

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AFGHANISTAN'S FREEDOM ON TWITTER

Saba Naz

Senior Lecturer Bahria University Karachi Campus.

Email: sb.siddiqui1@gmail.com

Sadaf Ahmed

Mphil scholar University of Karachi.

Email: Sadaafahmedkhan@gmail.com

Abstract

This research examines the opinions of Pakistan's current Twitter users on the revolution that came after the Taliban held Afghanistan. This research particularly focuses on the usage of sensationalism or peace on the tweets that the Pakistani audience shared on Twitter. We aimed to use our analysis approach to see how much the sensational media element encompass the consumers. As nowadays social media gives freedom of speech to its users and we are vouching that the Pakistani audience loves to debate on political issues, specifically on Twitter. As time is passing the peace from media is relinquishing somewhere and on most media platforms sensationalism is soaring. As we took the case study of the Taliban's regime in Afghanistan and how they revolutionized the country with their government we want to discern how their new government would be witnessed in the Pakistani audience's eyes and how we absorb this change in the region as Afghanistan is an Islamic and our neighbor country too. This study intends to see how the abundance of thoughts passed on Twitter on the Taliban's control over Afghanistan; a revolution that came after many years of war on terror. For this, we'll use Qualitative and Quantitative methods. For that purpose and to complete our research we collected a large-scale measurement and analysis of different popular hashtags on Twitter that were used after August 2021 (the time after which the US forces started leaving the country). The data that we procured would help to see that how the case was consumed in the minds of Pakistani Twitter users; basically, it's a critical analysis that would illustrate that how the sensational media create stories and then how social media users apprehend it. As we all know that hate discourses are the common problem of our society and sometimes, they reshape the conceptions on a specific subject so in this case we also desire to see how the case was discussed on Twitter and how and why it is connected to Pakistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, NATO, crisis, territory, peace, Twitter, freedom, social media, NATO, revolution, strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In a world where we found many issues that devastated the mental peace, territories, and precious lives; the Afghanistan crisis is another subject that should be discussed. The element of fear and questions on freedom of thought raised obstacles for Afghanistan to live a peaceful life. We aren't here to judge what's right or wrong but many misconceptions and disagreements grew this case too long, and still, it's discussed worldwide. The story began when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. They entered into the country to support Afghanistan's communist government in their rivalry with anti-communist Afghan Muslims. At that time a group of Mujahideen emerged (group of guerilla fighters) and started Jihad to stop Soviet forces. In the response, around 1 million Afghan civilians and 15,000 Soviet soldiers died. (Editors, 2021) As Pakistan is the neighbor of Afghanistan so it started supporting them. Since that time every political thing and scenario related to Afghanistan's civil war is affecting Pakistan. The country was broken badly and divided internally and Pakistan was also blamed for that. Pakistan's Prime Minister Zia Ul Haq in the year 1980 allowed Afghan refugees to flee to Pakistan. At that time the USA and Saudi Arabia were also aiding Afghan mujahideen. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan also invited Afghan fighters to the White House, Yunus Khalis, and their other leaders also visited the place 1987. CIA also supplied weapons to the Afghan fighters. The rural areas were badly devastated and around 2.8 million refugees have sought asylum in Pakistan and 1.5 in Iran. (Akhtar, 2008) Then in 1988 when the Soviets failed from Mujahideen forces so they signed a peace accord with Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, and the USA and withdraw their troops. In 1996, those Mujahideen developed as TTP and emerged as the greatest political force of the country. (Editors, 2021) According to the US perspective; the Taliban captured Kabul and imposed high shariah rules on the citizens that lost their liberalism.

Pakistan, USA, and Saudi Arabia accepted the Taliban regime and supported them automatically too. The scenario affected the neighboring countries badly specifically the foreign policy of Pakistan was badly affected. In 1998, the US started missile attacks on Afghanistan cause, they found that the Taliban attacked the US embassies in Kenya. Terrorist sanctions were imposed on the Taliban by UN Security Council. Since that time military attacks were blowing into Afghanistan from US-impst forces. Till 2002 the war on terror continued and Pakistan also supported the USA in its policy of war against the Taliban. Cause of all these issues Afghanistan has never been a peaceful county. (Baloch, 2021)

In 2013 it was announced by Obama to begin peace talks with the Taliban. In 2014, after a disputed elections Ashraf Ghani was declared as the country's President.

