



AFGHANISTAN Quarterly Journal

Establishment 1946
Academic Publication of
Afghanistan Sciences Academy
Serial No: 44,45,46 & 47

Address:
Afghanistan Sciences Academy
Torabaz Khan, Shabobo Str.
Shar-e-Naw, Kabul, Afghanistan
Tell: 0093202201279

Issue: 01,02,03 & 04, No: 44,45,46 & 47, 1403 (2024 - 2025)

AFGHANISTAN



Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
Afghanistan Sciences Academy
Deputy of Human Sciences
Center for Social Sciences

AFGHANISTAN

Economic, Social and Cultural Academic Journal

- Phase: 5th
- Issue: 01, 02, 03 & 04
- No: 44, 45, 46 & 47
- Year: 1403 (2024 - 2025)
- Establishment Year: 1946
- Kabul - Afghanistan



Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

Afghanistan Sciences Academy

Deputy of Human Sciences

Center for Social Sciences

Afghanistan Quarterly

Establishment year	1946
---------------------------	-------------

Phase 5th, Issue. 01,02,03 & 04, No. 44,45,46 & 47, Year :2024-25 (1403)

Note for contributors

- 1- Afghanistan quarterly is an academic journal, publishing articles related to historical, social, political, economic and cultural issues of Afghanistan based on the ASA policy.
- 2- Editorial board has the right of selecting, editing and manipulating of the articles.
- 3- Received articles are not returned to the authors.
- 4- Opinion expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ASA.
- 5- The contents of the articles should include abstract, keywords, introduction, conclusion and references as follow:
 - Contents of Abstract should represent the whole picture of the topic and it should not be more than 200 words.
 - Introduction should encompass general idea about the topic, research question, research objective and contribution.
 - Conclusion should represent the brief finding of the research.
 - References should be arranged based on alphabetical order, starting from A to Z. References should be arranged as follow: Second name, first name of the author, year of publication, title of the book, name of publication, name of translator, place of publication and number of pages.
- 6- Article should be provided in MS. word format using (Times New Roman) with a font of 13 simple for main contents, font of 14 bold for titles and font of 13 bold for subtitles, also, 1.4 line spacing for the contents.

Reminder: Arguments and perceptions that conflict with national values of the country and harm national unity of the Afghans are unwelcome.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Editorial Board:

- Associate Professor Dr.Mohammad Hakim Haider
- Associate Professor Mohammad Walid Hemat
- Assistant Professor Alam jan Zhman

Editor- in-Chief:

Assistant Professor Hekmatullah Aziz

Email: afghanistan.journal@asa.gov.af

Phone: +93 7860881079

Co – editor:

Assistant Professor Ziaulhaq Zaland

Publisher:

Directory for Information and Public communication, Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan

Place of Publication:

Sitara Hemat Printing Press

Design:

Assistant Professor Hekmatullah Aziz

Subscription:

For Foreign Countries: 100\$

For Student: 40 AFN

For teacher and academic members 70 AFN

Inside the country 80 AFN

Address:

Afghanistan Sciences Academy, Shar-e-Now, Kabul Afghanistan

Email: informationasakabul@gmail.com

NO	Title	Author	Pages
1	Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying Gaps ...	<u>Associate. Prof. Dr. M. Hakim Haider</u>	1
2	Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global Powers...	<u>Associate. Prof. Abdul khaliq ferdaus</u>	23
3	Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan: The...	<u>Assistant prof. Sanaullah Salihi</u>	41
4	Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of New ...	<u>Assistant prof. Hekmatullah Aziz</u>	60
5	The Role of social media in Disseminating Information ...	<u>Assistant Prof.Ab. Rahman Alkozai</u>	78
6	The Role of Educational Technology in the Effectiveness of ...	<u>Junior Assistant Prof. Elyas Ahmad Yaqoubi</u>	100

Author: Associate Prof. Dr. Mohmand Hakim Haider

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying Gaps and Guiding Inquiry

Abstract

A literature review grounds research in existing knowledge, highlighting gaps and guiding the study's focus. It also validates the research's relevance within scholarly discourse. The goal of studying the review of literature is to gain a deep understanding of previous scholarly work, identify knowledge gaps, and establish a strong theoretical and conceptual foundation for new research. This study employs a systematic methodology that involves searching, selecting, and critically analyzing relevant academic sources across disciplines. By synthesizing key findings and evaluating methodological trends, the review highlights unresolved questions and underexplored areas that warrant further investigation. The expected outcome is a refined research direction informed by evidence-based insights, fostering original contributions to the field. Ultimately, reviewing the literature enhances the clarity, credibility, and relevance of academic inquiry by guiding researchers toward purposeful and well-structured investigations.

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

Keywords: Literature review, Research gaps, Conceptual framework, Scholarly inquiry, Knowledge synthesis

Introduction

In academic research, the literature review is far more than a ceremonial summary of existing knowledge; it is a foundational mechanism for intellectual discovery. Under the title *“Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying Gaps and Guiding Inquiry,”* this article examines how the literature review serves as a strategic tool for advancing scholarly exploration. It plays a dual role: first, in mapping the terrain of what is known; and second, in illuminating the contours of what remains unexplored.

By synthesizing theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and methodological approaches from existing studies, researchers can construct a clear conceptual landscape that not only contextualizes the problem but also reveals substantive gaps, contradictions, and overlooked dimensions. These gaps often inspire critical research questions, guiding the direction and design of future studies. In this sense, the literature review is not just retrospective; it becomes prospective, shaping the trajectory of academic inquiry.

Moreover, the literature review fosters analytical rigor and coherence by helping scholars avoid redundancy, refine their conceptual frameworks, and justify the relevance of their investigations. It encourages researchers to situate their work within ongoing scholarly conversations and respond to

unresolved issues with innovative approaches. When executed effectively, it provides a compelling rationale for inquiry rooted in scholarly need rather than mere curiosity.

This article explores various frameworks for conducting literature reviews, such as Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology (TCCM), - Search–Appraisal–Synthesis–Analysis (SALSA), and conceptual mapping, and demonstrates how these models enhance gap identification and guide empirical and theoretical research. By establishing the literature review as an active scaffold for inquiry, we reposition it as a generative force in the research process, integral to producing meaningful, original, and impactful scholarship

Review of Literature

A literature review is a vital scholarly tool that synthesizes past research, reveals gaps, and guides inquiry. It establishes theoretical foundations, informs research design, and fosters originality by positioning studies within existing debates. This process transforms intuition into structured investigation and advances knowledge with clarity and purpose.

Scholars such as **Boote and Beile (2005)** emphasize that a “substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research.” **Hart (1998)** describes the literature review as a means to appreciate the sequence and growth of knowledge. **Jesson (2011)** argues that literature reviews help identify areas have not yet been investigated, guiding future research. **Fink**

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

(2005) outlines multiple purposes for literature reviews, including anchoring the theoretical foundation of a study. **Okoli and Schabram (2010)** stress the dual role of synthesizing material and offering scholarly critique. **Aveyard (2010)** highlights the importance of theoretical frameworks in shaping literature reviews. **Cooper (1998)** views the review as a tool for building innovative ideas from existing knowledge. **Jose L. Galvan (2006)** provides practical guidance for evaluating and organizing literature in the social sciences. **Ridley (2012)** discusses how literature reviews justify research questions and methodologies.

Finally, **Machi and McEvoy (2009)** present the review as a blueprint for constructing scholarly arguments. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and methodological approaches from these scholars, researchers can construct a clear conceptual landscape that not only contextualizes the problem but reveals substantive gaps, contradictions, and overlooked dimensions. These gaps often inspire critical research questions, guiding the direction and design of future studies. In this sense, the literature review is not just retrospective, it becomes prospective, shaping the trajectory of academic inquiry.

Research Question

How can a systematic literature review serve as a framework for identifying research gaps and guiding the development of new scholarly inquiries?

Research Objective

- To explore how systematic and critical literature review processes contribute to:
- Understanding previous academic work across a particular discipline
- Identifying unresolved questions or underexplored areas
- Establishing a solid conceptual and theoretical foundation for future research
- Informing the development of original, evidence-based research directions

Hypothesis

A rigorously conducted literature review enhances the quality and originality of academic research by systematically uncovering knowledge gaps and providing theoretical grounding for new inquiries.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual methodology aimed at exploring how literature reviews function as strategic frameworks for identifying gaps and informing research direction within the social sciences. The approach is rooted in an integrative review design, which allows for the synthesis of diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives across disciplines.

Data Collection

1. Source Selection: Academic publications including peer-reviewed journal articles, research monographs, dissertations, and methodological guides, were drawn from recognized databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar.

2. Search Criteria: Keywords included “literature review,” “research gap analysis,” “academic inquiry,” “review frameworks,” “social science methodology,” and “TCCM.”

3. Timeframe: Studies published between 1995 and 2025 were included to encompass both foundational and contemporary contributions.

Definitions of Literature Review

A literature review is a cornerstone of scholarly work, offering a structured examination of existing research. It synthesizes knowledge, highlights key debates, and clarifies research gaps. This section presents definitions from prominent scholars to illustrate the review’s role in shaping inquiry and advancing academic understanding across disciplines.

A literature review is “the selection of available documents... on the topic, which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views” (Chris Hart,1998).

A literature review should be “substantive, thorough, sophisticated... a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research” (Boote & Beile,2005).

A literature review is defined as a “systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work” (Arlene Fink, 2010).

A literature review is Described as “a critical summary and assessment of the range of existing materials dealing with knowledge and understanding in a given field (Diana Ridley, 2012).

A literature review is “a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic” (Lawrence Machi & Brenda McEvoy, 2016).

The Role of Literature Reviews in Research Proposals

A literature review is a cornerstone of any research proposal, serving both a foundational and strategic purpose. At its core, it demonstrates the researcher’s familiarity with existing scholarship, establishing credibility and scholarly context. It outlines what has been studied, what remains ambiguous, and where gaps exist, thereby justifying the necessity and originality of the proposed research.

By synthesizing prior findings, theoretical perspectives, and methodological trends, literature reviews help shape research questions and hypotheses. They guide researchers in refining their scope, selecting appropriate designs, and avoiding redundant inquiries. This process also aids in identifying key variables, common measures, and influential frameworks

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

within the field. As such, the review isn't merely retrospective; it plays a forward-looking role by informing and supporting every aspect of the research design (Cooper, H, 1998).

Moreover, literature reviews hold broader implications beyond individual projects. They contribute to the cumulative development of knowledge within disciplines, surfacing patterns and controversies that can catalyze innovation. When well-executed, they challenge dominant paradigms, promote interdisciplinary dialogue, and foster theory-building. Their critical nature encourages reflection on methodological rigour and epistemological diversity.

In academic and funding contexts, literature reviews are used to assess feasibility, relevance, and alignment with priority areas. Review panels look for clarity, logic, and insight drawn from existing literature, making the review a decisive factor in research approval and resource allocation. Ultimately, the literature review is not an academic formality, it is an intellectual framework that anchors the research proposal in scholarship and situates it within ongoing conversations. Its significance lies in both illuminating the current state of knowledge and creating pathways for meaningful inquiry (Galvan, J. L, 2006).

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks are foundational elements in the construction of a rigorous literature review, particularly within social science research. While they are often

discussed together, each serves a distinct yet complementary purpose in guiding scholarly inquiry.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

A **theoretical framework** provides a lens through which researchers interpret and understand phenomena. It draws upon established theories to explain relationships between variables, justify research questions, and situate the study within a broader intellectual tradition. For instance, using Bandura's Social Learning Theory in educational research helps frame how individuals acquire behaviors through observation and modeling. As Aveyard (2010) notes, theoretical frameworks offer a perspective for understanding research topics, anchoring them in existing knowledge (Ridley, D,2012).

In contrast, a **conceptual framework** organizes ideas, constructs, and assumptions into a coherent structure that guides the research process. It is often developed by the researcher and reflects how key concepts interrelate within the context of the study. Conceptual frameworks are especially useful for clarifying the scope of inquiry and communicating the logic behind methodological choices. They serve as a blueprint for operationalizing variables and mapping out the research design (Cronin et al., 2008).

Both frameworks are essential for connecting research proposals to broader fields of knowledge. They ensure that studies are not conducted in isolation but are informed by and contribute to ongoing academic conversations. By integrating

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

theoretical and conceptual frameworks into the literature review, researchers enhance the clarity, relevance, and impact of their work, transforming the review from a summary of past studies into a strategic foundation for new inquiry (Hart, C,1998).

Justification of Research

A well-crafted literature review plays a pivotal role in the **justification of research**, serving as both a scholarly foundation and a strategic rationale for inquiry. It demonstrates that the proposed study is not conducted in isolation but emerges from a thoughtful engagement with existing knowledge. As Ridley (2008) emphasizes, the literature review highlights the significance and relevance of the research by identifying gaps, unresolved questions, or limitations in prior studies. This process not only validates the need for further investigation but also positions the research within a broader academic conversation (Galvan, J. L, 2006).

By systematically analyzing previous work, the literature review enables researchers to critique established theories, methodologies, and findings. Okoli and Schabram (2010) argue that this critical engagement anchors the research in context and provides a platform for theoretical refinement or innovation. It allows scholars to challenge assumptions, propose alternative perspectives, and build upon existing frameworks with clarity and purpose.

Moreover, the literature review enhances the credibility of the research proposal by demonstrating methodological awareness and intellectual rigor. It informs the selection of research design, data collection strategies, and analytical techniques, ensuring that the study is both feasible and grounded in scholarly precedent. This justification is especially crucial when seeking funding, ethical approval, or institutional support, as it assures stakeholders that the research is necessary, relevant, and likely to contribute meaningful insights (Cronin et al., 2008).

In essence, the literature review transforms a research idea into a justified academic endeavor. It bridges past scholarship with future inquiry, ensuring that the proposed study is not only original but also responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of the discipline. Through this lens, justification becomes more than a procedural requirement; it becomes a compelling narrative of scholarly purpose.

Systematic Literature Review

A **systematic literature review (SLR)** is a structured and methodical approach to synthesizing existing research on a specific topic. Unlike traditional or narrative reviews, which may be selective or subjective, systematic reviews follow a clearly defined protocol to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and comprehensiveness. As Cronin et al. (2008) emphasize, SLRs provide a **complete and critically appraised list of studies** relevant to a subject area, using

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria to evaluate the quality and relevance of each source.

The primary goal of a systematic review is to **summarize the current state of knowledge**, identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps, and offer insights that inform future research directions. This process begins with the formulation of a focused research question, followed by a comprehensive search across multiple databases using predefined keywords. Studies are then screened based on eligibility criteria, and relevant data are extracted and synthesized, either narratively or through statistical techniques like meta-analysis (Ridley, 2008; Okoli & Schabram, 2010).

One of the most significant contributions of SLRs is their ability to **highlight inconsistencies and underexplored areas** in the literature. By systematically comparing findings across studies, researchers can detect methodological limitations, conflicting results, or populations that have been overlooked. These insights are crucial for developing **well-grounded research questions** and refining theoretical frameworks. For example, if existing studies on digital learning show mixed outcomes across age groups, an SLR might reveal the need for age-specific interventions or longitudinal designs (Galvan, J. L, 2006).

Moreover, systematic reviews enhance the **credibility and reliability** of academic inquiry. They reduce bias by adhering to transparent procedures and allow other scholars to replicate

or build upon the findings. In disciplines like healthcare, education, and social sciences, SLRs are often used to inform policy decisions, clinical guidelines, and evidence-based practices.

In sum, systematic literature reviews are not merely academic exercises; they are **powerful tools for knowledge synthesis and innovation**. By rigorously mapping the intellectual terrain of a field, they enable researchers to move beyond anecdotal evidence and contribute meaningfully to scholarly and practical advancements.

Important Points in Review of Literature

When conducting a literature review, researchers must approach the task with strategic precision and scholarly awareness. One of the most important considerations is **relevance**, selecting sources that are directly aligned with the research questions and objectives. This ensures that the review contributes meaningfully to the study's conceptual foundation. Next, **credibility** and **quality of sources** must be assessed. Peer-reviewed articles, academic books, and recognized research reports provide reliable insights, whereas non-academic sources may lack rigor. Researchers should also consider the **recency of literature**, as outdated studies may not reflect current trends, methods, or debates. **Theoretical alignment** is another vital factor. Sources should be evaluated for their theoretical frameworks to determine whether they support, challenge, or expand the study's perspective.

