

E-DIPLOMACY ON TWITTER. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF STRATEGIES AND EFFECTIVITY

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Abstract

The primary aim of this article is to analyze the Twitter communication strategy and its efficiency. The authors took into consideration four Ministers of foreign affairs from Great Britain, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia (their private accounts have also been examined). However, considering that Ministers of Poland and Russia did not have their own Twitter accounts (Witold Waszczykowski and Siergiej Lawrow), authors decided to analyze private accounts of Great Britain's and Ukrainian's Ministers (Boris Johnson and Pavlo Klimkin). All examined profiles are accredited. Because of the popularity of Twitter and the appearance of the new type of diplomacy, which involves social networking sites, the authors attempted to make a qualitative and quantitative analysis of given accounts. The results present the effectivity index and also show that spontaneously published messages on social media have a significant impact on how state institutions convey content. What is more, the qualitative and quantitative analysis and the effectivity index allows to present the tools needed for e-diplomacy on Twitter.

Keywords: diplomacy, Twitter, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, effectivity index.

Introduction

In the era of Web 2.0 and social media, one can face a new type of communication. The ease, speed, and possibility of interaction are the qualities of social networking sites. People expect information flow to reach them at a rapid pace. At present, one can notice that old media use social media as a source of information, and the leading one is Twitter [Statista, 2017]. This specific site stands out from others. It is dedicated to the political dissemination content, and it gives an opportunity for politicians and diplomats to present their ideas and views. The resolution in communication and the popularity of social media lead to a new type of diplomacy, which is related to new aims and missions of foreign policy. This casus is called diplomacy 2.0 [Arendarska, 2012, p.52] and has not been examined by media researchers yet. The books use many names such as electronic diplomacy, e-diplomacy, digital diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, virtual diplomacy or Internet diplomacy. All of the above are used interchangeably and inconsistently.

Furthermore, the impact of social media was spotted already in 2011, and public relation agency Burson-Marsteller used the term Twiplomacy for the first time [Portal Twiplomacy, [online: April 20, 2017]. In 2013, the same agency analyzed 505 government's accounts in 153 countries. The findings of the study depicted that approximately 78% of leaders have an account on Twitter, 68% maintain mutual relations with politicians

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from other countries and 45 governments are active on Twitter. However, there are no documents or regulations, which could adequately describe and control this new type of diplomacy. There is only the draft law on electronic diplomacy introduced by Council of the European Union [Dyplomacja elektroniczna, 2015]. Its content only generally presents the code of conduct in cyberspace in every member state.

Twitter was created in 2006 and right from the beginning it was distinct from others social networking sites. Since^{2]} Moreover, all Twitter users can comment on posts of others and can create a relation on the sender-receiver line. The distinctive language spoken by its users is a significant feature of Twitter. For effective exploit, it is crucial to know all Twitter tools. The application of hashtags increases the possibility of finding a similar topic and also attracts users [Bud, 2013]. What is more, the dissemination of the sign # can lead to a strengthening of the message and the creation of a discussion on given topic. Putting the sign @ before the word is a fast way to move to the already mentioned user account. Additionally, it is also important to mention retweets, which make posts available on the wall.

The scope of research and methodology

The article presents the results of the research conducted between April, 17 and 30, 2017. The study had two stages: quantitative and qualitative. In the first part, the authors the number of tweets, retweets, comments, and likes. Those communication tools, used only on Twitter, became the essential elements of effectivity index, which was the main aim of the research. The second part concentrated on communication, the meaning of hashtags, replays, and multimedia accessories. Topics and languages were also analyzed. The aspects mentioned above gave the authors the opportunity to see some tendencies and the general image of e-diplomacy run on Twitter.

