

# A Digital Diplomacy Irony: Donald Trump

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## Abstract

The concept of digital diplomacy includes the use of digital communication techniques both in interstate diplomacy and in the relationship between a state and foreign public opinion groups. This study is a qualitative research to determine how the 45th President of the USA, Donald John Trump, uses Twitter in terms of content in the context of digital diplomacy. The general purpose of the study is to evaluate Trump's digital diplomacy activities on Twitter. In this context, examining the styles and forms of the role of digital diplomacy constitutes the main research question of this study. The question of how Trump's digital diplomacy practices on Twitter are, constitutes the main problematic to focus on in the research. In the study, firstly, the literature on the subject was searched, and then Trump's tweets containing diplomacy issues between January 20, 2017 and January 20, 2021 were taken as a basis in the selection of the data needed for the research. In the process of collecting data within the scope of the research, document analysis method was used. In the content analysis carried out on the determined sample, categories were produced based on the diplomacy actors that are frequently repeated in the literature, and each analyzed tweet was analyzed within the relevant category. One of the most basic findings obtained as a result of the research is the fact that the language he uses while using social media is quite far from the language of diplomacy due to Trump's tweets. In addition, it is noteworthy that Trump exhibits a racist attitude and uses hate language with tweets he sends to both himself and other countries' citizens and administrations on Twitter, one of his social media channels. Looking at the data, it is seen that soft power elements are not used in the content of Trump's tweets, therefore, there is no national and international dialogue environment, and it is concluded that his tweets have reached the level of sarcastic, insulting and even hate crime, and therefore it can be called digital diplomacy irony.

**Key Words:** Donald Trump, Digital Diplomacy, Twitter, Social Network.

## Öz

Dijital diplomasi kavramını hem devletlerarası diplomaside hem de bir devlet ile yabancı kamuoyu grupları arasındaki ilişkide dijital iletişim tekniklerinin kullanılmasını içermektedir. Bu çalışma ABD'nin 45. Başkanı Donald John Trump'ın dijital diplomasi bağlamında Twitter'ı içerik bakımından nasıl kullandığının tespitine yönelik bir nitel araştırmadır. Çalışmanın genel amacı Trump'ın dijital diplomasi faaliyetlerini Twitter üzerinden değerlendirmektir. Bu bağlamda dijital diplomasi rolünün hangi tarz ve biçimlerde yürütüldüğünü incelemek bu çalışmanın temel araştırma sorusunu oluşturmaktadır. Trump'ın Twitter üzerinden yürüttüğü dijital diplomasi uygulamalarının nasıl olduğu sorusu araştırmada odaklanılacak temel sorunsalı oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada öncelikle konuyla ilgili literatür taraması yapılmış, ardından araştırma için ihtiyaç duyulan verilerin seçiminde Trump'ın 20 Ocak 2017 - 20 Ocak 2021 tarihleri arasında diplomasi konularını içeren tweetleri baz alınmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında verilerin toplanması sürecinde doküman incelemesi yöntemine başvurulmuştur. Tespit edilen örneklem üzerinde gerçekleştirilen içerik analizinde literatürde sıklıkla tekrarlanan diplomasi aktörleri baz alınarak kategoriler üretilmiş ve incelenen her bir tweet ilgili olduğu kategori dahilinde analize tabi tutulmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen en temel bulgulardan birisi Trump'ın attığı tweetler nedeniyle, sosyal medyayı kullanırken kullandığı dilin diplomasi dilinden oldukça uzak olduğu gerçeğidir. Bunun yanı sıra Trump'ın sosyal medya mecralarından biri olan twitter üzerinden hem kendi hem de diğer ülke vatandaşlarına ve yönetimlerine yönelik attığı tweetlerle ırkçı bir tutum sergilediği ve nefret dili kullandığı dikkat çekmektedir. Ulaşılan verilere bakıldığında, Trump'ın tweetlerinin içeriklerinde yumuşak güç unsurlarının kullanılmadığı bu nedenle ulusal ve uluslararası diyalog ortamının oluşmadığı görülmekte, attığı tweetlerin iğneleyici, aşağılayıcı ve hatta nefret suçu boyutuna ulaştığı ve bu nedenle dijital diplomasi ironisi olarak adlandırılabilceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Donald Trump, Dijital Diplomasi, Twitter, Sosyal Ağ.

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## Introduction

Today, at the point where internet technologies have reached, information that reaches everywhere instantly with the speed of light has become a commodity that can be instantly collected, traded, analyzed and transformed in large data centers. The internet, where digital content is produced, has a unique communicative nature and has a different structure from the communicative nature of conventional mass media such as newspapers, radio and television (Schmid and Cohen; 2015, p.277). The communicative structure that emerged with the second generation internet technologies has a two-way and symmetrical nature. Referring to this nature, Grunig states that social media is in perfect harmony with the strategic management paradigm of public relations (2009, p.6). With the changes in communication technologies brought to the world by globalization, international politics and diplomacy have also undergone structural changes. In the 1990s, with the evolution of technology, the internet was offered to citizens; Inventions in the field of internet, communication and integration have created a new social order in the global sense. The use of technology has influenced diplomacy and diplomacy makers in the historical process, and states have used technological opportunities for intelligence purposes in the modern period. With the use of social media in diplomacy, diplomacy has come to a very different point from the classical understanding, and this age has started to be called both the communication age and the digital age (Ekşi, 2016, p.25). Digital diplomacy, which was founded in the 1990s and was first announced in 2001 (Köse, 2017, p.2352), can be defined as the communication in diplomacy created in the digital age. Corneli Bjola and Marcus Holmes have been a source for researchers, states and international organizations working on this subject with their writings and statements on the definition and practices of digital diplomacy. In their work called "Digital Diplomacy Theory and Practice", they describe digital diplomacy as a strategy of managing change with virtual cooperation and digital tools (Bjola and Holmes,2015, p.35).