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

Additionally, recognizing **methodological diversity** across studies, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, can reveal strengths, limitations, and potential areas for innovation (Cronin, P., Ryan, F., 2008).

Researchers must also identify **gaps, contradictions, and patterns** within the literature. These observations help justify the need for the proposed research and refine its focus. Finally, ethical citation practices and critical engagement, not mere summarization, are essential. Synthesizing findings and drawing logical connections showcase the researcher's depth of understanding and scholarly contribution. Altogether, thoughtful review practices ensure the literature review becomes a cornerstone of credible and impactful research (Cronin et al., 2008).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

When conducting a literature review, establishing clear **inclusion and exclusion criteria** is essential for ensuring scholarly rigor and maintaining relevance. These criteria serve as filters that guide the selection of sources, enabling researchers to focus on studies that meaningfully contribute to their inquiry while avoiding irrelevant or unreliable materials (Galvan, J. L., 2006).

Inclusion Criteria

This review prioritizes **academic works that explicitly discuss the structure, function, and strategic purpose** of literature reviews. Selected sources must engage critically with

how reviews inform research design, identify knowledge gaps, and shape theoretical or methodological frameworks. Preference is given to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and research reports within the social sciences, including fields such as education, sociology, political science, and psychology. Studies that propose or apply recognized frameworks for literature reviews (e.g., TCCM, SALSA) are considered particularly valuable, as they offer practical tools for guiding inquiry and enhancing research synthesis (Galvan, J. L., 2006).

Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality and relevance of the review, **non-academic publications** such as blogs, opinion pieces, and general internet articles are excluded. Likewise, **conceptual models deemed outdated**, those lacking contemporary citations or relevance to current methodologies, are filtered out. Finally, works outside the context of social science research, including disciplines with significantly different epistemological foundations (e.g., hard sciences without cross-disciplinary relevance), are excluded to maintain consistency and thematic cohesion (Cronin et al., 2008).

By applying these criteria systematically, the literature review remains focused, evidence-based, and aligned with the objectives of guiding scholarly inquiry and identifying research gaps. This careful curation helps ensure that the resulting

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

synthesis is both credible and constructive for future investigations (Ridley, 2008; Okoli & Schabram, 2010).

Analytical Technique in Literature Reviews

Analytical techniques in literature reviews are essential for transforming a collection of sources into a coherent and insightful synthesis. These techniques help researchers move beyond summarizing existing studies to uncovering patterns, contradictions, and conceptual innovations. One widely used approach is **thematic coding**, which involves identifying recurring themes, concepts, or issues across multiple sources. This method allows researchers to group findings into categories, making it easier to compare perspectives and detect gaps in knowledge. Themes may emerge inductively from the literature or be guided by predefined research questions.

Another powerful tool is the **TCCM framework**, Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology. This technique organizes literature by examining the theoretical foundations of studies, the settings in which they were conducted, the variables or constructs explored, and the methods used. TCCM enables a structured comparison of research and highlights areas that are underexplored or methodologically weak (Hart, C, 1998).

Common Approaches to Literature Reviews

Literature reviews can be conducted using various approaches, each suited to different research goals and disciplines. From broad narrative overviews to highly structured systematic reviews, these methods help researchers synthesize knowledge,

identify gaps, and shape inquiry. The following table outlines the most common approaches used in academic literature reviews.

Approach	Description	Best Used For
Narrative Review	Offers a broad, descriptive summary of existing literature without a strict methodology.	Exploratory topics, conceptual discussions
Systematic Review	Follows a rigorous, predefined protocol to identify, evaluate, and synthesize studies.	Evidence-based research, healthcare, policy
Meta-Analysis	Statistically combines results from multiple quantitative studies to identify trends.	Quantitative research with comparable data
Scoping Review	Maps the scope, range, and nature of research on a topic; identifies gaps.	Emerging fields, broad questions
Critical Review	Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of existing literature to challenge assumptions.	Theoretical development, paradigm critique

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

Approach	Description	Best Used For
Integrative Review	Synthesizes both qualitative and quantitative studies to generate new frameworks.	Mixed-methods research, interdisciplinary studies
Rapid Review	Condensed version of a systematic review for time-sensitive decision-making.	Policy briefs, urgent research needs
Umbrella Review	Summarizes findings from multiple systematic reviews and meta-analyses.	High-level synthesis across topics
Theoretical Review	Focuses on existing theories and their relationships to develop new hypotheses.	Conceptual research, theory building
Mapping Review	Categorizes literature to identify trends and gaps for future research commissioning.	Research planning, funding proposals

Conclusion

This article has established that literature reviews are central to academic research, functioning as both a reflective and

generative process. In the **review of literature**, we recognize its power not only to summarize existing scholarship but to illuminate research gaps and guide future inquiry. Definitions provided by renowned scholars reinforce its status as an intellectual foundation for any rigorous study. The **research methodology** employed in this exploration, including integrative review strategies and structured analytical tools, demonstrates how a literature review can evolve from a descriptive task into a purposeful academic instrument. Frameworks such as TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methodology) enable systematic organization and analysis of sources, while **thematic coding** reveals conceptual patterns and contradictions that deepen understanding.

Within **research proposals**, literature reviews play a vital role in grounding the study in scholarly discourse, framing questions, and clarifying the relevance of the investigation. Their importance is further magnified by **theoretical and conceptual frameworks**, which serve as lenses for interpreting phenomena and organizing inquiry, connecting research to broader fields of knowledge (Aveyard, 2010). The **justification of research** relies heavily on the literature review's ability to identify deficiencies in existing studies and build a compelling rationale for new exploration. By revealing overlooked perspectives and questioning dominant assumptions, the review provides a solid scholarly foundation for future work.

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

A **systematic literature review** adds further depth by applying transparent, reproducible methods to identify relevant studies and synthesize findings. It supports evidence-based conclusions and facilitates the development of clear, focused research questions. Finally, well-defined **inclusion and exclusion criteria** ensure the review's rigor and relevance, while careful **analytical techniques** turn scattered insights into structured arguments. Together, these elements transform the literature review into a dynamic scholarly practice, one that informs, challenges, and advances the field of research with clarity, precision, and strategic insight.

In more advanced reviews, researchers may also apply **meta-analysis** or **meta-synthesis** to statistically or interpretively combine findings from multiple studies. These techniques are especially useful in systematic reviews where precision and reproducibility are key. Ultimately, analytical techniques elevate literature reviews from descriptive summaries to strategic tools for inquiry, helping scholars build stronger arguments and design more impactful research.

References

1. Aveyard, H. (2010). *Doing a literature review in health and social care: A practical guide* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press
2. Boote, D. N., & Beile, P. (2005). *Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation*. Educational

Researcher, 34(6), 3–15.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034006003>

3. Cooper, H. (1998). *Synthesizing research: A guide for literature reviews* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
4. Cronin, P., Ryan, F., & Coughlan, M. (2008). *Undertaking a literature review: A step-by-step approach*. British Journal of Nursing, 17(1), 38–43.
<https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2008.17.1.28059>
5. Fink, A. (2005). *Conducting research literature reviews: From the Internet to paper* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
6. Galvan, J. L. (2006). *Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences* (4th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing
7. Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination*. London: SAGE Publications
8. Jesson, J., Matheson, L., & Lacey, F. M. (2011). *Doing your literature review: Traditional and systematic techniques*. London: SAGE Publications
9. Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2009). *The literature review: Six steps to success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Literature Review as a Framework for Identifying...

10. Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2016). *The literature review: Six steps to success* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
11. Okoli, C., & Schabram, K. (2010). *A guide to conducting a systematic literature review of information systems research*. *Sprouts: Working Papers on Information Systems*, 10(26), 1–49.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1954824>
12. Ridley, D. (2012). *The literature review: A step-by-step guide for students* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications

Author: Associate Prof. Abdul Khaliq Ferdaus

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global Powers in the South Caucasus: Implications for Afghanistan

Abstract

Following the emergence of three independent states in the South Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia several countries perceived a security vacuum in the region. As a result, it drew the attention of both regional and global powers, including Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States. This article aims to explore the objectives pursued by these powers through their growing involvement and competition in the region. Using a descriptive-analytical method, the article examines the multidimensional rivalries of the key actors. The findings indicate that Russia, Iran, and Turkey not only share borders with the South Caucasus but also maintain deep-rooted historical, ethnic, and religious ties with the region. These factors contribute to their strategic interest in strengthening bilateral relations with the Caucasian states to secure exclusive access to regional resources and opportunities. In contrast, the United States is concerned about the increasing influence of Russia and Iran in the region and engages in strategic

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

competition over energy resources and the geopolitical significance of the South Caucasus.

Keywords: South Caucasus, Russia, Iran, Turkey, United States, regional rivalry, strategic interests, energy, transit, Afghanistan.

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 not only brought significant changes in global politics but also led to the geographical fragmentation of the USSR into fifteen independent states. These changes gave rise to new countries in the regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus, sparking competition among regional and global powers over the resources and strategic value of these areas. Russia, positioning itself as the heir of the region, aims to reassert its influence. Iran and Turkey, leveraging their historical, cultural, and religious ties with the region, seek to strengthen their presence and expand their influence. Meanwhile, the United States employs the promotion of democracy and human rights as an instrument to expand its strategic presence in the region.

Consequently, these states are engaged in an intense geopolitical competition, each seeking to outmaneuver the others and assert its dominance. This research seeks to answer two fundamental questions: What are the underlying objectives behind the competition of these powers in the Caucasus region? And how do their rivalries impact Afghanistan?

The research hypothesizes that Russia is striving to revive its former influence in the region; the United States aims to expand NATO and counter Iranian and Russian influence; Turkey seeks to boost its popularity in the Islamic world, particularly among Turkic nations; and Iran is pursuing religious expansion and attempting to obstruct the continued presence of the United States in the region.

A descriptive-analytical method has been employed for this study. The paper is structured as follows: it begins with an overview of the Caucasus region and its strategic importance; followed by an analysis of the goals and strategies of the regional (Russia, Iran, and Turkey) and global (United States) powers; and finally, it explores how this geopolitical rivalry affect Afghanistan.

Overview of the Caucasus Region and Its Geopolitical Importance

The Caucasus region lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, two bodies of water that significantly enhance the area's climatic, economic, and strategic importance. The region is divided by the Greater Caucasus mountain range, which stretches approximately 150 kilometers, into two parts: The North Caucasus and the South Caucasus.

The North Caucasus is currently part of the Russian Federation and includes several republics such as Dagestan, Chechnya-Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Adygea. The South Caucasus comprises the

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

independent republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, all of which gained independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. (Arin Zai, Ehsanullah. 2003, p. 525)

Historically, the Caucasus has played a significant role in global affairs. During the 2nd century AD, the Silk Road passed through both the northern and southern parts of the Caucasus, connecting the Black Sea with China, and linking Europe with the Near and Middle East. (Bekiarova, 2019, p. 1019)

In recent history, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 precipitated a significant geopolitical transformation in the region, resulting in the emergence of newly independent states and fundamentally reshaping the Caucasus' geopolitical landscape.

A significant feature of the contemporary South Caucasus is its pivotal role in transit and energy transportation. The region serves as a crucial corridor for pipelines that transport energy resources from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to European countries. In particular, Azerbaijan possesses abundant energy reserves. Globally, Azerbaijan holds approximately 0.6% of the world's oil reserves, estimated at about one billion tons or seven billion barrels. Additionally, it contains roughly 0.8% of global natural gas reserves, amounting to approximately 1.37 trillion cubic meters. Surveys of the Caspian Sea, which lies within the region, indicate that it holds about 10% of the world's total oil reserves. (Bekiarova, 2019, p. 1019)

Given its significant transit potential, control over this region offers dominant powers an opportunity to exert substantial

influence within the intercontinental transportation system. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan further highlighted the transit importance of this region, as NATO aircraft utilized its airspace in operations against Afghanistan. Moreover, territories such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkmenistan in Central Asia were used for transporting non-military cargo along the so-called Northern Distribution Network.

The three South Caucasus countries Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia are bordered by Russia, Iran, and Turkey, all of whom share historical, ethnic, religious, and linguistic ties with these states. Consequently, each of these regional powers strives to maximize its influence in the area. Meanwhile, the United States is also intent on leveraging the region's advantages and opportunities by cultivating closer ties with these countries through various policies to achieve its strategic objectives. The following section analyzes the specific goals of these key actors and the nature of their competition in the South Caucasus.

Russia

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus region was considered part of the Soviet sphere of influence and included three allied republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia) within its territory. After the dissolution of the USSR, Russia sought to maintain its influence in these countries by jointly establishing a Collective Security Organization in 1992 with the states of the region. One of the key objectives of this organization is to collectively safeguard the independence,

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

territorial integrity, and sovereignty of its member states and to defend against external aggression. (SCTO official web page)

In Russian foreign policy, the South Caucasus is regarded as a vital area for the country's survival and is often referred to as part of the "Near Abroad." (Kazemi, 2005, p. 114) Given that the Caucasus was historically under Soviet influence, Russia continues to strive to regain control over this strategically important region. This concern intensified after the Soviet collapse when the South Caucasus countries Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan began to gradually distance themselves from Russian influence and move closer to the West, despite being aware of Russia's dominance in the neighborhood.

On the other hand, the shared borders between the Caucasus region and Russia, the presence of energy resources, and the contiguous borders with Central Asia, Iran, and Turkey (a NATO member) have attracted significant attention from Western countries and NATO. To maintain its control over the South Caucasus and achieve its strategic goals, Russia has established military bases in Armenia and engaged in conflict with Georgia in 2008, subsequently recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In summary, Russia employs three main strategies to implement its policies in the Caucasus:

1. **Military Intervention:** For example, the 2008 war with Georgia and the ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

2. **Economic Pressure:** Imposing restrictions on oil and gas exports and economic sanctions.
3. **Political Influence:** Strengthening its influence through political parties, media, and diplomatic channels.

Russia views the South Caucasus as critical to its national security because instability in the region could spill over into the North Caucasus within Russia itself. Therefore, Moscow endeavors to prevent the South Caucasus countries from moving closer to Western powers, particularly the United States and NATO. To this end, Russia actively cultivates support among ethnic Russians in the region, considering this backing a key factor in its regional policy. (Rai, 2013, p. 25)

Through this approach, Russia aims to sustain its long-term influence over the South Caucasus and impact the decision-making processes of these countries. This influence also serves to mitigate Russian fears that ethnic groups in the South Caucasus might inspire similar separatist sentiments among ethnic groups in Russia's North Caucasus republics, potentially threatening Moscow's territorial integrity

Iran

From Iran's perspective, the South Caucasus region was historically part of Iranian territory before the Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828), after which the area was separated from Iran and incorporated into the Russian Empire. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran saw an opportunity to strengthen its influence in the region and

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

began efforts to bolster its political, economic, and cultural position. Leveraging shared borders, ethnic, religious, and historical ties, Iran aimed to deepen its relationships with the South Caucasus states and counterbalance the influence of other actors, particularly the United States and Turkey.

Iran shifted its policy in the South Caucasus notably when the idea of “Greater Azerbaijan” a union between Iran’s Azerbaijani province and the Republic of Azerbaijan emerged in Azerbaijan. This issue intensified alongside the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. To prevent the spread of nationalist sentiments among ethnic Azerbaijanis within Iran, Tehran censored certain media outlets to avoid fueling public opinion in favor of Azerbaijani nationalism. Iran feared that ethnic Azerbaijanis inside its borders would align with those in Azerbaijan against Armenia, potentially fostering separatist movements that could lead to territorial disintegration. (Saqib & Ferdaus, 2017, p. 8)

At the same time, Azerbaijan sought to reduce Russian influence by strengthening ties with the United States and European countries, which further heightened Iran’s concerns. Tehran suspected that the U.S. might use Azerbaijan as a key military foothold in the South Caucasus in the event of a conflict with Iran. (Bahman, 2015, p.35)

Furthermore, recognizing its own significant transit capacity and the transit potential of the South Caucasus states, Iran adopted a strategy aimed at keeping these countries embroiled

in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This approach sought to prevent them from fully exploiting their geopolitical location and transit potential, thereby weakening Iran's regional influence.

