

Leaders on Twitter- Twitter as a Digital Diplomacy Tool

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Abstract

In this study, use of Twitter by Narendra Modi- the Prime Minister of India, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan- the President of the Republic of Turkey and Imran Khan- the Prime Minister of Pakistan is analyzed in terms of their tweets about international issues, reflections of their emotions and their use of language, their interactions and their approaches to the problems. Taking place in the top 10 list of Twiplomacy rankings, they are all active users. The accounts of selected leaders are analyzed by considering each tweet in a determined period. While Narendra Modi shares every activity that he is in and information for the public, Imran Khan mostly tweets about political issues. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan mostly uses his account to inform about domestic developments. All of them have quite active accounts and they use Twitter mostly to inform both their citizens and international community. Reflections of their emotions and tendencies are visible and sometimes perceivable. Since the selected period is coincided with the rise of COVID-19, all of three leaders paid special attention to this pandemic.

Keywords: digital diplomacy, internet, leaders, international relations

Liderler Twitter’da: Bir Dijital Diplomasi Aracı Olarak Twitter

Öz

Bu çalışmada Hindistan Başbakanı Narendra Modi’nin, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’ın ve Pakistan Başbakanı Imran Khan’ın Twitter kullanımı, uluslararası sorunlar hakkındaki tweetleri, duyguların tweetlere yansımaları, dilin kullanımı, liderlerin problemlere karşı yaklaşımları ve diğer hesaplarla etkileşimleri açısından incelenmiştir. Twiplomacy sıralamasında ilk onda yer alan üç lider de aktif Twitter kullanıcılarıdır. Belirlenmiş bir zaman aralığında atılmış olan tüm tweetler incelenerek ilgili hesaplar analiz edilmiştir. Narendra Modi katılmış olduğu tüm etkinlikleri ve halk için gereken bilgileri paylaşırken Imran Khan çoğunlukla siyasi problemler ile ilgili tweet atmıştır. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ise çoğunlukla ülke içi gelişmelerle ilgili bilgilendirme amacıyla hesabını kullanmaktadır. Hesapların hepsi de oldukça aktif hesaplardır ve çoğunlukla hem kendi vatandaşlarını hem de uluslararası toplumu bilgilendirme amacıyla kullanılmaktadır. Hesap sahiplerinin tweetlerindeki duygusal yansımalar ve yatınlıklar da belirgindir ve belirgin olmadığı zamanlarda da algılanabilir niteliktedir. Seçilen zaman aralığı COVID-19’un yükselişte olduğu döneme denk geldiğinden dolayı üç liderin de pandemi ile ilgili tweetlere özel ilgi gösterdikleri görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dijital diplomasi, internet, liderler, uluslararası ilişkiler

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Introduction

Diplomacy is one of the most important notions, which cannot be neglected while explaining and understanding international relations. Hedley Bull defines diplomacy as management of the relations among states, their official agents and the other actors that may affect the world politics with their peaceful targets. Even the role and the importance of international actors have been increased; the states are still the most prominent mechanism in politics. Individuals and communities tend to live in a determined geography with the rules and practices. However, this tendency does not block individuals to communicate with the people in further geographies and people may define themselves in different ways (Westcott, 2008, pp. 4-5). Every means that both trigger the development of technology and that are resulted after technological advancements help the changes in communication ways in international relations and its transformation. Developments that used to be completed in centuries may be completed faster in today's technologically advanced world. The number of communication channels has increased and thus individuals, politicians, diplomats and business people are able to express themselves in much wider ground. Besides, the rate of dispersion has risen and the range of people who has reached the information has widened. It has also fastened diplomatic activities implemented by traditional diplomacy. Using digital diplomacy tools to implement official policies in an efficient way in the future seems inevitable. Many actors may be included in this transformation process. These actors can be either representatives of states or even the individuals (Hayden, 2018, p. 8). Digital diplomacy is basically transformed within the usage of internet. A New Zealand diplomat, Richard Grant sees internet, the most prominent digital diplomacy tool, as a way to democratize the diplomacy. It means that internet functions for four ways in diplomatic field: increasing numbers of actors, diversifications on actors, increasing cooperation fields and increasing polarization. Only internet itself cannot handle these works, but it helps non- state actors to enhance their capacities (Westcott, 2008, p. 8). In this frame, this idea is compatible with dissemination, transmitting information and information storage. Internet, the use of it in the right way and tools are essential for today's communication. Technology itself offers the right of using the internet, but still individuals decide which information will be served, spread or replaced. According to Thomas Friedman, internet has important role in widening playing ground of all actors in global system. Digital platforms make collective efforts possible despite long distances from

communities. In this respect, accepting the ideas of local people, which are already the thoughts of majority, is not the key point. The key point is to unify under universal values despite the distances (Westcott, 2008, p. 3).

The use of digital platforms for diplomatic activities is an important issue to highlight for its some aspects. Firstly, most issues about using social media are political struggle area, which can repress social cohesion and security. Secondly, velocity of information is an important resource to use information in manipulative ways. Moreover, all these struggles are the issues that international community has been dealing with. Information exchange about the dark side of digital diplomacy is essential to sustain tranquility. The digital media that creates misinformation and complexities needs public diplomacy in digital ground to manage this chaos. To ensure the security of global environment is essential for establishing mutual trust environment and improving productive relations. In this respect, digital diplomacy not only includes the same actors and networks, but also gathers them altogether to determine best technological and digital practices. It functions from bottom to top unlikely to public diplomacy (Bergstrom, 2018). Feeling about the digital age was more optimistic in very early phases of digitalization or digital age. The belief about the power of digital age regarding its leading role on transformations, its capability to make strong who seems powerless, creating a global community in which people are responsible, pluralist and democratic are relatively high. Because it is a tool and representative power of an uncontrollable area, the outputs cannot be recognized easily. Being uncontrollable may cause misinformation, distrust in the community and techno-phobia. The digitalization process has been going somehow different directions even if it has started with good intentions (Bjola & Pamment, 2016, p. 1). Hence, propaganda is an output of this negative process and the leaders, politicians and the diplomats have to deal with the propagandas. It is a gospel truth that digital diplomacy is a type of diplomacy that is implemented in a regular way. Especially, the accounts of foreign ministries share their countries, the values of their countries and their stand about global issues. Besides, accounts of the leaders and government agencies have synchronized tweets. Even they can promote their campaigns of elections on social media and hence they have the power to use social media for both its negative and positive aspects (Adesina, 2017, p. 11).

