

The Role of Social Media in Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Study of United States and Pakistan

Ifra Siddiqui

Iffymas2001@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0608-9717>

Scholar, International Relations, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Karachi Campus, Sindh, Pakistan

Sadia M Hussain

sdiamammedhussain@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9711-630X>

Scholar, International Relations, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Karachi Campus, Sindh, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Habib

muhammadhabib.bukc@bahria.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5990-5283>

Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Karachi Campus, Sindh, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: Ifra Siddiqui Iffymas2001@gmail.com

Received: 18-02-2026

Revised: 27-02-2026

Accepted: 20-03-2026

Published: 30-03-2026

ABSTRACT

The social media is one of the strongest instruments in the modern digital world that defines the way countries communicate, create their image, and reach out to the global audience. This research examines the application of social media as a tool of their public diplomacy by the United States and Pakistan by comparing their approaches, problems and general effectiveness. As the study demonstrates, the United States is based on the well-structured and sophisticated system of digital diplomacy, which is based on soft power, two-sided communication, and long-term planning, whereas Pakistan still has to develop its strategies, which are usually reactive but depend on domestic political factors and lack of resources. Based on theories such as Soft Power, Agenda-Setting, Framing and Network Theory, this study will point out the way in which both nations seek to shape the opinions of foreign populations, enhance the fight against fake news and establish their national image on the internet. In literature review, case study, and qualitative examination of online content, the results show that the U.S. has greater institutional capacity and global outreach, and Pakistan is facing issues with consistency, digital illiteracy, and regulatory issues. Nevertheless, the fake news, cyber threats, and the balancing of regulation and freedom of expression are the common problems faced by both countries. On the whole, this comparative paper shows that social media has reshaped public diplomacy, introducing both new possibilities of interaction, as well as posing complex challenges of credibility, transparency, and the future of digital diplomacy in international politics.

Keywords: Social Media, Public Diplomacy, United States and Pakistan, Comparative Analysis, Soft Power, Fake News

INTRODUCTION

A In the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping public diplomacy. Governments, political leaders, and international organizations increasingly rely on social media platforms to communicate policies, engage with global audiences, and influence public perception. The ability to reach diverse populations in real time has transformed traditional diplomatic efforts, enabling direct interaction between states and foreign publics. This paper explores the role of social media in

public diplomacy, examining its impact on diplomatic strategies, soft power projection, and global political narratives. By analyzing case studies and key trends, this study highlights how social media has redefined international political communication, bridging gaps between nations and fostering new avenues for engagement in the 21st century.

Background of the Study

The background of the study of our topic which is The Role of Social Media in Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Study of United States and Pakistan is that through different platforms of social media the government and diplomats of United States and Pakistan are directly engaged globally with each other. Social media is a powerful tool through which the economies are flourishing as well as the economies will declining because of the use of misinformation. Social Media also give opportunities to the governments to reach wider audience rather than few audience, but because of social media we also faced some challenges like cyber-attacks, spread of misinformation and removing the regime of government.

Research Questions

1. What are the impacts of social media in Pakistan and the United States?
2. What type of opportunities and challenges social media gave to the United States and Pakistan? How both countries used social media used as a tool to destroy each other?
3. How social media used as an influencer for countering both countries?

Objectives of the Study

1. How state and non-state actors of United States and Pakistan utilized digital platforms in shaping an international arena for public diplomacy?
2. What challenges the state and non-state actors of United States and Pakistan were facing after utilized digital platforms and what opportunities they received?
3. How social media changed the nature of both countries to use their theories for to influence and to dominate each other?

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Fake news on social media can hurt a country's image and make it harder for the leaders and the governments of the country to promote itself to the world.

Hypothesis 2: Social media helps people of United States and Pakistan to understand each other's culture and values, which supports diplomatic relations.

Problem Statement

This thesis sets out to deal with an important issue. Social media has transformed the way public diplomacy (PD) works, pushing it into a new digital age where communication is faster, broader, and more interactive than ever before. However, while the potential of digital diplomacy is widely recognized, a full understanding has not yet developed—especially when it comes to how global power differences and geopolitical contexts affect these strategies. One of the key gaps in knowledge lies in comparing the approaches of countries with very different levels of resources. For example, the United States, as a resource-rich global superpower, has the advantage of long-standing narrative dominance and the ability to invest heavily in shaping international opinion. On the other hand, Pakistan, as a resource-limited developing country, struggles with different challenges such as fighting negative

perceptions, managing its global image, and handling complex diplomatic crises with fewer means. This study aims to compare these two extremes in order to understand how their social media public diplomacy strategies differ. It will explore how the availability of resources, the urgency of national priorities, and the nature of narrative challenges shape their online diplomatic efforts. The research will also examine what measurable differences can be seen in how each country engages with foreign audiences through digital platforms and how successful these efforts are in achieving foreign policy goals. By doing so, this thesis hopes to highlight not only the opportunities that social media creates for diplomacy but also the limitations that arise from inequality in power and resources. (Mohyidin. R, 2023)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used as a qualitative research method to explore how social media is used in public diplomacy. It follows a descriptive and exploratory approach to understand how both governments and non-government actors used digital platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to reach global audiences, share political messages, and communicate strategically. This study takes a deductive approach, using well-known theories of political communication, soft power, and public diplomacy to understand how these ideas work in the digital world (Nye, 2004; Gilboa, 2008).