In pursuit of this goal, Iran not only refrained from actively mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict but also supported Armenia against Azerbaijan. Conversely, Turkey, sharing ethnic, linguistic, and religious bonds with Azerbaijan, allied with Baku and provided military support during the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war, including supplying Turkish Bayraktar (TB-2) drones and F-16 fighter jets. Consequently, Iran lost ground in the South Caucasus to Turkey and Azerbaijan, as Azerbaijan emerged victorious in the conflict and reclaimed territory in Nagorno-Karabakh. (Mathieu, 2023, p. 1)

On another front, Iran faces competition from Israel in the region. Israel has sought to establish strong ties with Azerbaijan, a fellow Muslim-majority country, by importing energy and supplying arms. Over the past five years, Azerbaijan has reportedly imported about 70% of its weapons from Israel, including drones, Barak-8 missiles, and other military equipment. (Mathieu, 2023, page 1) The close relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan has become a source of concern for Iran, which fears that Israel may use Azerbaijani territory as a strategic base against it.

Turkey

Turkey shares a border with the South Caucasus countries, so any developments in the region directly affect it. Turkey

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

pursues its policy in the South Caucasus based on ethnic, religious, and linguistic commonalities, particularly supporting Azerbaijan. This support aligns with Turkey's broader Pan-Turkism agenda aimed at uniting all Turkic peoples in the region. Recently, leaders of both countries have openly expressed their commitment to this cause. For example, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated during a joint press conference with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Turkey and Azerbaijan will take the necessary steps to establish the Zangezur corridor to unite the entire Turkic world." (Michael, 2021, p.1)

The creation of this corridor was agreed upon in Clause 9 of the ceasefire agreement that ended the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The agreement stipulates: "All economic and transit routes in the region will be reopened, and the Republic of Armenia shall guarantee the security of transport connections between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, allowing free movement of residents, vehicles, and cargo from both sides."

With the establishment of this corridor, Turkey will be able to connect directly with Azerbaijan and other Turkic countries in Central Asia, strengthening ties among these nations and providing a significant boost to the Pan-Turkism agenda. Additionally, this corridor will offer Turkey a direct and faster trade route to China, bypassing Iranian territory. Consequently, Iran's

importance as a transit country will diminish because the Zangezur route is shorter and more efficient. (Koolae, 2024, p. 3-6)

Iran perceives Pan-Turkism as a geopolitical threat aimed at undermining its own regional influence. Therefore, the construction of the Zangezur corridor highlights the economic competition between Iran and Turkey in the South Caucasus, particularly over transit capacities and regional cooperation. Following the Nagorno-Karabakh war, the strengthened positions of Turkey and Azerbaijan indicate that these two countries are poised to counterbalance Iran's influence in the region.

United States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the independence of the South Caucasus countries, the United States gained an excellent opportunity to compete with Russia and Iran in the region and to limit their expanding influence. On one hand, the three South Caucasus countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) sought to gradually free themselves from Russian influence by formulating independent policies. On the other hand, the United States aimed to assist these countries in various sectors to prevent their falling back under Russian influence in the future.

To achieve this goal, the U.S. sought to expand NATO's influence eastward and supported several agreements signed by the regional countries, such as the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development. Established in 1997 by Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova—and later

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

joined by Uzbekistan in 1999, GUAM includes Turkey and Lithuania as observer members. The organization's main objectives are to promote democratic values, strive for stable and sustainable development, and enhance international and regional security.

The GUAM organization holds special significance for the U.S. because it views it as a means to expand NATO's influence in the region and weaken Russia. Consequently, the United States periodically provides military assistance to GUAM member countries. In addition to military support, the U.S. cooperates with these countries in financial, technical, and military field's support which has continued since their independence, including the transfer of some used U.S. military equipment to these countries. (Rumer, Sokolsky, & Stronski, 2017, p. 6

U.S. engagement in the South Caucasus has positively impacted the reduction of Russian influence in the region. Even Russia's most loyal ally in the area—largely dependent on Russian economic aid and hosting Russian military bases—has attempted to distance itself from Russia's dominance. A good example is the recent humanitarian aid sent to Ukraine, including smartphones, computers, and tablets. (The New Voice of Ukraine, 2023) Furthermore, from December 11 to 20, 2023, the U.S. and Armenia conducted joint military exercises involving 85 American and 175 Armenian troops. (Reuters, 2023) Besides Russia, the United States is also working to curb Iran's influence in the South Caucasus and diminish the importance

of Iran's transit position. To this end, the U.S. supports infrastructure projects that isolate Iran, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. This pipeline transports oil from Azerbaijan's capital Baku, through Georgia's Tbilisi, to Turkey's Ceyhan port, and then on to international markets. Stretching 1,768 kilometers, it became operational in 2005. (Ahmadian, 2008, p. 2) More recently, the U.S. has supported the Zangezur corridor project, which connects Turkey and Azerbaijan and also links China and Central Asia with Turkey and European countries without passing through Iranian territory.

Impact on Afghanistan

Due to its strategic location, the South Caucasus region has become a competitive arena for both global and regional powers. This region is endowed with vast energy resources and key transit routes, making it highly significant for the implementation of international policies and the strengthening of economic activities.

Afghanistan, which shares geographic proximity and historical ties with the countries of the South Caucasus, cannot remain unaffected by the outcomes of these competitions. The effects of this rivalry also extend to Afghanistan; however, these impacts can only be clearly understood once a definitive winner emerges in the regional competition.

Based on this premise, the potential impacts on Afghanistan can be analyzed through various scenarios as follows

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

First Scenario: If the United States emerges victorious in the power struggle over the South Caucasus region, it will not only expand its influence there but also strengthen Turkey's influence, as Turkey is a member of NATO alongside the United States. Should this occur, the impacts on Afghanistan would be as follows:

a. **Increase in Turkey's Influence in Afghanistan:** Turkey, sharing linguistic ties with Turkic-speaking countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, can strengthen its relations with these countries. Since Afghanistan also has Turkic-speaking populations, Turkey will likely attempt to expand its influence within Afghanistan.

b. **Expansion of Economic Relations:** With Turkey's success in the region, it will be necessary for Turkey to broaden its economic relations with Turkic countries, especially in infrastructure development and investment. Under these circumstances, Afghanistan could benefit from Turkey's support in strategic projects such as the development of transportation networks and the industrial sector.

c. **Strengthening of Regional Cooperation:** With the establishment of the Zangezur Corridor, Turkey will promote the expansion of transportation and trade links with Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Afghanistan, positioned as a connecting hub in this regional network, could become part of these transit corridors. This would create new opportunities for Afghanistan's trade relations. Additionally, Afghanistan would be

able to connect directly to Turkey and European markets through Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, bypassing Iranian territory.

Second Scenario: If Russia prevails in this competition, given the presence of energy resources and transit routes in the South Caucasus, it will create opportunities for Afghanistan to develop economic cooperation and regional connectivity. Russia will seek new routes through Afghanistan not only to transfer its energy resources but also those of the region to South Asia. Accordingly, opportunities for infrastructure development and trade expansion in Afghanistan will increase. The author believes that Iran's chances of success and expanding its influence in this region are quite low. However, Iran can still coordinate with Russia to some extent to hinder the expansion of cooperation and influence of Turkey and the United States in the region. Nonetheless, the triangle of cooperation recently formed between the United States, Turkey, and Azerbaijan, which involves multifaceted collaboration in the region, has a higher chance of success.

Conclusion

the South Caucasus region holds special significance for global and regional powers from both geopolitical and geo-economic perspectives. This region, situated between Asia and Europe, is considered a key strategic area not only because of its energy resources and transit opportunities but also due to its crucial role in controlling and containing other countries.

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

For Russia, the South Caucasus is vital for expanding and maintaining its strategic influence. Russia seeks to monopolize the energy resources of this region and prevent the expansion of NATO and Western influence there. Meanwhile, the United States endeavors to strengthen democratic governance and provide military cooperation with these countries to keep them from aligning too closely with Russia. Additionally, the U.S. seeks active engagement with Turkey and Azerbaijan in the region to curb the growth of Iran's influence.

Afghanistan, due to its geographical proximity to the South Caucasus via Central Asia, is inevitably affected by any developments in these countries. Changes in the South Caucasus impact Afghanistan's economy, transit potential, regional connectivity, and cooperation.

References

1. Aghai Diba Bahman, Relations of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan: Potential friends and enemies, publish date 2015-2-18, access date 20^{۲۵}-0۳-0۱^۵, access online <http://www.payvand.com/news/15/feb/1089.html>
2. Ahmadian, B. A. (2009, February 5). The inauguration of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline and its consequences in the region. Ahvaz Pipe Manufacturing Company. Available at: <https://www.apm-ir.com/fa/article/3/>
3. Aryanzi, E. (2003). The mirror of the world: Asia (Vol. 1). Peshawar: Sapi Pashto Research and Development Center.

4. Beneyamin poghosyan, US _ Russia relation: implications for the south Caucasus , Available at : <https://othjournal.com/2017/10/02/us-russia-relations-implication-for-the-south-caucasus/>
5. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace .available at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/31/u.s.-policy-toward-south-caucasus-take-three-pub-70122>
6. Kazemi, A. (2005). Security in the South Caucasus, Tehran: Contemporary International Cultural Studies and Research Institute.
7. Koolae, Elaheh & Rashidi, Ahamad, The Zangezur Corridor and Threats to the Interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the South Caucasus. Caucasus Analytical Digest, No:136, page 3-6, published date: Feb 2024, available at: <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000657553>
8. Mathieu Droin, Tina Dolabaia, Abigail Edwards, CSIS, A Renewed Nagorno – Karabakh Conflict: Reading Between the Front Lines, Published September 22, 2023, access date: ۳/1۵/202۵ available at: A Renewed Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Reading Between the Front Lines (csis.org)
9. Michael, Rubin, the National Interest, Why Turkey and Azerbaijan Won't Get a Corridor Across Armenia, published date: November 9, 2021, access date: ۳/14/202۵, available at: Why Turkey and Azerbaijan

Geopolitical Rivalries among Regional and Global ...

Won't Get a Corridor Across Armenia | The National Interest

10. Natalia Bekiarova, SOUTH CAUCASUS AS A REGION OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE, IJASOS- International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences, Vol. V, Issue 14, August 2019, page, 101⁹.
11. Raayi,. (2013). The interests of Russia and the West in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the role of multilateral organizations. Retrieved March 15, 2025, from <https://iranbazgoo.persianblog.ir/>
12. Republic of Azarbaijan, ministry of foreign affairs, about guam. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.az/en/content/557>
13. Reuters, Armenia to exercise with US troops next week in sign of frustration with Russia, published date: September 6, 2023, access date: 3/10/2024 available at: Armenia to exercise with US troops next week in sign of frustration with Russia | Reuters
14. Saqib, N. & Ferdaus, A. K. (2017). Causes of tension in political relations between Azerbaijan and Iran. Haq Journal.
15. SCTO official web page, online link: About SCO | SCO (sectsco.org).
16. The New Voice of Ukraine, Armenia officially delivers humanitarian aid to Ukraine, published date: September 8, 2023, access date: 3/13/2024, available at: Armenia officially delivers humanitarian aid to Ukraine (yahoo.com).

Author: Assistant Prof. Sanaullah Salihi

**Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan: The
Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis, Sufism, and Shari's,
(1750–1900)**

Abstract

This study explores the pivotal role of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi order in shaping Afghanistan's religious, political, and institutional landscape between 1750 and 1900. Drawing upon primary sources—such as Sufi manuals, waqf records, and court chronicles—as well as recent scholarship including Waleed Ziad's *Hidden Caliphate: Sufi Saints Beyond the Oxus and Indus* and Nile Green's *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*, the article examines how the Mujaddidis constructed a layered system of Islamic authority that bridged the sacred and the administrative. It argues that the Mujaddidi order cultivated both a manifest authority through their khanaqahs, endowments, and formal teachings, and a hidden authority through transregional spiritual networks and charismatic leadership. In a fragmented political environment where central governance was weak, these Sufi institutions played a stabilizing role by offering moral order, conflict mediation, and Islamic education. The study contributes to the understanding of how sacred authority operated in early modern Muslim polities, proposing a model of informal

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

religious governance that was both institutionally grounded and spiritually transcendent. By situating the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis within the broader Persianate and Central Asian traditions, this research highlights their significance in Afghanistan's state formation, identity construction, and integration into transregional Islamic intellectual life.

Keywords: Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi, Afghanistan, Sufism, Hidden Authority, Islamic Authority, Khanaqah, Waqf, State–Religion Relations, Shari'a

Introduction

Afghanistan's historical trajectory during the 18th and 19th centuries was shaped not only by dynastic politics and tribal confederations but also by deeply rooted religious traditions that provided moral and institutional frameworks amid political uncertainty. Among these traditions, the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi order played a profound and often underappreciated role in the formation of Afghan religious identity, governance structures, and socio-political networks. Emerging from the reformist teachings of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624)—the *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani* or “Reviver of the Second Millennium”—the Mujaddidi branch of the broader Naqshbandiyya *tariqa* introduced a unique synthesis of spiritual mysticism and orthodox jurisprudence that resonated deeply with Afghan realities (Ziad, 2017).

As the newly formed Durrani Empire sought to consolidate power in a fragmented tribal landscape, the Mujaddidi Sufi

shaykhs stepped in as intermediaries, educators, spiritual leaders, and political advisors. Their spiritual authority, institutional presence, and transregional ties allowed them to exercise a form of governance parallel to—and at times intertwined with—the formal apparatus of the Afghan state (Green, 2017).

The significance of this study lies in examining the Mujaddidi order not merely as a mystical or devotional movement but as a foundational institution in shaping Islamic governance and moral leadership in early modern Afghanistan. By focusing on both the visible and invisible forms of their authority—their manifest and hidden authority—the research highlights how they created enduring frameworks of legitimacy, community, and religious cohesion in regions where state structures were weak or contested. This dual system of governance, with its institutional infrastructure of *khanqahs* and *waqf* and its spiritual leadership rooted in *silsila* and transregional discipleship, offers a lens to reinterpret Afghan political and religious history (McChesney, 1991).

Despite their centrality, the role of Sufi networks—particularly the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis—remains understudied in Afghan historiography. Existing literature tends to emphasize legalist traditions or revolutionary Islam, leaving a gap in our understanding of how mainstream religious authority functioned in everyday governance. This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring how the Mujaddidis adapted their teachings

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

to local tribal norms, institutionalized their spiritual influence, and negotiated complex relationships with state rulers. Through these inquiries, this study contributes to our understanding of Islam in Afghanistan and highlights the importance of Sufi institutions as enduring frameworks of spiritual and political order (Paul, 2017).

Research Problem

Although the role of Sufi networks—particularly the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order—was central to the formation of Afghanistan’s religious, social, and political structures, it remains largely understudied in Afghan historiography. Existing scholarship has tended to focus either on legalist traditions or on revolutionary Islam, leaving insufficient attention to the question of how mainstream religious authority functioned in everyday governance and contributed to processes of state building.

Significance of the Study

This study provides a detailed and historically grounded account of Mujaddidi activities and proposes a broader theoretical model for understanding how sacred authority and informal governance intersect within fragmented and politically complex Muslim societies. By exploring both the manifest and hidden authority of the Mujaddidis, the research highlights their enduring role as architects of ethical governance and as mediators between the local and the global, the spiritual and the institutional.

Objectives

- To examine the religious, social, and political role of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order in Afghanistan.
- To analyze the concept of Islamic governance through the manifest and hidden authority articulated by the Mujaddidis.
- To highlight the Mujaddidis' contribution to state building, moral leadership, and religious cohesion.

Research Questions

1. How were Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi teachings adapted to Afghanistan's tribal, linguistic, and social realities?
2. What institutional roles did khanaqahs, doctrinal texts, and waqf endowments play in structuring Afghan public life?
3. In what ways did the Mujaddidi shaykhs legitimize, negotiate with, or challenge rulers such as Ahmad Shah Durrani and Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan?
4. How did Mujaddidi networks bridge the divide between elite Islamic scholarship and rural populations?
5. How did transregional connections with Sirhind, Bukhara, and the Hijaz shape Afghan religious identity?