In this study, the reflections of digital diplomacy that are conducted by some leaders in digital platforms are analyzed in frame of public diplomacy by considering the general transformation of diplomatic activities in history. Digital diplomacy is essential part of digital

branding and politicians try to strengthen their own brands in digital platforms. They always try to promote their political identities on social platforms and they never give up their discourses to persuade the individuals either from their own countries or foreign publics. Hence the emotional side of all interactions on Twitter is undeniable (Duncombe, 2019, p. 91). Even the differences about how they ensure it, most of them have some sort of style about using social media. The principle of transparency and leaders' efforts to be legitimate in digital platforms results in different ways. Hence, the design of this study is to give academic information about all above mentioned concepts and issues in the first part of the study. In the second part of the study, the tweets of the selected leaders are analyzed. The use of social media and communication technologies platforms have already been more important since near past. However, some terms have almost the same reflections in practice such as Twitter Diplomacy, e-diplomacy, digital diplomacy etc. With the increasing numbers of Twitter accounts that are for politicians, diplomats and the heads of states and diplomatic interactions over Twitter have shown the importance of Twitter on diplomacy. And in 2011, the term "Twiplomacy" was used in a study conducted on the use of Twitter by heads of states (Chhabra, 2020, p. 2). In this study, the selection of the leaders has been made according to their rankings at "Twiplomacy" Platform, which was established to publish last updated analyses about the usage of social media regarding the diplomatic activities and rankings on digital media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (Twiplomacy). All three leaders are on the top ten in the rankings of "The 50 Most Followed World Leaders" with high numbers of followers. Another selection criteria is the language while using Twitter. At this point, using Twitter both in official language and in English is a determining variable while selecting the leaders. When considering all these, The Prime Minister of India- Narendra Modi, The President of the Republic of Turkey- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan- Imran Khan have the most appropriate Twitter accounts to analyze.

Time selection about tweets cover the year 2020 until June since the last updated rankings are for this year. While the starting time for Mr. Erdoğan and Mr. Khan is 1st of Jan, it is 18th of March for Mr. Modi. When scanning the account of Mr. Modi, since the number of his tweets are quite high, his tweets are accessible only from the date March 18, 2020. This is an exceptional case for this account. However, when the content of his tweets are analyzed, comparatively shorter time period for Mr. Modi does not affect the overall assumptions and analyses about his account.

Because these leaders' numbers of tweets are too many, only the tweets about the international issues, evaluations on problems, and the interactions with the other leaders are considered. After analyzing them, an overall result is determined for each leader and their ways of existing on social media, especially on Twitter in this study. While some of them are more sensitive to international problems, especially the problems about gender equality, some of them are more concerned about domestic politics and convey his ideas to international ground. Moreover, while the use of language is somehow sincere for some leaders, some of them use the language more directly and give harsh messages. It means the way that they use Twitter shows their political, social and cultural stand in international politics. In this respect, this study contributes to the literature by comparing the most effective leaders of today in terms of their tweets by content analysis method. As the determined limitations about the content of the tweets mentioned above, results give us implications about how efficient and effective these leaders use their accounts. Since statistical studies about Twitter are more common, this study contributes the literature from a different perspective by a detailed content analysis and reveals general tendencies about their style of using Twitter.

1. Digital diplomacy as a means of public diplomacy

In this part of the study, firstly, general transformation of diplomatic activities through history is explained. Even a community is contacted with another community; this can be counted as a diplomatic activity (İskit, 2018, p. 27). Hence, the history of diplomacy dates back to ancient times. However, there are some turning stones, which need to be mentioned while explaining the transformation. Secondly, digital diplomacy as a type of public diplomacy will be explained shortly. Since the analyses of Twitter accounts is the differentiating part of the study, history and conceptual explanations are not stressed too much.

1.1. General transformation of diplomatic activities

Diplomacy is all kinds of political activities that combines the abilities, information and capacities of the states. The basic target of diplomatic activities is to achieve the interests about their foreign policies without the use of force, international propaganda and international law. Traditional diplomacy dates back to early times by implementing bilateral agreements. The first written agreement was Kadesh Agreement and it was made in B.C. twelfth century. Its

characteristics were both peace and alliance. The first Olympiads are also notable implementations of diplomacy B.C. 9th century. Besides, B.C. 7th century Assyrians' diplomatic activities and B.C. 5th century Old Greek city-states' diplomatic and trade relations were counted as diplomatic activities. In *Iliad* and *Odessa*, in Thucydides, some clues were found about the Old Greek diplomacy system. Following the Old Greeks, Romans contributed and developed diplomatic activities (İskit, 2018). While the activities between states and generally made as agreements are named as traditional diplomacy activities, modern diplomacy has started by Italian city-states. In this period, loose alliances were formed and embassies were opened up. 1648 Westphalia was a cornerstone through the institutionalization and development of diplomacy. The importance of Westphalia was also because of its multilateral characteristics and also its leading role on conference diplomacy. The other milestone was 1815 Vienna Congress- Concert of Europe. Another important period about diplomatic activities was the period between W.W.I and W.W.II. The general characteristics of this period was that, instead of loose alliances, there were close and stable alliances. In addition, with higher technologies, wars have started to be more devastating. Ideological approaches were also on scene in this period. By the foundation of the League of Nations, the chance to have diplomatic contact constantly have been supplied both bilaterally and multilaterally. During the World War I., secret diplomacy and agreements were on scene and during the World War II., open summit diplomacy was in the forefront. The institutions responsible for diplomatic activities were first of all the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and followed by the embassies and consulate generals. The main paper regulating the diplomatic relations is based on the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961. Within these general frames, the sorts of diplomacy have been evolving during history and many actors have started to be included in the diplomatic activities. Dual diplomacy means all kinds of official visits and contacts between two states. Multilateral diplomacy means all the activities and relations conducted by at least three states at the same time. Multilateral conferences are in this category and international organizations are a kind of institutional proof of this type of diplomacy. There are many triggering factors on the sustainability of multilateral diplomacy activities since globalization, international transportation and international communication are enhanced; the problems of environmental pollution and illegal migration are existed. Permanent secretaries, representation offices helped multilateral diplomacy to be permanent. Because they exist on many different fields, diplomatic activities are also specialized in different fields. Summit diplomacy that means gathering the heads of states and/or

