

**MS Thesis**

**PAKISTAN RELATED TWEETS OF AFGHAN LEADERS IN THE  
POST-ASHRAF GHANI GOVERNMENT: AN ANALYSIS**



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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this MS thesis, titled “"Pakistan-Related Tweets of Afghan Leaders in the Post-Ashraf Ghani Government: An Analysis"” represents my original work and research efforts. I have appropriately cited all sources and references used in this thesis following the APA 7th edition guidelines. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for any academic qualification. I take full responsibility for the content, ideas, and conclusions presented herein. I submit this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MS 'Mass Communication' degree at the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

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## **THESIS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

It is certified that we, the Committee, have read this thesis submitted by Mr. Faisal Wali. It is our judgment that this thesis is of sufficient standard to warrant its acceptance by the International Islamic University, Islamabad for awarding the degree of MS 'Mass Communication'.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my research work to my respectable parents. This thesis is a testament to their unwavering love, encouragement, and belief in me. Their sacrifices, wisdom, and guidance have been the foundation upon which I have built my dreams. They have instilled in me the values of perseverance, hard work, and integrity, and especially my elder brother has always been my greatest source of inspiration.

I am thankful to their endless support, for lifting me up during times of doubt, and for always reminding me of the strength within myself. I owe everything to my elder brother and my mother, and this work is as much theirs as it is mine.

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## Abstract

The current study titled "*Pakistan-Related Tweets of Afghan Leaders in the Post-Ashraf Ghani Government: An Analysis*" explores the patterns of Afghan political leaders for using the Twitter to form the narrative against Pakistan and its rule in Afghanistan political situation especially after the regaining of the control by the Afghan Taliban during the chaos of August 2021 that was erupted after the evacuation of US forces from the areas and control of the government was officially taken by the Taliban. Twitter (formally known now as X) which is an online messaging and social networking site widely used among the social media users around the world to share views, news, narrative and thoughts of individual through their twitter handles that make the official statement of the person using the networking site. The study examined the tweets posted by the top five well-recognized political leaders of Afghanistan namely Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud, Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and Shukria Barakzai during the five months period started from August 2021 and ending on December 2021. For analysis purpose, the study has used sentimental and topic analysis in order to analyze as many as 390 tweets posted by the aforementioned influential that were using it to sketch an image of Pakistan towards Afghan internal politics. The selected tweets were related to topics such as war, security, diplomacy and humanitarian needs. After a thorough analysis, the research found more than half (65.4%) tweets by the Afghan diplomats and influential with negative tone towards Pakistan for their interference in their political venue by supporting stance of Taliban and creating difficult security situations along boarder shared with Pakistan. The research also found a correlation between use of political communication during war times in war zones along with the agenda setting role of communication mediums as well as digital diplomacy through twitter (X). In addition, it was also explored and found that social media networking sites especially twitter was largely used by the Afghan officials specifically during the times of crisis particularly the armed conflict times to influence the complex political process by taking the advantage of the situation to make a narrative that is either the part of political diplomacy or to gain the attention of international community towards a specific agenda set through communication tactics.

# Chapter 01

## Introduction

Throughout history, Afghanistan and Pakistan have faced many political, military, and social challenges, all of which have had a significant impact on the relationship between the two countries. These two states are geographically close to each other, so there have been frequent conflicts and wars. The conflict has been exacerbated by territorial disputes, militant operations, and foreign interventions. The end of the Ashraf Ghani administration in August 2021 has brought about a significant change in the political landscape of Afghanistan. The recent seizure of power by the Taliban has significantly changed the internal dynamics of Afghanistan, which has also created serious problems. About Pakistan's role in contributing to these events.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the ways in which Afghan politicians, particularly those active on social media, use Twitter to express their views on Pakistan, as well as the ways in which their tweets reflect the broader geopolitical dynamics behind the regime change.

The landscape of political discourse in the digital age has changed significantly as a result of the microblogging network known as Twitter<sup>1</sup> (X). Social media platforms provide a different way for political leaders to connect directly with their voters and the general public, unlike traditional media platforms, which often adhere to specific editorial restrictions. The immediacy of the platform and its ability to distribute messages quickly serve as a powerful tool to shift public opinion, shape narratives, and engage in real-time conversations on issues that matter. Twitter is an important platform for political leaders and influential figures in Afghanistan and Pakistan to express their opinions on important issues such as security, diplomacy, and bilateral relations. Twitter serves as a place for these individuals to do just that.

The relevance of Twitter in the process of creating a political narrative is greater than the situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Communication with domestic and international audiences is becoming increasingly common among political leaders around the world, who are increasingly turning to social media. Research has shown that Twitter has a significant impact on

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<sup>1</sup> Twitter is now officially known as 'X' since July 2023 after it was acquired by Elon Musk, owner of American company X Corp. For more details see: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/roberthart/2023/07/24/elon-musk-kills-twitter-bird-logo-in-x-rebrand/>

public perception and shapes diplomatic relations, especially in times of political instability (Enli & Simonsen, 2018).

The platform's scarcity and immediacy make it possible for political figures to respond to events in real time, allowing them to craft narratives that often bypass formal diplomatic channels. Because of the ability to communicate directly with one another, Twitter has become an important venue for Afghan officials, especially after the fall of the Ghani administration. These officials wanted to express their views on Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs and Twitter has given them the opportunity to do so.

The historical context of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations is one of territorial disputes, accusations of complicity, and deep animosity that has developed over time between the two countries. According to Barfield (2010), the Durand Line, built in 1893 during the colonial era, is a major source of conflict as it helps define the border between British India and Afghanistan. From the beginning, Afghanistan has consistently refused to recognize the line, arguing that it serves to separate Pashtun tribal areas located in the two countries. Pakistan regards the Durand Line as a border that conforms to international standards. Wars continue due to this geographical difference, which poses a major problem in their diplomatic relations.

The two countries have repeatedly accused each other of supporting rebel groups that threaten the stability of the region and have been embroiled in territorial disputes. There have been several Afghan administrations that have accused Pakistan of providing covert support to the Taliban. On the other hand, Pakistan has maintained that Afghanistan is home to anti-Pakistan militants operating across the border. Especially after the fall of the Ghani regime, there has been a significant deterioration in diplomatic relations as a result of repeated mutual claims. Several Afghan officials, both inside and outside the country, have taken to social media platforms, particularly Twitter, to express their concerns over Pakistan's alleged interference in Afghan affairs.

The Afghan leaders used Twitter as an effective medium to share their prospective about Pakistan after the end of Ashraf Ghani's term. As Ghani's government fall, it has created a very supportive environment as well as a vacuum to be filled by the political leaders as the situation was considerably uncertain among various Afghan political leadership that how to reach or what

would be the new setup considering the future of the country and the role, they may have to play in it.

Social media, especially Twitter, provided a platform for these leaders to sustain their political engagement, despite many being in exile or lacking formal political positions. Afghan leaders employed Twitter to build and share narratives regarding Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan, frequently portraying Pakistan as a significant factor in the Taliban's rise to power. This thesis aims to examine the content, tone, and themes of these tweets in order to gain insight into how Afghan leaders shaped their narratives regarding Pakistan during this politically tumultuous time.

The study attempts to analyze the ways in which Afghan leaders have shaped and articulated narratives regarding Pakistan on Twitter in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani administration. The notion of framing, articulated by Goffman (1974), pertains to the methods through which individuals and group's structure and convey information to shape its perception by others. Political leaders on Twitter employ framing techniques to shape narratives that emphasize specific aspects of an issue while minimizing or disregarding others. For instance, Afghan leaders who are critical of Pakistan might craft their tweets to highlight Pakistan's purported backing of the Taliban, thus influencing public perception of Pakistan as a disruptive element in Afghan matters.

The practice of framing on Twitter frequently incorporates hashtags, visuals, and emotionally impactful language to communicate political messages effectively. Hashtags serve a vital function in disseminating political messages and enhancing narratives. Leaders in Afghanistan have been actively tweeting about Pakistan, often incorporating hashtags that directly or indirectly highlight their apprehensions regarding Pakistan's involvement in the political transition of Afghanistan. This study will also attempt to examine the utilization of these hashtags and the associated tweet content to investigate how Afghan leaders have shaped particular narratives regarding Pakistan following the events of 2021.

Beyond its role in framing, Twitter functions as a significant platform for setting agendas. The agenda-setting theory, initially introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, posits that the media possesses the ability to shape the public's perception of significant issues through the extent of coverage they provide. On social media platforms such as Twitter, political leaders possess the capacity to shape the agenda by consistently emphasizing specific issues. In the context of

Afghanistan and Pakistan, it appears that Afghan leaders have utilized Twitter to highlight particular occurrences, such as border disputes or diplomatic incidents, with the aim of shaping public perception regarding Pakistan.

There are many advantages and disadvantages to using social media. This research study discusses the role of politicians in setting the agenda in political crises using social media, especially Twitter. It specifically highlights the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the main points of which are in mind.

The first thing to consider is what is the effect of agenda setting? An important objective of this study is to discuss the effects of agenda setting and to see how Afghan political representatives have talked about the role of propaganda setting in relation to Pakistan through the use of Twitter. In the effects of agenda setting, social media plays an important role in influencing public sentiment, especially during political crises. Afghan leaders have continuously used Twitter to shape a narrative on Pakistan's role, especially when the Taliban came to power.

The government of Ashraf Ghani came to an end, and along with this, they created a narrative that gave the world the impression that Afghanistan's internal affairs were perhaps Pakistan-backed. Afghan leaders have frequently used Twitter to formulate statements on Pakistan's role and built a narrative to fill a vacuum in Afghanistan's power, in which Pakistan was apparently portrayed as an enemy interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs while trying to convince the world that Pakistan interferes in Afghanistan's political and social issues and that is why there are problems with peace and stability in Afghanistan.

One of the objectives of this study is to analyze the techniques used by Afghan leaders to set the agenda on Twitter, as well as to understand the way in which they draw attention to Pakistan's role in the Afghan political landscape. This is also an important objective of this study. If we talk about the importance of this study, it will be possible to increase research on the effects of social media on political discourse. One important reason is to shed light on the problems and concerns that have remained regarding Pakistan-Afghanistan relations after the change of Afghan government in 2021 and, at the same time, to understand the opinions of Afghan leaders through social media.

Examining the impact of public discourse and diplomatic engagement is also an important aspect of this research study. If we talk about digital diplomacy, then this research is trying to understand

the main reasons for the formation of diplomatic and political narratives in international relations on platforms like Twitter. It is also shedding light on how political leaders use social media for direct communication, leaving aside traditional media and diplomatic channels. The implications of this research include how it is possible to increase the understanding of international relations and digital diplomacy. The implications of this research are talking about increasing the understanding of international relations and digital diplomacy. Along with this, it is to provide an insight into the role of social media in Afghanistan after the political era of Ashraf Ghani and to clarify the impact of social media on diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This research can prove to be a valuable asset in understanding the complex process of setting political agendas through social media.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan are based on a complex and dynamic history, which is explained by many factors. The first of these is the historical background. Historically, since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the relations between the two countries have been subject to fluctuations. Regional differences and historical border disputes such as the Durand Line issue have been a constant source of conflict in these relations. Similarly, if we talk about geographical and ideological factors, the geographical proximity and ideological differences between the two countries have affected the relations, among which Afghanistan's claims on the Pashtun areas of Pakistan and Pakistan's military policy are at the forefront. If we observe the patterns of the allegations of internal interference, both countries have been accusing each other of interfering in internal affairs, of which we have many examples in the past, which has significantly damaged mutual trust.

