



Twitter diplomacy between Pakistan and the United States: A case study of Imran Khan US visit

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Abstract: Twitter is increasingly used by national governments for diplomatic communication between states. Leaders and diplomats around the world are using Twitter strategically to engage with their counterparts in other countries. Tweets from state representatives has increased in last few years and popularity of tweets by political leaders has impacted diplomatic relations between states. During election campaigns and states visits by political leaders Twitter becomes highly active and user engage with discussions which results in trending hashtags. This study examines tweets (N=9269) during visit of Prime minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to United States. These tweets were collected based on trending hashtags “#PMIKInUSA” and “#PMIKJalsalnUSA”. Results shows that most of the tweets and retweets were generated from official political pages of Imran Khan’s political party and were supported by individual and media influencers.

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1. Introduction

Social networks have immersed as latest communication tool for governments around the world. And among social networks Twitter has appeared as authentic source for getting updates from verified Twitter accounts. Similarly, traditional media and journalists mainly follow Twitter feed to cover stories from variety of legitimate and informal sources. It been noticed that the reliability of the traditional media has also included tweets to improve the credibility of their news and is highly used by the proficient journalists.

Alongside social media status of Twitter, it has also dominated as an independent media due to its short commentary of current happening and updates. Use of Twitter by political figures has increased civic and democratic engagement. It has improved the authority of Twitter which resulted into a higher active user base. According to worldwide statistics in 2019, 275 million monthly active users are now on social networks (J. Clement, 2019). Twitter subscribers are now allowed to publish a public message with 280-characters which previously had only 140 characters (Larson, 2017), and this message is called a ‘tweet’. (A. Small, 2011).

Owing to real time information feature, millions of users around the world started to use Twitter. Many scholars believe that, Twitter’s one of the significant feature is the geographical and spatial factors that are indulged in arguments and debates on tweets (R.

Khan, H. Khan, M. Faisal, K. Iqbal & M. Malik, 2016). However, Twitter has stopped support for the geo-location tagging and users no longer have the geo-tag feature available while tweeting. This effort is made to make Twitter user experience more simplified and to make Tweeting experience more convenient for users. Twitter focuses on making user experience more simplified and increase access and use of Twitter in the society.

Furthermore, Twitter is a source of public opinion which can also be referred as online feedback. Users engage with discussions on different topics along with their hashtags which leads to a participation of large audience. Based on their popularity and number of engaged users these hashtags become trending and appear as top topics on home page of Twitter platforms. Researcher noticed that on social media users are not restricted to any country so people participating on this platforms can engage with discussion any topic to making it “effective” and reach the “real user” (Senyuva & Demiroglu).

Due to effective communication a large number of diplomats and head of states from different countries are using Twitter for diplomatic communication. Presidents and Prime Ministers of many countries use Twitter for publishing their opinion or message towards important issues between

countries. Diplomatic avenues have experienced new digital platform for creating soft power and improving image of their home country.

Around the world, Twitter has emerged as an introductory platform for new connections between countries, and this study objectives are to identify fundamentals of current visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan to United States and the use of Twitter during this visit. It also finds the linkage between the use and content of Twitter in public gathering by citizens of Pakistan and the US. Prime Minister Imran Khan has millions of users on Twitter and is most followed political figure in Pakistan and abroad. During his visit, special focus was given to digital publicity specially on Twitter. This resulted into a global hash tag which originated from United States and remained trending globally among Twitter users due to huge conversation about this visit.

This study explores the emergent trends in public comments on Twitter from both countries and addresses their implications for the global and cultural changes that are on the way, as well as the evolution of social media as a news source. Public diplomacy includes public relations communications and cultural exchanges to help build positive and even personal relationships with people in other countries. This is done largely through information subsidies – a free service to the media – of which Twitter is one.

International Agenda-Building vs. Digital Diplomacy:

Digital diplomacy has three cornerstones: information, internet and communication (DiPLO). This tools allow every country's embassies, politicians and political parties to influence millions of people and build "digital" bridges with their online voters, followers and common publics with the aim of enhancing worldwide associations and collaborations (Marks & W.Freeman). social media is an extension of digital media where government target their new collaborations and strong international relation (IR) (Westcott, 2008). For overseas population, foreign ministries published Social media content which is used as press release or TV broadcast. Research shows in a cross-national comparison that there are obvious differences in the acceptance of dialogic ideologies. It also shows that foreign ministries still not successful to understand the potential of digital diplomacy to temporary negotiation. Social media holds the potential to temporary negotiation and dialogues between states and overseas people (Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015). Social media play a revolutionary role in the hand of diplomat. They promote message and get responses live from the community where they serve (C. Bjola & Lu Jiang).