The study collects data in two main ways: content analysis and semi-structured interviews. For the content analysis, the researcher carefully chooses official social media accounts of selected countries and political leaders from the United States, the European Union, and Pakistan. These cases are picked because they show different ways of using social media in diplomacy. Posts shared between 2019 and 2024 are studied to see how these accounts communicate during major global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, international meetings, and global political tensions. The study looks at key themes such as nation branding, digital diplomacy, image building, and cross-border influence (Manor, 2019).

The study also includes semi-structured interviews with scholars, diplomats, and communication experts. These interviews helped to explain the reasons behind different social media campaigns and how successful they are. The collected data—both from social media and interviews—is analyzed using thematic analysis to find repeated ideas and key messages. A computer program called NVivo is used to organize and examine the data carefully and reliably.

Ethical rules are followed strictly in this research. All interview participants are given clear information about the study and their identities are kept private. The social media content studied is public, and it is used respectfully and without any changes. However, the study has some limitations. For example, it is difficult to talk to the main decision-makers directly, social media algorithms might affect what is seen, and the study does not include posts in languages other than English.

This research adds to the growing knowledge about digital diplomacy and political marketing, showing how social media is changing the way countries communicate and build their images on the international stage.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Social Media

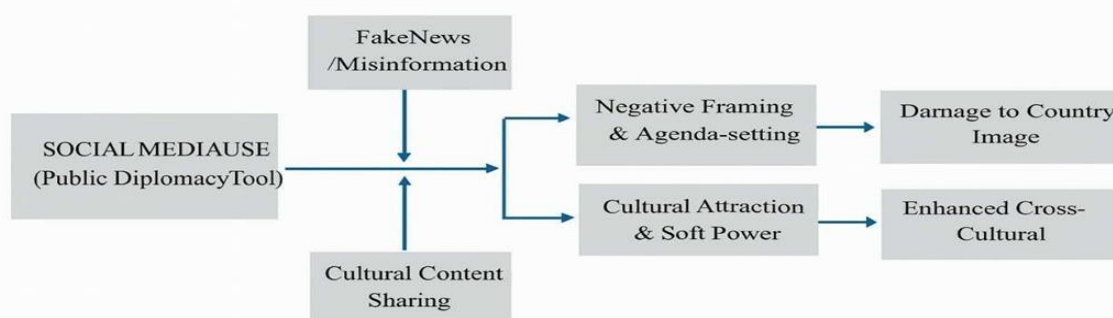
Social media is a form of mass media communication on the Internet (such as on websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Social media is an "online means of communication". Conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility." (Tuten and Solomon, 2015).

Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age

The state was always at the center of traditional public diplomacy, which depended on formal communication channels like cultural exchanges, international broadcasting, and diplomatic missions. But the rise of globalization and digital communication has brought a major change in public diplomacy. It is predicted by some scholars that modern public diplomacy is not restricted to governments anymore but includes various players like the general public, media, and digital influencers. The one-way communication road of public diplomacy has now turned into interactive engagement road. The case of the U.S. and Pakistan reveals that there are differences in institutional capacities and communication strategies, thus, digital platforms become an important comparative variable for this research study.

Social Media as a Tool of Public Diplomacy

The extensive body of literature is in consensus about the role of social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube as the major tools of public diplomacy in the current era. Social media, in contrast to traditional media, allows for instantaneous interaction, narrative shaping, and the very public engagement of foreign audiences. Nevertheless, researchers have indicated that the very same channels are responsible for the quick propagation of untruths and unfounded stories which in turn can be a country's international reputation detractor. This dual character of social media is very applicable to the current research as both the U.S. and Pakistan are digital platforms to create their images while at the same time confronting the issues of misinformation and trustworthiness



Theoretical Approaches

Soft Power Theory

Joseph Nye's Soft Power Theory is based on the idea that international relations should be conducted through attraction rather than coercion. Cultural appeal, political values, and the legitimacy of foreign policy are the three most important factors that generate soft power. In the digital age, social media is the main conduit for the transmission of soft power. The U.S. has formalized its digital diplomacy to exercise its soft power worldwide, while Pakistan's method is still rather disorganized. The disparity between the two countries in terms of public diplomacy effectiveness can be understood through this theoretical lens.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Theoretical understating of agenda-setting describes the process through which the media influenced public perception by giving priority to some issues and ignoring the others. Social media has provided a platform for governments and political figures to actively control international narratives to attract audience. The lack of a unifying power, however, still contributes to the rise of opposing stories and false information. The theory is of great importance in understanding the competition between the US and Pakistani governments' narratives and the unofficial content available, which international perception is affected by.

Two-Step Flow of Communication

The two-step flow model emphasizes the importance of opinion leaders in influencing the public's views. When it comes to social media, the power is in the hands of influencers, reporters, and political analysts who act as go-betweens for the government and the public. The present research adopts the theory to analyze the situation of non-state players in the public image game of the two countries, whether their impact is positive or negative.

The conceptual framework for this research is based on the connection of social media usage and public diplomacy outcomes. The use of social media is taken as the independent variable, whereas the effectiveness of public diplomacy and the national image are the dependent ones. False information and lies are the intervening variables that can reduce the impact of the diplomatic message. Meanwhile, public understanding and engagement are the mediating variables that will strengthen the perception of the US and Pakistan as a united front. This framework lays down a systematic method to through which the impact of the digital platforms on public diplomacy outcomes can be analyzed empirically.