It is an undeniable fact that digital media has an impact on world politics and foreign policy. The use of social media for diplomatic purposes can change the practices of diplomats in knowledge management, public diplomacy, strategy planning, international negotiations and even crisis management. However, despite what digital diplomacy offers for the conduct of international relations, from an analytical point of view, little is known about how digital diplomacy works and to what extent it develops its success and limits (Bjola and Holmes, 2015, p.4). With the use of social media in diplomacy, institutional adaptation and innovation have been brought to politics. The use of social media has enabled governments to manage digital diplomacy. With the implementation of the digital diplomacy policy, the use of the internet in public diplomacy communication has occurred rapidly. Researchers who define digital diplomacy as the new public diplomacy highlight the diversity of the principles of the new public diplomacy as follows: "The new public diplomacy is not a monologue understanding, but a structure that wants to understand and adopts integration, develops cooperation with non-state actors, works with a network method rather than a hierarchical method, and provides accurate information instead of propaganda" (Sancar, 2019, p.373). In short, digital diplomacy is the way of managing international politics with digital tools and virtual collaborations to get the highest impact in the decision-making processes, public diplomacy and professional rules of states. While the digital space, where information and views are exchanged, which has never been seen in history, affect the national images of the states, it inevitably requires the state to be more dynamic. In addition to adapting to the instant and rapid structure of digital by getting out of the cumbersome communication structure, they need to produce strategies that are powerful and appropriate to the instant nature of digital, which are constantly produced about the distorted, exaggerated, fake news and information about states as well as about almost everything in social media. The tools, procedures and methods of the digitalized communication environment are of critical importance in terms of both the continuity of the

existence of the state and the structure of the diplomatic relations of the state with other states. It is inevitable that this great digital change, which affects all areas of life, affects, changes and transforms diplomatic life. Digital media for governments, international organizations and international companies, in this age where digital diplomacy is widespread, knowledge leadership gains even more importance. There is a need to develop information strategies and influence policy outcomes by doing knowledge leadership. Managing information, analyzing and influencing the flow of information is becoming important. It has enabled the use of the internet and other digital technologies to conduct good diplomacy and manage resources efficiently. Digital diplomacy focuses on social media in the easiest way, diplomats and online audiences are in the same position when using social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook. Ilan Manor (2017: 3) states that they believe that the media has changed in the conduct of public diplomacy with digital diplomacy, but the message has not changed; thinks that people communicate with the people of other countries through social media and especially Twitter account instead of communicating directly. In recent years, Twitter has become an indispensable social medium of the virtual diplomatic network (Hocking and Melissen, 2015, p.15). This virtual diplomatic network includes not only diplomatic actors, but also informal groups, organizations, and individuals participating in the online community (Melissen, 2005, p.5). Due to the increasing diversity of actors participating in digital diplomacy practice, governments are gradually losing their monopoly on the information they once had (Nweke, 2012, p.24). In the age of digitalization, it is a fact that users who benefit from digital platforms are exposed to information overload with the speed of information spreading. For this reason, government actors have started to engage in a dialogue with the public through social media accounts such as Twitter, in order to filter and control the information pollution and negative discourses, especially on the issues that concern governments. In this context, today, many researchers claim that Twitter is recognized as a

new tool in which especially public diplomacy is applied (Fletcher, 2011). Current research in digital diplomacy shows that social media focuses on reshaping and renewing the practice of public diplomacy (Bjola and Holmes, 2015, p.1). In this context, in this study, how the 45th US President Donald John Trump, who actively uses Twitter, one of the social media channels, uses digital diplomacy, has been examined with the qualitative content analysis method.

### **Digitizing Diplomacy**

In the literature, it is possible to interpret diplomacy from different perspectives by dividing it into periods. 'Old Diplomacy' until the end of the First World War; The process starting with this date and ending with the end of the Cold War is called "New Diplomacy" (Acar, 2006, p.417). Another perspective is diplomacy with modern method definitions; It distinguishes it as Diplomacy 1.0, Diplomacy 2.0, Diplomacy 3.0. Diplomacy 1.0 defines classical diplomacy, while Diplomacy 2.0 defines public diplomacy. Digital diplomacy, on the other hand, is called Diplomacy 3.0 (Yücel, 2016, p.2). With the development and change of diplomacy communication technologies, it has prepared an environment for the development of digital diplomacy. The main difference between Diplomacy 3.0 and the other two is that it can completely reverse all the methods, rules, actors, processes and tools of classical diplomacy. In digital diplomacy, borders and protocols disappear, creating a platform in which everyone takes an active role. States and related government institutions now see digital diplomacy as a guide to complete their digital transformation. İskit (2007, p.278) expressed that communication is the spirit of diplomacy. Diplomacy is a method of interstate negotiation and is in a strong relationship with communication procedures, methods and technologies.