Methodology

This study employs a historical-analytical methodology, textual analysis, and comparative regional perspectives. Primary sources include Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi doctrinal manuals, shrine biographies, and royal chronicles, examined within their socio-political contexts. These materials are

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

interpreted through the lenses of the sociology of religion and Islamic political theory. Comparative insights from the Persianate and Central Asian worlds situate the Afghan case within wider transregional Islamic currents.

Historical Background of the Naqshbandi Order

The Naqshbandi Sufi order, one of the most influential and widespread in the Islamic world, traces its origins to Baha' al-Din Naqshband (1318–1389) of Bukhara. Rooted in Central Asian Islamic revivalism, the order emphasized silent *dhikr* (remembrance of God), strict adherence to the shari'a, and a sober, disciplined spiritual path. It gained popularity among both scholars and political elites due to its integration of mystical spirituality with social engagement and religious orthodoxy (Weismann, 2007).

Over the centuries, the Naqshbandiyya expanded across Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Ottoman domains, forming a cosmopolitan and interconnected spiritual network. The order's emphasis on inner transformation (*tazkiyah*), intellectual rigor, and public service made it particularly attractive in times of political upheaval. In the 16th and 17th centuries, under the influence of figures like Khwaja Ahrar and Ahmad Sirhindi, the Naqshbandiyya evolved further into a reformist force. Ahmad Sirhindi, known as the *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani*, reinvigorated the order with his campaign to harmonize Sufism with the shari'a and to confront perceived deviations within Islamic practice and society (Ziad, 2017).

Sirhindi's legacy, carried forward by his descendants and disciples, gave rise to the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi branch. This offshoot gained prominence throughout the Mughal Empire and Central Asia, promoting a blend of mystical devotion, Sunni orthodoxy, and political engagement. By the 18th century, this branch had extended into Afghanistan, where it found fertile ground among both urban elites and tribal populations. The Mujaddidis' capacity to navigate between cosmopolitan scholarship and local customs enabled them to forge a distinctively Afghan mode of Islamic authority—one that would endure through the turbulent processes of state formation, colonial intrusion, and internal reform (Green, 2017).

Sufism and Shari'a

The cosmic millennial upheavals were the catalysts that entrusted Sirhindi with the charge of renewing the essence of the shari'a. In his millennial discourses, he underscored the *shari'at-i Muhammadi*—the law or path of the Prophet Muhammad—as a necessary corollary to the Sufi path. His work became an important contribution to a centuries-long debate on the precise relationship between Sufism and the shari'a.

Sirhindi's notion of the shari'a was complex and far removed from modern conceptions of a system of normative laws enforced at the state level. To premodern Muslims like Sirhindi, the shari'a did not signify a codified canonical body of law. Rather, it was a collective, scholarly, human enterprise to

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

interpret rules, etiquette, and norms of religious behavior from divine sources, particularly from the Prophet Muhammad's life. It was also an intimate practice: emulating the Prophet in his actions and deeds was itself an act of devotion. Sirhindi's discourses on the Prophet's shari'a were grounded in Sufi notions of the perfection of the Prophet and the stations of spiritual intimacy with him, while also accentuating the necessity of outward practices and jurisprudence. For Sirhindi, jurists played a vital role because they helped believers interpret the shari'a, which was the touchstone for correct behavior and the foundation of any spiritual journey (Ziad, 2021).

For Sirhindi, the shari'a was a multivalent term encompassing outward acts of worship, faith, and the Sufi path. Without all three dimensions, the shari'a could not be realized; it was difficult to reach God by obeying only outward commands and prohibitions. Spiritual companionship and initiation into a Sufi order were necessary. In fact, the truth of the shari'a could only be understood and internalized after a mystic experienced the state of annihilation (*fana'*) and then entered the station of wayfaring in God (*suluk*). The shari'a also had an outward dimension, tied to the prophetic example. To Sirhindi, every minute detail of the Prophet Muhammad's life carried spiritual significance—even his manner of tying a turban. Sirhindi's biographer accordingly describes, in painstaking detail, how he followed the Prophet's example and Hanafi legal tradition,

from his late-night vigils to how he brushed his teeth with a traditional *miswak* stick.

His call for the millennial renewal of the shari‘a targeted two groups. The first were jurists who followed only its superficial aspects, about whom he quipped: “*For a worm hidden under a rock, the sky is the bottom of the rock.*” The second group consisted of those engaged in “incorrect” Sufi practices—more concerned with amassing wealth and pursuing altered states of consciousness than with disciplining their egos. Accordingly, many of Sirhindi’s letters outlined precise guidelines for Sufi practices in conformity with scripture, the prophetic example, and jurisprudence. In his view, any Sufi insights or practices had to be in harmony with these sources.

The foundational place of the shari‘a in Sufism was by no means new; it had been articulated centuries earlier. Yet Sufis such as Sirhindi’s contemporary ‘Abd al-Rahman Chishti responded critically to his circumscribing of Sufism within juristic norms. ‘Abd al-Rahman argued that the Sufi’s shari‘a was proper conduct, grounded in following the Sufi master who could access truths inaccessible to others. This formula, he insisted, carried more weight than blindly adhering to a juristic tradition. In this way, ‘Abd al-Rahman rejected Sirhindi’s notion of juristic Sufism and, in doing so, indirectly questioned his millenarian claims (Ziad, 2021).

Though Sirhindi was widely regarded as a saint by his disciples, his millenarian teachings—and self-image—were undoubtedly

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

controversial. In his autobiographical *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, the Mughal emperor Jahangir (Akbar's son) referred to the *Maktubat* (*Collected Letters*) as a heretical text. Because of some of Sirhindi's claims and visions, Jahangir summoned him to court and imprisoned him at Gwalior Fort. Just a year later, however, Sirhindi was released. The precise nature of his relationship with the emperor remains unclear: Jahangir bestowed gifts upon him after his release and later mentioned him with reverence in his autobiography. Hagiographies even claim that Jahangir became his disciple. Later, during Emperor Aurangzeb's reign (1658–1707), however, the *Maktubat* was proscribed for its perceived heterodox content.

Sirhindi's writings also elicited unfavorable responses from contemporary 'ulama. Later biographies mention that 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddis Dehlavi, Hindustan's foremost jurist, criticized his millenarian discourses. 'Abd al-Haqq—incidentally a disciple of Sirhindi's teacher, Baqi Billah—found Sirhindi's writings troublesome. He went so far as to draw parallels between Sirhindi and the Mahdi claimant Sayyid Muhammad of Jaunpur. Sirhindi's notion of the “common believer” also drew criticism, as it implied that the Prophet Muhammad required Sirhindi for his own spiritual progress (Ziad, 2021).

Khanaqahs and Madrasas: Building the Order's Infrastructure

Sirhindi's principal successor at Sirhind was his third son and deputy, Khwaja Muhammad Ma'sum (d. 1668). Muhammad Ma'sum is credited with establishing the central khanaqah in Sirhind, designed to transmit the teachings and practices articulated in Sirhindi's writings. This khanaqah became the prototype for future institutions of the order.

Initially, Sirhindi instructed his disciples within a central mosque. As the number of students grew, this space became insufficient. Muhammad Ma'sum significantly expanded the mosque's foundations and transformed it into a pilgrimage center that integrated scholastic, devotional, and commercial functions. He introduced a Mughal-style water reservoir and waterfall system and enlarged the land surrounding Sirhindi's tomb, accommodating large-scale pilgrimage activities and spiritual exercises. A generous plot of 3.5 square kilometers to the north and west of the tomb—gifted by the landowner—was divided among Muhammad Ma'sum's sons, who built residential complexes that also hosted visiting guests. An adjacent field was converted into a grand bazaar, now known as the Sandalpura Bazaar, which served pilgrims and promoted commerce. To its east, a complex of buildings was specifically dedicated to teaching circles and meditation.

The site continued to grow over time. According to the eighteenth-century biography *Rawzat al-Qayyumiyya*, the

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

Mughal emperor Shah Jahan visited the tomb and financed several structures modeled on those in his royal fort of Shahjahanabad in Delhi. Over generations, more elaborate shrines were added, with Sirhindi's tomb—known as the *Rawza-i Sharif*, or “Noble Garden”—as the focal point. Nearby were the tombs of his ancestor Rafi‘ al-Din, the legendary founder of Sirhind, and shrines to Sirhindi's sons Muhammad Sadiq and Muhammad Ma‘sum, featuring Mughal funerary architecture with intricate mosaics. Over a century later, the mausoleum of Zaman Shah Durrani, the Afghan emperor, was constructed within the complex, sponsored by another Afghan ruler, the nawab of Rampur.

Over time, the khanaqah became a center for producing didactic and hagiographical literature as well as devotional poetry. Sirhindi's *Collected Letters* established a precedent, and successive Sufis produced compilations of epistles and *malfuzat* (teachings and memoirs), including Muhammad Ma‘sum and his brother Muhammad Sa‘id. Detailed accounts of Sirhindi's life, such as *Hazarat al-Quds* (by Khwaja Badr al-Din Sirhindi) and *Zubdat al-Maqamat* (by Muhammad Hashim Kishmi Badakhshi), created a tradition of extensive biographies that preserved historical memory and communicated ideals of Sufi conduct. This literary tradition continued across generations in every branch of the order, with Sirhindi as the central figure.

Sirhindi's grandson, 'Abd al-Ahad Wahdat—a prolific poet and author of around forty volumes, including vernacular Urdu poetry—produced one of the first systematic *ma'mulat* (practical) texts, formalizing Sirhindi's teachings into a structured guide. Collected letters, biographies, and practical texts remain central literary genres within the order and are produced more systematically in Mujaddidi institutions than in other regional Sufi traditions.

While the khanaqah at Sirhind expanded, another associated institution was established in Delhi by the Mujaddidi scholar Shah 'Abd al-Rahim. Over the following century, his Madrasa Rahimiyya emerged as the foremost center for exoteric sciences in Hindustan, complementing the Mujaddidi khanaqahs. Shah 'Abd al-Rahim was succeeded by his son, Shah Waliullah (1703–1762), regarded as the most influential philosopher and theologian of eighteenth-century Hindustan. Often called the *mujaddid* of the twelfth Islamic century, Shah Waliullah developed a universal philosophical paradigm combining empirical analysis, revelation, and reason to synthesize traditional Islamic disciplines, including philosophy, theology, sociology, law, Sufism, and history. His work extended far beyond the Mujaddidi order. As Hamid Algar observes, “his interest in expounding the spirit and wisdom of the shari'a, expressed in his magnum opus *Hujjatullah al-Baligha*, may be regarded as a prolongation, or even fulfillment, of the practical and theoretical interest in the

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

primacy of the shari‘a shown by . . . Khwaja Ahrar and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi” (Ziad, 2021).

Generations of Leadership

Sirhindi’s appointment of his sons as principal deputies established a precedent for both hereditary and nonhereditary principles of initiatic succession. Select members of Sirhindi’s family, who possessed scholastic and administrative expertise, typically presided over the khānaqāh at Sirhind. These family members received formal education in the revealed and rational sciences either at the khanaqah complex under Sirhindi’s Sufi guides or from resident ulama at Sirhind. Some were even sent to major centers of learning in cities like Delhi. Early in their education, students began basic Sufi practices alongside their studies. While trained in hadith and jurisprudence, the Sirhindi Sufis generally referred complex legal questions to the ulama within their network, focusing their own efforts on teaching mystical practices (Ziad, 2021).

In accordance with the concept of the Imamate, Sirhindi’s descendants embodied greater sacred capital than mere initiatic lineages, representing authentic spiritual links to Sirhindi himself. Mujaddidi initiates who were hereditary descendants of sacred lineages—whether Sirhindi, Sayyid, or Ahrari Khwajas (descended from ‘Ubaydullah Ahrar)—often sought multiple initiations, both from family members and from other Mujaddidi teachers. These Sufis drew on the authority of their familial lineages and frequently inherited their institutions and

associated property, while maintaining spiritual or scholastic allegiance to their initiatic lineages.

Appointing sons as principal successors offered clear advantages for both the institutions and the families. It ensured managerial and financial continuity, simplified the transfer of authority, and facilitated the inheritance of personal property intended to sustain the khanaqah and household. Since daily expenses were often covered through gifts and grants to Sufi masters, such resources would pass to their offspring. Ideally, these gifts, stipends, or land grants were then reallocated for charitable purposes by the successor.

Within mosques or khanaqahs, Sufi masters often held the position of *mutawalli*, or custodian, as formalized in detailed *waqf* (charitable endowment) documents. The custodian was responsible for allocating revenues from endowments, collecting and transferring tithes from tenant farmers if lands were leased, or directly managing cultivation and benefiting from the harvest (Ziad, 2021). Land revenues supported institutional administration, faculty, and functionaries, while covering expenses for food, construction, and repairs. Any surplus revenue could be used for the custodian's personal needs or placed in escrow to cover unforeseen future expenses. Endowment documents typically stipulated that the custodianship pass to a capable and responsible son, allowing the position, barring mismanagement, to remain within the family across generations (Ziad, 2021).

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

Analysis and Discussion

The central analytical premise of this study is the duality of Mujaddidi sacred authority as both a manifest, institutionalized power and a hidden, transregional spiritual network. This duality enabled the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis to shape Afghan religious and political life at both visible and invisible levels.

Their doctrinal teachings were adapted to Afghanistan's tribal and linguistic landscape through vernacular translations and locally accessible ethical treatises. Khanaqahs functioned as centers of education, conflict resolution, and social welfare, sustained by independent *waqf* endowments that ensured autonomy from state patronage. Mujaddidi shaykhs played critical roles as political mediators and legitimizers under rulers such as Ahmad Shah Durrani, while carefully negotiating complex positions during Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan's reign. The Mujaddidis acted as cultural and spiritual bridges between elite and tribal communities, transmitting knowledge, moral guidance, and ethical norms beyond urban intellectual circles. Transregional connections—particularly with Sirhind, Bukhara, and the Hijaz—sustained the hidden dimension of their authority, providing spiritual legitimacy, social capital, and integration into wider Islamic networks.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order was a central force in shaping Afghanistan's political, social, and religious landscape between 1750 and 1900. Their

teachings were carefully calibrated to the tribal, linguistic, and cultural realities of Afghan society, ensuring that Sufi doctrines resonated across diverse communities and became embedded in local ethical and spiritual practices. In doing so, the Mujaddidis forged a religious discourse that was simultaneously accessible and authoritative, linking the spiritual ideals of Sufism with the lived realities of Afghan life. Khanaqahs, doctrinal texts, and *waqf* endowments functioned as institutional anchors of Afghan public life. These structures provided spaces for education, mediation, and resource management, connecting religious authority to the organization of everyday governance. Through such institutions, the Mujaddidis extended their influence beyond the spiritual domain, grounding it in practical and administrative frameworks that shaped society.

Mujaddidi shaykhs also played pivotal roles in political life, legitimizing rulers such as Ahmad Shah Durrani, negotiating with dynastic elites, and occasionally challenging figures like Amir ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan when moral or communal order was at stake. Their authority bridged sacred legitimacy and dynastic power, enabling them to act simultaneously as advisors, mediators, and moral critics of the state. At the same time, their networks helped close the gap between elite Islamic scholarship and rural populations, fostering religious cohesion across a fragmented society.

Manifest and Hidden Authority in Afghanistan ...

Transregional ties with Sirhind, Bukhara, and the Hijaz further integrated Afghanistan into broader Islamic networks, reinforcing a religious identity that was both locally rooted and connected to wider Persianate and Central Asian traditions. These connections sustained the dual framework of authority identified in this study: the manifest authority, anchored in institutions, law, and community structures, and the hidden authority, grounded in spiritual charisma, *silsila* authority, and expansive Sufi networks. This duality allowed the Mujaddidis to operate effectively across formal dynastic structures and informal tribal and rural spheres.