Summary and Research Gap

This chapter has conducted a literature review related to public diplomacy, social media, and the communication theories that are at the heart of the matter. The review brought to light that the topics of digital diplomacy, soft power, and media influence in international relations have become the subject of intense scrutiny from different angles by researchers. Despite this, the majority of the literature is still limited to national or Western viewpoints and thus lacks a proper comparative analysis between the developed and developing nations. Moreover, the issue of fake news as a public diplomacy hindrance has not been considered in depth yet and remains a grey area especially when it comes to Pakistan. Thus, this research is set to fill in these gaps by providing a comparative study of the USA and Pakistan, emphasized on social media's role in public diplomacy and national image formation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Complex Interdependence, which was formed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, offers an extensive framework to comprehend the present-day international relations in a scenario where there is a close economic, political, and social interlinking between countries. Realism is a theory in international relations that highlights military power and state security as the main factors when it comes to state relations, whereas complex interdependence has highlighted the significance of various forms of interaction among states and non-state actors such as international organizations, global companies, and public that have been considered as part of the interstate dialogue (Keohane & Nye, 1977). This theoretical approach is very much suitable to analyze the current global exchanges where the influence of multilateralism, oral communication, and commerce is gradually deciding the behavior of states. The main idea around which complex interdependence revolves is interdependence, which is defined by Keohane and Nye as situations where states are mutually impacted through each other's actions. Interdependence has mainly two dimensions of operation: sensitivity and vulnerability. The term sensitivity points out the quickness and the size of the country's being affected by the changes in the outer world, while on the other hand, vulnerability denotes how much a state suffers economically when the changes via policy responses and others are brought (Keohane & Nye, 1977). The interdependence

and the concepts surrounding them are the ones that give reasons as to how the states involved in trade, sharing of information, and even global communication networks would be restrained to weapons-free zones in their foreign policy decisions. David Baldwin advances the argument and clarifies the concept by postulating that power in interdependent ties can no longer be considered from the standpoint of material capabilities only but also through the visibility of the ability to shape decisions in dependence networks (Baldwin, 1980). Baldwin now connects the argument of power and influence in terms of international relations to his analytical innovation of complex interdependence, which in fact, broadens its scope. Likewise, John Ikenberry points to the fact that liberal institutionalism which has a tight linkage with complex interdependence allows states to govern their mutual relations through institutions, norms, and rules that minimize uncertainty and transaction costs (Ikenberry, 2001). In today's world politics, the concept of complex interdependence has become more and more important, especially with the global intertwining of economies, the fast communication through digital means, and the popularity of soft power. Keohane (1984) claims that one of the main facilitators of cooperation in the case of international collaboration among states is the presence of international institutions which provide information, monitoring compliance, and reducing distrust among states. Thus, the theoretical viewpoint of Keohane has encouraged the increasing focus on such non-military tools of diplomacy as media, communication strategies, and public engagement which are very much in line with the goals of modern public diplomacy. Nevertheless, complex interdependence theory still has its fair share of limitations and counter-arguments, notwithstanding its merits. Realists point out that the theory minimizes the role of military might and power struggles, especially in the case of crises or wars. They support their view by saying that interdependence does not get rid of power differences and that states could still give priority to national security over economic or social ties when their vital interests are at stake (Mearsheimer, 2001). Furthermore, complex interdependence takes for granted an international environment that is somewhat stable, which may not be able to fully incorporate sudden changes like wars, sanctions, or shifts in power. Besides, critics also say that interdependence is often one-sided, favoring mighty nations over the feeble ones. The weaker states might be under more restrictions and have less options, thus low-interdependence usage ability (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Such criticism holds much water when studying interactions between rich and poor countries, as the latter's dependency might only deepen their plight and not lead to any benefits for both sides. Despite a number of criticisms, complex interdependence remains a robust theoretical model that helps to see international relations through the lens of power politics only. The model's attention to various players, different topics of concerns, and subtle non-coercive influences is really suitable for evaluating current diplomatic activities. By incorporating both its merits and demerits, the theory inherits the capacity of a well-balanced analytical instrument that boosts the research's theoretical foundation.

Habib, Amin, and Khan (2026) examine how Artificial Intelligence is transforming modern conflict through what they conceptualize as Sixth Generation Warfare (6GW). Using a quantitative and longitudinal research design (2010–2025), the study develops an AI–6GW Capability Index (A6CI) to measure states' military AI integration and its impact on strategic power projection, political influence, and global stability. The findings show that while AI capabilities significantly enhance power projection and coercive leverage, they also increase cyber and grey-zone instability. Importantly, the study demonstrates that strong legal–normative governance frameworks can moderate these destabilizing effects, highlighting governance—not technology alone—as the key determinant of systemic stability.

Afshan, S., Ali, P., & Habib, M. (2025) examine the Israel-Palestine conflict through Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model in the age of Artificial Intelligence. Published in the *Journal of Academic Research for Humanities*, 5(4), the study applies qualitative content analysis to assess media framing and ideological filtering. It argues that mainstream media narratives are shaped by ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and anti-ideological pressures, while AI algorithms function as an emerging "sixth filter." The paper highlights the growing role of AI in shaping public perception and conflict discourse in contemporary geopolitics.

Role of social media in Public Diplomacy and its impacts

Political Campaigns and Social Media Strategies

The rise of social media has changed the face of political communication and public diplomacy all over the world, by giving new ways to leaders to interact with people and to countries to present themselves in the world. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram have turned into very influential tools for influencing stories, getting people to vote, and doing diplomacy through the internet. In the US, social media was used as a main element in political tactics and soft power, especially during the 2008 Barack Obama presidential campaign, which is considered the starting point for the digital political communication era. Obama's campaign was not only about gaining people through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars from small donations but also about talking directly to the voters and getting through the traditional media by engaging with them. This mix of social media with the campaign strategy gave the US a new image as a high-tech and democratically lively country that was using openness and interactivity to strengthen its public diplomacy. Obama's online outreach was not just limited to the US; he was able to change the world's views of America as a leader in technology and democracy, thus, laying down a new way of digital democracy and political transparency. On the other hand, the adoption of social media in Pakistan was slower but it has soon gained a major role in the political arena, especially with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf led by Imran Khan. Social media has helped to spread PTI's messages of change even among the youth and urban voters, who, in turn, have become more active in voicing their opinions and aspirations, thus challenging the traditional political elites. The online visibility of PTI during the 2013 and 2018 general elections was a crucial factor in provoking political participation. (Smith, K. N, 2011).

