

**Is International Media Switching off  
on Afghanistan? An Analysis of Print  
& Digital Media  
September 2021**

# Is International Media Switching off on Afghanistan? An Analysis of Print & Digital Media

## Overview

G5iO carried out a discourse based analysis of Twitter data and popular international media outlets' coverage of the Afghanistan issue over the last few months. The study aims to analyse a) how frequently the issue has been reported in international media and b) twitter traffic generated over this issue.

The study demonstrates

1. Overall coverage of international media on the Afghanistan issue has declined.
2. Similarly, social media interest in the issue has gradually dropped over the last few weeks.

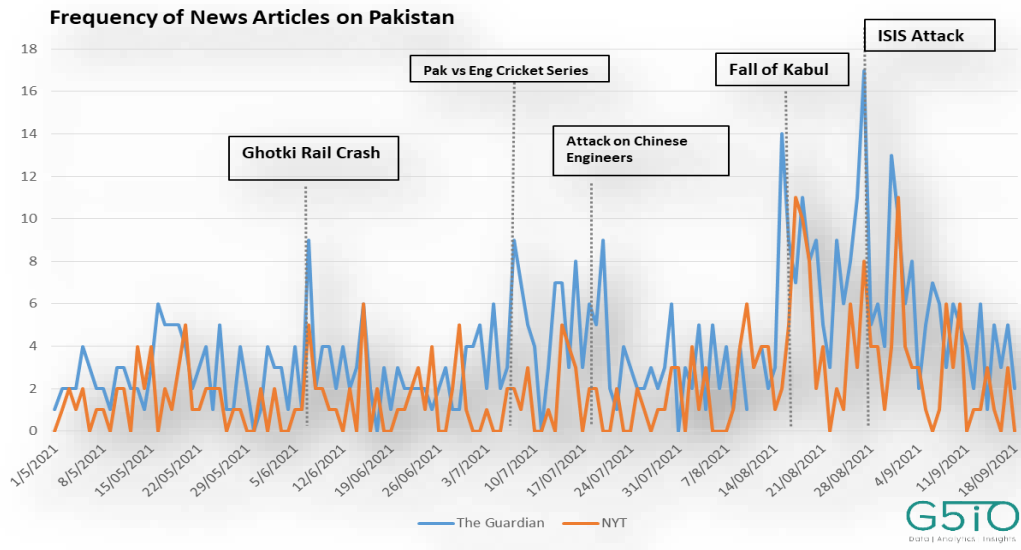
## Methodology

Data Points:

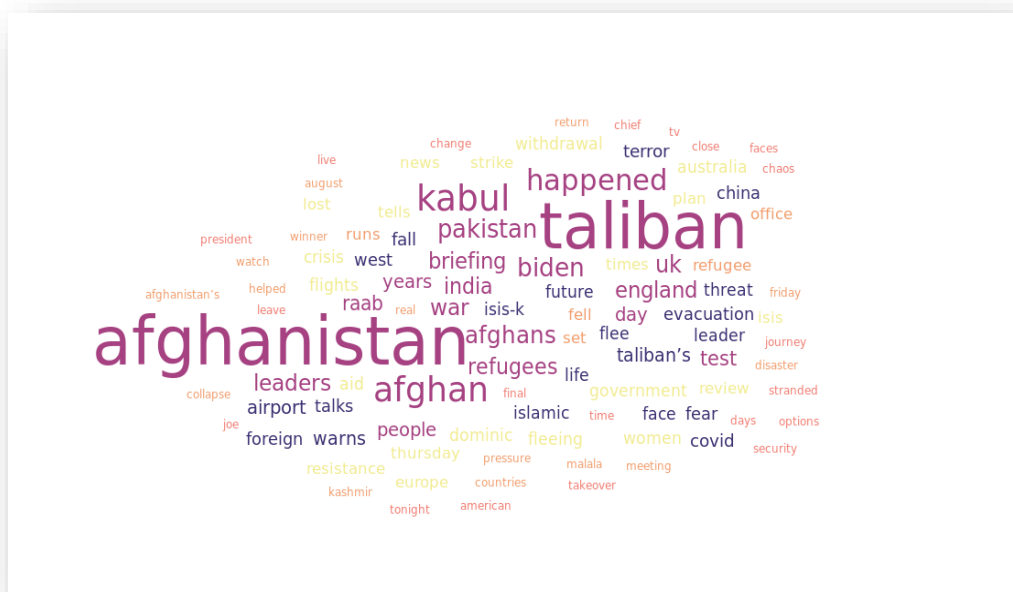
- a) News articles from the New York Times & the Guardian on the keyword "Pakistan" (522) and the keyword "Afghanistan" (2391)  
Timeline: 1st May 2021 – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- b) Twitter data on keyword "Pakistan" (total tweets: 97848) and "Afghanistan/Taliban" (total tweets: 328271)  
Timeline: 1st September 2021 – 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021