By reframing their legacy through the concepts of sacred authority and informal governance, this study challenges conventional narratives that marginalize Sufi orders in Afghan state-building. It demonstrates that the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis were not merely spiritual guides but architects of moral order, ethical governance, and political culture. Their enduring legacy underscores the profound role of spiritual networks in shaping Afghan identity and affirms their continuing relevance in the broader history of the Muslim world.

References

1. Azad, Arezu. (2017). The beginnings of Islam in Afghanistan: Conquest, acculturation, and Islamization. In Nile. Green (Ed.), *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban* University of California Press. (pp. 41–55).

2. Green, Nile. (Ed.). (2017). *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*. University of California Press. (pp. 50–53).
3. McChesney, R. D. (1991). *Waqf in Central Asia: Four hundred years in the history of a Muslim shrine, 1480–1889*. Princeton University Press (pp. 29–34).
4. Paul, J. (2017). The rise of the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya Sufi order in Timurid Herat. In Nile. Green (Ed.), *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban* University of California Press. (pp. 71–88).
5. Tarzi, A. (2017). Islam, Shari'a, and state building under 'Abd al-Rahman Khan. In N. Green (Ed.), *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban* University of California Press. (pp. 129–144).
6. Weismann, I. (2007). *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and activism in a worldwide Sufi tradition*. Routledge.
7. Ziad, Waleed. (2017). transporting knowledge in the Durrani Empire: Two manuals of Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi practice. In N. Green (Ed.), *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban* University of California Press. (pp. 105–128).
8. Ziad, Waleed. (2021). *Hidden caliphate: Sufi saints beyond the Oxus and Indus*. Harvard University Press. (pp. 81–87)

Author: Assist Professor Hekmatullah Aziz

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of New Media in Political, Security, and Ideological Conflicts

Abstract

In recent years, social media platforms have transcended their traditional role as communication tools, emerging instead as strategic battlefields where ideological, political, and security conflicts are actively contested. This paper investigates how new media functions as instruments of influence, propaganda, psychological warfare, and mobilization employed by both state and non-state actors. Using a qualitative mixed-methods approach, including content analysis and case studies, the research explores the weaponization of social media across diverse geopolitical contexts. Findings reveal the multifaceted ways social media shape public perception, redistribute power, and impact national and international security. The study concludes by offering policy and practical recommendations to mitigate the risks posed by digital conflict while safeguarding democratic values and digital freedoms.

Introduction: The New Frontlines of Conflict

In the digital age, the nature of conflict has fundamentally shifted. Modern warfare is no longer limited to physical battlefields but has expanded into domains of information, perception, and influence. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), TikTok, and YouTube have evolved from mere tools of communication into arenas where ideological, political, and security struggles unfold. These platforms serve as instruments for propaganda, recruitment, surveillance, and narrative control, enabling both state and non-state actors to pursue strategic objectives without conventional warfare.

As Miglani (2024) notes, today's users are unknowingly engaged in a continuous, invisible war on social media, where emotional manipulation and ideological infiltration have replaced traditional weapons. Psychological operations, disinformation campaigns, and algorithmic manipulation represent a profound transformation in the conduct of modern conflict.

Scholars and institutions alike have identified this paradigm shift. Payne (2005) emphasizes that modern conflict outcomes rely as much on shaping media narratives as on battlefield victories. Nikolaev and Yurchenko (2021) illustrate how militarized language in Ukrainian media constructs national identity and frames ideological battles. Shanks (2024) analyzes ISIS's media strategy, showing how extremist groups use

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

digital platforms for global propaganda and recruitment. Reports by Mercy Corps (2019) and Do No Digital Harm (2019) further reveal how algorithmic amplification of disinformation and hate speech escalates violence in fragile states such as Myanmar and manipulates democratic discourse in countries like the Philippines.

Iranian sources, such as Hawzah.net, expand the analysis by discussing cyber warfare as a means of ideological subversion targeting societal consciousness. Khamenei.ir (n.d.) suggests that media is not merely a channel but a tool capable of reshaping political dynamics. Rattray (2009) and Yan (2021) highlight the strategic importance of information dominance and the redistribution of power from institutions to individuals. Cullen (2023) further warns that platforms like TikTok combine commercial algorithms with state interests, posing surveillance and security risks.

Together, these insights establish that social media should be understood not only as communication platforms but as strategic domains where perceptions are engineered, loyalties forged, and power contested.

Statement of the Problem

The growing dependence on social media platforms for communication, influence, and mobilization has transformed them into contested arenas of ideological and political conflict. Unlike traditional battlegrounds, digital platforms facilitate both covert and overt operations such as propaganda

dissemination, psychological manipulation, and misinformation campaigns. These operations directly shape public perception, destabilize governments, and impact national and international security.

Despite increasing awareness of the strategic role of social media, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the specific mechanisms through which these platforms are weaponized. Both state actors and non-state groups, including extremist movements and ideological influencers, utilize social media to pursue their agendas. However, limited research exists on the broader political, social, and security implications of these actions across fragile and stable political contexts alike. This study aims to bridge that gap through empirical and theoretical analysis.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. How are social media platforms utilized as battlefields for ideological, political, and security conflicts?
2. What are the key strategies and techniques used in the weaponization of social media?
3. In what ways does social media impact national security, political legitimacy, and social cohesion?
4. What policy and practical responses can mitigate the negative effects of digital conflict without undermining digital freedoms?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze how social media functions as a strategic domain for political, ideological, and security-related conflicts.
2. To identify the various methods and actors involved in the weaponization of social media.
3. To explore the broader effects of digital conflict on governance, public trust, and societal stability.
4. To evaluate policy and strategic frameworks aimed at countering the harmful impacts of social media weaponization.
5. To offer recommendations that balance security concerns with the protection of democratic freedoms in digital communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws up three major theoretical perspectives:

a. Media Ecology (Strate, 2008; McLuhan)

Media ecology views media as environments that shape human experience and social behavior. In the context of social media, this perspective emphasizes how the design, algorithms, and structure of platforms condition how users interact, perceive events, and form beliefs. Social media platforms are not neutral tools; they actively frame ideological battles by shaping the logic, speed, and emotional intensity of communication.

b. Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Abdulkhamidova, 2021)

This theory proposes that media influence what issues are perceived as important. In digital spaces, even with user-generated content, media algorithms and gatekeeping practices ensure that certain narratives receive more visibility. This process influences political discourse and public priorities, making agenda-setting a critical mechanism in ideological conflict.

c. Information Warfare Theory (Chkopoia, 2021)

Information warfare involves the strategic use of information to manipulate public opinion, distort reality, and undermine adversaries. Social media platforms serve as tools for these tactics by enabling the rapid spread of disinformation, emotional appeals, and polarizing content. IW is a central component of hybrid warfare and a key tool in modern statecraft.

Literature Review

The academic and policy literature has increasingly focused on how social media and traditional media function as domains of conflict, influence, and warfare. This review synthesizes insights from multiple scholars and institutions, presenting a cross-disciplinary understanding of how the media landscape has evolved into an ideological and strategic battlefield.

Cullen (2023) examines the national security risks posed by TikTok, particularly its algorithmic potential for surveillance

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

and influence. Drawing on Zuboff's theory of surveillance capitalism, he argues that platforms optimize user engagement not just for profit but also for political and psychological manipulation. He links TikTok's operations to the Chinese Communist Party, raising concerns about covert influence and strategic data collection (Cullen, 2023).

Almahrooqi (2014) explores historical uses of television news media during conflict, demonstrating that calculated media control through framing, censorship, and propaganda has long served state interests. Using examples from the Vietnam War to the Iraq invasion, he shows how televised narratives shape both public opinion and operational legitimacy (Almahrooqi, 2014).

Mercy Corps (2019) contributes a practical, field-based framework for countering the weaponization of social media. Their report examines coordinated disinformation campaigns, such as Russian propaganda against Syrian civil defense forces, as well as hate speech in Myanmar and electoral manipulation in the Philippines. Their proposed model includes prevention, monitoring, resilience-building, and mitigation strategies.

Payne (2005) provides a foundational theory on the media's role in modern warfare, asserting that media narratives are as strategically important as kinetic operations. He highlights the U.S. military's experiences in Somalia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan to illustrate how political legitimacy hinges on media framing.

Nikolaev and Yurchenko (2021) delve into the militarization of language in Ukrainian media, identifying six "fields of fight" that include battles over language, history, and national identity. Their work shows how the media constructs ideological frontlines during geopolitical conflict.

Shanks (2024) explores how extremist groups like ISIS use social media to build ideological support, recruit followers, and organize activities. Using Python-based analytics, he shows how these groups adapt their messaging strategies over time to maintain relevance and influence.

Miglani (2024) approaches the issue from a sociopsychological angle, warning that users are drawn into emotional and ideological conflicts without realizing they are participants. He emphasizes that the illusion of connection on social platforms conceals deeper feelings of isolation and manipulation.

The Iranian analysis from Hawzah.net (n.d.) discusses soft and cyber warfare, emphasizing that non-kinetic methods are used to gradually alter belief systems, weaken social cohesion, and achieve strategic dominance without military engagement.

Rattray (2009) argues that information operations must be central to counterinsurgency efforts. He outlines a framework that includes psychological operations, electronic warfare, and digital influence, asserting that success in modern war depends on controlling the narrative environment.

Yan (2021) highlights how social media redistributes power from institutions to individuals. She illustrates how platforms

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

enable citizens to expose injustice, shape discourse, and hold authorities accountable, thereby destabilizing traditional hierarchies.

Khamenei.ir (n.d.) contributes to the understanding of media as a strategic tool by describing how control over media narratives becomes a means of exerting power and resisting adversaries. It presents media not only as a conduit of messaging but as an active arena of struggle.

Additional insights from Mercy Corps and Do No Digital Harm (2019) underscore the dangers of algorithm-driven hate speech, the global spread of digital misinformation, and the failure of platforms to contain violence-inducing narratives. Their findings support calls for stronger content regulation and civic literacy initiatives.

Collectively, these sources present a complex picture in which media is no longer a neutral observer but an active combatant in shaping modern conflict. The breadth of literature discussed above, from Cullen (2023) and Almahroqi (2014) to Mercy Corps (2019) and Miglani (2024), provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of media in contemporary ideological and security conflicts.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative mixed-methods approach comprising:

- **Content Analysis:** Systematic examination of selected social media content to identify themes and tactics.

- **Case Study Analysis:** In-depth analysis of geopolitical contexts such as Ukraine, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Afghanistan.
- **Literature Synthesis:** Review of academic and institutional sources to establish a theoretical and practical framework.

Data sources include social media platforms, academic articles, official reports, and investigative journalism.

Case Studies and Analysis

a. Ukraine

Media played a critical role in the ideological framing of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Ukrainian media employed militarized language to build national identity and galvanize resistance (Nikolaev & Yurchenko, 2021).

Social media platforms have transformed traditional battlefields into dynamic ideological and informational arenas where political, security, and ideological conflicts unfold. As Garinet (2025) explains, media narratives actively shape military strategies by framing certain doctrines as more legitimate, influencing public opinion and policymaking. Similarly, Amir (2024) highlights that modern warfare relies heavily on controlling discourse and ideology through media, making narrative dominance a strategic goal.

Moreover, the ideological framing of conflicts through media narratives as seen in Ukraine, Russia, and far-right online communities further illustrates social media's role in shaping collective identity and political legitimacy (Nikolaev &

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

Yurchenko, 2021; Garinova & Kharitidi, 2023). This evolution demands that policymakers and security experts treat social media as critical domains of warfare, developing strategies to counter misinformation while promoting media literacy and peacebuilding (Hook & Verdeja, 2022; International Media Support, 2006).

b. Myanmar

Facebook served as a platform for inciting ethnic violence through hate speech, showing the dangers of unregulated digital spaces (Mercy Corps, 2019).

c. Philippines

Disinformation campaigns influenced electoral outcomes and undermined national institutions, illustrating how political conflict is now digitally mediated (Mercy Corps, 2019).

d. TikTok and Surveillance

Cullen (2023) investigates how TikTok's data collection and algorithmic structure raise national security concerns by enabling covert influence.

e. Political Mobilization

Social media was instrumental in movements such as the Arab Spring, the 2020 U.S. elections, and Iran's 2009 Green Movement. In Afghanistan, both state and non-state actors have leveraged platforms like Twitter and Facebook to shape narratives.

f. Security and Hybrid Warfare

Russia's use of digital disinformation in Crimea and the broader Ukraine conflict illustrates how cyber tools complement traditional military actions. China and the U.S. also engage in influence operations.

g. Extremism and Ideological Warfare

Groups like ISIS have mastered the use of encrypted apps, hashtags, and viral content to spread propaganda and recruit followers (Shanks, 2024).

h. Afghanistan

Afghanistan's digital ecosystem reflects a multi-layered information battlefield. Social media is used for propaganda, identity politics, and misinformation by domestic and foreign actors.

Social media also empowers both state and non-state actors by enabling rapid mobilization, propaganda dissemination, and recruitment, as evidenced by insurgent groups and social movements worldwide (Rehman & Riaz, 2021; Shanks, 2024). This dual-use nature presents both opportunities for political engagement and risks of destabilization (Valencia, 2024; Schleffer & Miller, 2021).

Risks and Challenges

The rise of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities, is transforming traditional military tactics and strategies, while simultaneously elevating the role of media as a key arena for shaping and legitimizing these new

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

strategic paradigms (Garinet, 2025). In today's conflicts, social media platforms such as TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, and Telegram are no longer just communication channels. They have become dynamic battlefields where disinformation and emotional manipulation are actively deployed to influence political outcomes and escalate tensions (Khan, 2025; Chan, 2025).

This weaponization of social media introduces a range of significant risks that extend beyond the battlefield. These include the radicalization and recruitment of individuals by extremist groups, the widespread dissemination of disinformation that undermines public trust, and the psychological harm caused by cyberbullying. Additionally, foreign actors exploit these platforms to manipulate domestic affairs, threatening national sovereignty, while algorithm-driven content amplification exacerbates societal polarization and division. Together, these challenges highlight how the digital domain has become a critical front in modern conflicts, requiring integrated responses that address both technological and social dimensions.

Recommendations

1. Digital Literacy Programs to build public awareness and critical media skills.
2. Platform Accountability and Regulation to monitor harmful content and algorithmic bias.

3. Cybersecurity Infrastructure to protect national interests and prevent external manipulation.
4. Strategic Communication Units within governments to engage in effective counter-narratives.
5. International Legal Norms to regulate state behavior in digital environments and promote responsible information practices.

Conclusion

Social media platforms have evolved into critical arenas of political, ideological, and security conflict. This research has shown that these platforms are not neutral, but are instead active agents that shape perceptions, redistribute power, and influence outcomes. The weaponization of social media demands nuanced understanding and interdisciplinary solutions. Effective policy must combine digital rights with national security, and media freedom with responsible regulation. A balanced, informed response is essential to navigating the challenges of digital-era conflict.

In summary, social media has become a vital and contested battlefield that influences the nature, perception, and outcomes of modern political and security conflicts, making it essential to integrate media dynamics into conflict analysis and response strategies.

References

1. Abdulkhamidova, F. (2021). Agenda Setting Theory. ResearchGate.

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352465425_Age
nda_Setting_Theory](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352465425_Age_anda_Setting_Theory)

2. Almahroqi, K. S. (2014). News TV coverage during conflicts: A study of media information control and its influence on security (Master's thesis, Khalifa University).
3. Amir, S. R. (2024, July 11). Narrative as battlefield: The role of discourse, media, and ideology in contemporary warfare. Modern Ghana. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1408928/narrative-as-battlefield-the-role-of-discourse.html>
4. Chan, J. (2025, March 22). The new battlefield: How social media became a weapon of war. PAC MAG. <https://mccs-journalism.gold.ac.uk/wp/pacmag/the-new-battlefield-how-social-media-became-a-weapon-of-war/>
5. Chkopoia, S. (2021). Information warfare in the modern political theory. Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Eğitim Dergisi (USBED), 3(4), 105–116. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1390641>
6. Cullen, B. M. (2023). Assessing the threat of social media to national security: Information operations in the 21st century (Senior Thesis). University of South Carolina. https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses/660
7. Do No Digital Harm, Mercy Corps, & Adapt Peacebuilding. (2019, November). The weaponization of social media: How social media can spark violence and what can be done about it. Mercy Corps.