With the Taliban in 2021, the fall of Ashraf Ghani's government and the coming to power of the Taliban have brought an important and new turn in the relations between the two countries, due to which the return of the Taliban has not only affected the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also affected the relations between the two countries. Rather, it has also had a profound impact on regional and international political movements. These relations have remained complex and sensitive throughout history due to geographical realities and current political changes.

### **1.1.1 Historical Context of Afghan-Pakistan Relations**

The Durand Line and Afghanistan-Pakistan relations are related to the Durand Line dispute, the background of which is that in 1893, British India established the 2640-kilometer-long Durand Line. Its purpose was to act as a border between present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan (Barfield, 2010). Although its previous purpose was an agreement between the then Afghan Emperor and British India to mark the influence of two countries. The current Durand Line is currently serving as a border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan considers it an artificial border that is dividing the Pashtun tribes and refuses to recognize its legal status.

On the other hand, Pakistan recognizes this border in the light of its internal affairs and considers any interference in its internal affairs as a violation of the country's integrity. As far as the effects of this dispute are concerned, this dispute is a permanent cause of distrust in the relations between the two countries, which have created a deadlock between them both for a long time. The activities of militants and violent clashes on the border further complicate the issue.

In order to observe the role of Pakistan in Afghanistan, in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. After the attack, Pakistan provided support to the Afghan Mujahedeen, which also received support from the United States. This was the time when Pakistan recognized the status of the Afghan Mujahedeen in the Afghan issue and supported the US's agenda to fight against Soviet. This cooperation strengthened Pakistan's influence in Afghan politics. In the following years, such as after the Soviet invasion in 1989, Pakistan remained involved in Afghanistan's internal affairs and allowed itself to operate in Afghanistan. The civil war of the 1990s and the allegations of supporting the Taliban after 2001 increased criticism on Pakistan (Rashid, 2012).

Regarding the allegations of supporting the Taliban, Afghan leaders, especially Ashraf Ghani, expressed concerns about Pakistan's alleged role in promoting the Taliban insurgency. These allegations further strained the relations between the two countries. Regarding the impact on bilateral relations, the dispute over the demarcation line and the allegations of Pakistan's interference in Afghan politics further complicated the relations. In terms of civil relations, the citizens of both countries have a history with each other. The message of unity and peace is conveyed. On the other hand, instability and the presence of militants on the border have had a negative impact not only on diplomatic relations but also on regional security.

These are the factors that have been the basis of tension in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are becoming more complicated day by day due to historical, geographical and political reasons. If we look at these events and issues in the light of these events and challenges, no significant progress is visible from the side of the two countries, although there are political and cultural similarities between the two nations that they share from a very long time.

### **1.1.2 Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations Post-Ashraf Ghani Era**

After the fall of Ashraf Ghani's administration in 2021 and the rise of the Taliban to power, Afghanistan-Pakistan relations had a negative impact on the political dynamics of the region. The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan caused a severe setback to peace in the region, and instead of improving, problems arose.

The return of the Taliban and the rapid advance of the Taliban in terms of international reaction further accelerated the process of the collapse of the Afghan National Army and the revolution of foreign troops. Similarly, the resurgence of the Taliban also surprised the international community and Afghanistan's neighboring countries. There were allegations against Pakistan that Afghan political figures and international analysts had a role in making the return of the Taliban possible, which was also widely criticized.

Islamabad has repeatedly rejected the allegations of supporting the Taliban, but Afghan leaders on social media and in public forums have highlighted Pakistan's alleged disruptive influence. According to Afghan leaders, Pakistan has full influence on the internal affairs of Afghanistan and tries to disrupt it. If we talk about the role of social media, Afghan leaders have widely used social media, especially Twitter, as a great way to criticize Pakistan and air their grievances. Public dialogues have been held in which the existing tensions between the two countries have been deepened, and the idea has been instilled in the minds of citizens of both countries that one country is responsible for interfering in the internal affairs of another country in terms of administrative matters. Here, Pakistan has faced diplomatic challenges. Pakistan has been trying to establish its position as a diplomatic mediator in order to navigate relations with the Taliban government and maintain engagement with the international community. The Taliban has

been subject to reservations from the international community due to concerns about human rights, especially women's rights and education (Kugelman, 2021).

The international community's reservations against the Taliban due to concerns about education have created more difficulties for Islamabad as well as for Kabul. The bilateral relations and tensions have further increased between the two nations. The Taliban-led government has created new political and security complications in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The two countries are still trying to resolve these issues, but relations remain tense. The intended progress has not been made and it has important implications not only for Afghanistan-Pakistan relations but also for wider political and diplomatic matters in the region.

Regarding the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, there seems to be cooperation between the two countries in terms of trade and travel facilities. Along with this, Pakistan is also concerned about the activities of some groups in Afghanistan, especially regarding the TTP, i.e., Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, and its presence and operation. Pakistan expects the Afghan government to take action against militant groups on its soil so that bilateral relations do not deteriorate further. Regarding the TTP and the UN reports, the TTP is present in Afghanistan and has ties with terrorist groups, as has been stated in the UN report. Some Taliban officials reject this claim, but Pakistan is fully aware of this position and considers it a fact and demands action.

After the Taliban came to power, there was hope for an improvement in relations between Kabul and Islamabad after the 2021 incident, but this was not possible because of many factors. Pakistan tried to improve relations with the Afghan government in the past and is also working with the current Taliban government in the same spirit. However, the situation seems to be somewhat different. Recently, the Pakistani consulate in Germany was attacked, which was a sad incident. The TTP accepted responsibility for the incident, on which Pakistan appealed to the German government to take action against those involved and take security measures. The German government apologized for the incident, increased security measures and promised to hold those involved accountable. The position that emerged regarding Pakistan's foreign policy is that the aim of Pakistan's foreign policy is to remove all misunderstandings with Afghanistan and find solutions to common problems. Senior Pakistani officials have visited Afghanistan repeatedly to further strengthen relations, but we have not seen any significant progress in this regard. These are the

points that paint a picture of the existing relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the challenges and diplomatic efforts.

### **1.1.3 Social Media and Political Narratives**

Social media, especially Twitter, has emerged as an important element in Afghanistan's political discourse. Especially after the fall of the Ashraf Ghani government, Afghan political leaders made extensive use of Twitter, in which messages of public diplomacy and foreign diplomacy have been conveyed on Twitter to sway public opinion.

After the fall of the Ghani government and the rise of the Taliban to power, Afghan political leaders used Twitter for public communication and narrative formation. After the possible limitation or silence of traditional media, social media became an important means of communicating with global and local audiences. In terms of shaping the narrative against Pakistan, Afghan leaders took to Twitter to raise claims of Pakistan's alleged support for the Taliban and interference in Afghan affairs. This platform became an important means of diplomatic communication, shaping public perceptions and demands for global intervention.

In terms of influencing the global political discourse, the use of social media shows the importance of digital platforms in international political debate. During changes in government and during changes in government, social media not only reinforced the political narrative but also influenced opinion and international reactions. In terms of its importance in the specific context of Afghanistan, after the Taliban came to power, social media became a place for Afghan leaders where they could focus on internal and external issues.

This platform became the only means for them to raise their voices and engage with different parties. This analysis speaks to the illustrative importance and influence of social media, especially Twitter, in Afghanistan's changing political landscape.

### **1.1.4 Pakistan's Strategic Interests**

The historical and current complexities in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially after the Taliban's return to power, it is very important to talk about Pakistan's strategic interest in Afghanistan. Pakistan has considered Afghanistan important to strengthen its strategic position against India, and ensuring stability in Afghanistan and limiting cross-border militancy

have been among Pakistan's priorities. Pakistan's close relations with the Taliban have attracted the attention of the international community and the Afghan leadership (Khan, 2021).

The challenges facing the Taliban government and Pakistan show another picture, the Taliban administration is facing issues such as internal governance, economic hardship, and international isolation. Pakistan has to strike a balance between maintaining diplomatic relations with the Taliban and emphasizing its own security concerns.

Cross-border activities of militant groups are further complicating the relations between the two countries. Talking about Pakistan's role at the international level, Pakistan is among the few countries that are currently actively engaged with the Taliban government, providing them with assistance and strengthening their international recognition. Advocates This approach has been met with skepticism from Afghan leaders and the international community. Afghan leaders have used Twitter to shape the narrative on Pakistan's role in social media, especially with regard to the return of the Taliban. Social media has become an important tool in influencing public perceptions and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Researchers have been trying to understand how Afghan leaders shape the narrative about Pakistan by analyzing their tweets. This study is also a part of this series and in this study, an attempt is being made to explore the public and diplomatic impact of social media on the relations between the two countries. This analysis is being done in the context of the complex historical background of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, current diplomatic challenges and the changing importance of social media, and an attempt is being made to understand how Afghan leaders have tried to shape a narrative against Pakistan through the use of social media, especially Twitter.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

There is a great deal of factors in play between Pakistan and Afghanistan relationship. For instance, the mistrust between the two nations, the long-standing territorial dispute, the back and forth on allegation on one another regarding interference in each other's affairs, and the sense of realization of mutual existence all play role in political and diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

In 2021, the Ashraf Gahni's administration was dissolved so does the control of non-Taliban powers in the country. The tension within the country exacerbated with swift ascent of Taliban

and at the moment the leaders who were inside Afghanistan or outside got a chance to take advantage of the situation and used social media to voice for power share and tell the world about the ongoing situation by diverting and framing Pakistan as the key player in the background and responsible for aiding the non-state actors and changing political situation in the country. The Afghan leaders used Twitter to express their ideas and thoughts regarding Pakistan's involvement in internal affairs of Afghanistan. This very use of social media has initiated a debate on the role of social media in shaping political agenda and in the larger picture its drastic impacts on public policy and perception during crisis situation.

On the other hand, Pakistan being the responsible and major actor in the geo-political and strategically important country in the region denied officially for its any sort of involvement in the resurge of Taliban or involvement in the internal affairs of the Afghanistan but the Afghan leaders continue questioning Pakistan's involvement and leveled the allegations that Pakistan has backed the Taliban in aiding them to come into power and control Afghanistan post 2021 incident (Rashid, 2012). The use of Twitter to imply these allegations and accusations had a great deal of impact on the future of bilateral relations between the two countries as well as damaging for Pakistan image in the international community but questioning its role in the region to maintain peace.

The use of social media for political discourse especially the one for agenda setting and framing has posed the threats to countries both internally and externally and even in the changing scenarios and situations in bilateral relations and diplomacy. This provides a perfect opportunity for researchers to not only understanding the use of social media but to analyze its impacts on the internal and external affairs of nations. It remains important and most significant to examine and learn the way Afghan leaders have used the Twitter for narrative building against the neighboring county and political diplomatic stance to shape the public perception using social media (Enli & Simonsen, 2018).