Diplomacy, which has undergone many changes and transformations in line with the development of communication technologies, has continued within the framework of secrecy between countries for a great period of history. The fact that computer experts such as Chelsea

Manning, Edward Snowden and Julian Assange have leaked highly confidential information to the internet<sup>1</sup> are important indicators that show us that digital technologies have radically transformed diplomacy. In today's world, where even the deepest secrets of nations are spread online and shared millions of times, states have to produce more original policies and develop national strategies, especially since governments have become inoperable because they do not have a clear agenda on how to deal with such processes (Ünver, 2017, p.5). There is a difference between traditional diplomacy and digital diplomacy. Diplomacy, which was European-centered in the classical period, entered into a new diplomatic process between the USA and the USSR between 1919 and 1945 after the First World War (Kurt, 2018, p.10). In the 1970s, the US Department of State was restructured in the field of diplomacy. With this restructuring, media tools such as radio and television, which will enable communication with the citizens of other countries, were used intensively. The United States used these studies, which we call public diplomacy, quite intensely during the Cold War period. Strategic communication and soft power took the place of propaganda, which was used extensively in the Second World War (Yücel, 2016, p.748). Between the 1970s and 1980s, multinational companies had a great influence on diplomacy. The change and transformation of diplomacy has continued with multinational companies entering diplomacy and increasing their effectiveness (Kurt, 2018, p.10). International companies and states continue to change the perceptions of societies in their own way. While doing this, they act with the principle of using softer instruments instead of hard power such as threat, deterrence and economic sanctions of classical diplomacy (Yücel, 2016, p.748). This, in turn, increases the importance of soft power. Nye stated that soft power consists of political values, culture and foreign policy and defined the source of soft power (Nye, 2017, p.32).

The rapid increase in technological developments and the fact that globalization made itself felt prominently in the world in the 1990s caused the power of the USA to be felt more in the

whole world. These developments caused the new understanding of diplomacy to be questioned after the First World War and laid the groundwork for the formation of diplomacy in accordance with the technology age and globalization conditions (Köse, 2017, p.2348). In this process, the Diplomacy 1.0 and 2.0 paradigm also changed. As a result of the rapid change in technology, ordinary people, or more accurately, users, have removed all hierarchical levels and developed a new communication style that is self-directed (Yücel, 2016, p.748). Digital diplomacy, which left its mark on diplomacy in the 2000s, is diplomacy 3.0 (Köse, 2017, p.2348). To understand digital diplomacy well, we need to know the tradition of public diplomacy well. Public diplomacy, in the traditional sense, is formed by the communication of a state with the citizens of different states. In diplomacy, which we define as the new generation public diplomacy, there is a communication between citizens and citizens of different countries. One of the most important application areas of the new public diplomacy, in which peoples communicate with each other, is digital diplomacy (Sancar, 2019, p.373).

According to Muharrem Ekşi (2016, p.79), the features that separate digital diplomacy from traditional diplomacy are; It is the transition from interstate relations to relations between state-society, state-individual, inter-people, international organizations and individuals. In the digital age, international relations have gone beyond interstate relations and become a global relations network, and thanks to social media channels such as diplomacy, e-diplomacy, Twitter diplomacy, Instagram diplomacy, it has gained functions such as journalism activities and public relations activities, as well as activities such as protocol and intelligence. This has led to the necessity of diplomats in the representation office being not only diplomats who know ordinary foreign policy protocols, but sometimes a media player and sometimes a public relations specialist. The importance of social power and its ability to shape the agenda have increased with new communication technologies, and the development of digital media has also changed the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sup.org> Access Date: 14.10.2021

foreign policy environment. Thanks to digital diplomacy, the public sphere expands, transparency and openness are provided. Even if the diplomatic missions are closed, 24/7 public service can be provided thanks to the digital environment. With digital diplomacy, the methods, purposes, actors, protocols and borders in traditional diplomacy no longer matter, and the main addressees of diplomacy are no longer official representations, but the public. Along with digital diplomacy, it created instant diplomacy towards events and the public, and these formations caused spatial changes in diplomacy (Brian and Jan, 2015, p.16). The USA, which is one of the most successful states in digital diplomacy applications, established the "usa.gov" website, which is the first e-government application in the world, in 2000, and in 2007, the US Department of State published the first blog called "Dipnote" within the public diplomacy. In addition, blogs, videos, webcasts, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, links were included in the US "america.gov" portal, which was designed interactively (Yağmurlu, 2019, p.1272).