- <https://www.mercycorps.org/research/weaponization-social-media>
8. Garinet, T. K. (2025, January 16). The influence of media narratives on military strategy. *The Defence Horizon Journal*. <https://tdhj.org/blog/post/media-narratives-military-strategy/>
 9. Garinova, O., & Kharitidi, I. S. (2023). Media ideologies of far-right Russian social media users. *Social Media + Society*, 9(1), 20563051241306833. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241306833>
 10. Hawzah.net. (n.d.). Soft warfare, cyber warfare, and techniques. <https://hawzah.net/fa/Article/View/96910/>
 11. Hook, K., & Verdeja, E. (2022). Social media misinformation and the prevention of political instability and mass atrocities. *International Order and Conflict*. <https://kellogg.nd.edu/social-media-misinformation-and-prevention-political-instability-and-mass-atrocities>
 12. International Media Support. (2006). *Voices of war: Conflict and the role of the media*.
 13. Khan, M. B. (2025, June 19). The dynamics of the social media battlefield. *Stratheia*. <https://stratheia.com/the-dynamics-of-the-social-media-battlefield/>
 14. Khamenei.ir. (n.d.). Media as a tool of strategic power. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=8208>
 15. Miglani, S. (2024, February 5). We're all fighting a war every day on the battlefield of social media. *Medium*.

Social Media as Battlefields: Examining the Role of ...

<https://medium.com/@sohitmiglani/were-all-fighting-a-war-everyday-on-the-battlefield-of-social-media-714e7a754e8f>

16. Nikolaev, A. G., & Yurchenko, M. (2021). Media space as a battlefield: A historical narrative of modern Ukrainian media. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349680509>
17. Nikolaev, N. Y., & Yurchenko, D. S. (2021). Media space as a 'battlefield': A historical narrative of modern Ukrainian media. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2021(2), 86–94. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2021.02.02.86>
18. Payne, K. (2005). The media as an instrument of war. *Parameters*, 35(1), 81–93. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA505194.pdf>
19. Payne, K. (2005). The media as an instrument of war. *Parameters*, 35(1), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2243>
20. Rattray, G. J. (2009). The role of information operations in counterinsurgency (Report No. ADA505194). Defense Technical Information Center. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA505194.pdf>
21. Rehman, S.-u., & Riaz, S. (2021). How social media is shaping conflicts: Evidence from contemporary research. *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication*, 5(4), 76–94. <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V05-I04-06>

22. Schleffer, G., & Miller, B. (2021). The political effects of social media platforms on different regime types. *Texas National Security Review*, 4(3), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/13987>
23. Shanks, D. P. (2024). The digital battlefield: Extremists on social media (Doctoral dissertation, Old Dominion University). https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/241
24. Shanks, M. T. (2024). The media on the battlefield: ISIS and the evolution of social media warfare. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345574344>
25. Strate, L. (2008). Studying media as media: McLuhan and the media ecology approach. *MediaTropes eJournal*, 1, 127–142. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265024673>
26. Valencia, J. G. (2024). Examining the role of social media and mass media in political campaigns: A review of the literature. *American Journal of Arts and Human Science*, 4(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajahs.v4i1.2252>
27. Yan, N. (2021). Social media is redistributing power. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(6), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2021.960>

Author: Assistant Pro Abdul Rahman Alkozai

The Role of social media in Disseminating Information to Tourists in Afghanistan

Abstract

In today's rapidly evolving world, social media has emerged as a strong tool for communication, promotion, and economic development. Its reach extends across industries and nations, transforming how businesses and individuals interact. One of the most visible manifestations of this impact is the tourism industry. Fortunately, Afghanistan, has some of the world's most spectacular and diversified tourist locations, including stunning mountains and broad deserts, as well as cultural, religious, archaeological, and forest-rich sites where social media's helps to show this scenic beauty to others. The purpose of this study is to investigate and assess the function of social media in tourism promotion and the dissemination of tourism information in Afghanistan. The quantitative method was used and the Uses and gratification theory was applied. the data was collected through online with questionnaires. The finding shows that most people in Afghanistan like and inspired by social to travel for natural sites and visit historical places, besides, its

social media plays key role in providing information to tourist such as security issue, tourist spots, Staying.

Keywords: Tourism, social media, information, Afghanistan, Disseminating

Introduction

World Trade Organization (WTO) and United States Nations Statistics Division (UN) (1994) define that in order to qualify to the category of tourist, one has to travel and remain in a place outside of usual residential environment for not more than a year either for spending free time, business or similar other purposes. Tourism has emerged itself as one of the prominent, leading and diverse industry in the world since past decades. According to World Tourism Organization, 5 billion international tourists were recorded in the year 2019 (Sha & Saba, 2021).

An anticipated 1.4 billion international tourists (overnight visits) were registered worldwide in 2024, representing an 11% increase over 2023, or 140 million more. According to preliminary predictions, worldwide tourism receipts will exceed USD 1.6 trillion in 2024, up approximately 3% from 2023 and 4% from 2019. Tourism export revenues (receipts and passenger transport) are expected to reach a record USD 1.9 trillion in 2024, up almost 3% from 2019. International visitor arrivals are predicted to increase by 3% to 5% in 2025 vs 2024. The newest UN Tourism Confidence Index reflects the sector's strong outlook, with a score of 130 for 2025 (UNWTO, 2025).

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

Afghanistan has unique attractions for tourist that reflect centuries of cultural interaction and historical significance, ranging from the Buddhist remnants of Bamiyan to the medieval cities of Herat and Ghazni.

The Afghan tourist Authority was founded in 1954, signaling the start of organized tourist activities in the country. In the same year, around 200 visitors visited Afghanistan. Over time, this statistic grew dramatically; by 1961, it had risen to 23,413, and by 1968, it had reached 63,089 visitors. The number of tourists increased substantially after 1973, with annual levels topping 100,000. By 1976, the number of international tourists had reached around 150,000. However, decades of violence and insecurity have hampered not only the country's overall development but also the expansion of the tourism industry. Despite these obstacles, Afghanistan remains a country with significant tourist potential due to its unique four seasons, which provide warm places for winter travel and cool, pleasant spots for summer trips. Traditional games, cuisine, clothing, handicrafts, and historical places are all popular attractions for travelers. These cultural and ecological assets continue to pique the curiosity of international visitors (Shirani, n.d).

In the last few years, the number of local and foreign tourists in Afghanistan has expanded, which has greatly benefited the government. According to the Ministry of Information and Culture, roughly 9,000 international visitors visited Afghanistan over the previous year to explore the country's

historical and recreational areas. Furthermore, more than 9 million domestic tourists were registered in the same year. Additionally, nearly 3,000 tourism enterprises have been registered with the Ministry. The ministry is also developing a number of projects in different provinces to help tourists, notably in recreational and historical areas. (Azadi Radio ,2024).

Social Media in Afghanistan

The concept of social media has been defined in multiple ways. Social media is a broad word that encompasses writings on blogs and forums, images, audio recordings, videos, links, profile pages on social networking sites, and a wide range of other social media content (Eley & Tilley, 2009). Roberts and Kraynak (2008) define social media as collaborative, user-created internet content. Social media has been characterized as a category of internet-based applications that allow users to create and edit information while adhering to the internet's technological and ideological roots (Sahin& Sengun, 2015)

Due to broad internet access, Afghanistan has seen an explosive increase in social media use. This increase has improved communication and strengthened national links, bridging the gap with the outside world. Facebook, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn, Twitter, and TikTok are among the most popular social media platforms in Afghanistan. According to the Datareportal website, there were 7.88 million internet users in Afghanistan by the beginning of 2024, with internet

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

penetration at 18.4 percent. In January 2024, Afghanistan had 3.70 million social media users, which accounted for 8.6 percent of the population. In early 2024, Afghanistan had 27.67 million active cellular mobile connections, which accounted for 64.6 percent of the total population. According to data revealed in Meta's advertising resources, Facebook had 3.70 million users in Afghanistan as of early 2024. Instagram had 1.01 million users, while X's (Twitter) advertising resources show that X had 310.3 thousand subscribers in Afghanistan in early 2024 (Datareportal, 2024).

Social Media role in promotion of Tourism Industry

Social media is a crucial factor in drawing tourists around the world. The internet has transformed the tourism industry, both as a source of information and a sales channel. Naturally, the rapid advancement of information technology and the internet around the world will surely drive the expansion of the tourism industry. The number of web users in tourism places is increasing and becoming more widespread by the day. Many tourism enterprises, including hotels, airlines, and travel agencies, have begun to use the internet as a key marketing and communication strategy. In this regard, the internet has become one of the most powerful elements of competitiveness in the tourism industry. The tourism industry has begun to employ social media as a new marketing strategy in conjunction with emerging internet technologies (Sahin & singun, 2015).

Although travelers have other options for communication, social media is the most recommended platform for them to seek for and exchange information with others. Numerous social media sites offer both general and detailed information about lodging, dining options, tourist destinations, transportation, internet access, etc. Before making a final decision, travelers consult audience feedback. Social media has an edge over print and electronic media in that it helps travelers find new trends and, consequently, gives more information quickly. Social media has a significant impact on encouraging and motivating travelers to base their trip planning on the following steps: Visitor Evaluations and Remarks Compared to other traditional sources of information, the opinions and comments left by visitors on the images posted on social media are seen as reliable sources of information. Social media provides potential travelers with more powerful images to assist them make an informed choice when selecting the top tourist destinations (Sha & Saba, 2021).

Afghanistan, like other countries, has the opportunity to utilize social media in the tourism business. In recent years, the number of internet and social media users in Afghanistan has skyrocketed, both individually and among businesses. These platforms have the potential to play a critical role in recruiting visitors to the country. Using social media, information on Afghanistan's rich cultural legacy, historical sites, and natural beauty may be extensively spread, strengthening the country's

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

tourism industry. The judicious use of these platforms has the potential to enhance the tourism industry while also benefiting the national economy. As more tourists learn about Afghanistan's attractions through internet platforms, the country will profit from enhanced worldwide visibility and a greater influx of international visitors.

According to government estimates, more than 5,000 foreign visitors visited Afghanistan in 2023. Many foreign tourists have visited from China, Central Asian countries, the European Union, Russia, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Among these tourists were some foreign YouTube personalities who traveled to Afghanistan, a trend that has inspired others to visit this war-torn country too (B.B.C, 2025)

Problem Statement

Despite Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and numerous tourist attractions, the country is underrepresented and frequently misrepresented in global tourism markets, owing primarily to security concerns and restricted traditional marketing channels. With social media becoming a main source of information for travelers globally, there is an urgent need to understand how these platforms are used to spread tourism information in Afghanistan. However, the role and impact of social media in changing tourist views, influencing travel decisions, and promoting tourism growth has not received adequate attention in the country.

Research Questions

1. How social media provide enough information for tourists interested in visiting different areas of Afghanistan?
2. Does social media inspire tourist to travel?

Significance of the study

Social media platforms have proven to be the most successful and efficient source of information for tourist, playing an important part in tourism marketing, trip planning, and tourist motivation. In the context of Afghanistan, social media has helped to empower the industry. It helps reflect the country's hidden beauty to a worldwide audience, rehabilitate its image, and instill curiosity and trust in potential tourists and investors.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the significance of social media in spreading tourism-related information in Afghanistan, with an emphasis on its effectiveness in influencing public interest and travel motivation. Furthermore, the study seeks to assess how social media influences the country's image and promotes tourism growth.

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant reliance on social media platforms for obtaining tourism-related information among people in Afghanistan.

H1.1: People increasingly rely on social media platforms to search information about tourism spots in Afghanistan.

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

H02: People are not significantly inspired to travel after seeing videos, images, or comments on social media platforms.

H2.2: people are inspired to travel after seeing other people's uploaded videos, images, and remarks on social media platforms.

Literature review

Social networking is becoming increasingly important in the tourism business. More experts are looking into how social media affects the tourism business. Social media proved to be an important communication tool that expanded throughout the region. The tourist industry is one of the most benefited by the internet, and as a result, social media has become an essential component of any national or state tourism promotion and planning efforts.

Kiralova and Pavlicecka (2015) stated that social media plays an important role in both the demand and supply sides of tourism, allowing destinations to communicate directly with tourists through various online platforms and monitor and respond to visitors' comments and assessments of services. The article outlines tourism destinations and discusses social media and communications in tourism. It covers the key aspects of social media and their consequences for destination communication strategy, as well as changes in visitor behavior that affect destination marketing (Abdurahim Zai & Samim, 2023).

Sahin and Sengun (2015) emphasize the role of social media in tourism marketing. He added that the tourism industry has

begun to employ social media as a new marketing strategy in the era of rapidly evolving internet technologies. His research demonstrates that social media has a beneficial and negative impact on the tourism industry. The remarks and personal experiences of other social media users have a significant impact on the young generation's travel decisions.

Roberta Minazzi (2015) in “Social Media Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality” states that the term "social media" refers to websites and apps that enable users to communicate and connect with others. It allows users to engage, share information, ideas, and express emotions through virtual websites. Social media comes in a variety of formats, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, which are widely used for both personal and professional marketing.

The internet has transformed the tourism industry, both as a source of information and a sales channel. guests' evaluations, images, videos, tales and recommendations, as well as internet marketing, bring locations closer to future guests regardless of their physical location. They also play an important part in increasing business competitiveness by airing tourist itineraries aimed at demonstrating Afghanistan's rich indigenous culinary culture in an attempt to disseminate positivism and hence attract new customers. Tourism enterprises in Afghanistan can take use of social networks by actively engaging with tourists on social media and developing company websites that serve as a direct link to the companies. Increased tourist visits would

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

result in more employment opportunities for local populations. (Abdurahm Zai& Samim. 2023)

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G), which emerged in the mid-twentieth century, is today considered as a fundamental sub-tradition in media impacts research (McQuail, 1994). Early scholars, such as Cantril (1942), Herzog (1940) and Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1949), investigated how media material draws viewers by meeting their psychological and social demands. This early research paved the way for understanding media usage not as a passive activity, but as one in which audiences actively choose content based on personal reasons. U&G changed over time to meet the demands of new technology, particularly the rise of social media. (Hajdarmataj & Paksoy, 2023).

The concept looks at how people deliberately seek out media to meet specific requirements like information, social engagement, or enjoyment. In the context of tourism, social media can be examined by looking at how travelers and potential tourists utilize it to meet their needs for travel information, inspiration, and connections with those who have visited or want to visit tourist attractions in Afghanistan.

Research Methodology:

This study employed a descriptive research design and quantitative method was selected for its ability to produce measurable and generalizable results. A structured online

questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool to gather information. The target population was limited to active social media users in Afghanistan, specifically those who had shown engagement with tourism content online (e.g., by posting travel photos or participating in travel-related discussions). The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp public groups and direct messages to users who had uploaded tourist images on social media platforms. A total of 101 complete responses were received and analyzed. The survey instrument was developed using Google Forms and contained 17 structured questions, designed to collect both factual and perceptual data. The questionnaire included a mix of: Multiple-choice questions; Dichotomous (Yes/No) questions; Open-ended recommendations. The Key areas covered in the questionnaire included: Purpose and nature of travel; Preferred travel destinations; Motivational factors (e.g., natural beauty, historical sites, food); Sources of inspiration (media and social media platforms); Pre-trip planning habits (e.g., road conditions, accommodation, safety, weather); Engagement with social media (e.g., sharing content, influencing others); Perceptions of tourism challenges and development needs.