Voter Engagement and Mobilization

The usage of social media as a medium for voter engagement, and mobilization has turned out to be the most effective way, especially when done through the leading cultural figures like drag artists. According to the research, drag artists have employed the use of their digital footprint to prompt the engagement of voters along with the delivery of political messages that are unforgettable, non-stereotypical, and festive in nature. The majority of the performers that were part of the interview stated that their drag characters get more interaction on the social media platforms than their personal profiles do, which helps them get in touch with voters of diverse backgrounds, especially the youth and the ones who might not be able to attend live events. The 2020 election was the time when the performers had the virtual platforms as the only means of communication to announce voter-registration deadlines, bring political issues to the forefront, and do all the GOTV (Get-Out-The-Vote) initiatives in fun and entertaining ways. Their capacity to stretch their humor, charm, and visual appeal made political messages more digestible and impressive, especially for low-propensity or previously disengaged voters. The online GOTV messages of the drag artists were viewed as "more real," "more fun," and "less static" compared to those of the traditional political actors, thus being in line with the results of the GOTV studies that suggested that trusted, unexpected messengers can enhance mobilization outcomes significantly.

Consequently, social media provided drag artists with a strong platform for engaging diverse audiences, enriching democratic participation, and widening political consciousness beyond the conventional channels. (Kammerer Jr, E. F., & Michelson, M. R, 2022).

Influence on Public Opinion and Political Perception

Public diplomacy is a very complex area, and the ability to shape how people and governments think is the most important part. However, social media makes this job much harder. It's like trying to speak up in a noisy party not only do you have to make sure your voice is heard, but you also have to deal with people who are already talking to each other. He points out that it's unlikely people will be completely open-minded when they finally hear your message. He explains how people's minds are already shaped by the outside world before they even see the message. This happens through exposure, like when

someone has been following a topic closely (for example, through news coverage or online discussions), or through reputation, like when someone already has strong beliefs about a country or political group (such as thinking "Germany is efficient" or "that party is fiscally responsible"). This creates a tricky situation that can lead to confusion, especially for the very people public diplomats often try to reach. These engaged citizens are hard to change because they only want confirmation of their existing beliefs for example, they wouldn't be surprised to hear a pro-environment party supports green policies. But they can be easily convinced if something unexpected happens, like a usually conservative party suddenly strongly supporting climate action, especially when it comes to politically aware audiences. For public diplomats, a social media campaign that gets only likes or shares might still be a success. It could mean the message was so strong that it already influenced public opinion, and the final campaign was just a formality. So, real influence isn't always shown in simple numbers it takes understanding the bigger picture and the conversations that already shaped people's thinking. (Slothuus, R., 2016).

Digital Diplomacy and International Relations (Governmental and Non-Governmental)

Digital diplomacy has become a pivotal element in contemporary international relations, leveraging internet-based communication tools such as social media, official websites, and mobile technologies to achieve foreign policy objectives. It extends traditional public diplomacy by fostering real-time, direct engagement with foreign publics and international actors, thereby enhancing transparency and influence. Governments worldwide utilize digital diplomacy strategies to project their national images, manage crises, and address global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development, often employing social media platforms for targeted messaging and dialogue. Beyond state actors, non-governmental organizations and civil society also play essential roles by participating in digital diplomatic discourse, advocating for global issues, and mobilizing support across borders. Despite its numerous benefits, digital diplomacy faces challenges, including misinformation, cyber security threats, and the delicate balance between transparency and confidentiality. Nonetheless, its impact on international relations is profound, facilitating multilateral cooperation, accelerating response times to crises, and fostering cross-border humanitarian and environmental initiatives.

As digital diplomacy continues to evolve, strategic deployment of these tools remains crucial for enhancing diplomatic effectiveness and strengthening international relations on both governmental and non-governmental levels. (Maksymova, I., Vyshnevskaya, K., Lavrenko, R., Baida, M., & Kulishov, V, 2023).

Social Media as a Tool for Crisis Communications

Social media has turned out to be a vital device in present day disaster verbal exchange, reshaping how governments, public institutions, and agencies proportion facts during emergencies. Its actual-time nature allows government to quickly provide updates, safety instructions, and situational reviews, which facilitates lessen fear and confusion among affected communities. Throughout the Mumbai terrorist attacks, as an instance, social media proved critical for sharing on-ground updates and coordinating immediately responses. Further, after the 11th of September attacks, people used on-line structures to flow into actual-time visuals and support emergency mobilization. Studies also suggests that social media does more than unfold statistics quick it often will increase public agree with because audiences discover it greater handy and instantaneous compared to standard media. Inside the America, corporations have relied closely on systems like Twitter and Facebook throughout natural failures along with Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, the use of them to supply speedy steerage and warnings to thousands and thousands. Pakistan has accompanied comparable practices, specifically at some stage in country wide emergencies like the 2010 floods and the 2018 earthquake, where authorities saved the public engaged through live updates and pressing signals. Past information sharing, social media also supports relationship management by means of allowing two-way communication among governments, emergency responders, and residents. This interaction allows deal with incorrect information, construct transparency, and keep public self-belief at some point of tough moments. Taken collectively, those examples display why effective and strategic use of social media has emerge as essential for

international locations like the United States of America and Pakistan to inform, interact, and reassure their populations while crises spread. (Babatunde, K. A, 2022).