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The elections were held under the US government. And then another dispute grew among the Taliban and Afghanistan's new government. In 2001 Ghani was declared as the country's President but the violence was increasing. Pakistan wanted peace and it spoke on every act of Afghanistan timely. Many countries were distressed about terrorism while the US government was walking on a separate path on this case. Although Barack Obama once said that "I have always said that our fight is not with Islam" but Afghanistan's war on terror also built a negative image of Islamization in the brains of many nations. This scenario was termed as the war on terror by US President George W. Bush. As at that time, the US government asserted the Al Qaeda network of Afghanistan and this war took many years to resolve. The conflict that was continued from 1998 came to end in the year 2021. In February 2020 a peace agreement was signed in Qatar to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan but this negotiation wasn't proceeding. (Baloch, 2021) Finally, in April 2021, it was announced by President Biden to withdraw the remaining troops. In July US troops started leaving the country while without even fighting, the Taliban took over the country. Ashraf Ghani flee the country, his government slumped and on August 15, the country comes under the control of the Taliban. At that time many Afghans tried to leave the country cause of the Taliban's fear, many casualties occurred, many people were killed. (Baloch, 2021)

On August 30, military violence was seen and the Taliban made their independent government in Afghanistan. Several Afghan citizens take this revolution as a painful tragedy and they feel that this new era under the Taliban would culminate their freedom of living. In all these scenarios Pakistan played a vital role and stood for Afghanistan's welfare. It was an ideology of Pakistan's government that the Taliban broke the chains of slavery. (Maizland, 2021) Still, there are many issues of poverty, hunger, and a weak economy but this revolution was seen as a substantial change in terms of peace according to the Pakistani audience's perspective. Pakistan set an example by supporting Afghan refugees, still, Pakistan's government is speaking and working on the Taliban's regime. (Khattak, 2021)

This revolution was appreciated by many Pakistani people and they welcomed it as a good step towards the prosperity and wellbeing of Afghani citizens. Overall, it can be said that this change was inspired by the great number of Pakistani social media users who recognized this act and called it a dramatic victory.

HYPOTHESES:

Sensational media content provokes people to pass negative comments on a certain event. The media uses sensational tactics with the help of shocking words and exaggeration to gain the audience's attention. Fabrication is a part of framing that publicize the Afghan crisis with the usage of various propaganda. Pakistani audience is

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Scott and Gobetz (1992) researched that television news is the most significant especially in Western societies but the actual emphasis of this news should provide soft news. (Digital) According to a few types of research, many studies show that in human stories even sensationalism is found. (Lateef Adhlakun, 2017)

Two researchers Hofstetter and Dozier found that the income of local television also depends upon the sensationalism they provide, but he also developed that any kind of news that is sensational doesn't provide the appropriate or actual information. For that purpose, they did a content analysis of three local television channels to check the quality of their news. According to the discussion results, 46% of news was based on sensationalism. (Sinner, 2005)

Research was conducted to discover the ratio of sensationalism versus peace in news content. 63 news pieces were taken from the selected newspapers. The researcher used the Content Analysis method. 14 editions of The Punch and The Sun newspapers were selected from six months periods (September 2015 to February 2016). 430 from The Punch and 223 from The Sun. The stories were based on Nigerian scenarios, it was found that about 2/3 of 138 news reports on religion and socio-cultural aspects depict sensationalism. (Lateef Adhlakun, 2017)

It was also concluded that the religious reports deliver more propaganda than any other aspect of yellow journalism. It was searched that 1/5th of the stories was based on full propaganda while very few had the basic concepts of journalism. Marcus researched the reporting of public affairs to find the involvement of sensationalism in the media. He took the data from the years 1968, 1980, and 1996. He analyzed 60-weekday news from the evening bulletins. The channels were NBC, CBS, and ABC. He found that the community stories and the governmental stories belonged to embedded journalism as those stories were for human interest so they were identified as sensationalized material.

Hofstetter and Dozier (1986) researched through content analysis method to find that local television works based on sensationalism and to find out whether the news that is sensation-based doesn't provide reliable information. They took three television stations from Houston from 13 July to 14 August of the year 1981 to inspect the quality of news. Weekday's news was recorded of 924 stories. The revealed results showed that 46% of news were correlated to sensationalism. NBC had 52%, CBS had 43%, and ABC had 42% of their news time to present sensational stories. (Frye, 2005)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This research is based on three theories of Mass Communication that are relatable to this research. The Agenda Setting Theory exhibits that how the mass

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media direct make a distinct issue and create it as public agenda. This theory shows a relation that how the media create hype on an issue and then how the public show their reaction towards it. It can also be said that according to this theory mass media set public impressions and then they react on it sometimes unintentionally cause the collision of this agenda is too substantial. (Zain, 2014)

If we relate this theory to our research so it can be said that since the time of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan a negative image of Afghanistan was brought out in the minds of people and after the end of the war on terror still people called their soil a terrorist state. So according to some researches, it was an agenda to disrupt the portrait of Islam in front of people and raise questions on it.