Similarly, both the NYT's and the Guardian's coverage related to Pakistan also peaked during the fall of Kabul and ISIS attacks on Kabul airport. This indicates that Pakistan was portrayed as being closely intertwined with the unfolding situation in Afghanistan.

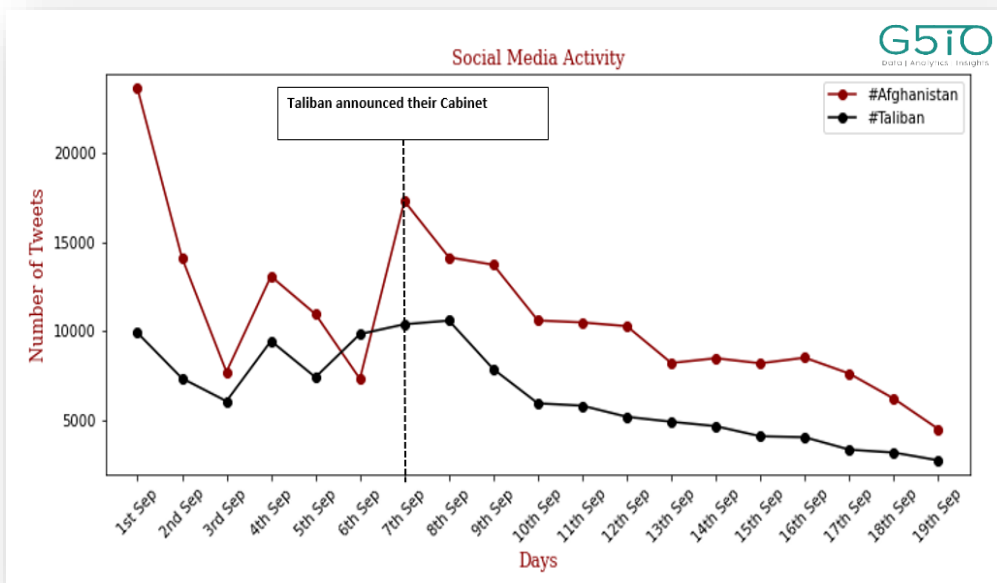


The NYT and the Guardian's coverage of Pakistan were mostly in relation to the ongoing Afghanistan issue where the key focus was on evacuation efforts, the refugee crisis and Pakistan's relationship with the Afghan Taliban. This again demonstrates a skewed coverage of Pakistan from the lens of the western countries based on their strategic priorities.



## Insight 2:

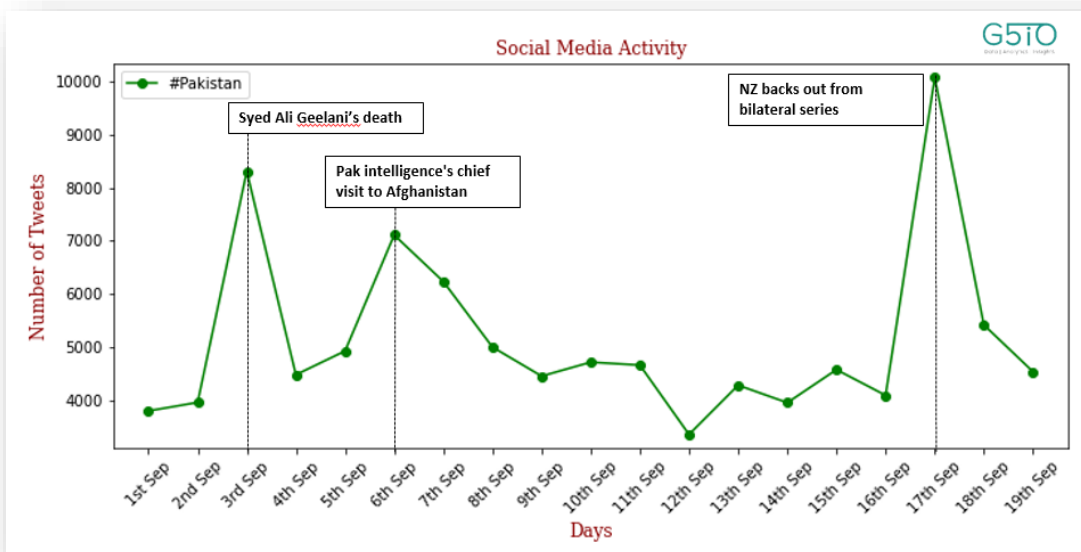
An analysis of Twitter data on the keywords “Afghanistan” and “Taliban” shows that public interest in the Afghanistan issue has been gradually declining over the last few weeks. The number of tweets peaked when the Taliban announced their cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> September followed by a gradual drop.