Case Study of United States and Pakistan

Overview of United States and Pakistan

United States

The United States of America is the world's third largest country in size and nearly the third largest in terms of population. It is located in North America, the country is bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Along the northern border is [Canada](#) and the southern border is [Mexico](#). There are [50 states](#) and the [District of Columbia](#). It has high mountains in the West and a vast central plain. The lowest point in the country is in Death Valley which is at -282 feet (-86 meters) and the highest peak is [Denali](#) (Mt. McKinley) at 20,320 feet (6,198 meters). It is divided into six regions: New England, the mid-Atlantic, the South, the Midwest, the Southwest, and the West. There are two houses of Congress: the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are 100 senators, two from each of the 50 states and each serves a six-year term. There are 435 representatives who must be elected every two years. The Supreme Court is made up of nine justices who are picked by the president and must be approved by Congress. For the first time in the nation's history an African American, [Barack Obama](#), was elected [President of the United States](#) in 2008. He was reelected for a second term in 2012. It has the largest coal reserves in the world. It is rich in water resources like the Mississippi River, mineral wealth, national parks system established beginning with Yellowstone, and regional divisions into six main regions. (Elnara, 2022)

Pakistan's Geography

Pakistan lies between 23 degrees 35 minutes to 37 degrees 05 minutes North latitude and 60 degrees 50 minutes to 77 degrees 50 minutes east longitude. It touches the Hindu Kush Mountains in the north and extends from the Pamir's to the Arabian Sea. The country has a total area of 796,095 sq. km and is nearly four times the size of the United Kingdom. From Gwadar Bay in its south-eastern corner, the country extends more than 1,800 km to the Khunjerab Pass on China's border. It consists of such physical regions as a) the western offshoots of Himalayas which cover its northern and north western parts of which the highest peak K-2 rises to 8611 meters above sea level; b) the Baluchistan plateau c) The Potohar Plateau and salt range and d) The Indus plain, the most fertile and densely populated area of the country. It gets its sustenance from the Indus River and its tributaries. Climatically, Pakistan enjoys a considerable measure of variety. North and north western high mountainous ranges are extremely cold in winter while the summer months of April to September are very pleasant. The plains of the Indus valley are extremely hot in summer with a cold and dry weather in winter. The coastal strip in the South has a moderate climate. There is a general deficiency of rainfall. In the plains annual average ranges from 16 centimeters in the northern parts of lower Indus plain to 120 centimeters in the Himalayan region. Rains are monsoonal in origin and fall late in summers. Due to the rainfall and high diurnal range of temperature, humidity is comparatively low. Only the coastal strip has high humidity. Urdu is the national language and is used as a medium of understanding throughout the country. Aside from this, Pakistan is culturally divided into four linguistic provinces. Punjabi is spoken in the Punjab, Sindhi in Sindh, Pashto in NWFP, and Balochi in Baluchistan.

Key Platforms and Campaigns of social media used by United States and Pakistan to promote its diplomacy

Over the last couple of years, digital diplomacy has become a fascinating area of research among Mass Communication, Peace and Conflict Studies, and International Affairs scholars. Social media and new technology open up new avenues for governments, individuals, and organizations to engage with foreign audiences. However, developing countries' governments are still lacking in the realization of the potential of social media. This study aims to analyze the usage of social media (Facebook & Twitter)

by the two biggest countries in South Asia (Pakistan and India). In light of Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic communication framework, the results indicate that no digital engagement and dialogue occurs between government departments and the public through social networking sites. Government departments do not engage with local or foreign audiences through digital media. When comparing both countries, results reveal that India has more institutionalized and organized digital diplomacy. In terms of departmental use of social media, the digital diplomacy division and foreign office of India is more active than other government departments in that nation. Meanwhile, Pakistan's military public relations office and press office is more active than its other government departments. In conclusion, both countries realize the potential of social media in digital diplomacy, but still lack engagement with foreign audiences. (Ittefaq.M, 2019). 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 "#PMIKJalsaInUSA". The tweets and retweets were generated from official political pages of Imran Khan's political party and were supported by individual and media influencers. (Azeema, N., Abbasi, N. A., & Ansari, A. A, 2020).

Strength and Challenges in United States and Pakistan's Digital Diplomacy

Pakistan's Digital Diplomacy

This article explores the prospects and challenges of digital diplomacy in Pakistan. In recent years, Pakistan has recognized the importance of joining digital tools to enhance diplomatic engagement, both domestically and internationally. By analyzing the current landscape and examining case studies, this article highlights the potential benefits of digital diplomacy for Pakistan, including improved public outreach, increased transparency, and enhanced soft power projection. Additionally, it discusses the challenges that may delay its successful implementation, such as limited internet access, cyber threats, and institutional resistance. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities presented, Pakistan can leverage digital diplomacy to effectively represent its interests in a rapidly evolving global arena. (Ashraf, H. S, 2023).