Another theory that relates to our research is the Propaganda Model of Communication or Propaganda Theory. It explains that how pressures, systematic biases, wrong conception, and exaggeration on little concerns dominate mass media. It depicts that how powerful authorities use their strength to aggrandize news or happening and play their propaganda over it. (Maharjan, 2018) It correlated with our research in a way that many people thought US interference in Afghanistan and then the war on terror was propaganda that was played by the world's ascendant powers.

Another theory that relates to our research is the Social Responsibility Theory. According to this theory, media should play its role as the socially responsible element of society. It also lies on social media that the one who's using social media must know that what is his content and in which way it can be transmitted. As this theory says that media shouldn't be liberal nor in the control of the government but it should be socially responsible. (Koladkiewicz, 2009) It is relatable with our research in a form that in the case of the Taliban's recapture many social media users expressed their views but didn't think that what they are delivering and how persuasive it can be. We also see that his day's high rating sensationalism reflects in the news stories without thinking that it should be presented peacefully and it's also happening on the platform of social media. So, concerning these theories, it can be said that the meaning of peace is missing somewhere in media but if peaceful journalism is seen somewhere so it must be recognized.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research methodology is the crucial component of the research. It is a blueprint to fulfill your research with the help of proper designs. (Sileyew, 2019) In acquiring the relevant and genuine data for this study, the data is mainly ground from Twitter. We took the hashtags related to the topic that was mostly used by Pakistani audiences on their tweets and from this data we researched how people saw this case. This study is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods as we found the number of tweets and then analyzed them by dividing them into two parts;

either they are spreading peace or controversy. We'll discover how much people see this revolution as peaceful while how much of them amplify it spread pessimism.

We did content analysis from the collected data. To check the actuality behind those tweets we firstly count them in the form of percentages and analyze how it was deliberated. This case was based on the Case Study method as we took it as a case study to discuss. As we know a case study is a research approach that is used to complete a confounding issue or matter that is bridged in real life. (Crowe, 2011)

DATA AND ANALYSIS:

To analyze the case study, we used the most prominent hashtags that were used on Twitter in Pakistan at the time when Taliban's recaptured Afghanistan. We'll analyze the findings of the research by splitting them into two separate sections, how and why these sections were used this point is elaborated below.

Peace: In this section, we'll calculate the tweets that will relate to positivity or favor to the Afghans Revolution by the Taliban.

Sensationalism: In this section, we'll add the tweets that we found connected to hate, sensation or hyperbole, or negative perceptions of the Pakistani audience towards the change in Afghanistan and those who do not accept the Taliban's control after US forces left the county.

We took three popular hashtags that were used during the scenario brought from August 2021 on Afghanistan's crisis that we're there since the Soviet war. Things that we are going to analyze from the collected data in the form of tweets is how Pakistani Twitter users perceived this alteration in Afghanistan's politics. We'll present out critical analysis to discover how our audience support or discourage this monumental change. We'll also analyze the impact that our audience is predicting after the revolution came. The thoughts and ideologies of Pakistani government, their policies and strategies with Taliban's government and how it is anticipating in Pakistani audience.

The collected data from the Pakistani Twitter users doesn't based on any specification, as it's random sampling.

BELOW ARE THE HASHTAGS THAT WE USED FOR THE RESEARCH:

#afghanistan

#taliban

#unificationviakhilafah

RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

#afghanistan:

Table: 1

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| <i>Analyzed Tweets</i> | <i>Peace</i> | <i>Sensationalism</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 111 | 68 (61.26%) | 43 (38.7%) |