The current study aimed to measure the impact of social media use by the Afghani leaders in order to shape the political agenda towards the involvement of Pakistan in political matters of Afghanistan, especially after the fall of the Ashraf Ghani administration in 2021. This study examines the use of Twitter by political and influential figures of Afghanistan by analyzing the theme, sentiments and narratives of the messages spread through Twitter. The study also evaluates the proximity of these messages in a wider picture and its intended regional and international

political intentions. The study also attempted to explore the patterns in which digital forums like Twitter is used to employ the political debate and shaping the public agenda towards diplomatic stance.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

- To investigate the sentiments and tone stated in tweets by Afghan leaders concerning Pakistan during the period from September 2021 to December 2021 post Ashraf Ghani administration.
- To examine the primary themes in tweets from Afghan leaders shared about Pakistan post 2021.
- To investigate the patterns Afghan leaders used on Twitter to build narratives about accusing Pakistan for its involvement in Afghanistan's political crisis.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The current study explains and analyzes the use of Twitter by Afghan leaders, especially during the Ashraf Ghani era and the period after that, in order to understand the political narrative built by Afghan leaders regarding the involvement of Pakistan in their internal political affairs.

Social media plays an important role if used as a political tool. The study explains how social media is increasingly used by the political leaders to impact the public perception and general narrative and political diplomacy in order to frame an agenda through Twitter that favors one sided opinion and ignores the other side. Twitter has been increasingly used for narrative building for international affairs. It is used to discuss the affairs of counties and affirms the stance of one national towards others and internationally. The study aimed to analyze the use of Twitter for political narrative building by countries' prominent political figures in order to get the attention of the international community and present a viewpoint that is diplomatic, manipulative, and objective-oriented for the worldwide audience (Chadwick, 2017).

The control on traditional media such as Radio, Television and Newspapers has increased the use of social media as it not only gives the ease for one to share his thoughts and ideas indecently and without any influence but also allowed them to spread the agenda and lobby for common objectives if the need be. This study is an attempt to analyze how social media is being used by the political actors in order to access the international community with a specific objective and

how well that objective could be achieved through using social media. The leaders taking traditional media outlets aside and reaching out international audience directly using social media platforms to reach and share their narrative and political agenda which only happens because of the leverage the social media provides to them as they ignore the traditional media and focus on using social media such as twitter for public diplomacy and narrative building for bilateral relations (Howard & Hussain, 2013). They way twitter is used for such instances is remarkably effective and needs to be examined how it assists the users to achieve the desired outcomes.

The research study also put into question the use of Twitter by Afghan nationals in the times of political turmoil which emerge as a chance to take advantage to get the attention of international actors on specific issue of Afghan political future and that was the time when US troops evacuated the region and with that Afghan Taliban emerged as a most powerful force in the country who took the control of the entire territory in very litter time soon the Ashraf Ghani's government was dissolved in 2021. This was the time when all the eyes and ears were on the developing political situation in this region and geographical political landscape of the South Asia was in a transitional phase.

The study also analyzed the patterns of using Twitter and its overarching impacts on the bilateral relations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It attempted to explore the view of Afghan leaders by their usage of Twitter to understand their view point about the involvement of Pakistan in Afghanistan internal affairs by using the lens of communication medium which is widely accepted and acknowledged internationally. In context of the relationship between the Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Afghan nationals used twitter to build political narrative that explains alleged involvement of Pakistan in domestic affairs of their country and the message they communicate to international community was clearly not supportive to strengthen the relation rather worsen them (Enli & Simonsen, 2018).

The study is also of significant value as it explains the use of digital diplomacy and use of social media in shaping the foreign affairs and build the international narrative and lobbying for a cause that is questionable for all the parties involved in it. It explains the way Afghan political figures used the power of social media to impact the international community perception about the involvement of an independent county to their internal affairs and sought assistance in terms of their favor and against the neighboring country that shares a vast history and culture with them.

This study is important as it attempts to measure the impacts of using Twitter for narrative building and molding the public perception towards any specific agenda. It provides a great insight for the students, scholars and policy makers in the field of media studies and international relations. The findings of this study are meant to guide the diplomatic approach for bilateral relations for neighboring countries and plugging out the agenda setting and framing from the actual situations when using social media for changing public perception.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This research examines how Afghan political leaders utilized Twitter to convey narratives regarding Pakistan during the timeframe from the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani administration in August 2021 to December 2021. This study, as stated earlier, is to examine and investigate the use of Twitter by political leaders of Afghanistan to built the narrative against Pakistan involvement in Afghanistan internal affairs.

The research emphasized on users of twitter by influential Afghan leaders who were engaged and involved in shaping political discourse revolving around the comparison between the outgoing and incoming administration, the general understanding and view point of political activists, the involvement of Ex-officials of the government and major personalities having significance impact and influence on social media.

### **1.5.1 Scope of the Study**

#### **a. Time frame**

This examination intensive on tweets from August 2021 to December 2021 as it was an important period of time noted by the tremble down of the Ghani's administration and formation of Taliban led administrative power and authority.

#### **b. Subjects**

The research focused on tweets from Afghan political leaders and prominent figures who have played a significant role in Afghan politics or maintained a prominent presence on social media during this period. This included members of the Afghan administration and former officials.

### **c. Themes and topics**

The study discovered into substantial themes including accusations of Pakistani immersion, political bonds, security matters, and the illustration of Pakistan amongst Afghanistan's political disorder.

### **d. Types of analysis**

The researcher has applied a compounding of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The themes and framing of the tweets are analyzed through qualitative analysis. While, quantitative methods including sentiment analysis was applied to evaluate the tone of the tweet messages text under three predefined categories i.e., as positive, as negative, or as neutral.

## **1.5.2 Limitations of the Study**

### **A. Limited access to private or deleted tweets**

The researcher accessed all the tweets that are set for public view. Any tweets shared from the same account for private or any past tweet that was deleted by the owner was not made part of this study as they were inaccessible to the researcher.

### **B. Focus on a specific time period**

The time frame selected for this study was between August 01 to December 31, 2021. Any tweet before or beyond this period was not made part of the analysis. The pattern in pre and post tweets might defer from the one that made part of this evaluation.

### **C. Language barriers**

Tweets that are published in other languages, including Pashto, Dari etc. were translated by researcher for precise translations when required, however, linguistic disparities may influence the understanding of specific tweets.

### **D. Focus on a limited number of leaders**

In order to keep the research on track and specific to the topic as well as due to the limitations of the researcher, only five top political influential from Afghanistan that have international recognizing either way was selected for analysis. Any other persons in this

regard that might have a say or made influence in the political and diplomatic decision of the country are excluded from the sample.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

1. How do Afghan leaders use Twitter to frame Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's political crisis after the fall of the Ashraf Ghani government?
2. What are the dominant themes and topics in the tweets of Afghan leaders regarding Pakistan during the period from August to December 2021?
3. What is the overall tone and sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) of Afghan leaders' tweets about Pakistan, and how do these sentiments vary across different topics?

## Chapter 02

### Literature Review

Afghanistan-Pakistan relations reflect a complex and not historical background. Since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations have become more strained. There have been historical political and security issues between the two countries for decades.

The Durand Line is a major tension that is called the border dispute between the two countries. In particular, differences over the Durand Line have been a major issue (Rashid, 2012). Militancy and internal interference are another important aspect in which Pakistan has often been accused of supporting militants in Afghanistan, while Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of interfering in its internal affairs. Talking about the power of the Taliban, these allegations have intensified since the Taliban came to power. Pakistan is accused of having helped bring the Taliban to power. The humanitarian and economic crisis is a major reason for the deterioration of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The humanitarian and economic crisis in Afghanistan has further affected the relations between the two countries. Pakistan has had to host millions of Afghan refugees, which has been tantamount to weakening the country economically (Barfield, 2010).

Regional stability for both countries have to rely on each other for regional stability. Therefore, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been affected by many complex factors. Historical differences, militancy and recent political changes have led to a lack of trust between the two countries (Khan, 2021). In the future, both countries need to focus on common interests to improve their relations. The challenging economic condition in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan stemming from diminished trade volumes, border closures, and security issues (Shah, 2021).

To sum up the haphazard situation of bilateral relations between the two countries one can summarize those relations between the two countries have been historically tense as they both accused each other for internal interference and support of militancy (Kugelman, 2021). The Durand Line has been a major contentious issue. Pakistan has often been accused of supporting the Taliban. The humanitarian and economic crisis in Afghanistan has further affected the relations. Both countries have to rely on each other for regional stability. This dynamic presents

further difficulty to Afghan-Pakistan ties in the post-2021 era, as both nations contend with the economic repercussions of the Taliban's ascendance to power.

## **2.1 Social Media and Political Communication**

Social media has changed the system of political communication. Unlike traditional media, the use of social media and the promotion of agendas through it have become much easier and more convenient. Where information used to be transmitted only one-way, social media now allows for direct and two-way communication. This has profoundly affected the relationship between political leaders and the public and has changed the nature of political discourse. This change is particularly noticeable in situations such as conflicts, government changes, and international relations.

### **2.1.1 Social Media as a Tool for Political Communication**

Social media, especially Twitter, has provided political leaders with a powerful platform to directly communicate with the public and spread their messages, bypassing traditional media. This platform plays a significant role in shaping political discourse, influencing public sentiment, and influencing international relations. The examples of the Arab Spring (Howard & Hussain, 2013) and the 2016 US presidential election clearly demonstrate how social media has played a significant role in advancing political change and popular movements (Chadwick, 2017).

In Afghanistan, Afghan officials used Twitter extensively to influence public opinion by telling their stories about engaging Pakistan. This research highlights the growing political importance of social media and provides its opinion on how it is changing political communication around the world. Social media, especially Twitter, has provided political leaders with an immediate and seamless way to express their views and influence public sentiment. The research shows that social media has enabled political figures to bypass the gatekeepers of traditional media and directly engage with internal and external stakeholders. This capability enables political leaders to shape the narrative and respond quickly to changing circumstances. Unlike traditional media, which operates with delayed publication and institutional control, Twitter facilitates immediate interaction with audiences.

Several studies have examined the influence of social media on political communication, particularly in conflict zones and during political emergencies. Research on the Arab Spring 2012

from 2010 to 2012 has documented the importance of Twitter and other social media platforms in organizing protests, disseminating information, and garnering global support. Political leaders and activists used Twitter to post real-time updates and influence the narrative around uprisings, which led to global awareness of local events (Ott, 2017).

The impact of Twitter in shaping political discourse was evident in how politicians used the site to build and improve their narratives, or how they used the forum. This example demonstrates how political actors can use social media not only to provide information but also to create unique stories that resonate with audiences. In Afghanistan, Afghan politicians made extensive use of Twitter to create stories about Pakistan's involvement, thus influencing public perceptions of their geopolitical situation.

This study compares the use of social media as a method of political influence during periods of instability by Afghan authorities in response to Pakistan's involvement in a political transition. Research on political communication during the 2016 US presidential election has shown how social media, particularly Twitter, emerged as a platform for political influence.

## **2.1.2 The Impact of Social Media on International Relations**

Social media has revolutionized the field of political communication, including foreign relations and digital diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). Governments and political leaders can now use social media to interact directly with foreign audiences and governments, which helps them to increase soft power, influence global public opinion, and implement their policies more effectively than traditional diplomacy.

For example, the Ukraine-Russia war shows how social media served as an important platform for gaining support at the global level (Cull, 2016). Similarly, in Afghanistan, political leaders used Twitter to spread their message about Pakistan's involvement to the world.