government is divided into three groups: regular summits (by the organization of international organizations and international forums); ad hoc summits (temporary meeting on specific issues in determined time); exchange of views summit (to determine about how to take a stand, exchange of information and accelerate the process regarding the negotiations). All sorts of summit diplomacy activities raise the awareness and actors may take initiatives. The usage rate of media is also high and hence more importance is attached to public opinion. Mediation mechanism is another way of communication of politicians with authorities. However, it is conducted by third party actors. Public diplomacy is one of the most prominent diplomacy types in 21st century. It aims to inform, effect and understand the world citizens on national and international public opinion. Mutual interaction and the power of persuasion is in the foreground. Many shareholders are effected from all these interactions. However, many people from different backgrounds can also be a part of this diplomatic relationship. Track-two diplomacy, named as civic diplomacy means the way of diplomacy that is conducted by non-official diplomatic actors (Çolakoğlu, 2015).

The transformation of diplomacy from traditional diplomacy to public diplomacy includes many changes on the way how the diplomacy is conducted. Besides, the scope of the actors has been also changing during this period. Not only the elites or presidents of states such as in traditional diplomacy, but also foreign publics and government officials are actors of public diplomacy which means public diplomacy is more inclusive than traditional diplomacy considering the actors included and effects perceived. Public diplomacy is mostly about improving the relationship between a state and its foreign publics. At this point, persuasion is the key element. State of question tries to persuade the foreign publics on its own foreign policy agenda in a way that it can. A successful public diplomacy strategy includes not only material gain and coercive force but also emotional components. The underlying success about these strategies lies behind the belief that identities related to these politics have moral base. So, the mobilization of identity needs emotional side and successful public diplomacy strategies include it (Duncombe, 2019).

1.2. Digital diplomacy

Digital diplomacy is a field to implement diplomacy in a different way. However, it is not a challenge or a danger to traditional diplomatic ways. Changes on the communication tools in public diplomacy take diplomacy practitioners to use digital tools. Even there is no determined definition of digital diplomacy, basic principle of digital diplomacy lies behind the idea of effecting

publics on digital platforms, which is same about the public diplomacy (Hayden, 2018, p. 5). Besides conventional ways about the implementation of public diplomacy, digital diplomacy is another way to use emotions while persuading other publics. Actually, digital diplomacy helps diplomacy practitioners to overcome the limitations of traditional diplomacy. Via digital platforms, they can easily engage with a wide range of people. While diplomacy practitioners effect the people in this way, people also have chance to reach them via online platforms, which makes the communication “*two-way*” (Manor, What is Digital Diplomacy, and how is it Practiced around the World? A brief introduction, 2016). When a world leader tweets about any issue worldwide, or a policy frame, other politicians may reply the tweet either by mainstream media channels or by Twitter (Chhabra, 2020). Top-down messaging from political authorities to the publics may be seen obviously at online communication ways. The messages conveyed by social media especially on Twitter may enhance political identity either of political actor in specific or of the political authorities in general. At this point, the aim shaping and promoting the country’s image is seen as an advantage that social media offers. Digital tools are helpful in nation branding. While doing nation branding, diplomacy practitioners may have also a chance to promote their “brand” via digital platforms (Manor, What is Digital Diplomacy, and how is it Practiced around the World? A brief introduction, 2016). The official account of the State or the personal accounts of politicians promote the digital branding of themselves. Using social media increases the transparency and accountability of policy makers and diplomats. However, when it comes to emotions, it is not certain that while domestic publics react positively to some emotions, foreign publics may not react at the same way. Numbers of twitter followers are highly important regarding the people who may be reached and influenced in any ways. Public diplomacy’s ability to use emotions may increase the ratio of effecting foreign publics.

Hanson’s definition of digital diplomacy is quite obvious that is the use of internet and ICTs to help to obtain diplomatic goals. However, he indicates eight policy goals for digital diplomacy: knowledge management, public diplomacy, information management, consular communications and response, disaster response, internet freedom, external resources, policy planning (Hanson, 2012). According to Manor and Pamment, digital diplomacy has “attraction” facility and hence more people can follow the policies implemented by traditional diplomacy ways after they read them on social media platforms (Manor & Pamment, Towards prestige mobility? Diplomatic prestige and digital diplomacy, 2019).

2. Twitter as a digital diplomacy tool

In this part of study, selected Twitter accounts are analyzed by considering the contents of the leaders' tweets. According to the "The 50 Most Followed Leaders" ranking, The Prime Minister of India- Narendra Modi is the first leader in this analyses. Following to Mr. Modi, as the second leader in this sample, the President of the Republic of Turkey- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's tweets are analyzed. And the last analyses of this part of the study belongs to the Prime Minister of Pakistan- Imran Khan's twitter account. Each leaders' account is analyzed firstly by giving general numerical information about their account and then by indicating the issues they touched upon, they emphasize, and the striking features of their accounts. After analyzing the contents of the tweets, some general tendencies and their style of tweeting are revealed for each.