Agenda building is the extension of Agenda Setting Theory (AST) which is presented by

McCombs and Shaw's (1972) mentions to the method by which NEWS organizations and reporters feature, accentuate, or choose some selected events, problems, sources or causes to broadcast over others. This extension in this area is associated with agenda setting theory but diverse from the agenda - setting traditions which observes the linkage between the subjects showed in the NEWS media and the priority of the issue within the public (McCombs 2004). In political science the most work is relatively associated with Agenda building or policy agenda setting, which emphasis on how NEWS reporting both shapes and reflects the primacies of government administrators, decision - makers, and conglomerates (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). Cobb and Elder (1971) and Dearing and Rogers (1996) explained agenda-building theory as the conducts in which problems and issues are shaped and how they control or fail to control the decision makers'. Some are resolute by values of the political culture through which status is mediated by feature of their immediacy to harmony (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Social media world like in Twitter, global populations reach more posts than ever, and the measuring scales of 'consensus' possibly will be fluctuating as an outcome.

For understanding digital diplomacy concept social media are powerful channels, the researcher believes that medium of communication change due to ICT but message remain same (Dizard Jr, W, 2001). It just happened when advantages and opportunities are apprehended, such as approving message policies that fit and are personalized to the setting of social medium (Strauß, Kruikemeier, Meulen & Noort, 2015). Information and communication are two cornerstones of diplomacy which is highly affected through the Internet, and that's the burning issues of this era which is called Digital Diplomacy (DiPLO, What is Digital Diplomacy?, n.d.). For public and private communication social media become the contemporary tool and for political communication and NEWS Twitter become the most modern tool. Main functions of diplomacy (like i.e. the peaceful settlement of disputes, negotiations, and diplomatic functionality change are performed, namely through the use of new tools like Twitter) always affected with each and every invention which play a role of communication bridge (Hayden, C, 2012).

2. Research Question:

RQ1. What topics and tones emerge from Twitter comments in Pakistan and the United States during highly publicized diplomatic visits by their respective leaders?

RQ2. What are the similarities and differences observed in Twitter comments when comparing Pakistan and the United States?

RQ3. Which Twitter sources and story topics were frequently retweeted?

3. Methodology:

This research investigated Tweets from both US and Pakistan, and embattled two exceedingly publicized one-on-one meetings that would generate tweets from both countries: the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to the US President Donald Trump on 24 - 27 Sept 2019. Tweets were collected based on two trending hashtags (#PMIKInUSA and #PMIKJalsaInUSA) on Twitter during this visit. These Tweets were extracted using Twitter API and Python library (Tweepy) within PyCharm IDE.

Using Python which is an interpreted, high-level, general-purpose programming language, we collected samples in quantities over Total tweets 361,035 with timeframe of 4 days 24-27 Sep, they reach 3,798,808 with the impressions of 6,688,544 and find 1,769,433 favorites tweets in all these 4 days event. Extracted tweets were saved in csv file as raw data and we combined all tweets data in one spread sheet to make them readable for data analysis.

Tweets were in English and Urdu Language, however a large number of collected tweets were in English so sentiment analysis was conducted for English tweets only. Sentiment analysis of tweet was

conducted to classify the tweets in various sentiment classes accurately. It is also known as opinion mining and is used to extract sentiments and opinions from unstructured and complex text. Purpose is to identify if the text depicts a positive, negative or neutral opinion towards the subject (Pang, B., & Lee, L, 2008). For this study we used Lexicon-based model for sentiment analysis which has previously been used in many studies for measuring sentiments (Thelwall et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2011; Bakliwal et al., 2013).

4. Results and Discussions:

The first and second research questions addressed topics, tones, similarities and differences in the Twitter comments during state diplomatic visits in Pakistan and the United States, and the third research question addressed the sources and topics of retweets. we required a pre-coded dictionary of words for sentiments. There are various types of dictionaries available such as PMOS (Profile of Mood States), ANEW (Affective Norms for English Words), LIWC (Linguistics Inquiry and Word Count) etc. with unique characteristics and features. In this study we used LIWC dictionary to determine sentiments of the tweets as it supports lexicon-based sentiment analysis and shows results as positive and negative sentiments.