Boller also mentions that the actors of diplomacy have changed thanks to the internet that emerged with globalization. The internet has caused more and more different actors to be involved in political and diplomatic processes (Çömlekçi, 2019, p.2). The actors of digital diplomacy; They are actors used in public diplomacy activities such as individuals, civil society, opinion leaders, universities, private sector, global businesses, news and media agencies, pressure groups, supra-state institutions. Regardless of where they are in the world, these actors can interact by becoming a part of digital diplomacy by sharing information about foreign relations by using social media networks via the internet (Yavuz and Kaynar, 2015, p.1). Kurt (2018, p.47) states that due to the abundance of information and the speed of its spread in digital diplomacy, the events in foreign policy are on the agenda of the users. Individuals living in different geographies can form alliances with each other. In fact, country leaders, non-governmental organizations and pressure groups acting collectively with individuals create public space

from their social media accounts, turning them into action in writing with hashtags, and visually with photo and video contents. The studies carried out after this action are published on digital news sites. Especially on Twitter, trendtopic news reach decision makers quickly. A tweet by an individual or a collective social media activity can have a global impact with the digital public sphere (Kurt, 2015, p.339).

In summary, digital diplomacy is defined as public diplomacy activities realized through information communication technologies and social media. It can also be said that it is seen as a part of foreign policy activities used by states to inform and connect foreign publics using websites and social media applications, in short, to carry out public diplomacy activities.

### **The Effects of Social Media Tools in Digital Diplomacy**

Thanks to the technology developed as a result of globalization, world leaders and diplomats use social media to communicate directly with the audience they want to influence. Social media is now seen as a unique diplomatic tool by states, and states have the opportunity to announce not only their stances on different issues, but also their ideas around the world, thanks to the appropriate use of social media (Christodoulides, 2005, p.2). Thus, when social media tools are used correctly, government officials help to create a positive image of the country they represent in the eyes of foreign people. As a result of digitalization, diplomats, who communicated with the target audience in electronic environment, started to use social media platforms actively. Social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter have added an important dimension to diplomacy and have made communication very fast and less erroneous (Adesina, 2017, p.8). Due to the transformation in communication, diplomacy always has to adapt and change to certain forms of communication in its own environment. Hocking and Melissen (2016: 1) state that political leaders use Twitter, which is one of the social media platforms, both for promotional purposes and for important diplomatic activities such as gathering

information, supporting certain policies, negotiating with more intense masses and providing consular services to citizens abroad. Countries interact with their followers through digital diplomacy practices through their social media accounts and create dialogue channels to convey their foreign policy messages, history, cultures, values and traditions (Manor and Segev, 2015, p.14-47). As an example, Park and Lim (2014, p.72) stated that social media platforms are used in South Korea and Japan to increase the support of the people for the country. Geybullayeva (2012, p.176), on the other hand, states that social media is used as an effective tool in promoting the positive change in Nagorno-Karabakh through public diplomacy. Thanks to social media in the digital world, geographical, economic, cultural and linguistic differences are eliminated, and it is possible to distribute international information equally (Armstrong, 2009, p.1).

### Twitter

In recent years, social media, especially Twitter, has offered newly developed communication channels and governments are also accepting the power of these newly developing social media channels. Twitter, which emerged in 2006 and where users post messages known as 'tweets' and interact with each other, has become one of the most visited websites on the internet. Today, many government organizations create Twitter accounts to develop promotion policies, and they state that using Twitter provides efficient information distribution, and also plays an important role in strengthening relations with citizens and other governments (Choo and Park, 2011, p.9).

Twitter was first established by Jack Dorsey on March 21, 2006 as a social networking site (Ovalı, 2020). The concept of Twitter diplomacy emerged with the intense use of Twitter by individuals and institutions that have a say in foreign policy and international studies. With the importance of Twitter diplomacy in foreign policy, it was named twiplomacy by Burson, Cohn and Wolfe (BCW), the global communication agency working on this issue (Ovalı, 2020). Twitter diplomacy has become a form of diplomacy that is effectively practiced by many state leaders, ministers, embassies and state

representatives. It is possible to interact not only with the relevant interlocutors, but also with all Twitter users, with tweets posted by corporate accounts or people representing the state (Ovalı, 2020, p.33). Government officials such as Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Donald Trump and Dominic Raab, who have been using Twitter effectively as a foreign policy tool in recent years, have moved their diplomatic missions to the digital universe as rational actors in the international arena. These leaders developed their communication strategies in public diplomacy with digital diplomacy. This has led to an increase in the importance of social networking sites in international politics (Collins and Bekenova, 2018, p.6). Twitter, which plays an important role in political communication, has become an important structural element of social media. Twitter, which is an important communication tool for political actors who provide first-hand news, mostly journalists and politicians, takes place in a timeless network system, becomes a space that allows to exchange information and connect with other users and to publish important news quickly (Lakomy, 2014, p.1). Due to its short content and the speed of information dissemination, users can easily access any information published in real time about another user they are following. This has made Twitter a beneficial area for politicians who use it to get very important, short and precise information directly from its source. Now, while the actors in the political arena have a tool that will enable them to intervene in national and international events instantly, journalists and citizens can follow many politicians at the same time. This method is Twitter's ability to instantly publicize information that is important to its sender and broader audience. Sandre (2013, p.1) states that Twitter is the fastest growing social media platform and at the same time is a complete transition tool to digital diplomacy for many political actors around the world.