As a social networking site, Twitter is a platform for diplomatic representatives to effect the publics or interact with them. Besides, it offers to even a single individual an opportunity to design their brands and images on an online platform (Surowiec & Long, 2020, p. 183). Anyone can have a chance to be a part of global conversation with a 140-character tweet and by consciously or unconsciously, this person can effect too many people' ideas. This is a kind of virtual power that social media offers them (Snow, 2013, p. 70). An important characteristic of Twitter is its easiness to send messages and to react to the international events (Tunney, 2014). As seen as the easiest social media to control, when someone tweets, it creates the effect of newspaper headline. And after that someone cares about the headline, they can go further in detail and share the tweet with the others (Sandre, *Diplomacy in 140 Characters, or Less- A conversation with Matthias Lüfkens, Practice Leader Digital EMEA, and author of @Twiplomacy*, 2015).

2.1. The Prime Minister of India- Narendra Modi on Twitter

Due to the limitations on access through the older tweets, the tweets from March 18 to Jun 1, 2020 are analyzed. As the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi has 59.2 million followers and Mr. Prime Minister is the second on the 50 Most Followed World Leaders ranking of Twiplomacy as the date of July 1, 2020 (The 50 Most Followed World Leaders, 2020).

Surprisingly, the amount of accounts that he follows is more compared to the other two actors, which is 2,356.¹ As a very active account on Twitter, he has tweeted since Jan 2009.²

Table 1: General Outlook of Narendra Modi’s Twitter Account

General Information on the Account	• Member since Jan 2009	General Findings regarding the Content of the Tweets	• Intra-state communication, announcements, “address to the nation” speeches
	• 59.2 million followers		• Birthday messages, congratulatory messages,
	• 2,356 followings		• A tool to inform the public and a way for knowledge management
	• 2 nd on the “The 50 Most Followed Leaders” ranking on Twiplomacy		• Hashtags, mentions, photos, videos, video and web-page links- a wide range of interaction methods
	• Linked to his personal web-page		• Sincere language
	• 515 tweets in English, 1 tweet in Russian and the rest is in Hindi out of 638 tweets		• Human dignity, women empowerment, COVID-19, calls for international cooperation
	• 226 tweets with photos out of 638 tweets		• Tweets with #IndiaFightsCorona hashtag
	• 145 tweets with videos out of 638 tweets		• Sharing every kind of interactions with the leaders of foreign countries
	• 8 retweets out of 638 tweets		• Emphasize on the notions of “cultural ties”, “historical links”, “well-being”, “harmony”, and “prosperity”.

Source: Original table derived from this study.

When looking at the main page of his account, it seen that a web-page is linked on the bio-side. This web page is his personal web-page and detailed information about his activities can be found at that page. Mr. Narendra Modi uses his account both in Hindi and in English. Period of analyzing is from March 18 until Jun 1, 2020 that includes 76 days in total. He is one of the leaders who uses Twitter in a very effective and efficient way by using all types of interactions such as hashtags, mentions, videos, video and web- page links, and re-tweets. Total number of tweets in this period is 638 and 8 of them are retweets from other accounts. All of these retweets were from different sources. 515 of these tweets were written in English and the rest was in local language. It is remarkable that one tweet was in Russian. Some of the tweets were written both in the local

¹ The numbers given about the followed accounts for the whole study is taken on July 2, 2020.

² The information given is updated on Jul 1, 2020 and all the information given in this chapter have been revised according to that date.

language and in English. Another remarkable feature of Mr. Modi's account is the existence of many shared videos. After a short introduction to the issue, he shared many videos, which is sometimes solely himself with his messages and sometimes with another content. There are many "address to the nation" speeches among these videos. The number of his tweets with videos is 145 out of 638 tweets. The percentage of videos is quite high. As well as high video shares, he has also shared many photos, which is 226 out of 638.

Emotions are very clear factor that was seen in his tweets. Birthday messages by mentioning the related person is common in his account. National and religious day celebrations were visible in his tweets. Besides, congratulatory messages for the people who works for government and related institutions were quite a lot. This is both a way to inform the public and knowledge management by the first hand. While doing these, he uses a sincere language. This means that he uses his account also for personal messages. When scanning the tweets, it was also strikingly obvious that twitter is a way for intra-state communication for India. Communication among the city leaders are supplied and the activities they've done are announced at this account. Some announcements were also made via putting photos, videos and mentioning some other tweets.

As indicated in numbers, Mr. Modi has enormous amount of tweets during the period that is analyzed in this study. Hence, the content of the tweets are analyzed in terms of their relevance to international issues, evaluations and developments of problems and the interactions with the other leaders. Besides, using emotions and not exactly formal expressions are also a variable that was looked for. There are some themes emphasized many times. These themes are sensitive for both India and Mr. Modi in personal. Even if he touched upon some problems within the country, he put emphasis on some global problems of human being such as ensuring dignity and securing women. Women empowerment is an important issue for the whole country (Narendra Modi, 2020). As a global problem, COVID-19 was a forefront issue in his twitter agenda. Most of the tweets after the outbreak of COVID-19 were about COVID-19, meetings to take precautions to stop spreading the disease. This issue was emphasized both in national and global levels. He warned and informed his citizens about the austerity of disease. Daily precautions were emphasized by videos and messages. Many mentions from citizens' tweets were seen to show its seriousness to people. The hashtag mentioning about COVID-19 was "*#IndiaFightsCorona*". He used this hashtag after all the tweets related to Corona virus. He used the tweets of his connection to raise the awareness on Corona virus. He identifies this process as "partnership to combat Coronavirus"

and all people seem partners with every single actor included in this duration of time (Narendra Modi, 2020). Another important perception about his tweets was his call to every sector, every people from different backgrounds for being cautious about the virus, social distance and calm about the industrial sectors in this process of combatting COVID-19. Collective fight of SAARC countries against COVID-19 was also emphasized (Narendra, 2020). After the announcement of their partnership, foundation of “COVID 19 Emergency Fund” was also announced and when some actors donated to the Fund, Mr. Modi announced the donations by photos that were a kind of proof (Narendra Modi, 2020).