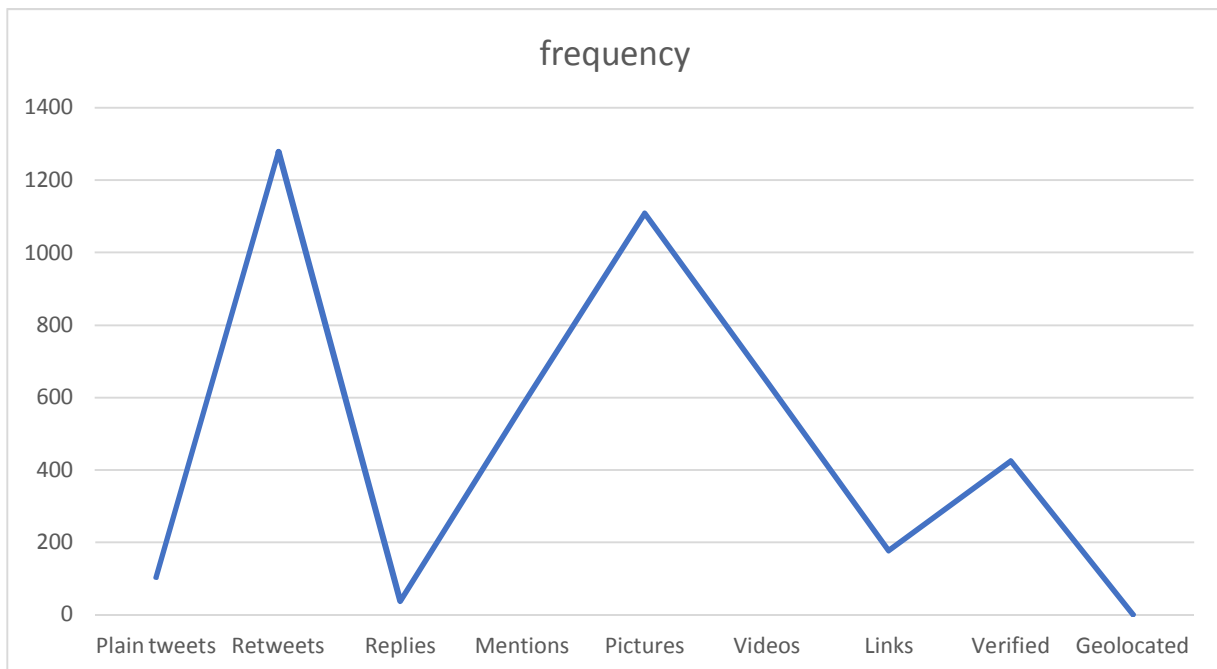


Figure 1: Top Influencer Account

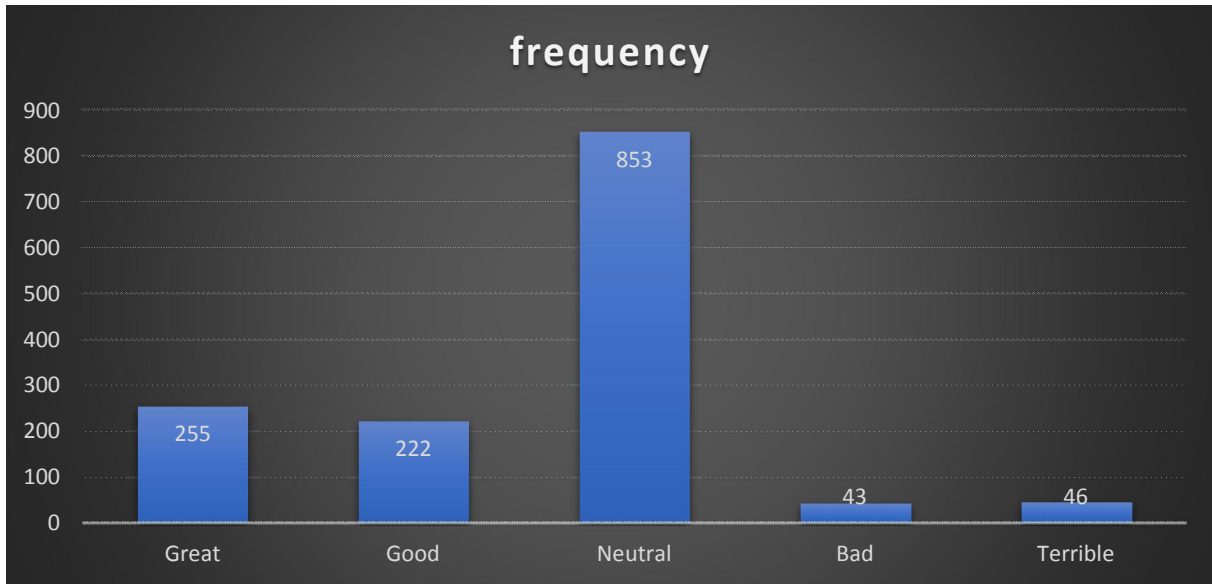


Figure 2: Top tweeter sentiments in Influencer Account

Tones The analysts initially looked at Twitter remarks about the two heads just from clients in Pakistan. Pakistan tweets were generally positive

about Imran Khan, and for the most part unbiased about Donald Trump (see Table 2). 853 Pakistani tweets about Donald Trump were neutral.