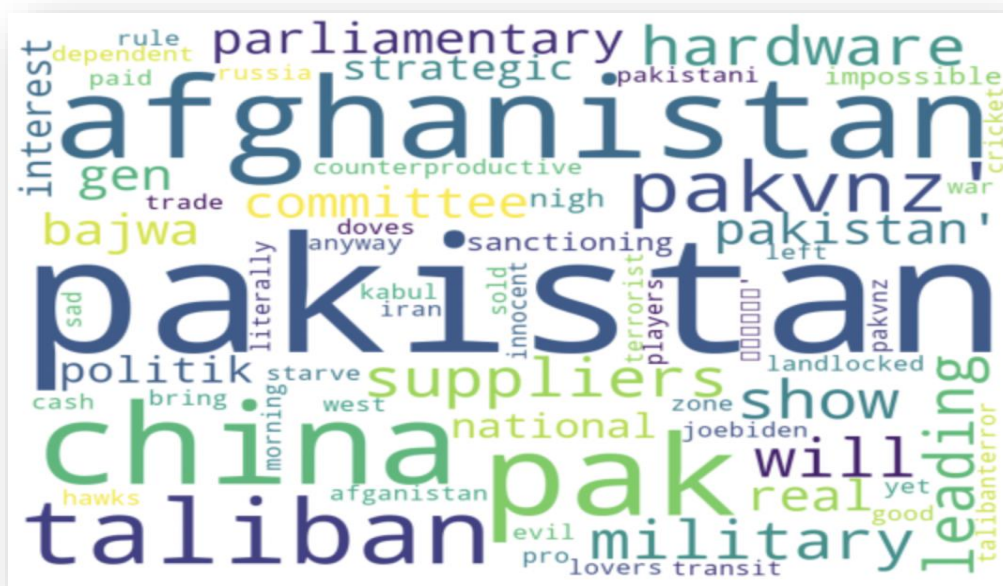
The narrative on Twitter regarding the Afghanistan issue is mostly centred around, ‘Afghan women’, ‘accountability for the new government’ and highlighting ‘acute shortage of basic needs’ faced by the Afghan people.



The number of tweets for the keyword “Pakistan” also shows a steep decline. However, it peaked during two key events such as Syed Ali Geelani’s death and the recent withdrawal of the New Zealand team. Afghanistan related tweets, however, also saw a surge during the Intelligence chief’s visit to Afghanistan.



Twitter data on the keyword “Pakistan” shows that Pakistan has been mentioned in parallel with the ongoing Afghanistan issue in relation to China and the Taliban. Other than Afghanistan, the withdrawal of the New Zealand cricket team also featured predominantly in discourse related to Pakistan.



## Conclusion:

- There has been a gradual decline in the international media coverage of both Afghanistan and Pakistan over the last few weeks.
- Overall narrative on the Afghanistan issue has been centred on evacuations efforts and refugee crisis while less coverage has been given to daily struggles and challenges faced by Afghan people.
- The coverage now does not distinguish Taliban and Afghanistan government as separate identities indicating overall acceptability of Taliban as the Afghan government
- Reporting on Pakistan was mostly in relation to the ongoing Afghanistan issue with sporadic spikes related to the New Zealand team withdrawal from bilateral series.