On the international reflections of his tweets, it is remarkable that he shared every meeting, every phone call and every kind of interactions with the leaders of foreign countries. He also announced meetings and shared results. Even if he made a phone call for a leader, he tweeted about it. On March 25, he announced G20 Virtual Summit that was special for Corona Virus agenda. While combatting Corona Virus, a global problem was emphasized which was to combat hunger. In this regard, ensuring food for vulnerable people both inside and outside the country was indicated as an important priority.

On March 27, he personally wished good health and healthy UK to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson. On May 1, the best wishes to Russian Prime Minister Mishustin were sent for his recovery and good health. He announced on March 28 that micro-donations were accepted to PM- Cares Fund. And from that day on, he started to thank for each donor. The overall look of his account seemed like full of donations and thanks for them in those days. He gave personal advices such as doing Yoga and drinking hot water. The summary of his approach through COVID-19 could be seen in his tweet dated on April 3, *“Everyday is crucial in the battle against COVID-19. Everyday we need to be strong. Everyday we need to be together. Everyday we need to take the right precautions. Everyday we need to be self-disciplined.”* (Narendra Modi, 2020). He supported to improve close ties with all people within the country, all citizens abroad and all international actors. He improved good relations with the countries in the region. While writing tweets about the countries within the region, he mostly used notions such as *“cultural ties”*, *“historical links”*, *“well-being”*, *“harmony”*, and *“prosperity”*. He also emphasized on healthy, clean and prosperous planet. On April 6, possible cooperation ways were discussed with HM Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain. At the same day, he spoke on phone to Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison and they agreed to cooperate against COVID-19 through collaborative

research. PM Morrison assured him about well-being of the vibrant Indian community, including students in Australia. Mr. Modi and His Majesty Sultan of Oman talked about HM's personal attention to well-being of Indian community in Oman. Opportunities to cooperate and research initiatives were the theme of the conversation between Mr. Modi and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven at the same day. On April 9, possible support to Uganda was spoken with President of the Republic of Uganda- Yoweri K Museveni and phone conversation was made with the President of the Republic of Korea- Moon Jae-In. At the same day, he agreed Mr. Trump about their possible closer cooperation in these harsh times. 10th of April seemed kind of busy day with conversations and discussions about partnerships and cooperation. On this day, Mr. Modi tweeted his willingness about partnership with Brazil and Japan and desire to support Nepal. At his tweets, he mentioned President of Brazil- Jair M. Bolsonaro, Prime Minister of Nepal- K P Sharma Oli and the Prime Minister of Japan. At the same day, the Prime Minister of Israel Netanyahu thanked for the medicals and then Mr. Modi indicated his openness for further collaboration in his tweet. On April 13, he discussed on the phone about supporting each other with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc of Vietnam. On April 14, Mr. Modi discussed with the Palestinian President H.E. Mahmoud Abbas about India's possible support to Palestine. On April 16, Mr. Modi mentioned about both President of Republic of Seychelles- Danny Faure and Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius- Pravind Jugnauth after medical helps to these countries. At the same day, Mr. Modi and Dr. Lotay Tshering- the Prime Minister of Bhutan exchanged their ideas on COVID-19. And he indicated the will to cooperate with Jordan after talking with the King of Jordan, Abdullah bin AlHussein. After the discussion with the President of the African National Congress- Cyril Ramaphosa, he assured medical support to South Africa on April 17. After donation of medical supplies to Kazakhstan, President Qasym-Jomart Toqayeva conveyed his greetings and as a reply, Mr. Modi extended his thanks on 19th of April. A remarkable tweet was about his thought on the relations with Afghanistan. As he indicated in his tweet on April 20, they have fought against terrorism for years and from that time on, they will fight against COVID-19 with their special friendship. At the same day, he spoke with the President of the Republic of Maldives- Ibrahim Mohamed Solih about fighting together for the health and economic challenges of Corona. After the help of India to Nepal about essential medicines, the Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli thanked to Mr. Modi and on April 22, Mr. Modi emphasized on strong and deep-rooted relations between two countries at his tweet. Moreover, at the same day at his tweet, Mr. Modi indicated India's will

to work together with Ireland in health, science and technology areas. And on April 23, he tweeted about his contact with the Prime Minister of Singapore- Lee Hsien Loong. At his tweet on April 28, he emphasized maritime neighborhood and close cooperation to deal with the health and economic issues with the President of Indonesia- Joko Widodo. A warm exchange message with the Prime Minister of Canada- Justin Trudeau was tweeted on this day. He contacted with the Prime Minister of Bangladesh- Sheikh Hasina to greet Holy Month of Ramadan and indicated that Bangladesh is an important partner during the fight to Corona Virus on April 29. On May 2, he discussed the issues related to COVID-19 with Prayut Chan-o-cha, Thailand. On May 5, he tweeted about his extensive discussion with the Prime Minister of Portugal- Antonio Costa. On May 6, he indicated that India could be a reliable partner to supply medical cares to Ethiopia as well as to the other countries in Africa after his talk with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali. On May 7, he announced his consultations with the President of European Council Charles Michel on protecting global health and global economic recovery. On 8th of May, he conveyed his condolences to the Prime Minister of Italy- Giuseppe Conte for the loss of lives due to the COVID-19. On May 14, Mr. Modi shared the link of his interaction with Bill Gates about the technology, innovations and vaccines. On May 15, speaking with the Prime Minister of Denmark and will to cooperate were indicated in his tweet. On May 16, as an answer to the Donald Trump's tweet regarding the donation of ventilators to India, Mr. Modi emphasized the importance of working together during this Corona times. On May 22, he sent his condolences to Pakistan for the plane crash. On May 23, greeting messages and successful cooperation messages were sent to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth for his controlling Corona-Virus in the country and brotherhood messages were given to the country. On May 25, greetings to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan- the UAE were sent. For international cooperation, his discussion with the President of Austria A. Van Der Bellen was shared as a tweet on May 26. At the same day, greetings to Amir of the State of Qatar Tamam Bin Hamad Al Thani and to the President of Egypt Abdelfattah Elsisy were sent since their personal attention to Indian people living in Qatar and Egypt. However, before this conversation, on April 17, they talked on the phone about Indian support to Egypt to control the spread of Corona Virus and its impact within the country. He shared his messages via Twitter such as his greetings message dated on May 27 to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa regarding his 50 years on his political career (Narendra Modi, 2020). Before this tweet, on May 23, Mr. Modi sent two tweets regarding the

cooperation, help and investments for Sri Lanka. As it is seen on May 17 and previous tweets, Mr. Modi attaches importance to the relations and cooperation with Israeli by presenting congratulations to him on his successes and their cooperation.