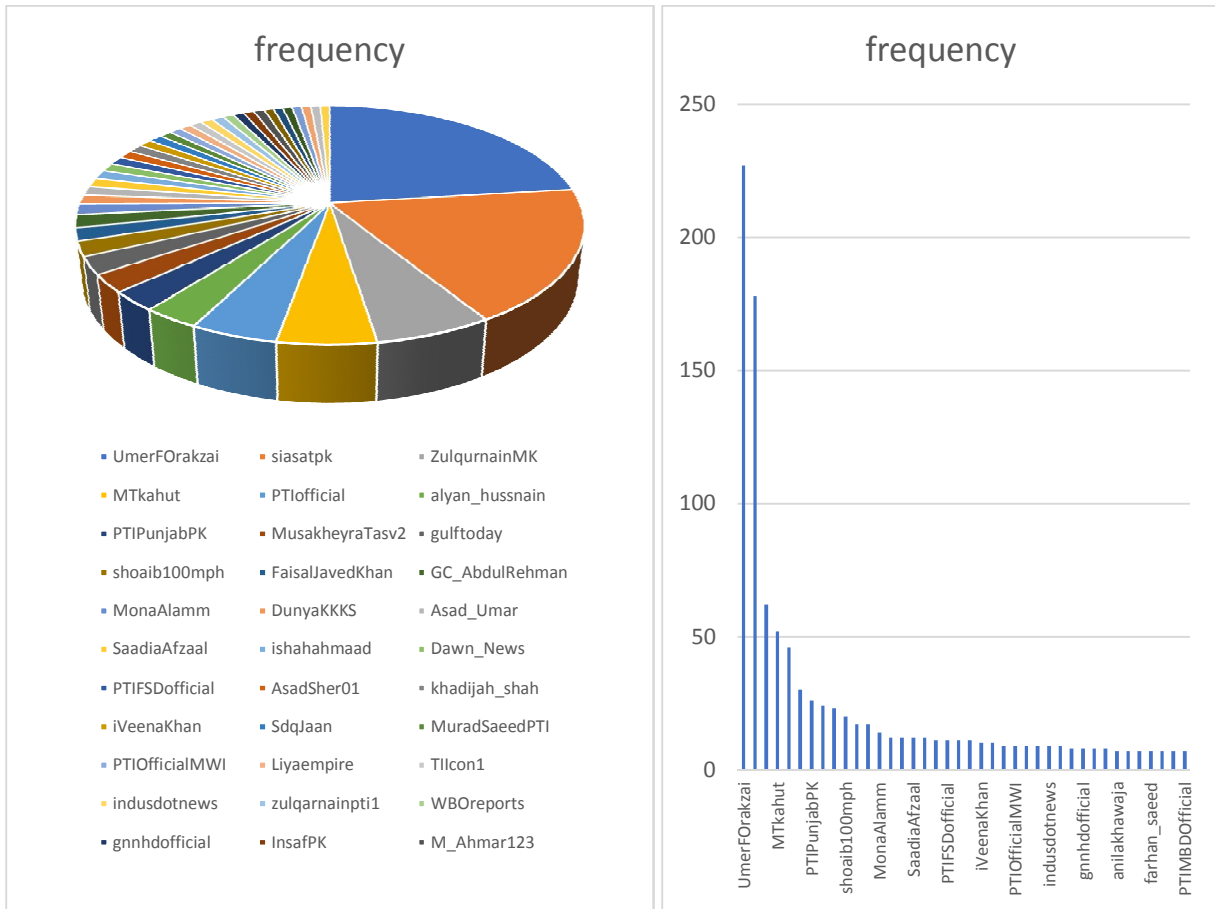


Figure 2: Top contributors Account

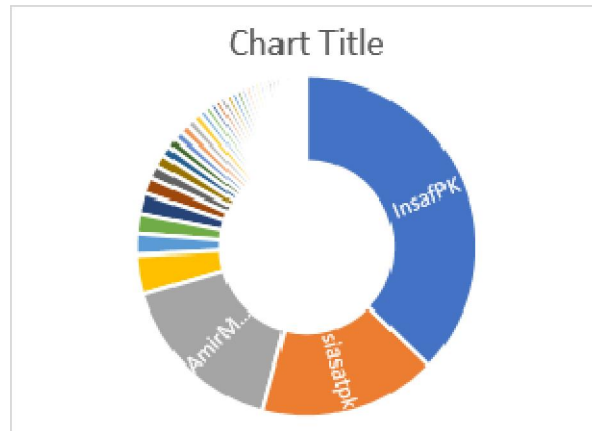
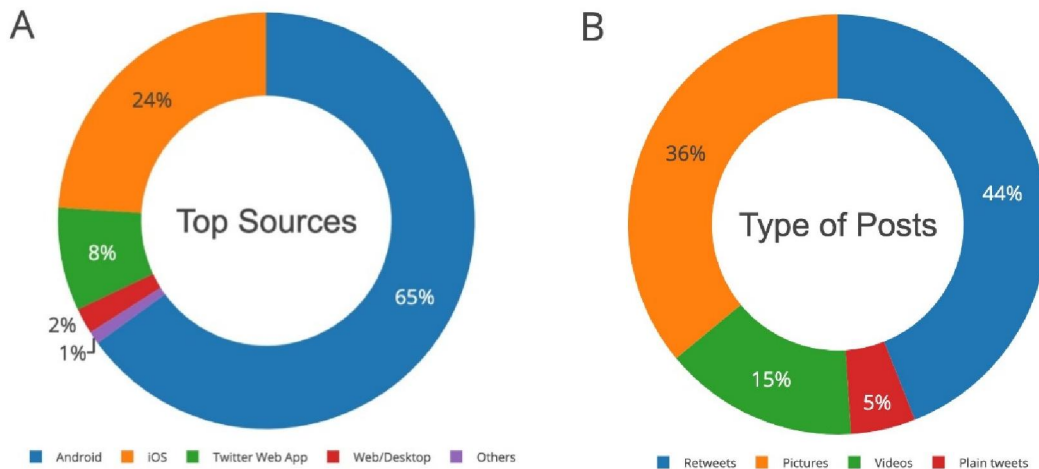


Figure 3: Top Influencer Account



Sources There were far fewer retweets for Imran Khan in the US: only 44% of comments were retweets, from sources such as InsafPK from Pakistan.

This study analyzed the sources and content of 9267 Twitter comments about international events specific to the Pakistan and US, looking for dominant sources and tones that built the news agenda on the social media site.

Twitter Results show that the American sources created more grounded impacts in Pakistan in that there were increasingly positive Pakistani Twitter remarks. The plan building impacts are apparent in the more noteworthy number of White House sources retweeted in Pakistan than they were in the US. Imran Khan is known in Pakistan for decidedly advancing himself via web-based networking media, and these occasions maybe gave a chance to recognize that another person – the American president, no less – praises Imran Khan enthusiastically. Strangely, American Twitter clients retweeted a similar Pakistani media sources more than they did any American source. The notoriety of these sources may demonstrate that the Americans who tweeted were to a

great extent of Pakistani legacy, as it appears to be improbable that numerous Americans even pursue Pakistani news media on Twitter. The various Twitter remarks from the White House and National Security Council may have helped Donald Trump staff to manufacture a positive plan for Pakistani media, however didn't result in Donald Trump getting more noteworthy or increasingly ideal Twitter inclusion inside the US, Pakistani tweeters were eager and positive about Imran Khan. Pride and appreciation in the new executive exceeded practically all different themes. 