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The Global Political Popular Culture

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The Global Political Popular Culture

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People across the globe are taking note of what is going on with American politics. Many people have ideas about what America is doing who do not vote in our elections or reside in our country. News organizations abroad often report on American political policies and actions. Our research examines two recent events involving President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton in Afghanistan. We examined the context of these events, the number and patterns of tweets, and the languages used. We also looked at how many tweets were announcements instead of personal opinions.

The first event relating President Obama to Afghanistan began on November 11, 2009, when he called together a war counsel to discuss how best to end America's involvement there. On December 1, 209 he gave a speech listing his goals and explaining why more troops were necessary and how he would turn the fight over to the Afghani government. President Obama hopes to begin withdrawing troops next summer and completely ending the war in 2013. Meanwhile, 30,000 more troops were sent in to counter Taliban activity and help the Afghan army and police take over responsibility.

- http://blogs.abcnews.com/george/2009/11/obama-looking-for-offramps-out-ofafghanistan.html
- http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/01/barack-obama-speech-afghanistan-war

Data for this report was gathered from November 11, 2009 to January 1, 2010.

Approximately seventy-five percent of the 33,422 tweets were announcements of new

developments in the story. Tweets spiked each time a new development was issued during the later part of November and the month of December, peaking with 4,988 on December 1, 2009 – after President Obama's speech announcing the surge. The majority of these tweets were in English. Of our sample of 2,391 tweets, we had only 6 in other languages.

Language	Number of Tweets
English	2,385
Malay	3
Vietnamese	2
Italian	1

Date	Number of Tweets	% of the Total
1-Jan	82	0.002
31-Dec	198	0.006
30-Dec	186	0.006
29-Dec	78	0.002
28-Dec	96	0.003
27-Dec	92	0.003
26-Dec	121	0.004
25-Dec	44	0.001
24-Dec	97	0.003
23-Dec	114	0.003
22-Dec	158	0.005
21-Dec	117	0.004
20-Dec	203	0.007
19-Dec	113	0.003
18-Dec	87	0.003
17-Dec	249	0.007
16-Dec	189	0.005
15-Dec	214	0.007
14-Dec	100	0.003
13-Dec	370	0.011
12-Dec	114	0.003
11-Dec	503	0.015
10-Dec	230	0.007
9-Dec	41	0.001

671	0.02
977	0.029
931	0.028
953	0.029
1317	0.039
1351	0.041
3586	0.107
4988	0.132
1534	0.046
608	0.018
607	0.018
718	0.021
645	0.019
1858	0.056
1225	0.037
1538	0.046
171	0.005
405	0.012
391	0.012
266	0.008
621	0.019
397	0.012
424	0.013
	0.011
145	0.004
1046	0.031
301	0.009
1432	0.043
	977 931 953 1317 1351 3586 4988 1534 608 607 718 645 1858 1225 1538 171 405 391 266 621 397 424 363 145 1046 301

On November 18, 2010, Secretary of State Clinton arrived in Afghanistan in a surprise visit. She met with US Ambassador Eikenberry and Gen. McChrystal, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan, to discuss the potential surge. That night she had dinner with the newly elected President Karzai. The next day she attended his inauguration to show US support of the new administration.

 http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2009/11/18/hillary-clinton-makes-surprisevisit-to-afghanistan/ Our data for tweets in response to Secretary Clinton going to Afghanistan was collected between November 18, 2009 and December 6, 2009. After November 18, the number of tweets drastically declined. This is because it was a single event, and there were no further developments of the situation to discuss. Of the 444 tweets collected, nearly all of these tweets, 99.3 percent or 441 tweets to be exact, were announcements. Only one of these was not entirely in English – it was half English-half Japanese.

Date	Number of Tweets	% of Total
11/18/09	435	97.973
11/19/09	4	0.009
11/20/09	1	0.002
11/21/09	2	0.005
11/22/09	1	0.002
12/6/09	1	0.002

The lack of foreign language tweets leads us to believe that these two events did not attract very much international attention. They also did not spark much debate, with the majority of the tweets being announcements. In these cases, the global political popular culture did not take a large interest. It remains to be seen what people will think of Obama's surge in Afghanistan, but it likely to develop into something of international relevance.