

Politics of Narratives:
How Images Reinforce Fragility in
Afghanistan
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Politics of Narratives: How Images Reinforce Fragility in Afghanistan

G5iO undertook a data-driven discourse analysis over how Afghanistan has been depicted online over the last 20 years across different media, policy and development platforms.

Summary:

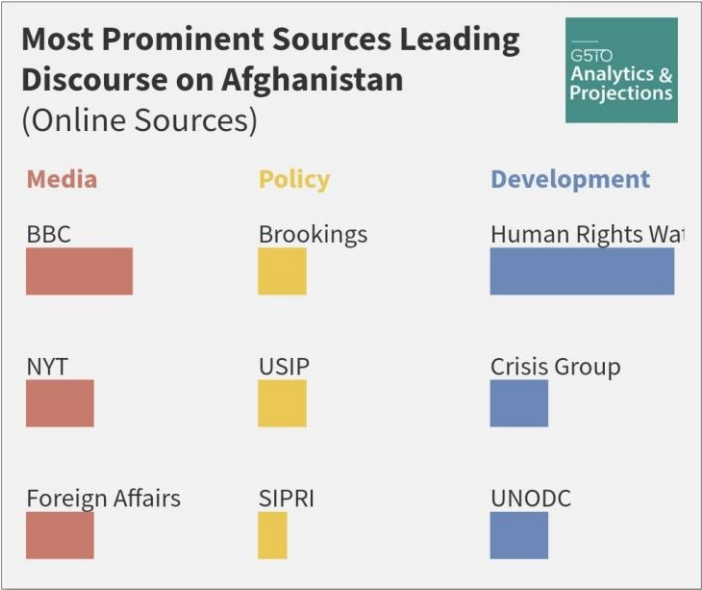
- Our findings show that discourse **on Afghanistan has been dominated largely by 2-3 International NGOs, US Think Tanks and Media outlets** that have maintained a more or less consistent narrative online.
- In addition, all three of the above perspectives have officially towed the US foreign policy narrative on Afghanistan
- Consequently, when viewed through a postcolonial lens Afghans have been “dehumanized” and “othered” throughout media, policy and development discourses, (especially when viewed through an American lens)
- Pakistan has been discussed, linked and directly alluded to throughout the entire narrative on Afghanistan

Methodology

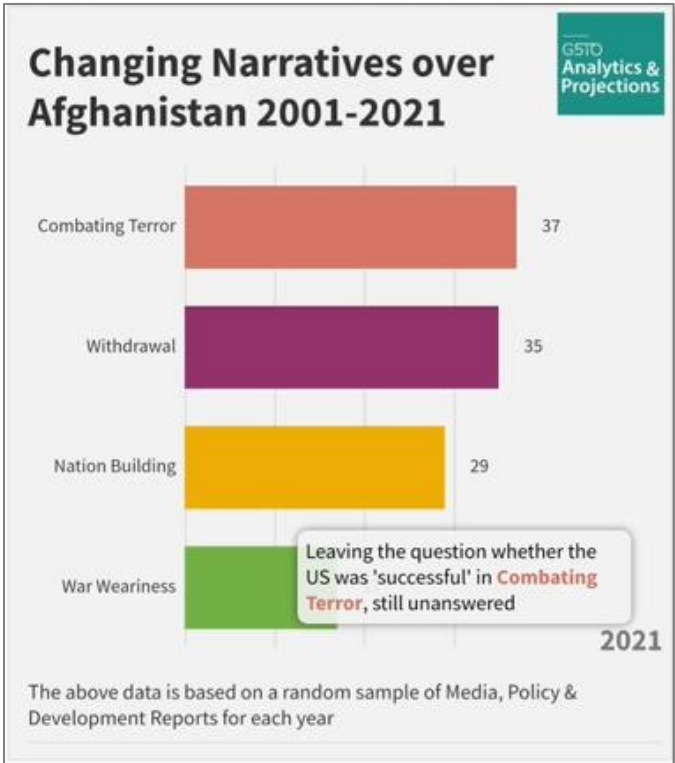
- Our method involved taking a random sample of media, policy and development reports related to Afghanistan for each year between 2001 - 2021.
- Our focus was on analyzing the **source, wording used and associated imagery** for Afghanistan year on year to examine how this discourse has evolved.
- Over 100 Images associated with the reports were qualitatively analyzed and coded into the following categories based on their recurring prevalence:
 - a. War
 - b. Human Suffering
 - c. Everyday Life
 - d. Neutral
- Similarly, headlines of the articles and reports, were also coded and categorized as follows:
 - a. Combating Terror
 - b. Nation Building
 - c. War Weariness
 - d. Withdrawal

Findings:

Throughout the last 20 years, the key discourse setting platforms on Afghanistan across media, policy and development perspectives were led by the following organizations:



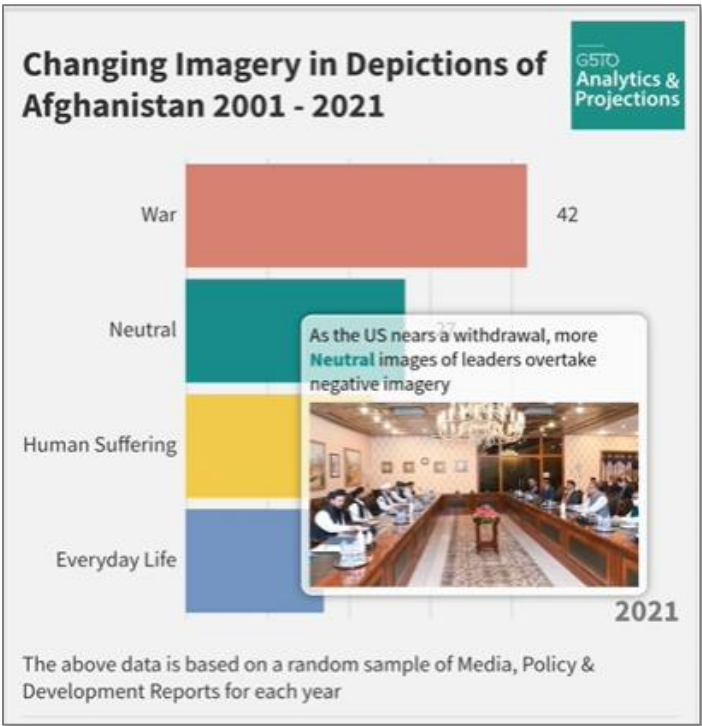
Each of these focused on the above themes of Combating Terror, Nation Building, War Weariness and the US Withdrawal depending on changing US policy over the period analyzed



This is also confirmed by the prevalence of the most prominent words used throughout these reports in their titles and headlines:



Similarly, an analysis of the changing kinds of imagery employed throughout media, policy and development discourses presents a similar story. In effect, coming back full circle to a conflict that was never really defined nor properly understood to begin with.



In summary, even a cursory look at the kind of imagery employed throughout the various phases of this conflict, correlates directly with the changing narrative that is reflective of the United States' Afghanistan Policy over the last 20 years.