If we look at the biggest change that Twitter has brought to foreign policy, it is seen that national or political statuses have disappeared, unfiltered information spreads rapidly, and it is an area that is quite open to interaction around the world. With the development of the technology sector and the world becoming a 'global village', information

sharing is increasingly democratizing. Thus, it becomes possible for citizens and civil society to criticize governments because of statements made by political actors (Schwarzenbach, 2015, p.1). Twitter has become a highly preferred area especially for diplomats, and Yepsen (2012, p.14) explained the reason for this with the two-way participation and rapid communication feature of Twitter, which is necessary in public diplomacy. Digitization of diplomacy causes political actors to reshape their roles in diplomacy by keeping up with the times. The digital platform enhances a country's leader's ability to communicate with the people of a foreign country, engage with significant audiences, and manage the image of his home country. Manor (2017, p.1) can help political actors to understand the world that is in a state of constant crisis by carrying out digital diplomacy activities through Twitter, reduce the anxiety and tension of this audience by suggesting information sources and important websites, and fight against the spread of fake news. In addition, while promoting their own countries to other countries by using social media within the framework of their digital diplomacy activities, they can also direct them to different cultures, norms and values. For this reason, it is important that the posts made by political actors on Twitter are examined in detail by digital gatekeepers first, and that they pay attention to the extent to which the messages support the policy goals in order to avoid any diplomatic conflicts (United States Department of State, 2012, p.154).

Although it changes the structure of diplomacy by adapting to technologies, it can be said that the essence, aims and values of public diplomacy have never changed, even if it is digital (Sandre, 2013, p.27). As mentioned above, one of the reasons why Twitter is preferred in diplomacy is that it is a very practical tool for transmitting short messages and getting feedback from users instantly. That's why Twitter is the most popular platform among other social media tools and is gaining more and more importance around the world. Individuals do not have trouble accessing the world leaders they follow, and world leaders are able to convey their ideas directly to their followers, easily get involved in politics, universalize discussion environments,

and become international civil society and international unofficial diplomats (Dinata, 2014, p.6). Thus, political actors can communicate directly with each other and with the citizens on the events experienced, and when they carry out their digital diplomacy activities correctly, interstate conflicts are reduced and a positive image can be created.

### Method

The study was conducted in the 45th US. It is intended to evaluate the role of President Donald John Trump's digital diplomacy through Twitter. In this context, the main research question of this study is to examine the types and forms of digital diplomacy activities that have been the intensive application of the classical understanding of diplomacy in recent years. Although there are different forms of digital diplomacy practices all over the world, the question of how digital diplomacy practices conducted by Trump via Twitter are a sample area within the scope and limitations of this study is the main problem to focus on in the study.

Although no one compatible academic study has been found in the literature review conducted on the subject of this research, certain dimensions of relevant studies have been identified. In this context, for example, examples of theoretical studies on the effects of digital diplomacy on international relations have been seen (see: Verrekia, 2017). In addition, there are academic studies that address the transformations that Twitter has led to in digital diplomacy (see Duncombe, 2018). There have also been some studies on how digital diplomacy is used by Trump. For example, Nantogno's research conducted in 2019 is aimed at comparing the practices of digital diplomacy of Trump and Obama. Among the related reviews, the closest study to the subject of this study was conducted by Šimunjak and Caliandro in 2019, "Twiplomacy in the age of Donald Trump: Is the diplomatic code changing?" it has been determined that the study is. In this study, the diplomacy activities carried out by Trump via Twitter have been analyzed in terms of countries and leaders. Although a general

perspective on the subject has been established in the relevant reviews, this study differs in that Trump categorizes digital diplomacy activities under the sub-components of diplomacy and applies them to analysis. Thus, this study aimed to make an original contribution to the literature in terms of subjecting Trump's use of Twitter to content analysis within the general frameworks of diplomacy.

In this study, qualitative content analysis method will be used as the research method. The study is a qualitative research aimed at determining how Trump uses Twitter in terms of content. Dec January January 20, 2017 to January 20, 2021, Trump's tweets on diplomacy issues were used as the basis for the selection of the data needed on the subject. Of the 376 relevant tweets that could be identified, 13 tweets were included in the study by purposive sampling from improbable sampling methods. In the process of collecting data within the scope of the research, the document review method was used. Classical content analysis is a method that analyzes the contents of the material to be analyzed and acts systematically within the framework of certain rules in order to analyze the existing communication dimensions and to make inferences about the non-existent social reality such as source, target and environment (Früh, 2001, p.119-132; Mayring, 2015, p.12-13). Although content analysis is only seen as a suitable method for the analysis of the contents of mass media research, it is actually a method that can analyze all communication content produced for novels, historical and literary works, religious and divine texts, inscriptions, archives and the public, beyond mass media (Gökçe, 2019, p.35). However, Kracauer (1952, p.631- 642) expresses qualitative content analysis as a complementary model to classical content analysis, not as a model against classical content analysis. Quantitative content analysis adopts a deductive approach, while qualitative content analysis adopts an inductive approach. Quantitative content analysis adopts a deductive approach, while qualitative content analysis adopts an inductive approach. There is no sequential analysis in qualitative content analysis, that is, there is a continuous transition between the

stages. In summary, data are collected, analyzed and interpreted simultaneously in the research.