United States Digital Diplomacy

The Internet and new media technologies are playing a growing role in transforming US public diplomacy programs, as part of broader efforts to counter the "Grand Narrative" of radical Islamic extremism. The Internet is at the heart of "digital diplomacy," communicating ideas, promoting policies and fostering debate and discussion aimed at undermining support for Al-Qaeda and crafting a credible alternative narrative. Programmers such as Public Diplomacy 2.0 are becoming increasingly important as the US seeks both to revitalize its tools of soft power and reach out and engage the "youth generation" of the Muslim world. It is the way in which Al-Qaeda has created a virtual battle space that is growing in importance as Western military forces seek to dominate the physical battle space. It explores how US policymakers have begun to hold the importance of fusing soft power, public diplomacy and information strategies, an approach at the heart of the technologically-savvy Obama Administration. It advances the argument that the Internet and social media is emerging as a key lever of US power and influence, alongside traditional "hard" levers of state power but concludes by arguing that to be truly effective the administration's strategy must be backed up by much broader and deep-seated shifts in US foreign policy. (Hallams, E, 2010).

Overview of strategies used by both countries

It explores the history of relations between the United States and Pakistan from the country's founding in 1947 to the year 2021, providing valuable context for understanding the complex nature of this diplomatic alliance. Through the use of a historical lens, the study investigates the major occasions, turning moments, and thematic developments that have influenced the bilateral relations between Pakistan and the US over time. The early years of diplomatic engagement, the examination looks at how Cold War dynamics affected Pakistan and the United States' alignment of interests in the early post-independence era. It explores the significance of Pakistan's role in enabling the U.S. and China to establish diplomatic relations in the 1970s and how it affected world geopolitics. It also examines times of conflict and divergence, such as the 1960s military aid embargo, the 1980s nuclear proliferation worries, and the difficulties brought on by regional conflicts. A particular focus is placed on the period following 9/11, explaining the workings of the strategic alliance established within the framework of the fight against terrorism and the consequent realignment of objectives. It is the relationships of the economic aspects by looking at trade agreements, foreign aid, and how economic assistance shapes bilateral ties. It also takes into account how the internal political climates of both nations affect the retreat and flow of their interactions. This overview attempts to offer a comprehensive understanding of the determined trends, difficulties, and opportunities that have shaped Pakistan-U.S. relations by utilizing a historical perspective. It also examine the diplomatic, geopolitical, economic, and sociocultural factors that have influenced the development of this important relationship over more than seven decades by using a multidimensional analysis. (Ali, I., & Anwar, M. F, 2023).

Use of soft power theory as a tool

This paper explores the impact of U.S soft power on Pakistan's foreign policy. Soft power, as defined Joseph Nye the ability of a country to shape the global order through influence military or economic coercion. The U.S as leading soft power hegemon in the international arena, has traditionally utilized its diplomatic, cultural and economic tools to influence Pakistan foreign policy. Particularly through processes such as strategic partnerships, defense cooperation, and economic alliances, the research focuses on three core pillars of U.S soft power: diplomatic relations, IT exchange programs, and military cooperation. It also explores that how the United States has projected its values, culture and institutional strength to enable its geopolitical interests in Pakistan. The study explores the challenges that have arisen in recent years, such as Chinas growing influence in Pakistan through CPEC, which provides an alternative to the U.S, centric world. It also discusses, rising anti-American sentiments and shifting global power dynamics, including the expansion of BRICS, have created hurdles for U.S soft power influence in Pakistan. It also examines the limitations of U.S soft power in a region where authoritarianism, political instability, and extremist ideologies challenge democratic values. In conclusion the study evaluates how the theoretical foundations of soft power address the complexities of Pak-U.S. relations in contemporary geopolitical dynamics and provides insights into the future of U.S influence in Pakistan. (Hussain, M, 2024).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Social Media on Public Diplomacy

On the one hand, social media is a very useful and powerful tool for public diplomacy. In the US and Pakistan, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are essentially the same platforms and they are very crucial in sharing the official stories of the countries, making the world more aware of their views, and reacting to global events instantly. The research concludes that America not only wins the social media battle but also manages to influence international public opinion through soft power projection; while on the other hand, Pakistan still has a long way to go before being able to use social media as an effective diplomatic instrument primarily because of its weak digital infrastructure, heavy regulation and misinformation.

Economic Interdependence and Digital Engagement

The results emphasize the link between economic status and public diplomacy effectiveness. For the US, its technology leadership and financial power give it the means to carry out advanced digital tactics that maintain its positive image worldwide. On the other hand, Pakistan's digital diplomacy is limited by its economic situation, which in turn has a negative impact on the extent and the quality of its online communication. This reiterates the theory of complex interdependence, wherein the economic power directly determines the public diplomacy initiatives in terms of their scope and their impact.

Technological Interdependence and Information Flow

Technological interdependence became a major factor in influencing the perception of the world. The rapid flow of information, the quick reaction to crises, and the involvement with people from other countries all emphasize the dual role of technology as a state's ally and a competitor. Furthermore, the research revealed that false stories and online wrong information could easily bring down even the hardest of diplomatic efforts, thus, revealing the exposure of states amidst the digital world that is deeply intertwined.

Comparative Insights

The research highlights that digital public diplomacy between the United States and Pakistan is not only determined by technology access but also by communication strategy, institutional capability, and global reputation. The US constant global messaging, which is supported by economic and technological resources, is in stark contrast to Pakistan's fragmented communication, that is, the latter is often slow and not aggressive in pushing its message across.

