

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In February 2020 the Trump administration and the Taliban signed an Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan that entailed the United States Armed Forces to withdraw from Afghanistan. A year later, the military forces completed the withdrawal process a day earlier from the schedule on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021 which ended America's two-decade occupation in Afghanistan. However, on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021 the Taliban had taken over sixteen major cities of Afghanistan as illustrated by Zucchini (2021) in New York Times. Murphy (2021) in BBC News reported that they quickly captured Kabul and Afghanistan's former president, Ashraf Ghani had departed the country, as well as the U.S. embassy staff on a helicopter provided by the U.S. government on the following day. Ever since then a recording of Afghans chasing after and hanging onto a cargo jet in their attempt to escape circulated on the internet. Upon this offending occurrence, Biden stood firmly behind his decision to bring home the military forces. Finally, on 31<sup>st</sup> August, the militants seized the Kabul International Airport. Over one thousand United States of America citizens and Afghans who have the visa of the United States or other countries were restrained from leaving Afghanistan.

This occurrence took the global eyes by surprise. The media, particularly U.S. media and media funded by the U.S. government stationed in the U.S. and Afghanistan, turned their attention regarding the issue to Biden and the Taliban. On

Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 President Biden stated that the Afghanistan military force was well-equipped and abundant in size compared to the Taliban which he believed was sufficient. He also stated that the fall of Afghanistan armed forces was caused by the lack of will to fight for the future of sovereignty (Biden, 2021). He also stated that the tragedy of the withdrawal was the inevitable result of the binary options he had been facing, either the United States pull out of Afghanistan or escalate the “forever war”. President Biden's remarks spurred various responses from the public, some praised him for his bravery to carry on the withdrawal and some others criticised the messy arrangement. President Biden received several criticisms regarding the failed conduct of the withdrawal amidst Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan.

Furthermore, in February 2022 the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Minority Report in the brief assessment argued that the rapid departure would have been avoided had the NSC (National Security Council) not wasted 115 days out of 150 days of preparation. The administration’s flawed decision and response to the withdrawal and the Afghanistan fall-out is regarded as important due to not only his status as an authoritative figure responsible for the well-being of Americans, but also to the fact that he used to be supportive of the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan until 2006. Thus, the public raised questions and began considering their trust in his previous experience as a foreign relations adversary and his current competence as a president.

Newspapers, among mass media, have a significant role in reporting the information in order to become the bridge of communication from the world and the government to the civilians. A medium such as newspapers facilitate an ideology discourse by presenting interpersonal meaning into the texts through language as social symbol. Chomsky and Herman (2008, p. 313) argued that media through ‘selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises’. The aforementioned ‘acceptable premises’ are influenced by the news company’s political interest and ideology orientation. They are reflected along with the salience and factual materials in the news reports.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is Halliday’s concept of model grammar that focuses on the concept of language function. It is the source of the development of the appraisal theory invented by Martin and White. It generally discusses the language function in social context which constructs clause, phrase, and sentences that bear intense meaning behind. It is more effective than traditional grammar which analyses the structure, formation of words, and sentences in literal sense without social context as much as SFL does.

Halliday emphasised that the aim of SFL is to construct a grammar for text analysis purposes: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about any text, spoken or written, in modern English (Halliday, 1994 p. xv, Eggins, 2004, p.2). SFL is progressively recognised as a very useful descriptive and interpretive framework for viewing language as a strategic, meaning-making

resource. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 28) language provides a theory of human experience and certain resources of the lexicogrammar of every language are dedicated to that function. It is clear that language construes human experience as it names things. Thus, construing them into categories; then it goes further and construes the categories into taxonomies, often using more names for doing so.

Halliday divides three functions of SFL into Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. Ideational resources are concerned with construing experience: what's going on, including who's doing what to whom, where, when, why and how and the logical relation of one going-on to another. Interpersonal resources are concerned with negotiating social relations: how people are interacting, including the feelings they try to share. Textual resources are concerned with information flow: the ways in which ideational and interpersonal meanings are distributed in waves of semiosis, including interconnections among waves and between language and attendant modalities (action, image, music, etc) (Martin and White, 2005, p. 7). Thus, from the three functions of SFL, interpersonal resources are mainly used in this study.

However, interpersonal resources developed by Halliday is only an umbrella of Appraisal theory which is the theory that examines interpersonal resources/function.