Social media has provided a powerful tool not only for governments but also for non-political institutions to raise their voices. Political leaders living in exile can also play their role in the political discourse using social media, as was seen during the Syrian civil war (Dagher, 2018).

The argument is that social media has brought about a new revolution in the field of political communication, which has caused a profound impact on global politics and international relations.

### **2.1.3 Political Communication in Conflict Zones**

Social media, especially Twitter, plays a role in political communication during crises. This platform facilitates the rapid exchange and dissemination of information, which helps political leaders convey their point of view to the public during crises and gain the support of the International community (Lynch, Freelon, & Aday, 2014).

The example of the Syrian crisis clearly shows how social media has affected the world. Similarly, in Afghanistan, political actors are using Twitter to convey their views about Pakistan to the world and try to influence public opinion. If we look at the world, the use of social media is increasing rapidly. Twitter, which is an important social media tool through which any country talks about maintaining its stars in public diplomacy and international affairs. Similarly, in view of the tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the use of social media by both countries is used to convince the world that for sustainable peace in the region, it is necessary for both countries to maintain their respective efforts for peace and to eliminate such unpopular and malicious elements that have led to the establishment of peace on both borders.

In order to prevent the problems that are being faced by both countries, both countries should sit together and develop a clear strategy through which peace and security efforts in the region can be made possible. The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have gone through different phases in the past and in such situations, when there is tension between the two countries and non-political elements are active in disrupting peace, then in such situations, both countries should think very seriously and cooperatively about how peacemaking can be effective in resolving conflicts.

To gain the support of the international community around the world, Afghanistan exaggerates the conflicts and Afghan representatives and political leaders convince the world that peacemaking is necessary according to their calculations, but other external powers, including Pakistan, that their interference in personal political affairs is a factor that is harming our peace efforts. This study has attempted to explain how Afghan leaders have been trying to influence

Pakistan in terms of peacemaking and gaining sympathy from the world. They are frequently using Twitter to convey a negative image to the world.

## **2.2 Twitter's Role in Diplomatic Tensions in South Asia**

Twitter has become an important platform for political leaders in South Asia. It is used not only for internal political communication but also for public diplomacy and international relations. Twitter has provided political leaders with a powerful tool to speak directly to everyone and spread their messages, bypassing traditional media.

The examples of the India-Pakistan tension and the Rohingya crisis clearly show how Twitter has influenced political discourse at the regional and global levels. Twitter has helped political leaders convey their views globally and gain the support of the international community, as stated at the beginning of this study. The importance of Twitter for political leaders in South Asia has been highlighted, as has its role in shaping regional and global politics (Kaura, 2019).

In the present era, Twitter is an important form of communication that political leaders, especially those in South Asia, are using to improve their communication and reach their audience immediately on other important issues. The social media platform, in which Twitter is at the forefront, has emerged as an important tool for handling issues like political crises, political communication, crisis management, and political diplomacy.

If we keenly observe the political background of South Asia, despite the presence of international stakeholders, Twitter has been used to obtain public opinion and political narratives and to get immediate help in crisis situations. For domestic political issues, Twitter has emerged as an important value in the history of South Asia, through which public diplomacy has been discussed, especially in the region, regarding war and diplomatic situations and diplomatic positions.

The use of Twitter for diplomatic interaction is called “Twiplomacy”. South Asia has witnessed a significant amount of direct communication between political leaders and their primary views to the world. One example of this is the 2019 conflict between India and Pakistan, which was the aftermath of the Pulwama tragedy. During this time, the leaders of both countries and other important figures clarified their stance on Twitter and gained the world's perspective. If we look at the case of India's air strikes in Balakot, Pakistan, and if we look at the Pulwama

incident, both countries used Twitter frequently in both these incidents to try to tell the world that their efforts will continue in the region and that they do not want any kind of chaos. Indian authorities called these airstrikes a counter-terrorism action, while Pakistani leaders called it an act of aggression, which is a violation of international law. According to Pakistan, this public discourse in both countries, which have nuclear weapons, makes it clear that Twitter has the power to be a neutral venue for political diplomacy.

In addition to bilateral relations and bilateral difficulties in the South Asian region, Twitter is also used for geopolitical matters around the world, such as the Rohingya refugee crisis in India. Political figures from South Asia have taken to Twitter to highlight serious human rights violations and have urged international organizations to intervene (Zaman & Nahar, 2020). Bangladeshi authorities have created a form in which they have spoken about national security and solidarity with refugees, thus making Twitter a tool for diplomacy.

The current study examines the use of Twitter by Afghan officials to build an international conspiracy against Pakistan for its alleged involvement in internal political affairs of Afghanistan during and post Ashraf Ghani's government. This study itself operates in a larger framework in order to analyze the utilization of Twitter by political figures in Afghanistan which is a major contributor of unrest in the South Asian region for quite some time.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The undertaken research applied basic theories for media studies and political communication to evaluate the use of Twitter by Afghan political figures to spread negative narrative about Pakistan and its alleged involvement in internal affairs of Afghanistan. The theoretical framework for this research is based on three theories namely media framing theory and agenda setting theory in order to examine how political actors create and influence public perceptions, delineate significant issues, and construct social realities using digital platforms such as Twitter.

### **2.3.1 Media Framing Theory**

Media Framing theory was explained by Erving Goffman (1974). The theory deliberates on the presentation and organization of the media content that shapes audience perception of the

information they receive or consume. Framing is associated with a technique of stressing precise foundations of a perceived reality to increase their eminence within a communicative context.

Framing is also the notion that pays direct attention towards some issues while put aside or exclude the others in a result it impacts the end result by influencing the perception and interpretation and comprehension of media consumers.

The study in hand discusses and analyzes the use of Twitter by Afghan nationals to blame Pakistan or in this context frame a message against Pakistan interference in Afghanistan internal affairs by twisting the reality through messages that are carrying a different sentimental exploitation and ultimately influencing the general perception of users to who the message reaches. The message on Twitter presented through text, images and hashtags create a perfect frame and hence the receivers of the message get the same which made them believe on it and so they unintentionally are influenced by consuming this information. The senders of the messages used quoted words such as regional instability, diplomatic failure, meddling, interference and many more.

This very trick of framing and organizing a message carrying certain information that influence the comprehension and understanding of the consumers by associating the message with different events and happening and particularly seeking political objectives. Afghan political influential narrated the messages on Twitter by painting a picture where they showed Pakistan as the main factor behind unrest in the country and portrayed a negative image of the country by backing the information with specific incidents. The frame of these message is clearly international and seeking the sympathies and support of international community that has a mixed sentiment for the two countries based on the information they get from various communication mediums and one such medium among them is Twitter on social media.

Framing is highly significant and appropriate in social media sites such as Twitter as the essential factor here is consciousness. The judicious selection of words, images and graphic representations by political figures because of the limitations of characters on Twitter interpreting framing an essential aspect of leaders' communication with the public. The social scientists argued that social media has a huge potential to greatly impact the public opinion and general perception about the international affairs when they rely or consume social media for such kind of information (Entman, 1993). This argument alone is sufficient for the researchers to examine the patterns and

framing method applied by Afghan political activists to influence and manipulate popular narrative.

### **2.3.2 Agenda-Setting Theory**

The most significant work of social scientists McCombs and Shaw (1972) in theoretical frameworks for media impact studies was the agenda setting theory that was widely used by the scholar around the world. The agenda setting role of media, as argued by the agenda setting theory, emphasizes that while the media may not dictate opinions, it may overwhelmingly affect the topics that occupy the public attention.

The media establishes the agenda for public conversation by highlighting particular subjects or occurrences (McCombs, 2004). The fundamental concept of agenda-setting states that media entities, or in this instance, specific political leaders utilizing social media, may steer public focus towards certain issues through persistent coverage or emphasis.

This study uses agenda-setting theory to show how Afghan officials use Twitter to highlight Pakistan influence in the Afghan political landscape and in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. They deliberately and constantly tweeted about Pakistan stating that the country is responsible by one way or another for its interference which is unwanted and unwarranted by them. They were making the issue the center of attention and drawing public and media attention to it.

This research also shows how Afghan officials use Twitter to try to influence global opinion about Pakistan role and highlighting the issue to the public and media. This study is to most of the extent in line with the agenda-setting theory which argues that public opinion can be influenced by highlighting specific issues through the media.

These theories, used for this study, together provide a broad framework for looking at how Afghan politicians use Twitter to shape public discussions about Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's political crisis and how they manage to held Pakistan accountable for any doings in the region which are neither factual nor the truth. The theoretical framework provided here assists the researcher to evaluate the data in a structural way in order to comprehend the hypothesis that social media such as Twitter is widely used by political figures for political communication and narrative building for public diplomacy.



## **Chapter 03**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study applies a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore how Afghan authorities used Twitter to construct narratives against Pakistan in the post-Ashraf Ghani period. A mixed-methods approach is used in order to deepen the comprehension of the content, tone, and themes of the tweets and to facilitate a thorough analysis of political debate on social media in this context.

The qualitative aspect of the research involves doing a theme analysis of tweets from certain Afghan political figures from August 2021 to December 2021. The qualitative aspect of the study seeks to discern major themes, patterns, and framing methods employed by Afghan officials in their tweets against Pakistan. The study attempted to analyze the content of these tweets to clarify how leaders formulate and communicate their narratives by emphasizing particular themes such as security, diplomacy, and charges of meddling. The qualitative technique allowed the researcher for an in-depth investigation of the context and language employed in the tweets adding the researcher to get better insights into the political framing and communication strategies of Afghan nationals towards Pakistan.

This quantity factor involves analyzing the sentiment in each tweet to determine its overall sentiment about Pakistan, positive, negative, or a neutral. This involved utilizing NLP technologies to process the feelings expressed in each of the tweets. The quantitative method provided an objective assessment of the tone and frequency of conversation and bringing out the comprehensive insights into the interactions between Afghan authorities and Pakistan as well as the nature of their attitudes. This study enhanced the qualitative findings by offering a more comprehensive knowledge of the narratives created on social media.

These methods were integrated to conduct a detailed study of the problems researched by allowing an extended investigation of the framing, themes, and attitudes stated by Afghan officials in their tweets toward Pakistan during the pivotal political change. Mixed methods improved the

results since both the qualitative and quantitative analyses' depths were combined with quantifiable insights.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

This study's data collection involves obtaining tweets from Afghan political figures published between August 2021 and December 2021. This period encompasses the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani administration and the rise of the Taliban, making it a critical moment for examining political debate on social media. The method of data gathering includes identifying specific Twitter accounts, setting search parameters, and using appropriate technologies for data extraction and management.

The research selects a cohort of Afghan political elites who were on Twitter during the period under investigation. The sample encompasses former government officials, political activists, and influential personalities who have been vocal in their engagement with political conversations on social media. The account of former Vice President Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud, and other influential political personalities is selected because of their significance and frequency of discussing Pakistan on the platform. The researcher by acknowledging these pivotal personalities tried that the data so gathered faithfully represents the political narrative shaped by Afghan authorities.

This study then sets search criteria to receive relevant tweets. The focus of the study is on obtaining those tweets containing specific words relevant to Pakistan and the political situation in Afghanistan. Some of the likely keywords include "Pakistan," "Taliban," "border," "diplomacy," "interference," among many others. This keyword-driven approach enables a targeted research of tweets that specifically detail Pakistan's influence in the political sphere of Afghanistan. The study limited the search to the specified period so as to ensure that information obtained would be relevant for the purposes of the research.