## Research

In the research, tweets sent by D. Trump from his official twitter account between January 20, 2017 and January 20, 2021 will be analyzed by content analysis method. While determining the actors subjected to the analysis, for Köni (1982, p.10) to accept a unit or element as an actor in international relations; a) clearly and unequivocally, b) to have a certain decision-making capacity in the international arena, c) to be more or less dominant, d) to be an autonomous unit that can exert influence over other actors, and e) most importantly, the actors who have a say in international relations and have more or less the power to influence, based on the definition that they should have such as the ability to survive for a certain period of time; National states, Individuals, National Non-Governmental Actors (NGOs), International Organizations (such as IMF, UNESCO, WHO, OPEC, UN, OSCE...), Transnational Groups and Organizations (such as the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Union of Churches...). In this context, the actors in question were determined as separate categories, and the analyzed tweets were analyzed in this direction.

## National States

Under this category, national states, which are the most important actors of classical diplomacy and thus digital diplomacy, are discussed. Trump's tweets against different states, which force the understanding of diplomacy, will be analyzed under this category.

The first example that can be examined under the category of national states in Trump's tweets is the statement he made about the chemical attacks in Syria. The said explanation is as follows:

*"Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and "smart!" You shouldn't be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people*

*and enjoys it!" — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) 11 April 2018.<sup>2</sup>*

In this statement, Trump used harsh expressions against Syria and indirectly against Russia, in a way that disregards the classical diplomatic courtesy. To characterize Syria's activities as "animalism" can be read as an unacceptable accusation of a state, especially a leader. At the same time, it is seen that similar heavy accusations and threats are clearly expressed in this tweet, although it is not very clear if Russia acts in cooperation with Syria.

Another tweet that can be evaluated in the category of national states is Trump's tweet after the USA's statement that "Turkey will soon take action for the operation in northern Syria, but the USA will not be involved in the operation and will not support it". In this tweet, US President Donald Trump threatens to completely destroy Turkey's economy if it exceeds the limits of possible operation:

*"As I have stated strongly before, and just to reiterate, if Turkey does anything that I, in my great and unmatched wisdom, consider to be off limits, I will totally destroy and obliterate the Economy of Turkey (I've done before!). They must, with Europe and others, watch over..." — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) October 7, 2019.<sup>3</sup>*

In this tweet, Trump is openly threatening the state of the Turkish Republic. In this tweet, which can be said to be completely outside the understanding of diplomacy, Trump can clearly state that he can easily destroy a state's economy, and moreover, he has done it before without hesitation. However, apart from diplomatic practices, he can voice his contact with a terrorist organization as a solution proposal regarding the international balances in the region.

Another example of tweets in the nation states category is Trump's tweet containing statements about Corona Virus:

*"Some wacko in China just released a statement blaming everybody other than China for the Virus which has now killed hundreds of thousands of people. Please explain to this dope that it was the "incompetence of*

*China", and nothing else, that did this mass Worldwide killing!" — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 20th 2020.<sup>4</sup>*

In this tweet, the problems related to a virus that affected the whole world were identified with a country, and Trump did not hesitate to completely destroy a possible epidemic on a state by describing this virus as a "China Virus".

### **Individuals (Political Leaders)**

Under this category, individuals, who are another actor in diplomacy, will be discussed, and in this context, Trump's tweets, which target the leaders of different states, are evaluated.

The first tweet that can be examined in this context is Trump's tweet in which he expressed his thoughts on what happened in the city of Duma in Syria:

*"Many dead, including women and children, in mindless CHEMICAL attack in Syria. Area of atrocity is in lockdown and encircled by Syrian Army, making it completely inaccessible to outside world. President Putin, Russia and Iran are responsible for backing Animal Assad. Big price..." -Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Apr 8th 2018.<sup>5</sup>*

In this tweet, a head of state was explicitly described as an "animal." Whatever the reason may be, it is not acceptable to characterize a head of state as such in diplomatic traditions. Moreover, while using this characterization, Trump implicitly threatens other statesmen.

In another tweet analyzed under the category of individuals, Trump also targets Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of his neighbor, Canada, whom he is confronted with due to additional customs duties on social media:

*"PM Justin Trudeau of Canada acted so meek and mild during our @G7 meetings only to give a news conference after I left saying that, "US Tariffs were kind of insulting" and he "will not be pushed around." Very dishonest and, weak. Our Tariffs are in response to his*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ntv.com.tr> Access Date: 03.09.2021

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com> Access Date: 03.09.2021

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thetrumparchive.com/> Access Date: 03.09.2021

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com> Access Date: 04.09.2021

of 270% on dairy!" — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Jun 9th 2018.<sup>6</sup>

In this tweet, a head of state was similarly described as "dishonest and weak". Trump continues to disregard the traditions of diplomacy by voicing these and similar heavy accusations against state leaders with whom he has the slightest problem.

In another tweet that can be considered in this category, Donald Trump called London Mayor Sadiq Khan a "cold loser" after criticizing the mayor's and the British government's decision to offer Trump a state visit:

*"@SadiqKhan, who by all accounts has done a terrible job as Mayor of London, has been foolishly "nasty" to the visiting President of the United States, by far the most important ally of the United Kingdom. He is a stone-cold loser who should focus on crime in London, not me....."* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Jun 3rd 2019.