Data collected through Google Forms was automatically recorded and then exported for further analysis. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to summarize trends and behaviors. In addition, Z-tests for proportions were used for hypothesis testing to

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

assess the statistical significance of specific observed behaviors, such as the reliance on social media for tourism information and inspiration. Moreover, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no personal identifying information was collected. The responses remained anonymous and were used solely for academic and analytical purposes, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

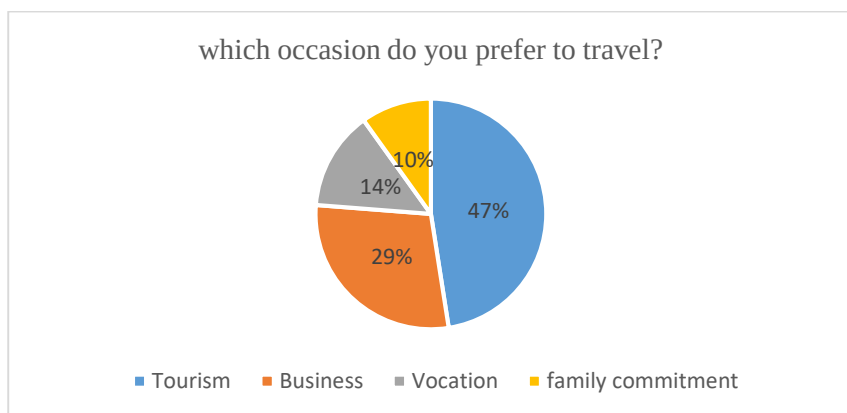
Discussion and Results and Hypotheses tests

This study's findings provide a comprehensive assessment of the evolving state of Afghanistan's tourism sector, reflecting both the growing enthusiasm for travel and the major difficulties that must be addressed to realize its full potential. The data reveals several crucial characteristics and provides statistically significant insights into how modern Afghan tourists behave, make decisions, and are influenced, notably by social media.

1. Changing Travel Behavior and Motivations

According to the survey results, tourism is increasingly considered as a leisure and cultural endeavor, rather than a necessity. Nearly half of respondents (48%) stated that tourism was their primary motivation for travel, surpassing business, professional, and family-related travel. This transition represents a cultural transformation in which people want to connect with Afghanistan's natural beauty and tradition. The study discovered that natural landscapes (85%) and historical

places (48%) are the most powerful motivators for travel. This emphasizes the need of protecting these assets while also promoting them more effectively. Interestingly, food and local cuisine had a lower influence (12%), indicating a possible area for expansion through culinary tourist activities.



Furthermore, domestic travel is the most popular, with 50% preferring local and 48% preferring national travel, while only 3% reported overseas travel. This demonstrates considerable untapped potential in domestic tourism, which can serve as a platform for future international engagement whenever conditions improve.

2. Infrastructure and Hospitality: Critical Barriers to Growth

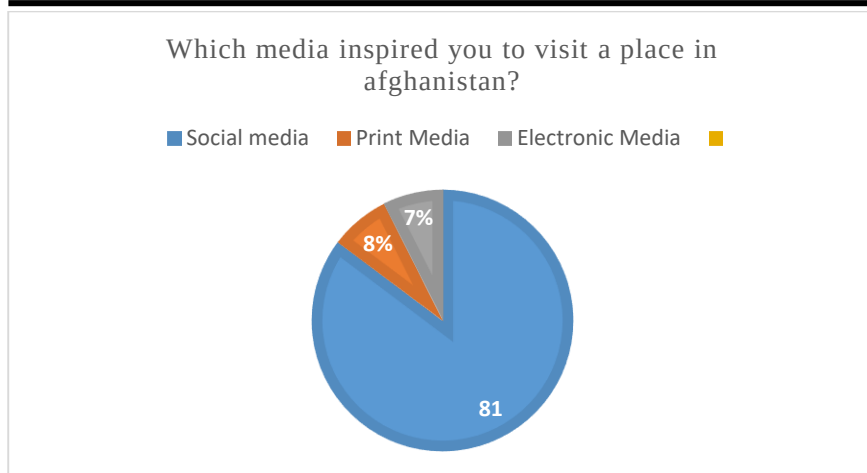
Despite increased interest in tourism, poor road infrastructure remains the most significant hindrance, according to 83% of respondents. Damaged and impassable roads have a significant impact on rural places with many tourist attractions. This reduces not only accessibility, but also the economic potential of tourism in developing countries.

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

The second most common issue (61%), particularly in rural or underdeveloped areas, is a scarcity of hotels and rooms. Travelers are frequently apprehensive due to concerns regarding hotel possibilities. Addressing this gap through investment in hospitality infrastructure, such as low-cost hotels, guesthouses, and travel services, has the potential to significantly improve the overall tourism experience. Although security concerns were mentioned (28%), they ranked lower than infrastructure and hospitality. This suggests a shift in traveler priorities or a growing confidence in localized safety, though caution remains necessary.

3. The Transformative Role of social media in Tourism

One of the study's most significant findings is the impact of social media on travel behavior. A whopping 81% of respondents said they were motivated to travel after seeing content on social media platforms such as Facebook (87%), WhatsApp (38%), Instagram (30%), TikTok (25%), and more. This strongly shows that social media has superseded traditional media as the key source of travel awareness and decision-making.



People are more than just passive users of digital content; they are active participants. Approximately 88% of respondents reported sharing their own photographs and tales online, with many claiming that their content influenced others to visit the same places. This results in a viral loop of peer-to-peer tourism promotion, in which personal recommendations are more influential than traditional advertising.

To reinforce this point, statistical hypothesis testing was conducted:

$\hat{p}$ = sample proportion (observed value)

p_0 = hypothesized proportion under the null hypothesis

n = sample size

$$H1: Z = \frac{\hat{p} - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}} = \frac{0.734 - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{0.5 \times 0.5}{100}}} = 0.23 / 0.05 = 4.6$$

The observed proportion (0.734) is Greater than the hypothesized 0.5. the calculated Z-score is 4.6, which is much greater than the critical Z-value of 1.645 for a one-tailed test at significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. This means we reject the null

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

hypothesis, which states that the true proportion is 0.5 or less. In other words, there is statistically significant evidence that people increasingly rely on social media for tourism information.

$$H2: Z = \frac{\hat{p} - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}} = \frac{0.86 - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{0.5 \times 0.5}{100}}} = 0.36 / 0.05 = 7.2$$

The observed proportion (0.86) substantially exceeds than the hypothesized 0.5. The Z-score of 7.2 is significantly higher than the critical value of 1.645. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that people are not inspired by others' shared photos, videos, and comments on social media. This shows strong statistical evidence that people are indeed inspired by social media content to travel. In other words, these hypothesis tests validate the earlier qualitative findings and confirm that social media is a behavioral driver—not just a promotional tool. Platforms have evolved into essential sources of real-time, on-the-go travel decision-making, as reflected in how people use them to:

Check weather conditions (89%)

Assess road conditions (75%)

Understand local customs and hospitality (67%)

Evaluate accommodation options (62%)

Monitor security situations (74%)

Furthermore, 65% of participants reported changing travel plans based on social media content. This demonstrates the

critical role of digital information in shaping traveler behavior and risk assessment.

4. Policy Implications and Development Opportunities

The survey results highlight several opportunities and practical actions for enhancing Afghanistan's tourism sector: Invest in road and transportation infrastructure, especially in remote areas with tourism potential; Expand the hospitality sector through incentives for hotel and guesthouse development, particularly outside urban centers; Develop a digital tourism strategy that leverages social media to promote destinations, provide real-time travel updates, and connect travelers with local experiences; Promote domestic tourism as a foundation for future international engagement; Protect and preserve natural and historical sites, ensuring long-term sustainability of the country's key attractions.

Conclusion

To summarize, social media plays an important and influential role in the development of the tourism industry. Social media is more than simply a source of information; it is also a platform for interaction, allowing tourists and residents to share experiences, feedback, and thoughts. It has evolved into an effective, accessible, and quick source of information for tourists in the present period. In Afghanistan, tourism companies and other relevant entities can use social media platforms to disseminate and promote information about the country's natural beauty, historical monuments, and cultural

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

heritage. This not only contributes to the country's excellent image, but it also attracts local and foreign tourists. Finally, such efforts benefit the tourism industry and generate new economic opportunities.

The study confirms that social media has a powerful and growing influence on tourism behavior in Afghanistan. A majority of respondents prefer traveling for tourism purposes, with natural sights and historical landmarks being the top attractions. Social media platforms—especially Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram—serve not only as sources of travel inspiration but also as essential tools for planning trips, assessing safety, checking road and weather conditions, and finding accommodations. Hypothesis testing strongly supports these findings, showing statistically significant evidence that people rely on social media for tourism information and are inspired by others' shared content. This highlights the potential of social media as a cost-effective and impactful tool for promoting Afghanistan's tourism industry.

However, despite this growing interest, several challenges remain, including poor road infrastructure, lack of accommodations, and security concerns. Addressing these issues is vital for fully realizing the country's tourism potential. Collaboration between government agencies, private investors, NGOs, and local communities will be critical. Encouraging content creation, storytelling, and influencer engagement can

further amplify Afghanistan's image as an emerging travel destination.

In conclusion, if leveraged strategically, social media can play a central role in revitalizing and expanding Afghanistan's tourism sector. With targeted investment in infrastructure, hospitality, and safety supported by digital engagement Afghanistan can attract more tourists, boost its economy, and showcase its rich cultural and natural heritage to the world.

Recommendations:

- The government has to take real steps to increase access to tourism attractions by developing and maintaining important road networks.
- To ensure tourists' comfort, enough housing facilities should be provided in key tourist sites.
- To get accurate data on the number of visitors visiting the country, a standardized registration system should be created, allowing tourists to register upon arrival at each location.

References:

1. Azadi Radio. (2024). *Tourism World Day: Some Afghan tourists say Afghanistan is not a safe place for tourism*. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://pa.azadiradio.com/a/33136380.html>
2. B.B.C Pashto. (2025). *The Taliban: Tens of thousands of foreigners traveled to Afghanistan last year*. April 18, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/pashto/articles/c7vnz9g5jrvo>

The Role of social media in Disseminating ...

3. DATAREPORTAL. (2024). *Digital 2024: Afghanistan*. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-afghanistan>
4. Hajdarmataj, F., & Paksoy, A. F. (2023). Uses and gratifications theory in social media applications: Today's active users, characteristics and obtained gratifications. In *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium: Communication in the Millennium* (pp. 24–35). Anadolu University.
5. Karim, Z. (2018). The impact of social media on tourism industry growth in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management United Kingdom*, VI(8). Retrieved from <http://ijecm.co.uk/>
6. Majeed, M. T., & Amjad, M. (2019). Tourism and economic development: Evidence from Afghanistan. *Tourism Economics*, 25(5), 734-754.
7. Mirehei, M., Asgari, S., Bakhtiari, L., & Mofid, M. A. (2024). Tourism Potentials in Afghanistan: Exploring and Ranking the Historic Cities. *Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies*, 8(2), 421-455. <https://doi.org/10.22059/wsps.2024.373036.1417>
8. Mohammad Edris Abdurahim Zai, Asifullah Samim, & Basira Sadat. (2023). The Role of Using Social Networking Sites to Achieve Competitive Advantage in the Tourism Companies in Afghanistan. *Botswana Journal on Vulnerable Community Development*, 1(1), 63-84.

9. Sahin, G. G., & Sengun, G. (2015). The Effects of Social Media on Tourism Marketing: A Study among University Students. *Management and Administrative Sciences Review*, 4(5), 772-786.
10. Shirani, F. W. (n.d.). The role of Tourism Sector in National Economy. Retrieved from <https://dpmea.gov.af/dr/DariArticles>
11. Tareen, D. S., & Saba, S. R. (2021). Role of Social Media in Promoting Tourism in Balochistan. *Journal of Media & Communication (JMC)*, 2(2), 110-135.
12. UNWTO. (2025). *World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex, January 2025*. Retrieved from <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2025.23.1.1?role=tab>

Junior assistant prof. Elyas Ahmad Yaqoubi

The Role of Educational Technology in the Effectiveness of Educational Institutions (A Case Study from Baesat High School)

Abstract

Educational technology is one of the most important topics in contemporary education and has been examined within educational systems from various perspectives and approaches. In recent years, this concept has gained a prominent position in enhancing teaching quality, facilitating learning, and increasing the effectiveness of educational institutions, particularly schools.

This research, using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with teachers and quantitative descriptive analysis of technology use, aims to examine the role of educational technology in the effectiveness of Baesat High School as an educational institution. The main research question is: What role does educational technology play in the effectiveness of Baesat High School as an educational institution?

To collect data, both library research and fieldwork methods were employed, given this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers of Baesat High School. The

statistical population in this study includes all 27 teachers of Baesat High School.

The findings of the study indicate that educational technology plays an undeniable role in improving teaching quality, increasing student motivation, facilitating learning, and enhancing teacher performance. The use of modern educational tools, such as visual media, interactive software, smart boards, and others, not only makes learning more engaging but also contributes to higher productivity and job satisfaction among teachers.

Therefore, the purposeful use of educational technology can be considered a strategic solution for improving the performance of educational institutions. Hence, greater attention to teacher training in the use of technology, provision of necessary equipment, and appropriate policy-making at the school level can pave the way for a transformation in the country's educational system.

Keywords: Educational Technology, Educational Effectiveness, Teachers, Learning, Teaching Quality, Education.

Introduction

In the 21st century, human societies have experienced fundamental transformations across various aspects of life, with education being one of the most significant areas of change. The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has not only reshaped economic

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

and social structures but has also altered the form and content of educational systems. In this context, educational technology has emerged as one of the key pillars of transformation in education, playing a highly effective role in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Educational technology is not limited to electronic tools; rather, it encompasses a set of methods, techniques, software, and tools designed and utilized to enhance the teaching and learning process. The proper and purposeful use of these tools can lead to increased motivation, creativity, and active student participation, ultimately contributing to improved educational quality. In modern educational institutions, the integration of technology is no longer optional, it has become an undeniable necessity.

However, in many developing countries such as Afghanistan, there are significant challenges to the effective utilization of educational technology. The lack of resources, shortage of skilled professionals, cultural resistance, and infrastructural problems are among the barriers that prevent educational institutions from fully realizing the benefits of educational technology. These realities highlight the need for precise and scientific case studies to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of technology use in educational environments.

Objective: the present research aims to examine the role of educational technology in the effectiveness of Baesat High School. This study seeks to evaluate the extent of technology

use at the school, assess its impact on students' learning processes, identify existing obstacles, and provide scientific recommendations to improve the educational system at the country level.

The findings of this research can assist school administrators, teachers, and educational policy-makers in taking more effective steps toward improving educational quality through a scientifically informed and context-sensitive approach.

Research question: The key question this study aims to answer is: What role does educational technology play in the effectiveness of Baesat High School?

Data and methodology

This study employed a case study design with a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through observation and semi-structured interviews with all 27 teachers of Baesat high school in district 13 of Kabul city.

Review of Literature

In recent years, numerous studies have been conducted in the field of educational technology and related topics. For example, a study by Rahmani, Farahi, and Hashemi (2023) titled “*The Role of Software in Learning Natural Sciences*” showed a significant and direct relationship between the use of educational software and students' interest in learning and applying natural sciences.

Another study by Rahmat Zehi and Lakzaei (2018), “*Investigating the Role of Educational Technology in*

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

Schools”, found that electronic learning facilitates the learning process.

Additionally, a study by Abbasi and Amiri Herfteh (2018), titled “*The Role of Educational Technology in Enhancing the Educational Quality for Female Students in Khash County*”, demonstrated that information and communication technologies can serve as powerful tools for improving the quality and efficiency of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, in another study conducted by Saidi and et. al (2016) titled “Teachers’ Attitudes Towards the Use of Educational Technology in Teaching and Its Relationship with Job Satisfaction in Smart Schools,” it was concluded that educational technology plays a decisive role in teaching. However, the role of educational technology in enhancing teachers’ instructional performance was not thoroughly explained. Therefore, we set out to conduct a study that comprehensively investigates the role of educational technologies in the effectiveness of educational institutions, particularly Baesat High School.

In today’s era, where traditional education no longer meets the needs of the digital generation, there is an urgent need to reconsider teaching methods through the integration of technological tools. Many schools still do not effectively utilize digital resources, multimedia materials, or modern teaching approaches. Given the current educational conditions in Afghanistan, along with the need to improve the quality of

education, reduce academic failure, and enhance the motivation of both teachers and students, this research can catalyze educational reform and provide a scientific model for decision-makers in the education system.

This study, with a specific focus on Baesat High School, aims to examine the direct and practical role of educational technology in improving teaching quality, student learning, and educational management. Its main innovation lies in moving away from generalizations and engaging in a practical, localized case study within a real educational institution. Unlike many theoretical and broad-based studies, this research analyzes empirical data from a school and, based on this, presents specific, policy recommendations that can be adapted for similar institutions.