'In the depiction of Imran Khan's clear charms, there is little contrast now between the dominating tone on Pakistan's online life and the standard of Pakistani news media, which have secured his visit to the US with ridiculous good faith' (Joseph, 2014), and this demonstrated valid on Twitter moreover.

Pakistan just evade articulations of difference, while individuals in low-setting societies, for example,

the US are less well-suited to think about contradiction literally; Americans are bound to isolate the issue from the individual in a contention. This might be the reason Twitter analysts from the US are increasingly negative and distrustful about political pioneers and especially about Donald Trump, and why the impacts of the US president's Agenda setting endeavors withered for American crowds contrasted with Pakistani spectators. It appears to be entirely conceivable that extending Twitter use will change the social dynamic in Pakistani culture. All things considered, the Pakistani-Americans who presented Twitter remarks appeared on impart that they felt a larger piece of Pakistan when Imran Khan was visiting the US, and they could share their sentiments in Twitter systems of many similarly invested individuals. Twitter people group may help distant gatherings to stick and improve social personality. As Twitter arrives at increasingly remote territories of the world and expands universal availability for millions, this administration will keep on giving scientists information that reflect and shape popular sentiment about one's own nation as well as one's mentalities towards different nations as well. Sources referenced pride in their legacy, again suggesting they were Americans of Pakistani birthplace.

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