The conclusions are based mostly on qualitative analysis of diplomacy of four countries with different culture and history:

1. Great Britain – old European Union member state (now leaving the UE). Its diplomacy is the most stable and based on traditions. It is also one of the countries, where the adaptation of foreign policy in social networks is being discussed at the state level³.
2. Poland – old member of the Eastern Bloc, which now belongs to European Union.
3. Ukraine – a member of European
4. Union aiming to western standards of diplomacy. This country tries to follow the EU diplomatic standards, but at the same time, it still follows some typical features of Ukrainian diplomatic culture.
5. Russia – authoritarian country, which has own principles and purposes of diplomacy.⁴

Based on recent report “Twitplomacy 2016”, made by Burson-Marsteller [2017], all the countries mentioned above are a part of The 50 Best Connected World Leaders ranking [Twitplomacy, 2017]. Second place belongs to Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Great Britain is listed as fourth, Ukraine - twenty-second, Poland - twenty-sixth.

O. Annusewicz and A. Morawski already examined the effectivity of political social media accounts. Their analysis involved a broader research scope, which was based on the general use of social media by politicians in chosen countries of Eastern Europe. Considering the aim of this article, the authors decided to choose another, more narrow

2 In September 26, 2017, Twitter doubled the characters limit from 140 to 280. [<https://www.theverge.com/2017/9/26/16363912/twitter-character-limit-increase-280-test>]

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/british-diplomacy-in-the-information-age> [online: January 6, 2018]

4 [<https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/327216-when-diplomacy-breaks-down-three>] [online: January 6, 2018]

effectivity index presented by I. Leonowicz-Bukała and A. Martens.

Quantitative stage

Considering all the data, seemingly it can be seen that the most significant support had Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 1,26 million people followed this account. While Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs account had only 57 thousand of followers (the lowest number). The difference between two accounts is quite significant. Also, it is worth to mention that the number of tweets, published in the given period, was the highest in Ukrainian account (310 tweets). On the other hand, the figures show that the Great Britain Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the least active on Twitter with only 53 tweets published during two weeks.

Picture1. Quantitative analysis of Twitter accounts

Source: author's own research

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland	Tweets: 27 K	The number of Tweets: 239	Retweets: 139	
	Following: 375		Own Tweets: 100	Comments: 290
	Followers: 57 K			Retweets: 431 Likes: 697
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation	Tweets: 39,5 K	The number of Tweets: 271	Retweets: 161	
	Following: 1184		Own Tweets: 110	Comments: 389
	Followers: 1,26 M			Retweets: 3631 Likes: 3519
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom	Tweets: 28,7 K	The number of Tweets: 53	Retweets: 32	
	Following: 29,4 K		Own Tweets: 21	Comments: 178
	Followers: 746 K			Retweets: 1221 Likes: 2093
Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Johnson	Tweets: 700	The number of Tweets: 12	Retweets: 2	
	Following: 111		Own Tweets: 10	Comments: 1177
	Followers: 312 K			Retweets: 2071 Likes: 6250
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ukraine	Tweets: 41,9 K	The number of Tweets: 310	Retweets: 242	
	Following: 1072		Own Tweets: 68	Comments: 62
	Followers: 85,6 K			Retweets: 2229 Likes: 1264
Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin	Tweets: 1906	The number of Tweets: 26	Retweets: 3	
	Following: 153		Own Tweets: 23	Comments: 155
	Followers: 281 K			Retweets: 2022 Likes: 2004

This research also involved foreign Ministers' private accounts. Considering that Witold Waszczykowski (Poland) and Siergiej Lawrow (Russia) did not have their private profiles on Twitter, the authors decided to analyze only Boris Johnson's and Pavlo Klimkin's accounts. It can be seen that more popular is Johnson, reaching 312 thousand of followers. However, it is also important to notice that the difference between those two diplomats was not considerable. British Minister published only 12 tweets when Klimkin had 26 tweets. Surprising, although Boris Johnson had quite a significant number of followers, the number of his tweets was the lowest of all analyzed accounts. It was only ten tweets during given period. What is more, Johnson had the highest number of likes and comments.