In this paper, after presenting the theoretical and conceptual foundations of educational technology, the historical development and evolution of this phenomenon discussed. Subsequently, various types of educational technologies are introduced, and the field data collected is analyzed and interpreted. Finally, based on the results obtained, recommendations and strategies are provided to enhance educational effectiveness through technology.

Definition of Technology

The word “technology” is derived from the Greek term *technologia*, meaning the systematic practice of an art or profession. The first part of the word (*techno*) combines the

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

meanings of art and craft, encompassing the knowledge of principles and the ability to achieve desired outcomes. In other words, techne refers to practical skills such as knowing and doing. The root logos means reasoning, explanation, principle, or justifying. Therefore, technology refers to the logical or reasoned application of knowledge (Fardanish, 2009, p. 10).

At the Third World Exposition in Japan (1985) under the title “Science and Technology in the 21st Century” technology was defined as:

“Technology refers to the skills, knowledge, and methods related to the production of goods and the provision of services. It is the knowledge of applying science and human knowledge to daily life or industrial and commercial practices” (Tofiq, 1986, p. 25).

Definition of Education

Linguistically, education means the transfer of knowledge. In terms of concept, education refers to the process of interaction between the learner and their learning resources. In other words, education is a combination of processes that include:

- Teaching to someone (as seen most clearly in classroom instruction).
- Learning from someone (interaction with human resources).
- Learning from something (interaction with non-human resources such as materials, media, environments, etc.) (Pakpour, 2011, p. 20).

According to Dubois, education is the systematic arrangement of the learning environment to achieve specific desired outcomes. Allen Gagné describes education as a problem-solving process aimed at facilitating learners' learning, where the teacher is regarded as responsible for guiding instruction. He introduced the term instructional strategies, referring to the decisions and actions taken by the teacher to facilitate student learning using educational materials.

Dr. Fardanish defines education as:

“A set of decisions and actions taken successively, aimed at enabling the learner to achieve educational objectives more effectively” (Fardanish, 2009).

Definition of Educational Technology

Various definitions have been presented for educational technology, each shaped by the historical development and different approaches within the field. In its early stages, educational technology was defined as:

“A series of systematic activities that integrate machines, materials, and techniques to achieve educational goals.”

The Special Committee on National Engineering Technology of the United States defines educational technology as:

“A body of knowledge resulting from the application of learning and teaching sciences in the real-world classroom, accompanied by tools and methods that facilitate the implementation of these sciences” (Nutbean, 2014).

More recent definition describes educational technology as:

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

“The art and study of designing a learning system. In this approach, the system is responsive to each individual's dynamics, meaning that each learner must be actively involved in the learning process” (Rastegarpour, 2007).

The British National Council for Educational Technology defines it as:

“The development, application, and evaluation of systems, techniques, and educational materials aimed at improving the human learning process” (Introductory Course Material on Educational Technology).

James Brown defines educational technology as:

“The systematic design, implementation, and evaluation of the entire teaching and learning process based on specific goals and research findings in the fields of learning and communication, and the use of both human and non-human resources to create effective education.”

Richmond defines it as:

“The systematic application of scientific knowledge in learning situations” (Ghaznavi, Najari & Rahimi, 2018, p. 7).

Another definition states:

“Educational technology is the systematic application of methods in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the entire teaching and learning process. This is based on defined objectives and research in the areas of learning and human communication, using both human and non-human resources to

provide more effective, sustainable, and deeper Learning” (Ahdayan, 2007).

Comprehensive Definition and Core Concepts

Based on the above definitions and explanations, educational technology can be defined as:

“A dynamic system of ethical study and practice with a defined purpose, aimed at creating an interactive environment where learners can engage in activities that promote fast, easy, effective, lasting, and personalized learning, aligned with their interests and characteristics.”

This definition encompasses several concepts that extend into related fields. The following are brief explanations of key terms within this definition:

System: Before anything else, educational technology is a system. A system is defined as:

“A collection of interrelated components interacting toward a specific goal.”

Accordingly, educational technology can be seen as an interconnected set of components that function together to achieve educational objectives.

Dynamism: Another key element of this definition is dynamism, which distinguishes educational technology from being static. Over time, shifting paradigms, evolving technologies, and the unique needs of societies, new methods are required. Educational technology must adapt to these

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

changes and apply knowledge based on contemporary advancements (Rastegarpour & Ahmadi Gol, 2014, p. 15).

the emphasis on systematic design, purposeful application, and the improvement of learning outcomes. However, these definitions should not be seen only as technical descriptions.

In fact, educational technology is a dynamic process that requires the integration of both tools and pedagogical strategies. From the author's perspective, the significance of educational technology lies not only in the provision of hardware and software but also in how teachers interpret and apply these tools in the classroom context. This means that educational technology should be viewed as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical

History and Evolution of Educational Technology

The use of audio-visual aids in education dates back to the early 1900s. At the beginning of the 20th century, educators began to recognize the importance of incorporating audio-visual tools into teaching. Initially, only visual aids were used. The first visual tools employed in American schools included slides and educational films.

With the onset of World War II, the focus of activities related to audio-visual tools shifted from educational institutions to the U.S. military. During the war, various tools such as projectors and overhead film devices were developed for the first time. In addition, devices like slide projectors, language

laboratories, and flight simulation trainers were used extensively to train military personnel.

In this period, educational technology adopted a hardware-oriented approach, which persisted until the mid-1940s.

Between 1950 and 1960, three major events marked a significant transformation in the field of educational technology:

1. Introduction of new models and theories by communication science experts.
2. Emergence of a systems approach in the field of education.
3. Advancements in cognitive and behavioral learning theories in psychology.

In the 1970s and 1980s, with the expansion of computer-based projects and the advent of networked communications, the concept of technology-assisted learning evolved further.

In the 1990s, the emergence of the internet led to the development of Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Blackboard, which allowed for the design, delivery, and management of online courses. This marked a fundamental shift in formal education.

From the early 2000s, mobile learning and virtual learning environments rapidly expanded. This evolution continued with the introduction of more advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, personalized learning, and educational data analytics.

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

These tools not only enhanced the quality of education but also expanded access to learning for remote and underserved areas. They transformed education from a static process into a dynamic, adaptable, and accessible system for all (*Introductory Course Material on Educational Technology*).

Types of Educational Technology

Various classifications of educational technology have been proposed, but three main categories are most commonly referenced in credible academic sources:

1. Hardware Educational Technology

This includes physical tools and devices used in education, such as projectors, televisions, computers, interactive whiteboards, sound systems, CCTV cameras, and more. These devices make content delivery more engaging and accessible, and they serve as aids to enhance learning.

2. Software Educational Technology

This refers to content and programs designed based on psychological theories of learning and instruction. Examples include educational software, digital resources, multimedia content (videos, animations, podcasts), learning apps, and virtual learning environments (Learning Management Systems) such as Moodle, Google Classroom, Canvas, etc., which are used to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate educational processes mostly in online formats.

3. Systems-Based Educational Technology

In this category, education is viewed as a system, including inputs (learners, resources), processes (teaching and learning), and outputs (learning outcomes). The focus here is on systematic design, planning, implementation, and evaluation to achieve optimal educational results (Hafez-ul-Islam and others, 2024).

Methodology

This research adopts a case study design and utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The main objective is to explore the role of educational technology in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Baesat High School. To achieve this, empirical data were collected from the educational environment.

For data collection, unstructured (open-ended) interviews and observations were conducted with all 27 teachers at Baesat High school. Due to the limited number of teachers and to ensure the reliability and depth of the findings, the entire population was selected. This comprehensive approach enabled the researcher to obtain deeper insights and a more accurate understanding of how educational technology is being utilized within the school setting.

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

Findings and Analysis

In this section, the data collected through interviews with the teachers of Baesat High School are examined and analyzed. For this purpose, content analysis and thematic analysis methods were employed. The goal of this analysis is to identify the perspectives, experiences, and challenges that teachers face about the use of educational technology in their teaching environment.

To better organize the findings, the data were categorized into five key thematic areas, each corresponding to one of the core dimensions of the research. Below is the analysis of the first dimension:

1. Tools Used by Teachers at Baesat High School

Based on the interviews conducted, it was revealed that a number of educational technology tools are actively used in classroom instruction. These are categorized and summarized as follows:

Table 1 Usage of Educational Technology Tools by Teachers at Baesat High School

Percentage of Teachers	Tools Used
35.7%	Hardware Technology: Computers, projectors, televisions, audio systems, etc.
35.0%	Software Technology: YouTube, Google, internet, educational videos, etc.
28.5%	Minimal use of educational technology
0.0%	Systemic Technology

Interpretation:

Based on Table 1, the findings indicate:

- Approximately **35.7%** of teachers at Baesat High School use hardware tools such as computers, projectors, televisions, and audio equipment in their teaching practices.
- About **35%** utilize software-based tools, including platforms like YouTube, Google, and online educational videos.
- Nearly **28.5%** of the teachers rarely use educational technology, indicating a gap in adoption or accessibility.
- **0%** of the teachers reported using systemic educational technology, which suggests it is not implemented at the school.

This data reveals that while some technological tools are being applied effectively, depending on the grade level and subject matter, their use is still limited and not integrated into a comprehensive educational system. The absence of systemic technology use is attributed to factors such as a lack of resources, low levels of awareness, and a shortage of technical specialists at the school.

Another important dimension that emerged from the interviews was the impact of educational technology on student motivation and learning at Baesat High School,

The teachers interviewed widely agreed that the use of educational technology has had a positive impact on

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

student motivation and learning. The key benefits highlighted include:

1. Increased student interest in lesson content due to the use of images and videos.
2. Deeper understanding of concepts through visual and auditory visualization.
3. Greater student participation during lessons, especially in group and interactive activities.
4. Enhanced motivation and improved academic performance among students.

• The Role of Educational Technology in Improving Teaching Quality at Baesat High School

The interview results show that the majority of Baesat High School teachers consider educational technology one of the most effective tools for enhancing teaching quality. Analysis of their responses reveals several dimensions of impact:

A) Educational and Learning Dimension:

1. Improved understanding and comprehension of academic concepts by students.
2. Enhanced academic quality and depth of educational content.
3. Reduced time wastage and optimized use of class time.

B) Motivational and Psychological Dimension:

1. Increased student interest and motivation toward learning.
2. More active participation in the learning process.

3. Development of mental growth and creativity among students.

C) Teaching Methodology Dimension:

1. Makes teaching more engaging and interactive.
2. Enables teachers to adapt instruction to students' varying abilities.
3. Helps teachers transition from traditional to modern teaching methods.

D) Cultural Dimension:

1. Plays a key role in promoting a culture of technology use in education.
2. Prepares the younger generation to enter a digital and tech-driven society.

These findings indicate that technology not only enhances the learning process but also has a positive effect on the psychological atmosphere and educational interactions within the school environment.

• Challenges and Barriers to Using Educational Technology at Baesat High School

The analysis of interviews with teachers at Baesat High School reveals that despite a general willingness to adopt educational technology, there are numerous obstacles hindering its effective use. The most significant challenges identified include:

1. Lack of sufficient infrastructure, such as projectors, well-equipped laboratories, and internet access.

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

2. Shortage of standard educational tools, making some devices practically unusable.
3. Low awareness and skill levels among teachers in using modern educational technologies.
4. Lack of training programs or upskilling workshops for teachers on how to effectively use educational technologies.
5. Technical issues and the absence of IT support, make digital tools difficult to use in practice.

These barriers demonstrate that for educational technology to be widely and effectively implemented, investment in infrastructure and teacher training is essential.

• Teachers' Educational Needs Regarding Educational Technology at Baesat High School

The interview data analysis shows that most teachers at Baesat High School expressed concern over the lack of necessary tools and equipment to effectively integrate educational technology. Their needs fall into two primary categories:

A) Equipment Needs:

1. Access to computers and laptops for the design and delivery of digital educational content.
2. Stable internet connectivity in classrooms to utilize online and interactive learning resources.
3. Availability of LCD screens and projectors to enhance concept explanation and visualization.
4. Use of AI tools and advanced educational software to improve teaching quality and effectiveness.

B) Training and Capacity-Building Needs:

1. Regular seminars and workshops on the use of educational technology in classroom settings.
2. Practical, project-based training to enable teachers to effectively use digital tools.
3. Training in the development of localized, student-friendly digital content tailored to the needs of their learners.

These insights clearly indicate that for the effective integration of educational technology, there must be a simultaneous focus on teacher capacity-building and the provision of adequate tools and infrastructure within the school environment.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study, based on interviews with teachers at Baesat High School, indicate that educational technology plays an important and effective role in improving the teaching–learning process. Tools such as videos, projectors, televisions, and educational films are used to a limited extent; however, the lack of sufficient facilities, inadequate training, and low awareness levels are major challenges in utilizing these technologies effectively.

Teachers emphasized that the effective use of educational technology can increase students' interest, make teaching more engaging and effective, enhance student participation, and improve their comprehension, motivation, and knowledge. Additionally, this technology is considered an important tool for saving time and diversifying teaching methods.

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

The results also revealed that traditional teaching approaches still dominate in the school, and educational technology has not yet found its proper place. From the author's perspective, a key factor in this regard is the absence of clear policies at the institutional level for institutionalizing technology in education.

This research also highlights the necessity of raising awareness and fostering a culture among officials, school administrators, and parents to create a supportive environment for the acceptance and use of technology in education.

Ultimately, the study demonstrated that if the necessary conditions, such as equipping schools, improving teachers' digital skills, and providing internet access and smart devices, are met, educational technology can play a vital role as an effective tool in enhancing the quality of education in Afghan schools.

Recommendations

1. Equip schools with educational technology tools such as computers, projectors, and internet access.
2. Organize workshops and seminars to train teachers on the effective use of technology.
3. Incorporate educational technology training into teacher education curricula and in-service training programs.
4. Encourage creative teachers through recognition and provision of additional resources.

5. Foster cooperation between the Ministry of Education and international organizations to provide resources and educational infrastructure.

References

1. Ahadian, Mohammad. (2007). *Introduction to Educational Technology*. Tehran: Boshra.
2. Pakpour, Younes. (2011). *Foundations of Educational Technology: Perspectives, Theory, and Practice*. Tehran: Didar.
3. Ghaznavi, Mohammad Reza, Najari, Mojtaba & Rahimi, Amir Mohammad. (2018). Investigating the Role of New Educational Technologies in Teacher Effectiveness. National Conference on New Psychology with Emphasis on Its Applications in Life, Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology.
4. *Introduction to Educational Technology* (Lecture Notes). (n.d.). [No author].
5. Islam, Hafizul, Nayeem, Abdun, Istiak Ahmad, Liton, Sizan, Junaid Jamil, & Sadik, Siam. (2024). The Role of Educational Technology in Enhancing Learning in Developing Countries. *Journal of Scientific Reports*, 7(1), 197–212.
6. Kheiri, Mahtab & Zahedi, Ali. (2017). The Impact of Utilizing Educational Technology on Teaching and Learning. Scientific Information Database, Jahad-e Daneshgahi.

The Role of Educational Technology in the ...

7. Nutbean, David. (2014). The effectiveness of technology integration into classroom in Rural Manitoba High schools, BU journal of Graduate studies in education, volume 6, issue 1.
8. Pakpour, younes. (2011). Foundations of educational technology: perspectives, theory and practice. Tehran: Didar.
9. Rastgarpour, Hassan. (2007). Designing Educational Systems and Educational Technology. *Psychology and Information*, Vol. 1, No. 1.
10. Rastgarpour, Hassan & Ahmadi Gol, Jafar. (2014). A Study and Analysis of the Philosophy and Nature of Educational Technology. *Educational Engineering Quarterly: Technology and Instructional Design*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (p. 1-20).
11. Seels, B.B., & Rick, R.C. (1994). *Instructional Technology: The Definition and Domains of the Field*.
12. Tofigh, Ali Asghar. (1986). *Tomorrow's Technology and the Future of Technology (Collected Articles): A Comparative Analysis of Technology Status in Iran and the World*. Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, General Directorate of Publications and Advertising.