The study used a systematic data extraction procedure in which data of tweets during the aforementioned timeframe was gathered from the twitter accounts selected for the study between the specified timeframe on a single spread sheet. This approach enabled the researcher to refine results by user accounts, keywords, and temporal parameters. The data collected includes the entire content of each tweet along with information such as the date and time of posting, retweet count,

and likes. This provided further context that helps to ascertain the reach and influence of each tweet. Every tweet is recorded with relevant information, including the author, date, content, and related keywords. This framework in an organized manner was imperative for both topic and sentiment analysis that was conducted subsequently in the research process.

The process of data collection followed ethics in the use of social media data in academic studies. The study used tweets that are public, so there was no violation of user privacy and confidentiality. The study ensured responsible management of data as it does not distort the material and the people involved. This ethical concern is in agreement with best practices in the study of social media (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

This rigorous data gathering method ensured a comprehensive and focused dataset that encapsulated Afghan officials' perspectives on Pakistan during a crucial political shift.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique in this research work would include selecting the tweets from an identified cohort of Afghan political individuals, that appeared on the social media stage, discussing their political contributions, on the defined timeframe between August 2021 and December 2021. These individuals are picked based on their importance within the political realm of Afghanistan, the frequency of being on the platform, which is Twitter, discussing topics associated with the political landscape, as well as influencing the local people and foreigners.

The research is based on a focused sample of Afghan leaders, ensuring that the analysis covers a range of perspectives. The individuals whose tweets were analyzed in study are as follows:

#### **1. Amrullah Saleh**

The former Vice President of Afghanistan, who declared himself as the acting president of the country after the Ashraf Ghani administration has been overthrown. Saleh has also put out several opinions on his Twitter regarding Pakistan's interference in the Afghan political instability and Taliban activities. His tweets frequently contain resistance, sovereignty, and foreign diplomacy issues; hence, his account becomes an important source for this study.

#### **2. Ahmad Massoud**

He is the head of the National Resistance Front (NRF) and a well-known opponent of the Taliban's rule. Massoud frequently uses Twitter to state his political stance, appeal for foreign aid, and debate issues concerning Afghanistan's future. His opinions reflect the tale of resistance against the Taliban and perceived foreign interference, particularly from Pakistan.

### **3. Hamid Karzai**

Still the strong political player post-2021, the ex-President of Afghanistan. Karzai is relatively soft-spoken and diplomatic in his words, but his tweets truly offer a glimpse into initiatives geared toward stabilizing Afghanistan through dialogue and regional cooperation. The study selects studying his tweets as well, which has been beneficial for comprehending the spectrum of political narratives concerning the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### **4. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah**

He is the former chairperson of the High Council for National Reconciliation and played a vital role in talks before the Taliban takeover. Abdullah's tweets show much about what is happening around diplomatic attempts and trying to form an inclusive government inside Afghanistan. His point of view concerning Pakistan's involvement in the peace process and the successive political transformation was crucial for this interpretation.

### **5. Shukria Barakzai**

She is the Ex-Afghan legislator and proponent of women's rights. Barakzai's vigorous engagement on Twitter shows social and human rights concerns particularly the effects of political transformations on Afghan society. Her tweets frequently address Pakistan's impact on Afghanistan, especially with human rights and gender equality that has provided the researcher a distinctive viewpoint for analysis under this study.

The research analyzed these five leaders for their active engagement in political debate on Twitter and their significant influence on shaping local and global narratives. This purposeful sample enables the research to encompass a diversity of perspectives, from dissidence and criticism to diplomacy and cooperation. The research analyzed the discourse surrounding Pakistan's role in Afghanistan at a very critical time of political transformation by selecting these influential figures of Afghanistan. This sample has provided enough data to identify dominant

themes, feelings, and framing devices used by Afghan leaders in their discourses to accomplish the purposes of this research.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

This study has used both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to explore how Afghan leaders framed narratives about Pakistan on Twitter during the selected period from August 2021 to December 2021. The approach focused on making the analysis process straightforward and manageable. For that purpose, the researcher has used accessible tools and techniques for data analysis and interpretation of results.

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative Analysis**

Under the qualitative method, the researcher opted on doing thematic analysis in which the tweeter accounts of five purposively selected political leaders of Afghanistan were selected for analysis between the specific timeframe of the study.

##### **3.4.1.1 Thematic Analysis**

For the thematic analysis, the tweets of the five selected Afghan political leaders were collected and compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Each tweet was listed with its text, date, and any relevant hashtags or keywords. This compilation provided a structured dataset that aided the researcher to conduct further analysis.

**The thematic analysis followed these steps:**

###### **a. Coding of the Data**

The tweets were first read thoroughly to identify recurring keywords and concepts. In the Excel sheet, a column was created to note down common themes such as "interference," "security," "diplomacy," and "human rights." The study used the simple application of color-coding on Excel by marking different themes, hence making it very easy visually to categorize the various tweets. This worked well in addition to the convenience this provided to the researcher. It did not require specialist software or even technical expertise on the elaborate data analysis and visualization skill.

###### **b. Categorizing Themes**

Keywords and phrases identified after preliminary coding were grouped into even more general categories. Such tweets that contained the phrase "border," "cross-border terrorism," or even "violence" have been put together in a category called "security concerns." This has given some insight into the leaders' Afghan government as to which issues would have most discussion time and which framing devices are used.

### **c. Interpretation**

After identifying the themes, the study interpreted data to see how Afghan leaders framed the narrative around Pakistan. It considered the context in which certain themes appear and how often they were emphasized. Findings from this thematic analysis offered insights into political messaging of the leaders on social media.

## **2. Sentiment Analysis (Quantitative Method)**

For the sentiment analysis, the study determines if the tweets have a mostly positive, negative, or neutral tone. This technique was used because it is user-friendly and accessible. It does not use any technical skills or hefty software installations.

- **Sentiment Categorization:** Each of the tweets was copied and then pasted into the online tool. The online tool automatically classified each of the tweets as being either positive, negative, or neutral in nature according to the language and tone of the tweets. Then the result of the sentiment of each tweet was recorded in a different column of the Excel sheet.
- **Quantifying Sentiments:** After categorizing all the tweets, the research computed the percentages of positive, negative, and neutral tweets. This simple statistical approach assisted in the determination of overall trends in the sentiment regarding Pakistan that Afghan leaders expressed in their tweets. The overall analysis provided an objective quantitative measure of the attitude expressed by these leaders in addition to qualitative findings.

### **3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis**

In quantitative method, the researcher analyzed the frequency of most commonly discussed topics and hashtags in the tweets of the selected Afghan nationals towards Pakistan between the period of five months post Ashraf Ghani's period. For the quantitative analysis, keywords and hashtags were analyzed using frequency analysis technique.

### **3.4.2.1 Frequency Analysis (Quantitative Method)**

In this study, basic frequency analysis was also conducted using Microsoft Excel in order to identify the topics that are commonly discussed and hashtags in the tweets.

#### **a. Keyword Frequency**

The study made use of the "Find and Replace" function in Excel to count the number of occurrences of key terms such as "Pakistan," "Taliban," "border," and "diplomacy." This simple method provided a frequency count of each keyword, showing the major issues and concerns of the Afghan leaders.

#### **b. Hashtag Analysis**

It further identified and counted the number of hashtags that were being used in the tweets to see which narratives the leaders were trying to amplify. Using the "COUNTIF" function in Excel, it determined how many times each hashtag was being used and an idea was developed about which topics were most discussed on Twitter.

### **3.4.3 Data Triangulation**

Data triangulation has been applied in the study in order to increase the validity of the findings through an integration of theme, sentiment, and frequency analysis. By cross-checking qualitative themes with quantitative sentiment and frequency data, this study has provided a much broader view of how Afghan leaders narrated their stories on Twitter.

This mixed-method approach has really captured the depth of political conversation and general patterns of emotion and issue focus. Moreover, with Excel and complimentary web resources, it has been possible to conduct the approach in academic research that is reproducible.

## **3.5 Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations**

This study has taken into consideration various ethical factors while analyzing tweets by popular people, taking into account privacy, secrecy, and the appropriate usage of social media data.

All the tweets under analysis here are public and have been taken from verified accounts of Afghan political figures. Influential people like that tweet to get to the vast audiences, such as

their constituents, supporters, and international observers. The data was obtained from publicly accessible tweets, therefore avoiding any violation of private or secret information. Guidelines on social media research indicate that utilizing publicly accessible material generally adheres to ethical norms, as it is designed for public consumption (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

This study recognizes the necessity of upholding the integrity of the persons involved, albeit the public character of the tweets. It refrains from distorting tweets or misrepresenting the perspectives of the leaders. Direct quotations from tweets are employed judiciously to represent themes and conclusions while preserving their original significance.

In social media research, obtaining informed consent from prominent personalities for utilizing their public tweets is typically unnecessary. It is especially in the case since the material is publicly accessible. This study examined tweets from political individuals that utilize social media to interact with the public and express their perspectives on political issues. The study analyzed only publicly posted text and refrains from accessing or interpreting private chats, direct messages, or deleted tweets for the same accounts.

Considering that the study pertains to notable public people that utilize Twitter for political discourse, confidentiality and anonymity do not apply in the conventional manner. The identities of the political personalities are essential for comprehending the context and importance of their words. The study excluded personal information or data that may compromise the privacy of anyone engaging with these tweets, such as retweets, likes, or comments from private citizens.

The emphasis was on the leaders' communications and the public dialogue they want to influence. The study upholds ethical standards by focusing exclusively on the material produced by public people and therefore tried to prevent the exposure or examination of private persons' data without their agreement.

The research adhered to ethical standards in the storage, processing, and reporting of data. All tweets have been archived in a secure digital format. The reporting of findings refrains from sensationalism or the construction of biased narratives that may distort the objectives of the public personalities involved. The research was an attempt to deliver an impartial examination of political communication at the same time honoring the leaders' freedom to articulate their perspectives in the public domain.

## **Chapter 04**

### **Data Analysis**

The study's data analysis included tweets from five prominent Afghan political figures namely 1) Amrullah Saleh, 2) Ahmad Massoud, 3) Hamid Karzai, 4) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and 5) Shukria Barakzai, posted between August 2021 and December 2021. The selected time period was a crucial time with a critical situation in Afghanistan's political history as the fall of the Ashraf Ghani's administration happened during the same period and the reestablishment of Taliban control was witnessed. The individuals shortlisted by the researcher for this analysis were selected for their active engagement on Twitter during the said time period because they have notably shaped public discourse around Afghanistan's political instability and Pakistan's alleged involvement.

These leaders twitted 628 tweets during the selected period of which a total of 393 tweets were gathered by the researcher for the analysis. Each message was categorized based on its content, sentiment, and themes. The majority of these tweets primarily focused on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's political affairs by giving a focused emphasis on the issues such as security, diplomacy, and regional stability. The research was targeted to determine the tone, frequency, and thematic structure of these tweets to understand how Afghan officials used Twitter (X) to construct narratives against Pakistan.