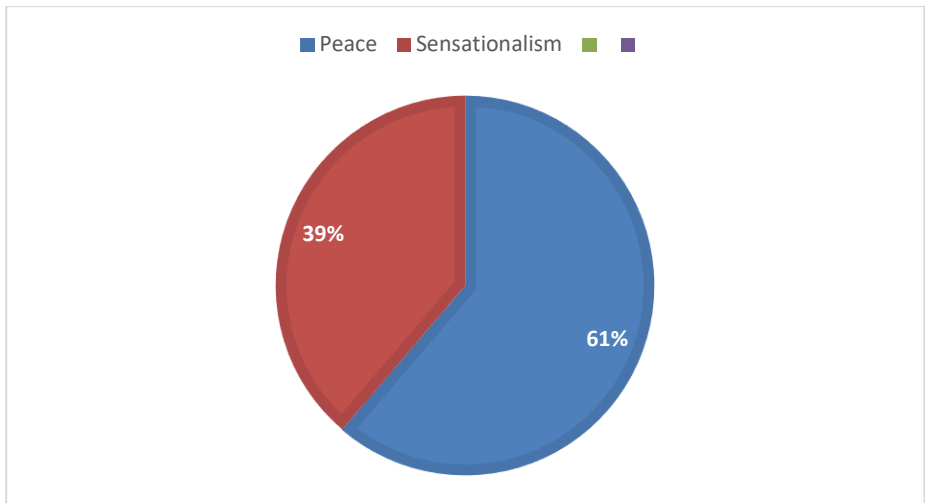


Table 1: According to table 1, 61.26% tweets were based on positivity or peace, while 38.7% were based on negativity or sensationalism.

#taliban:

Table: 2

| <i>Analyzed Tweets</i> | <i>Peace</i> | <i>Sensationalism</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 31 | 24 (77.4%) | 7 (22.5%) |

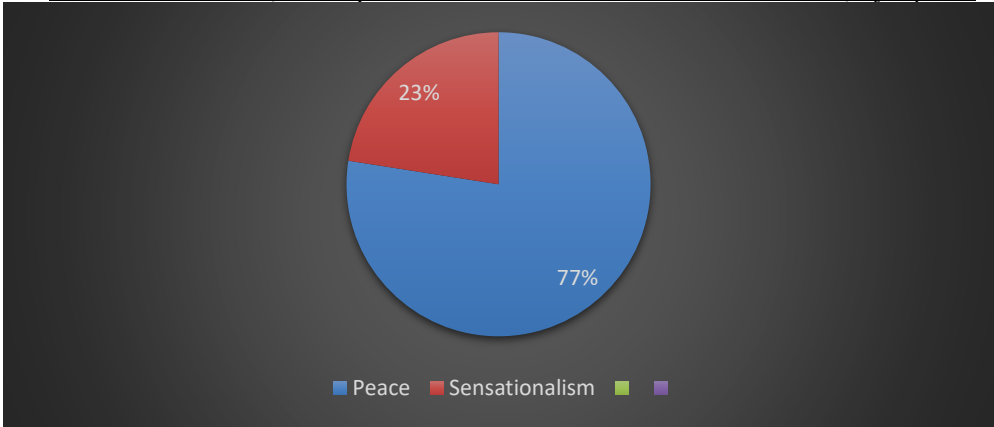


Table 2: According to table 2, 77.4 % tweets were based on positivity or peace, while 22.5% were based on negativity or sensationalism.

#unificationviakhilafah:

Table: 3

| <i>Analyzed Tweets</i> | <i>Peace</i> | <i>Sensationalism</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 77 | 77 (100%) | 0 |

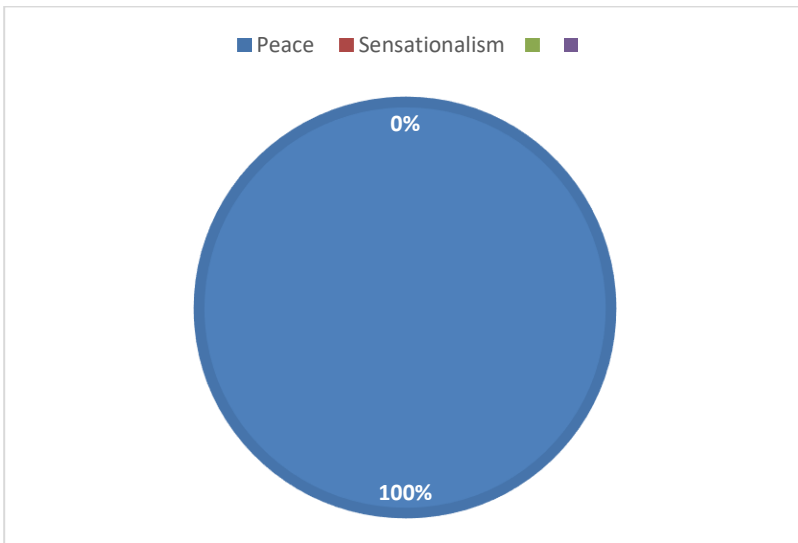


Table 3: According to table 3, all 100 % tweets were based on positivity or peace, while no tweet was based on negativity or sensationalism.