In this tweet, too, Trump has shown that he can direct his heavy accusations not only to heads of state but also to state officials at different levels without hesitation. Not only the heads of state, but also almost every elected leader, including mayors, can take his share from Trump's heavy accusations. Qualifications such as "foolishly" "nasty" and "stone cold loser" used for the mayor in this tweet can be considered as expressions that do not fit into the scope of diplomacy.

### Non-Government National Actors

One of the important pillars of diplomacy is non-governmental actors. Although there are different explanations in the literature about which units the actor in question will cover, structures such as NGOs and pressure groups are mostly discussed under this category.

In the first tweet reviewed under this category, Trump said that NYC's 'Black Lives Matter' painting in front of Trump Towers is a 'symbol of hate':

*"...horrible BLM chant, "Pigs In A Blanket, Fry 'Em Like Bacon". Maybe our GREAT Police, who have*

*been neutralized and scorned by a mayor who hates & disrespects them, won't let this symbol of hate be affixed to New York's greatest street. Spend this money fighting crime instead!"* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Jul 1st 2020.<sup>8</sup>

In this tweet, Trump has clearly revealed his stance against the phenomenon of criticism and protest, which is a usual phenomenon in Western democracies. Trump, who does not hesitate to use qualifications such as "pigs" for the pressure group in question, invites the authorities to take strict and police measures instead of showing democratic and diplomatic maturity against this protest.

*"...These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen. Just spoke to Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts. Thank you!"* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 29th 2020.<sup>9</sup>

The murder of George Floyd, which had a great impact all over the world, caused great demonstrations and protests in many countries, especially in the United States. Such actions can be individual and spontaneous, as well as organized and organized with the support of related NGOs. This event, which has brought the issues of human rights and freedoms to the agenda again and strongly around the world, has manifested itself with the unfolding of hate speech by Trump. In his tweet on this subject, Trump does not hesitate to associate these acts with "looting" in the face of the rightful reaction of the public and NGOs, and clearly states that he will not hesitate to take "armed" and police measures against these actions.

### International Organizations

Another important actor of diplomacy is the international organizations. Under this category, Trump's tweets with negative content about international organizations such as the UN, EU and WHO are analyzed.

*"Too bad that the European Union is being so tough on the United Kingdom and Brexit. The E.U. is likewise*

<sup>6</sup> <https://thehill.com> Access Date: 04.09.2021

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.reuters.com> Access Date: 04.09.2021

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com> Access Date: 05.09.2021

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.thetrumparchive.com> Access Date: 10.09.2021

*a brutal trading partner with the United States, which will change. Sometimes in life you have to let people breathe before it all comes back to bite you!"* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 11, 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Today, international organizations are extremely important and indispensable because many important fields such as politics and economy have crossed national borders and gained international dimensions. As a result of globalization, such organizations have a decisive influence on national and international policies. In this context, almost every country becomes a member of such organizations and attaches great importance to acting with them. Contrary to the general belief, Trump's approach on this issue is based on discrediting such organizations. Trump's reaction to the EU is clearly seen in his tweet on the occasion of trade relations. Stating that the commercial relations with the EU will "change" as soon as possible, Trump describes the EU as "brutal" and tries to present this organization as an organization that will "bite" them.

*"The badly flawed Paris Climate Agreement protects the polluters, hurts Americans, and cost a fortune. NOT ON MY WATCH! I want crystal clean water and the cleanest and the purest air on the planet – we've now got that!"* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Sep 4th 2019.<sup>11</sup>

Environmental problems are seen above the sovereignty of the nation-state and are an inevitable part of the international arena. With this aspect, environmental policies are inevitably handled on a global scale, and the policies related to the subject are carried out largely under the determination of relevant international organizations. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is extremely important and effective on the environment, has an important mission in determining global policies on the environment with the participation of many countries. In his tweet under review, Trump did not hesitate to accuse international efforts and initiatives in this regard as "bad, flawed" without justification. In addition, he clearly states that he considers international initiatives on the subject unnecessary

on behalf of himself and his country, and he clearly declares that he will not take any responsibility for this.

### **Transnational Groups and Organizations**

It is generally accepted that in modern diplomacy approaches, besides states, individuals, international organizations, transnational groups and organizations of different nature have an important role in recent times. Under this category, tweets directed at groups such as immigrants, women's movement and media world within the scope of transnational structures in diplomacy are analyzed.

*"Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen. We saw what they attempted to do, and failed, in 2016. We can't let a more sophisticated version of that...."* — Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) May 27th 2020.<sup>12</sup>

In today's world, where digitalization and social media have spread to many areas of life, many approaches and studies are carried out on these issues outside of academia and academia. Especially since the power of social media in influencing individuals and society is known, the effective use of this medium by the states is of great importance in terms of national and international policies. Despite this widespread acceptance, Trump underestimates social media, which is a transnational power, at every opportunity, and moreover clearly states that he will not hesitate to put pressure and censorship mechanisms into action against them. He clearly shows in the tweet discussed above that he will not hesitate to use his power over people and groups who exercise their right to democratic opposition, especially against him and the political understanding he represents in these media.