2.2. The President of the Republic of Turkey- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Twitter

The President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the 7th on the 50 Most Followed World Leaders ranking of Twiplomacy (The 50 Most Followed World Leaders, 2020). As the President of Turkey and AK Parti Chairman, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has his official Twitter account since August 2009 and by the beginning of July, 2020, he has 16.3 million followers. And the number of account that he follows is 95.

Table 2: General Outlook of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Twitter Account

General Information on the Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member since August 2009 • 16.3 million followers • 95 followings • 7th on the “The 50 Most Followed Leaders” ranking on Twiplomacy • 294 original tweets out of 341 tweets • 47 tweets out of 341 are from @tcbestepe, @rterdogan_ar and @Akparki accounts • 9 tweets in English, 7 tweets in Arabic, 1 tweet in Azerbaijani. • 123 tweets with photos out of 341 tweets • 207 tweets with videos and video connections out of 341 tweets 	General Findings regarding the Content of the Tweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit expressions, mostly hidden emotions • Announcements of all activities that he participates in • Press conferences and opening ceremonies • Condolences to historical, political and sportive figures • Calls to international community to fight against the terrorism • Emphasizes on “cooperation” • Emphasize on “refugees” and “borders” • Non-discriminative and humanitarian messages to international community • Faith- based approach regarding the pandemic

Source: Original table derived from this study.

Period of analyze is from Jan 1 until Jun 1, 2020 that includes 152 days in total. Total number of tweets in this period is 341 and 294 of them are original posts that were directly tweeted from his official account. 47 of 341 tweets are retweets from other accounts mostly from “@tcbestepe, @rterdogan_ar, @Akparsi”. Among these tweets; 9 of them are in English, 7 of them are in Arabic and only 1 of them is in Azerbaijani. A remarkable feature of his account is the number of videos, photos and connections shared within the tweets. These were quite higher compared to the tweets without them. 123 tweets out of 341 are with photos and 207 tweets out of 341 are with videos and video connections. This style seems characteristics to his twitter account while considering the other two official accounts in this study. When looking at the general overview of the account, the most of his tweets applies to domestic politics.

Since he uses explicit expressions at most of the tweets, emotions are generally hidden in the use of local language. Hence, the content of the videos gives clues to general tendencies while effecting citizens and people living abroad. Mr. Erdoğan announced all activities within the country and open to global arena at his account. Especially press conferences and opening ceremonies were quite visible at his tweets. His New Year message covered his best wishes for whole human beings. On Jan 8, he indicated that with TurkStream project, Turkey’s target is to be a global energy complex in the upcoming years (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2020). On Jan 13, he put a video regarding the press conference with the Prime Minister of Italy- Giuseppe Conte. However, while doing this, there was no other explanation regarding the content or results of the meeting. Before his official visits to abroad, he put press conference videos as tweets such as before his visit to Germany- to the Berlin Summit (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2020). At the same day, he put the video regarding his meeting with Vladimir Putin. On Jan 24, he put quite long press conference video, which was with Angela Merkel. In these videos, he used the word “*cooperation*” a lot and emphasized the differentiating policies, which Turkey conducted in a determined way. On the 26th of Jan, he tweeted a video regarding the press conference before official visits to Algeria, Gambia and Senegal. And after arrivals at the same day, he shared videos regarding the welcoming ceremonies. Sharing many videos especially about international agendas means that transparency is important in the global arena for Turkey.

Condolences to historical, political and sportive figures were seen as his remarkable tendency at his tweets. Meetings on specific issues and meetings related to the Party are also remarkable feature of his account. Even if they are not directly related to international relations, it

is important to indicate it to understand the general tendencies of his account. One of his limited English tweets was about the loss of Kobe Bryant. He expressed his sadness about the loss of the basketball legend on Jan 27 (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2020). On Jan 28, at his video, he emphasized on the sincerity of relations with Africa and defined themselves as in common destiny. Press conference and welcoming ceremony videos about Ukraine visit were tweeted on Feb 3. On Feb 12, he lashed out at the issue of Idlib and in case of any harm to soldiers of Turkey; he stated that Turkey would take action against them (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2020). On Feb 13, he announced his visit to Pakistan and put a video about welcoming ceremony in Pakistan. As well as his visits to African countries, his visit to Pakistan was also for the Business Forums. On Feb 19, he tweeted about the welcoming ceremony for the President of Uzbekistan- Şevket Mirziyoyev and press conference with him. On the 25th of Feb, he visited Azerbaijan and tweeted videos of welcoming ceremony and press conference. He had many tweets about combatting with terrorism and in his videos; he calls for international community to cooperate while fighting with terrorism. On March 2, he showed clear stance about Turkey existence in Syria while emphasizing that there was no questioning about the existence of Russia, the USA, Iran and France in Syria (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2020). At the same day, press conference video with Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov was shared as a tweet. On March 4, he emphasized the success of Turkey's "*Bahar Kalkanı Operation*" to Syria. And other internationalized issue was about refugees and he blamed every European country which closed its borders and seeks to send them back or sinking them as violating of Universal Declaration of Human Rights at his speech on March 4. On March 5, he had meeting and conference with Putin. On March 9, he had joint press conference with the General Secretary of NATO- Jens Stoltenberg mostly mentioning about Syria, refugees and terrorism issues and calls for alliances and cooperate about these issues. The first tweet about COVID- 19 was on March 11. On March 17, a video conference was made among Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel and Boris Johnson mentioning about a wide range of issues such as COVID-19, humanitarian problems in Idlib, Syria Crisis, refugees, and Turkey- EU relations. On May 2, he announced that breathing apparatus was sent to Somalia. During the period of fighting with COVID-19, religious expressions were seen at his tweets and faith- based approach is the general approach about this issue. On May 29, he reacted to the fascist and racist approach lying behind the death of George Floyd in the USA. He gave non-discriminative and humanitarian messages to international community. On May 30, he emphasized again to combat with terrorism after Turkey's loss of their soldiers.