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| <i>Hashtags</i> | <i>Analyzed Tweets</i> | <i>Peace</i> | <i>Sensationalism</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <i>#afghanistan</i> | 111 | 68 (61.26%) | 43 (38.7%) |
| <i>#taliban</i> | 31 | 24 (77.4%) | 7 (22.5%) |
| <i>#unificationviak hilafah</i> | 77 | 77 (100%) | 0 |

| <i>Peace based Tweets</i> | <i>Sensationalism based Tweets</i> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 77.16% | 22.8% |

ANALYSIS:

Concerning results, we determined many things. If we'll see the background of this case so we see that when in 2001, the US with the allied forces attacked Afghanistan and hold the Taliban regime so a new series of events commenced. Every hashtag that is trending or rising on Twitter these days related to this case portrays the civil war that smashed the territory of the country. If we'll see our first hashtag *#afghanistan* so from its results we found an enormous number of tweets showing the element of peace and stability towards the revolution. From the analyzed tweets 61.26% presented truce while 38.7% depicted the element of negativity towards the revolution. From the analyzed tweets we understand that there's a big support of Pakistani audience towards the new Taliban regime. Pakistan already has so many Afghan refugees and Pakistan always wanted to see a peaceful Afghanistan so now where people are neglecting the revolution and raising questions about it. So, on the other side people are also greeting this new Taliban government and encouraging the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan.

The media coverage on the issues up till now circulate many propagandas and agendas against the Muslim community too and people built a great perception in their minds that the Taliban are terrorist groups and they are using their state for genocide and battlefields. While the critics said that they are doing wrong deeds and spreading terror in the name of Jihad, they only want control on the territory as they don't know how to behave well with the general public.

While our second hashtag #taliban we found 77.4% of tweets in favor of the revolution that is securing the Taliban's policies and their ideologies for Afghanistan. From those tweets, we found that the rights activists from Pakistan and some active Twitter users are too much impressed by the new policies developing after the Taliban's conferences. While 22.5% tweets were belonged to the element of sensation or obstruction, they belonged to those who criticized the Taliban's ways to run the government asked questions related to the missing elements of liberation in the country. Most of the critics thought that in this way they are oppressing women and abandoning their living rights. In its response, it also suggested the people who were welcoming this revolution as a symbol of peace should spend a few days in Afghanistan, and then they'll realize how the Taliban are extracting the element of democracy from the country. Taliban were questioned in those tweets that how Afghanistan's President fled from the county how badly the fear Taliban made people feel that their own country is becoming a graveyard for them.

Another standing point is that Pakistan is still accused by the Indians and US of its involvement in training the Taliban and their recruiting to do bomb blasts in the USA but there are still people who are standing with US forces and their violence on Afghanistan's territory. When the Pakistanis started speaking with the Taliban so #sanctionpakistan was started as a massive campaign to demolish Pakistan's army but here some liberals are questioning the Taliban's rule and their tactics to amble their country.

While with the peaceful or positive Twitter results from #taliban we acquired that Pakistani audience feels that this change can provide an emanation of calmness in a suffering state and extract the illuminated haziness that was there for a long time. The reports that were presented on media repeatedly also played a vital role to show this revolution in front of people but with the past practices of media, sensationalism was always there in Afghanistan's stories. The events of this civil war also made theories in the minds of consumers by delivering them in flippant form.

As it can be said that what the news brings to the audience makes their mind understand the politics and believe it without inquiring sometimes and then this thing reflects on the content they post on social media. And we all know that when news stories are overhyped to gain readership or viewership so they have so strong and long-lasting impact on the viewers and readers. So, from the results of #taliban, we analyzed that sensation of extraordinary hype created in news put a great impact on the consumers, and then they believe it, repeat it, and spread it to others rapidly.