His insensitive tweet about the attack on the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris in 2015, in which 12 people were killed and 11 injured, garnered quite a reaction:

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com> Access Date: 10.09.2021

<sup>11</sup> <https://climate.law.columbia.edu> Retrieved 09.15.2021

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com> Access Date: 15.09.2021



Each of Trump's tweets reviewed contains negative statements, and such statements ignore the minimum language of courtesy and diplomatic respect required by the field of public diplomacy.



Figure 2. Donald Trump Twitter Account (Source: Yüksel, 2020, p.17)

Trump has tweeted more than 56,000, with more than 88 million followers since he created the account in 2009.<sup>15</sup> When we look at the tweets analyzed, it is seen that Donald Trump uses an informal language in his tweets, and the language, structure of his posts and the elements that can directly or indirectly affect foreign policy are far from the understanding of diplomacy.

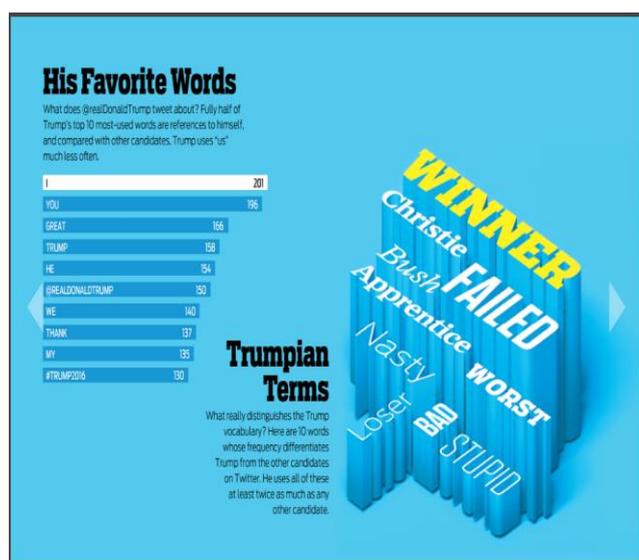


Figure 3. Trumpian Terms<sup>16</sup>

As seen in Figure 3, it is noteworthy that the words Trump has used since 2009, especially during his presidency, are far from the language of diplomacy and are harsh. It is seen that the words he uses most in his tweets are "nasty, bad, loser, stupid, failed" and he uses these words in the international relations dimension.

### Conclusion

The term diplomacy is often defined in the literature as attempts by the state through foreign governments to influence and manage international events. However, diplomacy is limited to peaceful means of securing foreign policy goals and is also used to express the rules of politeness on the international field (Heywood, 2015, p.86). New forms of application of diplomacy with the opportunities provided by the development of Internet technologies have led to the formation of a new concept called 'digital diplomacy'. Digital diplomacy has entered the literature as a term that refers to the use of social media for diplomatic purposes, especially (Bjola & Holmes, 2015, p.5). It is worth noting that the element of diplomatic courtesy, which has been persistently emphasized in the literature of diplomacy in the classical and modern sense, has greatly decreased in recent years. It is even witnessed that expressions such as threats, humiliation, insults, etc., which push the boundaries of diplomatic language, can be used by the authorities without proper place. It is possible that this situation can be characterized as an irony in the name of diplomacy. Therefore, this study focuses on the ironic dimensions of Trump's activities in the field of digital diplomacy.

The concept of diplomacy has evolved with the developing technology and has been moved to the digital environment. World leaders now carry out their diplomacy activities through social media tools, and interact with the target audience through Twitter, where two-way communication has been used effectively in recent years. In order to change the perceptions of the societies in the desired direction, they act with the principle of using softer instruments instead of the hard power

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.tweetbinder.com> Access Date:14.03.2021

<sup>16</sup> Source: <https://www.politico.com>

elements of classical diplomacy such as threats, deterrence and economic sanctions. Twitter stands out as the most common and effective social media where digital diplomacy is carried out in social media used as a diplomacy tool. Thanks to Twitter, the masses carry protests such as the Arab Spring, George Floyd and the Gezi Events to the digital environment, and they spread their messages worldwide by directly transmitting them. From this perspective, although social media platforms strengthen the public relations activities of governments, they also cause interactions that can lead to unexpected and unwanted dialogues. For this reason, it is useful to consider the soft power element while carrying out digital diplomacy activities. Donald Trump is one of the leaders with the most followers on Twitter, so every tweet he sends directs foreign policy. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the role of digital diplomacy of Donald John Trump, the 45th President of the USA, on Twitter. The data were analyzed with the qualitative content analysis method, and it was revealed that the language he used while using social media was far from the language of diplomacy due to Trump's tweets. According to the findings obtained as a result of the research, it is noteworthy that Trump exhibits a racist attitude with his tweets on Twitter, one of the social media channels, both for himself and for the citizens and administrations of other countries. When we look at the data, it is seen that in Twitter, which has a high level of interaction, soft power elements are not used in the content of Trump's tweets, therefore, there is no national and international dialogue. It has been concluded that his tweets have reached the level of sarcastic, insulting and even hate crime, and therefore can be called digital diplomacy irony.

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