2.3. The Prime Minister of Pakistan- Imran Khan on Twitter

Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan is the 9th on the 50 Most Followed World Leaders ranking of Twiplomacy (The 50 Most Followed World Leaders, 2020). As the owner of a very active account on Twitter, he has tweeted since March 2010 and by today, he has 12 million followers. However, the number of accounts that he follows is only 18. On this account bio, he shares a web-page which is linked to a political party on paper named Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Insaf-PK, 2020).

Table 3: General Outlook of Imran Khan’s Twitter Account

General Information on the Account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member since March 2010 	General Findings regarding the Content of the Tweets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tweets about political struggles of the country and calls for international community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 million followers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize on violence and state-terrorism issues by targeting India
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 followings 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevalence of the notions “fascism”, “violence to Muslim people”, “military attacks in borders”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9th on the “The 50 Most Followed Leaders” ranking on Twiplomacy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main threats to stability and peace in the borders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked web-page of his political party 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and emphasized stand against Modi’s regime and policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 123 tweets in English and 122 tweets in Urdu out of 245 tweets 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to stop violence and sanctions with humanitarian intentions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic and objective-driven account 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corona Tiger Force</i>

Source: Original table derived from this study.

Period of analyze is from Jan 1 to Jun 1, 2020 and the number of tweets in this period is 245 in total. As a political leader who uses his Twitter account in a systematic and objective- driven, the number of his tweets in English is 123 and the number of tweets in Urdu is 122. When he tweets in English, he regardfully tweets its Urdu version. When looking at his account generally, it is quite remarkable that he uses his account mostly for political struggles and calls international community to stop violence and biases against some groups. His messages are related to stop state- terrorism, especially addressing India. As it was written on his tweet on Jan 4, he blamed Modi’s Government in India as fascist and thinks that the brutality of Indian police was because of ethnic cleansing agenda through Muslims in India (Imran Khan, 2020). In addition, he was totally against of Modi’s

RSS vision, which includes support for Muslim's oppression. At his tweet on Jan 8, he indicated that the country could play its role through peace, however not as any part of a war. As it was seen at his tweets, the country struggles with terrorist attacks, violence to Muslim people. He accounted RSS as an extremist ideology and anxious about its possibility of bloodshed. On Jan 16, he stressed the necessity to solve internationally recognized situation in Jammu & Kashmir with the help of UN Security Council and welcomed the ongoing existence of this issue in UN Security Council Agenda. On Jan 19, at his tweet, he pointed out the similarities between Malaysia and Pakistan governments about dealing with mafia issues within their countries. At the same day, other clear message stood out about the problems with India and he declared that as long as military attacks have been going on the borders, Pakistan would not remain inactive. On Jan 25, he emphasized Modi's regime as the biggest threat to the stability and peace in the region by sharing the cover of *The Economist*. He eagerly supported the equality of people. He also declared his sadness about the earthquake in Turkey, at the same day. On Feb 12, he declared the support for China in its difficult times while dealing with Corona virus. A tweet sent on Feb 28 was noteworthy that was *"Images coming out of Muslim homes & businesses being burnt, Muslims being beaten & killed, mosques & graveyards being burnt & desecrated are similar to Jews fleeing the pogrom in Nazi Germany. The world must accept this brutal reality of the Modi fascist racist regime & stop it."* And the next tweet after this was *"As I have stating repeatedly, Modi's Hindu Supremacist agenda is akin to the Nazi pogrom of Jews in the 1930s while the major powers appeased Hitler. Modi conducted pogrom against Muslims in Gujarat as CM & now we are seeing the same in New Delhi."* This was an important resemblance asserted and needed to be considered by international community but firstly by Indian Government. However, there was no reply to these claims via twitter. Mr. Khan supported his ideas with the views of academicians (Imran Khan, 2020). On Feb 29, he warned the international community about the consequences of attacks unless intervening them at the right time. Following these tweets, he also shared photos in which the violence could be seen obviously. For the peace of Afghanistan, he was keen to apply political solutions at this first step. On March 5, he stressed one more time the need for support from Muslim World and he thanked the Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the President of the Republic of Turkey. Along with the analyzing period, he always called for support from international community to stop the violence against Muslim world and minorities within the countries regardless of their ethnic origins. On March 9, he congratulated Afghanistan's President

Ashraf Ghani and expressed his willingness to cooperate. The first tweet about COVID-19 was on March 14. On March 20, he reminded his promises for support to Afghanistan even in the global pandemic times. On March 22, with the humanitarian intentions, he called Donald Trump to lift the sanctions until the pandemic is over. On March 28, he wished recovery, good health and long life to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prince Charles. Another call was quite notable that is “*I want our youth to play their role in helping our fight against the COVID 19 by joining our Corona Tiger Force which will be organised to do jihad against the suffering caused by this pandemic*” on April 1. On April 2, at his tweets, he stood against the illegal actions of Hindutva Supremacist Modi Govt's and call international community and the UN to intervene. On April 12, he called international community, the UNSG & international financial institutions to respond positively to the dilemma confronting developing countries in the face of the COVID19 pandemic. On April 19, 21 and 30, he kept going on criticizing Modi’s Government about the previous issues. In the time of Ramadan, he delivered religious messages based on humanity. On May 2, he wished PM of Russia Mikhail Mishustin a speedy recovery and good health. On May 6, he kept warning about Indian oppression and brutalization. For the more detailed explanation of his stands about this issue is summarized in three parts:

“Modi's RSS-inspired doctrine on IOJK very clear: First, deprive Kashmiris of their right of self-determination by illegal annexation of an Occupied territory. Second, treat them as less than human by a three-pronged approach: one, trying to crush them with brute force incl using inhumane weapons like pellet guns against women & children; two, imposing an inhumane lockdown depriving Kashmiris of basic necessities from food to medicines; & three, by mass arrests of Kashmiris esp youth & isolating IOJK from the world by cutting off all communication links. Third, by trying to show Kashmiris' right to struggle for self-determination guaranteed in UNSC Resolutions as terrorism being abetted by Pakistan - to create opp for a false flag operation against Pak while detracting world attention away from Indian state terrorism in IOJK.” (Imran Khan, 2020).