**Table 4.1: Total Tweets by Afghan Leaders and Tweets Selected for Analysis (August 2021 - December 2021)**

Sr.	Leader Name and X handle	Total Tweets (N)	Tweets Selected for Study (n)	August 2021 (n, %)	September 2021 (n, %)	October 2021 (n, %)	November 2021 (n, %)	December 2021 (n, %)
1.	<b>Amrullah Saleh</b> @AmrullahSaleh2	210	136 (64.8%)	49 (36.0%)	38 (27.9%)	23 (16.9%)	17 (12.5%)	9 (6.6%)
2.	<b>Ahmad Massoud</b> @AhmadMassoud	127	78 (61.4%)	27 (34.6%)	18 (23.1%)	17 (21.8%)	9 (11.5%)	7 (9.0%)
3.	<b>Hamid Karzai</b> @KarzaiH	114	77 (67.5%)	24 (31.2%)	19 (24.7%)	15 (19.5%)	10 (13.0%)	9 (11.7%)
4.	<b>Dr. Abdullah Abdullah</b> @DrabdullahCE	101	67 (66.3%)	19 (28.4%)	17 (25.4%)	14 (20.9%)	8 (11.9%)	9 (13.4%)
5.	<b>Shukria Barakzai</b> @ShukryaBarakzai	76	35 (46.1%)	13 (37.1%)	7 (20.0%)	8 (22.9%)	4 (11.4%)	3 (8.6%)

#### **4.1 Summary of Total Tweets and Tweets Selected for Study**

During the research period, a total of 628 tweets were disseminated by the five chosen Afghan leaders. Of these, 393 tweets (62.6% of the total) pertained directly to Pakistan and were chosen for thematic analysis. The sample is significant, illustrating each leader's involvement with Pakistan-related issues in light of the changing political scenarios.

The monthly analysis of tweets provides insights into the focus and intensity of each leader's engagement with topics related to or mentioning Pakistan over time. As shown in the above table, Saleh's tweets exhibited a consistent decrease post-August, culminating in the lowest engagement recorded in December, with 9 tweets and an engagement rate of 6.6%. His focus in

August indicates his prompt reaction to the Taliban's takeover and the purported involvement of Pakistan. On the other hand, Massoud's activity was robust during September and October but diminished in the subsequent months. His tweets in August and September show his leadership role within the National Resistance Front and express his critical view regarding Pakistan's supposed support for the Taliban. In contrast to this, Karzai showed consistent activity, which indicates a moderate level of engagement with each month. His was diplomatic in nature, emphasizing regional stability which probably contributed to his continued engagement during the study period.

Meanwhile, Abdullah's engagement manifested a steady decline with significant rise in December (9 tweets, 13.4%), an indication of still continuing diplomacy. His steadiness of engagement suggests that he remained engaged with the peace processes and had dialogues with other global stakeholders. In contrast to other leaders, Barakzai exhibited low engagement, higher activity in August, and showed steady decline to December. The themes she tweeted about primarily centered on humanitarian and economic concerns and were not as aggressively confrontational as political oppositions.

## **4.2 General Observations on Afghan Leaders' Engagement (RQ1)**

In August, during the Taliban takeover period, all leaders showed the peak of tweets related to Pakistan. This peak therefore reflects a quick response to the situation and coincides with intensified global attention on Afghanistan.

The leaders mostly witnessed a sharp fall after August regarding the volume of tweets regarding Pakistan. Their fall rates were not alike, but it showed the reduction extent to vary between them. Some, like Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, fell pretty dramatically, reflecting initial urgency before things become stabilized. Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, by the way, kept their Twitter engagement quite steady with regards to the theme of discussion.

The high percentage of tweets on Pakistan by leaders, which ranged from 46.1% to 67.5% of their total tweets, underlines the importance of Pakistan in the discourse of Afghan leaders during this period. Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah had high proportions of Pakistan-related tweets, which underscored regional cooperation and diplomatic efforts.

Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud touched on issues of conflict and interference, while Hamid Karzai and Shukria Barakzai integrated themes of diplomacy and economic concerns. This thematic variety mirrors the different approaches taken in dealing with Pakistan's challenges to Afghanistan.

### **4.3 Thematic Analysis of Afghan Leaders Tweets Related to Pakistan (RQ2)**

The thematic analysis gives an in-depth look into the most prominent themes that emerged within the Afghanistan leaders' tweets from August 2021 to December 2021.

There are four major themes involved in the analysis. 1) Security issues; 2) Diplomatic efforts; 3) Conflict and interference; 4) Regional stability and economic implications. Each theme was analyzed using examples from the collected tweets and how those leaders articulated Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's political context.

**Table 4.2: Thematic Analysis of Afghan Leaders' Tweets Related to Pakistan**

Sr.	Theme	Sub-Themes	Leaders	Sentiment Distribution
1.	Security Concerns	Border Security	Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud	Negative (90%), Neutral (10%)
		Counterterrorism	Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud	Negative (85%), Neutral (15%)
2.	Diplomatic Efforts	Peace Talks	Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	Neutral (60%), Positive (40%)
		International Mediation	Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	Neutral (70%), Positive (30%)
3.	Conflict & Interference	Foreign Interference	Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud	Negative (100%)
		Taliban Support	Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud, Dr. Abdullah	Negative (90%), Neutral (10%)
4.	Regional Stability & Economy	Economic Concerns	Shukria Barakzai, Hamid Karzai	Neutral (80%), Positive (20%)

		Humanitarian Aid	Shukria Barakzai, Hamid Karzai	Positive (60%), Neutral (40%)
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### 4.3.1 Security Concerns

Particularly after Taliban assumed power, security remains the most prominent concern or rather, the challenge. On the consistent basis, Afghan officials have voiced their concerns concerning the ability of Pakistan to lead Afghanistan's security into instability. The charges that Pakistan backed insurgent organizations and helped the military activities of the Taliban were included in this subject, which also included allusions to border security and counterterrorism.

The issues that are linked with the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, notably the porous Durand Line, were highlighted in tweets that were related to border security. In a continuous manner, Afghan authorities such as Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud have accused Pakistan of allowing extremists to cross the border. They have asserted that Pakistan's activities threaten Afghanistan's sovereignty. Saleh made the following statement in August 2021: "Pakistan's failure to control cross-border terrorist activities along the Durand Line continues to destabilize Afghanistan." This focus implies that there are ongoing worries over Pakistan's alleged participation in insurgency that occurs beyond territorial boundaries.

The issue of counterterrorism surfaced as a recurrent subtheme with Afghan authorities asserting that Pakistan is a safe haven for terrorist groups that threaten Afghanistan's stability and provides assistance to these groups. During the month of September, Ahmad Massoud tweeted those external powers aiding Taliban insurgents weaken Afghanistan's war against terrorism. In his tweet, he implied that Pakistan was involved. Within the context of this narrative, Pakistan was portrayed as a disruptive entity that actively obstructs efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan.

The tweets that were sent out on this topic were almost all negative, with more than 90 percent of them being unfavorable. This indicates that the leaders are extremely concerned about Pakistan's alleged intervention in Afghan security. The emphasis placed on security concerns highlights a basic aspect of the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is that claims of instability and support for terrorism have historically been a source of conflict between the two countries.

### **4.3.2 Diplomatic Efforts**

In order to create stability in Afghanistan, the fundamental objective of the diplomatic efforts was to argue for the establishment of peaceful settlement and international mediation as a means of achieving this goal. In the process of finding a solution to the political issue, Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, along with a number of other political leaders, have frequently emphasized the need of working via diplomatic channels. In terms of its tone, this topic was unique from Security Concerns since it tended to be more collaborative in character and placed a focus on the potential of peace via communication. In other words, it was significantly different from Security Concerns.

During the course of their efforts, the Afghan government advocated for the development of diplomatic channels and peace negotiations, and they periodically asked Pakistan to encourage a peaceful transition. For instance, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah tweeted during the month of October that "engaging in constructive dialogue with regional partners, including Pakistan, is essential for Afghanistan's future stability." Pakistan is one of the regional partners that Dr. Abdullah Abdullah mentioned. The diplomatic approach that Abdullah takes and the efforts that he makes to de-escalate tensions are demonstrated in this area of attention, which represents his efforts.

On top of that, a number of politicians have urged for the participation of the international community, particularly organizations like the United Nations, in the process of mediation that is taking place between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The tweets of Hamid Karzai, which include statements such as "International engagement in our region is vital to substituting stability and addressing security concerns" (November 2021), provide evidence that he made frequent use of this technique. The objective of these tweets was to offer a more impartial forum for discussion, therefore showing a pragmatic perspective that international intervention would be able to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

It is estimated that around sixty percent of the tweets pertaining to this subject were unfavorable, while forty percent were good. The neutral mood may reflect the leaders' realistic

evaluation of the importance of international engagement. On the other hand, the positive attitude may reflect optimism that collaboration will take place.

### **4.3.3 Conflict and Interference**

The topic of war and intervention was particularly apparent in tweets that portrayed Pakistan as a force that was contributing to instability in Afghan affairs. The number of times that these tweets were posted was substantial. Pakistan has been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, especially in its provision of assistance for political and military activities of the Taliban's organization. But Pakistan has been very decisive in denying involvement in those activities. This paper therefore brought to light the narrative of foreign influence in which Afghan officials publicly condemned the involvement of Pakistan in their political future. The focus of this paper brought into the limelight the stand that Pakistan has.

Many Afghan politicians, including Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, have been putting considerable stress on the fact that Pakistan is responsible for interference in the political affairs of Afghanistan. This is based on the fact that Pakistan has been interfering in the political affairs of Afghanistan for a long time. One of the tweets, this one from September, reads: "Pakistan's hand in Afghanistan's crisis cannot be ignored," and thus seems to indicate that Saleh believes Pakistan has an interest in all issues that have a bearing on Afghanistan. The post by Saleh was put out precisely to air his opinion. Massoud, as well, agreed with this perspective, stating that the influence of Pakistan was characterized as an "obstacle to Afghan sovereignty" (October 2021).

Several tweets specifically pointed out that Pakistan was indeed supporting the Taliban and in this way, helping it regain power. This accusation was made for a number of reasons. Amrullah Saleh made numerous allusions to Pakistan's stated assistance for the Taliban in his tweets, including the following: "The world must recognize Pakistan's role in empowering the Taliban and undermining Afghanistan's legitimate government" (August 2021). Within the context of this line of discourse, Pakistan was depicted as a potential threat to the independence and stability of Afghanistan.

A significant sense of mistrust and discontentment with Pakistan's apparent involvement in the ongoing issue was reflected in the tone that was utilized under this topic, which was nearly

totally negative (about 95 percent). During this time period, ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan were defined by a hostile narrative, which was represented by accusations of interference and support for the Taliban.

#### **4.3.4 Regional Stability and Economy**

Despite the fact that it was brought up less frequently, the subject of economic stability and stability in the area continued to be of significant importance. The economic challenges that Afghanistan and its neighbors are now facing were the major focus of this research. Additionally, the report emphasized the greater consequences that Afghanistan's instability has on the stability of the region. The Afghan government, and in this respect, Shukria Barakzai, pointed out to the challenges Afghanistan is now facing in its economy, and called upon Pakistan, as well as other regional partners, to offer assistance to Afghanistan as it tries to recover its economy, thereby easing this humanitarian catastrophe the country now faces.

The economic issues that were brought up were mostly brought up by Shukria Barakzai and Hamid Karzai. They emphasized the ways in which regional cooperation and cross-border business has the potential to help in alleviating the economic challenges that Afghanistan is now suffering. In September 2021, President Barakzai posted the following on Twitter: "Afghanistan's recovery is only possible through economic cooperation with our neighbors." The tweets were a realistic approach to the importance of economic cooperation, especially concerning neighbors that have been antagonistic to each other in the past.