Studies focusing on mass media, especially news reports, have been conducted in great numbers previously. Jin's (2019) study revealed that in 2019 the United States took a hostile stance to China as described in the New York Times' report on the political dynamics of China and the DPRK. The study applied an Appraisal

theory, particularly the attitudinal perspective. Whereas Solman & Henderson (2019) compared the UK's media reporting between flood incidents in Northern England and Chennai in five UK newspapers. The result showed a striking difference; that UK media emphasised personal suffering from Northern England's flood victims while distanced Chennai flood's victims' grief and framed their incident with less significance than the former. Sabao (2016) conducted a study with newspaper comparisons as well, he investigated the objectivity in aforementioned newspapers regarding the retired General Solomon Mujuru's death using Martin and White's Appraisal theory. Kounalakis (2016) conducted a study on the comparison between China Daily's and The Washington Post's reports concerning China and Russia's international intervention importance in the UNSC vote on Syrian crisis using van Dijk's CDA framework.

Moving forward, Amer (2017) analysed the reporting's attitude of the Gaza war from 2008 until 2009 covered in international press. Meanwhile Wing-Chun Ng (2020) presented the study of the recontextualization of Beijing's hegemony that is both reinforced and counteracted in Hong Kong political discourse through Fairclough's CDA framework. Wang (2018) examined China Daily's news reports regarding air pollution that submissively abides by Communist Party of China (CPC)'s censorship indicated by the way they ameliorated the environmental issues from 2008 through 2015. Kharbach (2020) investigated the ideological hegemony battle between Qatar and Saudi manifested in the Gulf crisis reported by Al Arabiya English and Al Jazeera English using an interdisciplinary CDA framework.

Caddick, et al. (2020) conducted a newspaper coverage related to war. He studied the distinct hierarchy of wounding that veiled ideology in the UK's media representation of combat and non-combat injury in the UK-Afghanistan war. Their corpus takes two batches; the first from April to September 2009 and the second April to September 2014. Recently, Jing & Lihuan (2021) analysed the attitude displayed in China Daily's news articles of COVID-19 that leads to a positive attitude.

Martin and White's Appraisal theory is a popular framework in the previous studies in recent years, as well as U.S. portal news. As two of the leading newspapers in the U.S. that have plenty of reliable foreign news staffs, "high prestige and sophistication, and a record of willingness to take on the government", New York Times and The Washington Post (Entman, 2009, p. 77) have covered great number of reports on Afghanistan War and the White House, including in period of President Biden's tenure. The state of art of this study is to examine the interpersonal meanings constructed in the U.S. online news articles represented by The Washington Post and New York Times that evoke judgements and evaluation in the readers from the framework of Martin and White's Appraisal theory. The range of the articles is published from 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 because the Fall of Afghanistan, took place on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and the U.S. military troop and embassy's withdrawal had been completed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021. This study collected six online news articles that are relevant to the issue within the aforementioned range of time. This study collected six online news articles, three

articles from The Washington Post and three articles from New York Times that are relevant to the issue within the aforementioned range of time.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background of the study above, this study formulates one question:

1. What is the pattern of Appraisal resources in articles from The Washington Post and New York Times regarding President Biden's response to the Fall of Afghanistan in 2021?
2. Based on the appraising items, how do The Washington Post and New York Times take position regarding President Biden's response to the Fall of Afghanistan in 2021?

## **1.3 Research Purpose**

Following the formulation of the research question, the aims of this study are presented below:

1. To analyse the pattern of Appraisal items in The Washington Post and New York Times in reporting President Biden's response to the Fall of Afghanistan in 2021.
2. To analyse how The Washington Post and New York Times take position in reporting President Biden's response to the Fall of Afghanistan in 2021.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study investigates six selected news articles reporting on Biden's response to the Fall of Afghanistan in 2021 published by The Washington Post and New York

Times, with three news articles from each media. The range of the articles is published from 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 due to the occurrence which is the Fall of Afghanistan that took place on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and the fact that the U.S. military troop and embassy's withdrawal had been completed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The study will be limited to the Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation construed in both media platforms.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to broaden the repository of studies in Critical Discourse Analysis and U.S. government's national and foreign policy, especially in President Biden's tenure. Another significance this study gives is to contribute to critical lenses regarding attitude in government administration reports and the decisions chosen by their public figures in U.S. online news.