Future Implications for Global Politics

Through the years, social media's role in international diplomacy will still be as a major factor; it controls the relations of states, the views of the world, and the participation of the public. The nations employing high-tech digital diplomacy will keep on reaping the benefits of their superior technological capacity in international dealings. Digital outreach at a higher level, supported by the importing of good practices from the United States, will enable new players like Pakistan to gain not only international visibility but also strengthening of the soft power that they already have. Ahmad & Hussain (2024); Ayaz (2025) On a global scale, social media is more and more relied upon, and this raises very serious ethical questions concerning its usage, the establishment of proper regulatory frameworks, and how one can maintain transparency when there are concerns about national security. (Huzaifa Bin Salih et al., 2025; Khan, Z. F., 2024). The comparative study has concluded that even if Pakistan and the United States, both countries, recognized social media's power in public diplomacy, the differences in their approaches, the degree of their effectiveness, and the results were greatly due to their different institutional capacities, strategic planning, regulatory frameworks, and political contexts. Consequently, it is possible that strengthening digital strategies, investing human and technological resources, and developing balanced policies would enhance the states' ability to use social media effectively for global perception shaping and foreign policy goal promotion.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The social media analysis proves that public diplomacy in modern times cannot do without it at all. Countries having strong technological infrastructure and economic power such as the USA are in a much better position to manipulate global narratives in their favor and to reduce the impact of negative press on their image. On the other hand, countries like Pakistan have to deal with their limitations while using the internet-based diplomacy to increase the international presence and interaction of their culture and ideas. At the end of the day, the researcher has shown that the economic and technological dependency is strongly associated with the public diplomacy results. The victory in the digital world needs not only state-of-the-art technology and financial power but also a well-thought-out

communication strategy and acceptance in the international arena. As the global communication networks grow larger and larger, the awareness of this interdependence will be one of the prerequisites for any country that wishes to improve its international image and thereby enlarge its diplomatic influence.

REFERENCES

- Mohyidin, R. (2023). Changing Narratives: An Evaluation of Pakistan's Public Diplomacy Efforts under Imran Khan. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 23.
- Gilboa, E. (2008). Searching for a theory of public diplomacy. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 616(1), 55-77.
- Manor, I. (2019). *The digitalization of public diplomacy* (Vol. 15). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tuten and Solomon, (2015). *Penn State World Campus*.
- Linda C. Ashar, J.D, (2024). *American Public University*.
- Kaleem, M. (2023). The impact of the use of soft power in social media on public diplomacy for international co-existence. *International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology*, 10(3), 372-388.
- Jin, D. Y. (2024). The rise of digital platforms as a soft power apparatus in the New Korean Wave era. *Communication and the Public*, 9(2), 161-177.
- Kayani, S. A., & ur Rehman, M. S. (2022). Employing nation branding and public diplomacy: Strategies for Pakistan. *Margalla Papers*, 26(1), 34-46.
- Garud-Patkar, N. (2022). Mediated Public Diplomacy: Frame-Building contest between the United States and Pakistan during a conflict. *International Studies*, 59(1), 58-75.
- Koch, O., & Mattelart, T. (2023). Public diplomacy in a networked world.. The changing strategies and practices of international media influence. *Questions de communication*, (44).
- Palash, S. M. (2021). Public diplomacy in social media: an examination of Twitter use by foreign embassies in the US.
- Garud-Patkar, N. (2022). Mediated Public Diplomacy: Frame-Building contest between the United States and Pakistan during a conflict. *International Studies*, 59(1), 58-75.
- Khalid, R. A. (2021). Twitter Diplomacy on CPEC: Impact on the Triangular Relationships between the Pak-China and the USA. In *Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities* (pp. 195-207). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Ittefaq, M. (2019). Digital diplomacy via social networks: A cross-national analysis of governmental usage of Facebook and Twitter for digital engagement. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 18(1).
- Khan, M. K., & Pratt, C. B. (2022). Strategic communications: The Pakistan military's use of social media against terrorism. *Media, War & Conflict*, 15(4), 450-485.
- Perdani, M. K., Afandi, R., Lusa, S., Sensuse, D. I., Putro, P. A. W., & Indriasari, S. (2024). Social Media as an Instrument of Public Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review. *Policy & Governance Review*, 8(3), 284-302.

- Darmastuti, A., Inayah, A., Simbolon, K., & Nizar, M. (2021, December). Social media, public participation, and digital diplomacy. In 2nd International Indonesia Conference on Interdisciplinary Studies (IICIS 2021) (pp. 38-47). Atlantis Press.
- Rai, M., & Azam, M. (2023). The Inter-Services Public Relations Creating Narratives through Visuals: Pakistan's Nation branding and Public Diplomacy. *UCP Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2(1), 67-82.
- Ali, A., Hussain, Z., & Abbasi, S. A. (2023). National Media Discourse on Foreign Visits in Pakistan Implications for Public Diplomacy. *Journal of Journalism, Media Science & Creative Arts*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Smith, L. (2024). Digital diplomacy: How social media influences international relations in the 21st century. *EDU Journal of International Affairs and Research (EJIAR)*, 3(2), 40-47.
- Bano, M., Chaudhri, Z., & Zowghi, D. (2023). The role of generative AI in global diplomatic practices: A strategic framework. *ArXiv preprint arXiv: 2401.05415*.
- Khan, M. L., Ittefaq, M., Pantoja, Y. I. M., Raziq, M. M., & Malik, A. (2021). Public engagement model to analyze digital diplomacy on Twitter: A social media analytics framework. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 29.
- Rachmawati, I., Kuncoro, H. R., Sari, D. L., & Tahalea, S. P. (2024, September). Digital Diplomacy in the 21st Century: The Transformative Role of Social Media Platforms in Public Engagement. In 2nd International Conference on Advance Research in Social and Economic Science (ICARSE 2023) (pp. 567-576). Atlantis Press.
- Khan, B. R. D. Z. F. (2025). Pakistan in the Age of Algorithms: The Hidden Cost of Social Media. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(1), 2907-2916.
- Khan, S. (2022). Double gam: Why Pakistan supports militants and resists US pressure to stop. *Cato Institute*...
- Britchenko, I. (2025). Digital Diplomacy as a Tool of International Legal Communication: Challenges and Prospects. *J. Int'l Legal Commc'n*, 16, 30.
- Bennett, L. V., & Manoharan, A. P. (2017). The use of social media policies by US municipalities. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 40(4), 317-328.
- Perdani, M. K., Afandi, R., Lusa, S., Sensuse, D. I., Putro, P. A. W., & Indriasari, S. (2024). Social Media as an Instrument of Public Diplomacy in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review. *Policy & Governance Review*, 8(3), 284-302.
- Bano, M., Chaudhri, Z., & Zowghi, D. (2023). The role of generative AI in global diplomatic practices: A strategic framework. *arXiv preprint arXiv: 2401.05415*.
- Yadav, A. (2024). The Impact of Social Media on Public Opinion and Political Campaigns. *International Journal of Social Science Research (IJSSR)*, 1(4), 1-7. Smith, K. N. (2011). Social media and political campaigns.
- Kammerer Jr, E. F., & Michelson, M. R. (2022). You Better Vote: Drag Performers and Voter Mobilization in the 2020 Election. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 55(4), 655-660.