An added importance was humanitarian relief, which saw leaders calling for support from a number of bodies, regional and international alike, for Afghan refugees as well as those whose livelihoods have been impacted by the political turmoil that is currently unfolding. This was underlined by Barakzai, who shared a tweet that he issued in October. In the tweet, he mentioned, "Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan must be given urgent attention, and the neighbors, particularly Pakistan, should help themselves to ease the situation". Additionally, it asked regional parties to make significant contributions to Afghanistan's capability to sustain its stability. This policy placed a focus on working together, and it pushed regional parties to do so.

Sixty percent of tweets dealing with this topic were neutral, while forty percent were favorable. The tone of these tweets ranged from neutral to positive. On the other hand, the neutral tone suggests that the strategy is perceived as being rational and balanced, in contrast to the positive feeling, which communicates hope for the potential of economic and humanitarian relationships.

#### **4.3.5 Major Findings of Thematic Analysis**

It has been determined from the findings of the thematic analysis that the tweets that Afghan politicians have posted in relation to Pakistan include a narrative structure that is rather complicated. In general, the themes of Security Concerns and Conflict and Interference were pessimistic which was reflecting the persistent tensions and allegations of destabilization that have been present for a long time. On the other side, the subjects of Diplomatic Efforts and Regional Stability and Economy displayed more balanced tones with Afghan officials expressing cautious optimism about the potential of mutual collaboration and international intervention.

The distribution of themes is a reflection of the several approaches that Afghan authorities have tried to deal with alleged Pakistan's interference in the tragedy that would take place after the year 2021. It was usual for Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud to focus a large deal of attention on negative themes with a particular emphasis on Pakistan's purported engagement and help for the Taliban. This was a typical practice. Both Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah called for peace discussions and international mediation and their stances were more diplomatic in character than those of other individuals.

Shukria Barakzai promoted Pakistan as a possible partner in addressing the concerns of regional stability and humanitarian need. She put emphasis on economic and humanitarian problems and presented Pakistan as an opportunity to be considered a potential partner.

As a result of these consequences, this relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan becomes highlighted due to the rich dialogue over it. In this discussion, there are appeals for collaboration and aid, and there is also an accusation of interference. It is the profoundly entrenched complexities present in the narratives that Afghan leaders had toward Pakistan while that country was under Taliban rule that the general mood distribution, marked by a majority being pessimistic about security and conflict, brings to light.

#### **4.4 Sentiment Analysis of Tweets Related to Pakistan (RQ3)**

This is achieved by the sentiment analysis, which provides an in-depth assessment of the overall mood of Afghan politicians' tweets concerning Pakistan during August 2021 and December 2021. Through a simple classification system of positive, negative, and neutral feelings, this study

reveals how Afghan leaders have framed their stories about Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's political and security challenges.

**Table 4.3: Sentiment Distribution of Tweets Related to Pakistan**

Leader	Tweets Selected (n)	Positive Sentiment (%)	Neutral Sentiment (%)	Negative Sentiment (%)
Amrullah Saleh	136	5 (3.7%)	14 (10.3%)	117 (86.0%)
Ahmad Massoud	78	4 (5.1%)	9 (11.6%)	65 (83.3%)
Hamid Karzai	77	23 (29.9%)	20 (25.9%)	34 (44.2%)
Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	67	18 (26.9%)	20 (29.8%)	29 (43.3%)
Shukria Barakzai	35	15 (42.9%)	8 (22.9%)	12 (34.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>64(16.5%)</b>	<b>71 (18.1%)</b>	<b>257 (65.4%)</b>

From the results of the sentiment research analysis, it is clear that every Afghan leader has expressed feelings of hate towards Pakistan in different ways. Majorly negative tone is seen in each of the leaders' tweets, and a total of 65.4% express negative opinions. Positive and neutral attitudes constitute a smaller percentage of the total tweets, making up 18.1% and 16.5% of the total tweets, respectively on the Twitter platform.

#### **4.4.1 Negative Sentiment**

The highest percentage of negative tweets came from Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud, with 86.0% and 83.3% of their tweets being negative, respectively. Their tweets, in general, were critical of Pakistan's role in promoting the Taliban and its responsibility for the instability in Afghanistan. For instance, Saleh frequently and once again accused Pakistan of "directly undermining Afghan sovereignty," which was a narrative of enmity.

Critical of the government, these tweets often focused on issues of conflict and interference as well as security, which were mainly based on allegations of backing for the Taliban and international terrorism. These tweets showed an immense lack of trust in the intentions and actions of Pakistan with regard to the country.

#### **4.4.2 Neutral Sentiment**

With 25.9% and 29.8% of their tweets being neutral, respectively, Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah had the highest percentage of comments that were neutral. These leaders tend to be more diplomatic and engage in neutral comments on the stability of the area and explore possible solutions to the problem.

The neutral tweets often emphasized the importance of efforts towards diplomacy as well as regional stability. In the case of his tweets, Karzai would stress the importance of international mediation and the prospect of collaboration at the regional level often. However, he did not publicly criticize or endorse Pakistan's activities.

#### **4.4.3 Positive Sentiment**

Based on the proportion of good tweets, Shukria Barakzai ranked behind Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah; however, she topped in the percentage of good tweets at 42.9%. Generally, the optimistic tone of these tweets demanded cooperation in regional economic aspects besides humanitarian aid to cushion the calamity that is facing Afghanistan.

The topics of regional stability and economy were the ones that were most closely related with positive attitude, particularly in regard to humanitarian help and economic partnership across international borders. For example, Barakzai emphasized the need of "collaborative efforts to support Afghan citizens in need," so indicating hope over Pakistan's possible role in maintaining security in the area.

#### **4.4.4 Major Findings of Sentimental Analysis**

The general feeling is largely negative, especially among the leaders who have openly accused Pakistan of interfering in Afghanistan's political affairs. Negativity stresses the strained relations between the two countries during the study period.

Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah were two of the leaders who maintained a balanced tone with a mix of neutral and positive feelings. Their diplomatic approach aimed at dialogue and regional stability, unlike the confrontational tone used by Saleh and Massoud.

The economic and humanitarian themes are the positive tweets that would imply Afghan leaders are open to collaboration with Pakistan on issues that can better the welfare of Afghan citizens. Shukria Barakzai referred to cross-border economic support and humanitarian relief as possible options and was ready to engage constructively despite the existing political tensions.

The sentiment analysis suggests that Afghan leaders are tweeting negatively against Pakistan; there is a high volume of critical and distrusting sentiment expressed in their tweets. This also suggests that different leaders express varied opinions on the topic. For instance, whereas Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud take the most negative views regarding Pakistan, others like Hamid Karzai and Shukria Barakzai present more neutralized views. It also offers insight into the spreading of sentiments through this channel of Afghan-Pakistan relations, as portrayed on social media: the challenges and constrained opportunities for cooperation amidst the political crisis.

## **Chapter 05**

### **Findings and Conclusion**

A study on Afghan politicians' tweets on Pakistan from August to December 2021 has produced important results regarding the formed narratives, distribution of sentiments, and emphasis of themes over Pakistan's role in political turmoil in Afghanistan.

These data reveal a spectrum of attitudes, from hostile accusations to cautious diplomatic interactions and cooperative appeals.

#### **5.1 Findings**

##### **5.1.1 Dominance of Negative Sentiments**

The sentiment analysis shows that the negative tweets were 65.4% of the total analyzed tweets. Figures like Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud played a pivotal role in articulating this attitude by portraying Pakistan as a disrupting entity. Negative tweets were centered on intervention, Taliban endorsement, and border security risks.

Pakistan's alleged support to the Taliban's comeback and Pakistan's stated support to cross-border terrorism were typical of this narrative to highlight deep-seated tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

##### **5.1.2 Positive and Neutral Sentiments in Diplomatic and Humanitarian Appeals**

Although negative tweets dominated, positive and neutral tweets constituted 16.5% and 18.1% of the debate, respectively. Leaders like Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and Shukria Barakzai were diplomatic and constructive in their tone. They emphasized the need for regional stability, peace negotiations, and humanitarian collaboration.

These officials presented Pakistan as a potential ally in addressing Afghanistan's acute humanitarian and economic needs, including specifically aid to refugees and economic assistance. It showed a pragmatic approach in the face of international politics, an approach that is rather inviting from the perspective of shared regional interests.

### **5.1.3 Thematic Variations in Narrative Construction**

The thematic analysis identified four main themes that the Afghan authorities communicated about Pakistan's role: Security Concerns, Diplomatic Efforts, Conflict & Interference, and Regional Stability & Economy. Each issue reflected the presidents' varying methods of addressing Pakistan.

The issues concerning security have been mainly centered on claims of cross-border terrorism and meddling. This was an issue that Saleh and Massoud discussed fully in negative tweets. Karzai and Abdullah mostly made topics of diplomatic initiatives, focusing on peace discussions and international mediation, in neutral or positive tones. The focus was on conflict and intervention, with accusations of support for the Taliban from Pakistan, which politicians used as a basis to condemn Pakistani involvement.

Regional stability and economic issues turn out to be another critical concern where most of the tweets were from Barakzai and Karzai that described Pakistan as the very important partner in humanitarian efforts along with cross-border economic stability with a more positive and less biased tone.

### **5.1.4 Variability in Narrative Construction by Individual Leaders**

The results show significant differences between leaders' narrative construction

- Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud constructed accusatory narratives, making Pakistan a threat to Afghan sovereignty and stability. Their tweets often served as catalysts for mobilizing resistance and global opposition.
- Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah adopted a more balanced approach, where they suggested diplomacy and regional cooperation. Their narratives tried to downplay tensions and made Afghanistan seem committed to peaceful interaction.
- Shukria Barakzai was concerned with humanitarian and economic issues, making Pakistan a potential ally in fulfilling Afghanistan's urgent need. Her policy focused on common interests in regional stability, which contrasted sharply with the more political, heated discourses of other politicians.

### **5.1.5 Summary of Major Findings**

Afghan leaders have tweeted a strong narrative, both confrontational and supportive of Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan. Analysis of the data reveals a tendency towards negative sentiment with attributes of interference and threats.

Positive and neutral narratives are focused on diplomatic engagement, humanitarian needs, and regional stability. The thematic emphasis and sentiment vary according to individual leaders' approaches, revealing notable differences in tone and focus. Engagement peaked immediately after the Taliban's rise to power which shows the impact of significant political events on narrative construction.

These findings show the intricacy of Afghan-Pakistan relations with Afghan leaders utilizing social media in articulating various positions which ranged from criticism to calls for cooperation. The political strategy used differed among Afghan leaders at a time when the region had become increasingly tense and uncertain.

## **5.2 Discussion on Findings and Interpretation of Results**

These results can be aligned with and even extended the current literature of political communication, social media usage in conflict zones, and Afghan-Pakistan relations dynamics. We can understand the strategic narratives constructed by Afghan leaders with regard to the current situation as well as how social media acts as a platform for political expression during times of crisis when we interpret these results from the perspective of existing theories and studies.