On May 27, he repeated persistently again,

“The Hindutva Supremacist Modi Govt with its arrogant expansionist policies, akin to Nazi's Lebensraum (Living Space), is becoming a threat to India's neighbours. Bangladesh through Citizenship Act, border disputes with Nepal & China, & Pak threatened with false flag operation. All this after illegal annexation of IOJK, a war crime under 4th Geneva Convention, & laying claim to AJK. I have always maintained the fascist Modi Govt is not only a threat to India's minorities by relegating them to 2nd class citizens' status, but also threat to regional peace”. (Khan, ImranKhanPTI, 2020)

As seen in all tweets, Mr. Khan is quite determined to indicate problems that his country is facing to and he tries to find political solution at first. However, after his tweets, the people who

are responsible for the perception of these ideas stay indifferent to the problems and his statements are rather rejected in silence.

Conclusion

Comparing these three most followed politicians' tweets; there are differences and similarities among them. As we can infer from Mr. Modi's and Mr. Erdoğan's accounts, their main concentrate is still on domestic politics. However, Mr. Khan keeps balance among national, regional and international issues. After started tweeting about COVID-19, Mr. Modi's focal point has been issues related to COVID-19. Almost all his tweets were about the virus, its effects in home country, greetings to people who works for the country and contribute for the wealth of people, supports for the other countries, donations, meetings with the other leaders about precautions and collaborations about COVID-19. He indicated all domestic issues, developments and announcements via Twitter account. There is no argumentative tweet at his account. Hence, this outlook makes his account not open to argue. There is a large amount of information shared and announced at his account. His tweets are about positive and cooperative messages, birthday celebrations, condolences. He is the most active leader among three of them. And he is the most interactive one with the other countries, with the people he mentioned on his tweets. His friendly and positive approach is visible at his tweets. On the other hand, the President of the Republic of Turkey- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan uses more formal language while tweeting about international issues. However, his use of language is quite similar to his use of language for daily speeches and explanations regarding the issues within the country. The lacking part of his account compared to other two leaders is the limited number of tweets written in English. This actually is a kind of proof that Mr. Erdoğan does not tweet much about international issues and is keen on to tweet about domestic announcements and developments. He tweets about specific international agenda that are not open to discussion. Besides, the account "*@RTEdigital*" is a platform in which his digital media content is shared. And while Mr. Erdoğan shares photos and videos, he shows this account as the source. Imran Khan's account is quite determined about political issues and he uses his account to solve, to call for solutions. In this respect, his usage of Twitter for diplomatic activities and searching for first-hand solutions is compatible with the use of Twitter for diplomatic purposes and as a diplomacy tool. In addition, he informs Pakistan citizens about the issues and developments within the country. Imran Khan's tweets are mostly about calls for international community to be aware of the issues that are between India and Pakistan. His tweets are generally written in more

formal way compared to other two leaders. Mr. Khan does not have many interactions, but he retweets from the other institutions within the country. When tweets are about condolences and greetings, three of them uses emotions and their own feelings. They do not avoid from mentioning about how the case is very important to them. In an interview, there are some noteworthy conclusions specific to Mr. Modi's and Mr. Erdoğan's twitter accounts. Mr. Lüfkens defines their account as one-way broadcasting channel, which is also verified in this study (Sandre, *Diplomacy in 140 Characters, or Less- A conversation with Matthias Lüfkens, Practice Leader Digital EMEA, and author of @Twiplomacy*, 2015). When Twitter is used as a diplomacy tool, it is expected to find solutions to the problems both in national and global scale. Interactions, solutions and calls for cooperation are expected inputs while using Twitter by heads of states. However, when the communication is one-way communication, other actors may not find opportunity to be included in diplomatic activities and when the other actors are neglected, the use of Twitter as a diplomacy tool may not achieve its main goal. As it is derived from this study, use of sincere language is mostly while tweeting about more personal approaches and when it comes to serious issues both in national and global scale, a more formal language is used in all three accounts.

In today's world, engaging in digital platforms is inevitable. Communities, politicians, individual, corporates, institutions, NGOs and all the actors in international system have to adapt the process of digitalization. Unless the actors cannot adapt it, all of them face with danger to get out of the date and cannot catch the developments in the world (Sandre, *Pioneering Twitter Diplomacy- A conversation with Arturo Sarukhan, Ambassador of Mexico to the United States (2007–2012)*, 2015, p. 71). At least, they cannot be able to compete with the outer world. The effectiveness of digital platforms may change according to their usage targets. However, for politicians and state actors, it may become totally an advantage in relations to the others in spite of its disadvantages. While trying to specify the meanings of tweets, the reasons lying behind the styles of tweeting, any analyses can confront a problem, which is the lack of whole information about the background of each leader, their culture and their feelings (Collins & Bekenova, 2019, p. 4). An absolute analysis with determined criteria may not be done by any researchers because of the lack of information about the values of the leaders. As it is seen in this study, within a determined time period, general tendencies about their tweeting style and approaches on their contents may be revealed. Even a leader tries to use Twitter as a diplomatic tool, it may not reach his goal if his addressee does not give him the time of the day. However, even there is no

interaction, as it is seen in this study, a clear stance on Twitter proves the general tendency of both the leader and the country.

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