- Slothuus, R. (2016). Assessing the influence of political parties on public opinion: The challenge from pretreatment effects. *Political Communication*, 33(2), 302-327.
- Maksymova, I., Vyshnevskaya, K., Lavrenko, R., Baida, M., & Kulishov, V. (2023). Methodology for Researching Digital Diplomacy in the New Era of Sustainable Development and Climate Change. *Economics and technical engineering*, 1(2), 10-20.
- Babatunde, K. A. (2022). Public relations and social media for effective crisis communication management. *Jurnal Bina Praja*, 14(3), 543-553.
- Elnara. (2022). Geographical Position of the US.
- Ittefaq, M. (2019). Digital diplomacy via social networks: A cross-national analysis of governmental usage of Facebook and Twitter for digital engagement. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 18(1).
- Azeema, N., Abbasi, N. A., & Ansari, A. A. (2020). Twitter diplomacy between Pakistan and the United States: A case study of Imran khan US visit. *Report and Opinion*, 12(8), 1-7.
- Ashraf, H. S. (2023). Digital Diplomacy in Pakistan: Prospects And Challenges. *Global Political Review*, 8(1), 8-18.
- Hallams, E. (2010). Digital diplomacy: the internet, the battle for ideas & US foreign policy. *CEU Political Science Journal*, (04), 538-574.
- Ali, I., & Anwar, M. F. (2023). Pak-US Relations: An Overview in Historical Perspective (1947- 2021). *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(4), 4659-4673.
- Hussain, M. (2024). ANALYZING US SOFT POWER IMPACT ON PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY. *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, 7(3)
- Ahmad, J. B., & Hussain, M. A. (2024). Using artificial intelligence (AI) in cultural diplomacy and the public sector of Pakistan. *Pakistan Perspectives*, 28(2), 1–21.
- Ayaz, A. (2025). New media and digital diplomacy: Analyzing the influence of Chinese state media on Pakistan's national branding and soft power strategy. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 1423–1434.
- Huzaifa Bin Salih, M., Bukhari, S. S., Liaqat, I., Majeed, A., Noman, M., & Siddiqui, A. A. (2025). Deepfake diplomacy and international relations: Assessing the impact of AI-generated media on global trust, diplomatic engagement, and conflict escalation. *Advance Social Science Archive Journal*, 4(1), 2731–2737.
- Khan, S. M., Farid, K., & Najam, W. (2025). From tweets to tactics: Social media's role in shaping public opinion and digital diplomacy. *Pakistan Journal of Social Science Review*, 4(5), 196–1007.
- Khan, Z. F. (2024). The role of media in shaping public diplomacy. *Journal of Law, Social and Management Sciences*, 3(1), 216–223.
- Khan, M. H. B., Siddiqui, A. A., Safdar, A., Hussain, S. A., Ilyas, F., & Mehmood, Z. (2025). Cyber politics and cyber law: Online hate speech and political misinformation in Pakistan. *Advance Social Science Archive Journal*, 4(1), 3585–3596.

- Shad, M. R. (2022). Digital diplomacy as the new face of the diplomatic world: Pakistan's adaptability challenge. *Journal of Strategic Policy and Global Affairs*, 3(1), 1–14.
- Smith, L. (2024). Digital diplomacy: How social media influences international relations in the 21st century. *EDU Journal of International Affairs and Research (EJIAR)*, 3(2), 40–47.
- Sami ul Haq. (2025). Russia's digital diplomacy and cyber governance: Strategic narratives, hybrid tactics, and global implications. *Advance Social Science Archive Journal*, 3(2), 1287– 1302.
- Strategies and challenges in digital diplomacy: A case study. (2025). *Malaysian Journal of International Relations*, 20(3), 310–328.
- Habib.M, Amin, A. ., & Khan, A. U. (2026). Artificial Intelligence and Sixth Generation Warfare: Legal, Political, and Strategic Implications for Global Power Dynamics. *Research Journal for Social Affairs*, 4(1), 57-68.
- Afshan. S, Ali. P. Habib. M.(2025). Critical Analysis of IsraelPalestine Conflict Using the Propaganda Model in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. In *Journal of Academic Research for Humanities*, 5(4), 1–8.