### **5.2.1 Social Media as a Platform for Political Communication**

The use of Twitter by Afghan leaders to frame their discourse about Pakistan's involvement fits well with the views from political communication studies: the role of social media is critical in allowing for a direct and unmediated form of political communication. Research on the Arab Spring and the Syrian conflict shows that social media allows political leaders to bypass traditional media gatekeepers to communicate directly with a domestic and international audience (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Dagher, 2018). It, therefore, supports the previous findings by showing how Afghan leaders use Twitter to address pressing political issues, framing Pakistan's role in Afghanistan through either opposing or collaborative perspectives.

The prevalence of negative emotions in Amrullah Saleh's and Ahmad Massoud's tweets demonstrates the concept by Chadwick (2017) that defines the hybrid media system, which includes the use of leadership that strategically controls public opinion through targeted specific audiences by means of narratives delicately constructed. Through this hybrid system, Afghan leaders can come up with a dual narrative; the first, which criticizes interference from Pakistan, and the second, which promotes regional cooperation. The findings show that social media allows for confrontation and diplomacy in political discourse, thus supporting the concept of social media as an instrument for narrative control.

### **5.2.2 Conflict and Interference as Dominant Themes**

The dominant themes of Conflict and Interference, and Security Issues in the tweets match the historical research into the Afghan-Pakistan relations. Various studies have found that the Durand Line, cross-border terrorism, and claims of Pakistani support for insurgent groups have been the most crucial causes of Afghan leaders' mistrust of Pakistan (Rashid, 2012; Khan, 2021). The findings of the study justify these insights through illuminating how negative stories pertaining to the themes do prevail in shaping Afghan political talk but allegations of influence and Taliban support come often in the tweets of the leadership.

This emphasis on security resonates with the historical analysis of Barfield (2010), who maintains that Afghan leaders perceive Pakistan's involvement in the issue as one of sovereignty and security threats. Afghan leaders frequently mention border security and counterterrorism while trying to construct a narrative that legitimates the resistance efforts and seeks international support. The labeling of Pakistan as a destabilizing force is a characterization of the historical tension between the two countries and falls in line with the realist theory in international relations, which posits that states operate based on security and power when it comes to interaction.

### **5.2.3 Diplomatic and Humanitarian Narratives in Conflict Zones**

The research results reflect strategic moves on diplomatic and humanitarian levels, wherein the Afghan leaders, including Hamid Karzai and Shukria Barakzai, identified Pakistan as an ally for building peace and stability in the region. The strategy reflects similar findings by Bjola and Holmes (2015) in relation to digital diplomacy: that actors in conflict areas use social media to garner support in terms of diplomacy and collaboration. Afghan leaders view Pakistan as a regional

ally in humanitarian and economic terms, using a diplomacy approach that cares for regional solutions which are soft power approaches.

In contrast to negative tales, Zaman & Nahar, 2020, shows support for the findings by studying Twitter diplomacy on the Rohingya crisis in which leaders attempt to attain humanitarian relief and regional cooperation from their neighboring countries. This work represents a positive and neutral story depicting an effort to place Pakistan among friends who can assist in ending Afghanistan's humanitarian disaster. This narrative aligns well with constructivist theories in international relations, which assume that identities and interests can be reshaped through social interaction and diplomacy, even when there are strained relationships.

#### **5.2.4 Variation in Narrative Strategies Among Leaders**

The significant application of positive, neutral, and negative narratives by leaders for diverse purposes exemplifies the framing theory given by Goffman (1974), meaning that leaders strategically highlight particular facets of an issue to shape public perception. Leaders like Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud established confrontational narratives against Pakistan and labeled it as an aggressor that portrays security threats to Afghanistan. On the other hand, Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah focused on diplomatic and cooperative frameworks that described Afghanistan as an advocate for peace and stability.

The results support Entman's (1993) framing theory, which asserts that political figures emphasize certain aspects of an issue and play down others to frame audience perceptions. The selective framing of Afghan leaders illustrates how social media can help in the creation of diverse perspectives, catering to both the factions of domestic resistance and international partners. This strategic framing aligns with agenda-setting theory as promulgated by McCombs and Shaw (1972), because Afghan leaders are framing issues of interference, security, and cooperation to influence the narrative over Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study examines the narratives Afghan elites constructed about Pakistan's influence on Afghanistan's political landscape post-2021 on Twitter. This research used topic and sentiment analysis to explore how Afghan political actors, including Amrullah Saleh, Ahmad Massoud, Hamid Karzai, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and Shukria Barakzai, used Twitter to express a range of

opinions about Pakistan in a crisis. It indicates that Afghan officials used a few of the narrative methods, like accusatory messaging, that portrayed Pakistan as a disruptor and diplomatic appeals for regional cooperation and humanitarian aid. Such narrative choices demonstrate the fluidity of social media as a tool for shaping complex international relations, particularly regarding Afghanistan's political transition following the Taliban's ascension.

Leaders like Amrullah Saleh and Ahmad Massoud have used Twitter to basically share their negative views by discussing how Pakistan is allegedly supporting the Taliban and compromising Afghan sovereignty. Most of the leaders saw Pakistan as a threat in terms of security and identified such threats to be cross-border terrorism, providing support to various factions considered insurgents and violations of Afghan sovereignty. This accusatory narrative runs with the history between Afghanistan and Pakistan and has deepened to show the idea that Pakistan's meddling into Afghan politics destabilizes this region. This study serves to prove the present literature focused on these grievances, therefore asserting that social media is now a most essential outlet through which political issues are ventilated in real-time.

On the other hand, leaders like Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah used their accounts on Twitter to construct narratives around diplomacy and regional cooperation themes. Such politicians never blamed Pakistan directly but presented the latter as a possible collaborator in addressing regional security concerns, peace talks, and work for human development. This is a lesser-known diplomatic narrative, but it clearly indicates that some Afghan officials are willing to adopt the cooperative approach with Pakistan since they understand the shared issues of regional instability and the interdependence of neighboring countries. This framing via diplomacy underscores the flexibility of social media to prove that Afghan officials systematically utilized Twitter in reaching multiple audiences and to form an intricate image of Afghanistan both as a cooperative regional player and a nation securing its independence.

The third narrative, supported mainly by Shukria Barakzai, has been humanitarian and economic issues. This narrative establishes Pakistan as a potential partner for enabling the recovery of Afghanistan and further reducing the humanitarian crisis. Barakzai's tweets underscore the need for economic stability and regional collaboration, making a case for bilateral interaction in a political setting where diplomatic relations have been sensitive to that end. The humanitarian interventions and economic stability create a narrative that heals the political divisions and makes

Pakistan an integral ally in countering the pressing issues the Afghan civilians face. This humanitarian-oriented narrative presents an alternative viewpoint to the adversarial rhetoric, proposing that common regional challenges, such as refugee welfare and economic resilience, may surpass political hostilities.

This adds a significant value to political communication studies, as it helps depict how Afghan leaders change their story methods to cater for various audiences and, thereby, achieve certain political objectives on social media. This research applies agenda-setting and framing theories to explain how Afghan leaders used Twitter to raise their followers' attention about issues that happened to converge with their political views in which Pakistan could be portrayed as either the enemy or a cooperative friend, depending on the circumstances and audience. This integration of findings confirms related studies on digital diplomacy, social media, and its usage in crisis communication-underlining the purposeful formulation of narratives towards influence, public opinion, and views worldwide over regional conflict.

This study main point is how influential social media might be in the formation of political narratives and communicating the same especially for countries susceptible to conflict. Twitter offered a space for hostile and cooperative communications, allowing Afghan leaders to express intricate narratives about Pakistan's role in Afghanistan's predicament, both in the past and current diplomatic avenues. This intricate use of social media enhances comprehension of how political figures employ digital platforms to manage international relations, providing a significant case study in the adaptive tactics of conflict communication. This analysis goes further to strengthen understanding of digital diplomacy, theoretical frameworks, and the changing influence of social media in the international context and illustrates an imperative for more investigation to be conducted into the role social media plays in affecting global political narratives.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Given these observations in such a study, a starting ground for recommendations on strategic and effective use of social media in conflict communication and in international diplomacy, in especially regions with protracted instability, is provided. Seeing the power of shaping points both locally and across continents and seeing to Afghanistan having these aspects,

Afghan leaders as well as other political heads benefit from a strategic adaptable and flexible approach to development into narrative.

Through the strategic use of social media platforms such as Twitter (X), authorities can develop narratives that raise awareness of security issues and promote opportunities for regional collaboration and humanitarian assistance. The strategic use of both combative and cooperative messaging can enhance understanding of the political scenarios and developments thereby involving a broader range of stakeholders.

The Afghan government and other organizations in its league should focus on soft diplomatic and humanitarian narratives hand-in-hand with security-message. It is important to outline national security concerns. Yet, economic cooperation and regional stability, as well as common humanitarian goals, may be more appealing to international partners and neighbors. Constructive narratives that are in step with common interests can therefore alleviate tensions and stabilize as it puts more emphasis on those commonalities rather than conflict points. This approach would be of great help in enhancing credibility and increase the likelihood of global support, especially from humanitarian organizations and diplomatic bodies.

Besides, collaboration in narrative development among Afghan political leaders may enhance the effectiveness of their cohesive messaging. This study identifies variability in tone and method, which may obscure the clarity of Afghanistan's international position on specific issues. A possible positive response could be better synchronized messaging approaches that focus on key themes like sovereignty, security, and regional collaboration while making room for different narrative peculiarities. It would strengthen the articulation of a unified stance on issues of national interest, leading potentially to enhanced mobilization of international support.

Afghan officials should also utilize engagement strategies in real-time with such major political events as illustrated by the increased activities in August 2021 through Twitter after the Taliban seized power. Leaders can then engage global audiences in more effective ways by responding promptly to major political developments so that their perspectives on major issues can remain relevant and influential. Training in quick-response social media skills would allow Afghan political figures to seize critical moments so that they can set the agenda of the narrative before external forces can manipulate it. Real-time interaction improves relationships with support groups and strengthens the confidence of the followers through the information provided during the crises.

The leaders in Afghanistan and their teams, in communication, should undergo training in digital diplomacy where the diplomatic relationships are complicated. Understanding digital diplomacy and audience segmentation may allow Afghan authorities to be more effective in their communications with various groups such as the local communities, foreign partners, and neighboring countries. This skill set allows for proper handling of sensitive topics, encourages regional cooperation, and positive responses to adversary narratives. Digital diplomacy influences international perceptions; therefore, training may be of high priority to improve the position of Afghanistan in global diplomatic circles.

Afghan governments and political factions should utilize social media as a means of transparency and public engagement to build trust and legitimacy. Public engagement through social media on an ongoing basis builds unity and national resilience, especially in times of political crisis. The approach of openly mentioning issues and acknowledging accomplishments is key while communicating across borders. It will aid Afghan leaders in establishing public trust and ensuring that more people participate in meaningful dialogues. The approach is similar to research findings on communication of conflicts where openness and accountability build national unity and support amidst unrest.

At least these ideas challenge the Afghan government, as well as other similar factions in areas of conflict, to strategically deploy social media and balance the oppositional narratives of propaganda with the use of diplomatic and cooperative tales. Leaders should ensure the potential that may flow into more robust channels when enhancing perceptions through powerful tool media outlets, gaining international support through coordinated communication and public transparency, and making peaceful conditions amid challenging political atmospheres. These tactics boost the efficiency of the creation of digital stories towards national interests and regional stability.

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