When we analyzed the tweets with the #unificationviakhilafah so we found that the people of Pakistan appreciated how the Taliban want to come up with the caliphate system. After the death of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W.W) caliphate system

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was followed by Muslims to walk on the straight path. Now the Taliban also want to implement this system in Afghanistan. In Ashraf Ghani's government Afghans had a democratic system which now they want to change but other countries especially the non-Muslim countries have concerns about that. They think that if this theory would be imposed so gradually it will reach other Muslim countries and then Muslims would conquer the world. Pakistani audience supported #unificationviakhilafah with all their will and we found 100% of tweets in the favor of this ideology. Pakistanis also think that this system would unite Muslims under one umbrella based on faith. People also consider Ashraf Ghani as the agent of the USA who was the puppet of the US government. The supporter expressed that the Muslim leaders must learn from the Taliban that no matter what the opposition does if you're standing on your feet with complete faith so your ideas of implementing the methods of Prophethood would be accomplished. People asked through their tweets to cut the US supply lines and raise the symbol of revolution and speak up for real Islam. Through these tweets, Pakistan wants to say that a unified Islamic community would be built by uniting Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. With those tweets, people spoke for the killings of Muslims in Syria, Palestine, and Kashmir too, they expressed their anger at the laws made by the US and they found that Caliphate or Khilafah System can bloom the lives of Muslims otherwise we will see the Muslim nations mourning as Afghanistan was suppressed under US forces.

As we were doing critical analysis through this research and our population was Pakistani Twitter users so, in the end, we found that this take over by the Taliban is a source of contentment for Pakistan and they are complimenting the Afghan nationals for their freedom.

CONCLUSION:

Many efforts have been done on the Taliban and US war in Afghanistan to halt the war and bring peace to the country. In the conflict, Pakistan was indirectly involved as it opened its borders for Afghan refugees before. Now the withdrawal of US forces and the entrance of the Taliban to lead the country altered many other things encircled with Afghanistan. Now the question on the peace process and strategies are also occurring by Pakistan as we always supported Afghanistan being a Muslim and neighboring country. In past, Pakistan was invited many times to be a part of peace talks and to end this conflict and Pakistan did what it could do. Now with the help of this research, we wanted to figure out that how Pakistan favored Afghanistan in past and how it is standing with the Taliban government and acknowledging it. There was an abundance of sensationalism and agenda setting on this case of spreading Islamophobia and presenting a false image of Muslims and Pakistan was also indicted for that since 2011. Our Pakistani audience is speaking for

the innocent Afghanis and the cruelty they were facing. If we'll discuss the overall results or conclude them so we analyzed that 77.6% of Pakistani Twitter users were watching this act as a peaceful step while 22.8% were watching it as a wrong insurgent. We wanted to see still our social media stands for peace and discuss it and we found it through this case. There shouldn't be a sensation on the expressions although every individual has the right to express his thoughts but, at least we should weigh them before spreading them to others cause, it takes a few seconds to circulate on social media. With this long period of Afghan crisis, we can comprehend that the wars are just worse and wastage, they don't make things right. Afghanistan fell many times but now it is trying to stand based on its actual identity with the greatest Islamic laws. It needs others' support, according to many latest reports Afghanistan is going on the path of starvation, even 8 children have already died due to hunger, and if the situation would remain the same so their condition would be much disastrous than in Syria. They need the assistance and for that purpose, Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi arrived in Pakistan. The Foreign Minister reached to participate in Troika Plus Meet in Afghanistan in which the representatives from Russia, China, the USA, and Pakistan participate. It was also initiated by Pakistan to bring peace in the region and help the war-torn country although Pakistan didn't accept the Taliban government, it would be accepted when other Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE would accept it. Despite this Pakistan is properly supporting Afghanistan's Taliban government by addressing its problems and the Pakistani audience is also encouraging it. It is also the human factor to help Afghanistan to endure its economic problems otherwise the neighboring countries would also suffer. This visit of Afghanistan's Foreign Minister to Pakistan can build more regional connectivity, moreover, Pakistan also asked governments to unfreeze Afghanistan's dollars in its central bank assets to diminish their economic crisis. Contrary many critics also claimed the US for their false policies in the Afghanistan crisis and superfluous involvement in Afghanistan. We also concluded that the failure of US forces in Afghanistan just implied a failed democratic system and needless theories of wars that killed many innocent lives. As this research explains that US interference in many crises enlarge them and at last the nations mourned and small issues take years but do not resolve. We discovered that US policies were flawed and manifested the political, military, diplomatic, and humanitarian failure. It was also uncovered that the USA is facing criticism due to its involvement in the Ethiopian crisis as Ethiopian nationals said that we will not allow you to destroy us, you have already destroyed Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and Afghanistan, so now enough is enough and we will not be your bloodbath victim. Many studies are unclear on this point, but Pakistan's perspective is clear and

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it is ready to support the suffering country. And in the end, we can say that the founded results exhibit that some people are direct while some are indirectly measuring the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan and endorsing their cross-border ties.



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