Qualitative stage

When analyzing the Twitter accounts, the authors noticed the active usage of other multimedia platforms for publication of the information already posted on Twitter. Almost all accounts complimented their content with links to posts from official sites of Ministries of Foreign Affairs. But very often they also used other applications. For example, the account of Great Britain Ministry periodically distributes link of parliamentlive.tv - an official website of online broadcasts of parliamentary sessions. At the same time, the account of the Russian Federation Ministry preferred to use Periscope (made by Twitter) - a live video streaming application. The authors also noticed using pictures and infographics in large quantities by some accounts, e.g. Russian Federation not only has the largest number of images but also presents announcements using infographics (68 photos for 110 tweets).

Picture 2. Multimedia applications used in tweets of Ministries and Ministers' accounts

Source: author's own research

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland	Links: 36	www.gov.pl www.flickr.com
	Pictures: 62	
	Video: 0	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation	Links: 68	www.mid.ru www.pscp.tv
	Pictures: 53	
	Video: 46	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom	Links: 9	www.gov.uk www.parliamentlive.tv
	Pictures: 14	
	Video: 3	
Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Johnson	Links: 0	None
	Pictures: 3	
	Video: 0	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ukraine	Links: 40	www.mfa.gov.ua
	Pictures: 62	
	Video: 2	
Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin	Links: 0	None
	Pictures: 6	
	Video: 1	

A Minister is the chief representative of a ministry, so it is obvious that there will be a connection between both Twitter accounts. The Ministries of Great Britain and Ukraine retweet posts of its Ministers and also supplement them with some additional information. Official Ministries' accounts also publish quotes of their Ministers by using hashtags and surnames (#Waszczykowski, #Lavrov). It also can be noticed that only Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs quotes the Vice Minister. The authors noticed that the account of Great Britain Ministry has an exceptional feature. It comments its own tweets combining them in thematic groups.

Topics of all posts were another essential point of the research. However, this stage was not profoundly analyzed. It is logical that accounts of ministries were created for describing and announcing events connected with ministries' activities. But, for example, Polish account very often posted tweets about historical dates and national holidays. At the same time, Russian account became a field of retweets from other representatives of ministry and it also published tweets related to the function of Russian Federation Ministry of Defence.

Picture 3. The use of hashtags and replies in analyzed accounts

Source: author's own research

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland	@59	@RadiowaJedynka – 6 @rzeczpospolita – 4 @EU2017MT – 4 @tvp_info – 3	#213	#Waszczykowski – 53 #USA – 16 #UE – 15
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation	@8	@RF_OSCE – 2 @MID_Abkhazia – 2	# 81	#Лавров – 33 #Захарова – 23 #РоссияОБСЕ – 7
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom	@11	@BorisJohnson – 2 @macmillancancer - 2	#24	#LondonMarathon – 2 #AnzacDay – 2
Minister of Foreign Affairs Boris Johnson	@5	@poroshenko @OSCE_SMM @francediplo @UN @nikkihaley	#12	#Ukraine – 2 #KhanSheikhoun – 2 #DPRK - 2
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Ukraine	@30	@Mariana_Betsa – 6 @VGroysman – 5 @PavloKlimkin - 4	#82	#ООН – 10 #Україна – 8 #Klimkin – 8
Minister of Foreign Affairs Pavlo Klimkin	@6	@OSCE_SMM – 6	#7	#ICJ – 2 #Chornobyl – 2

Another essential point in the research was the language. It is important to notice that the accounts of Polish and Russian Ministry have additional accounts in English used for international information. Because the target audience of accounts in state languages are citizens and local media of the particular country that is why there were differences in the content of tweets depending on the language of the accounts. During the research, the authors also noticed that accounts of Ukrainian Minister and Ministry published some official statements in both English and French (this is due to the subject). For example, tweets describing details of President of Ukraine visiting Great Britain were duplicated in English, and the events in Paris were commented in French. The language of hashtags was also another interesting detail. The internal affairs of national importance were published with hashtags in the state language, whereas international ones - in English (for example, #EU, #UE, #EC, #EC).

Twitter is continually gaining popularity, that is why its functionality increases every day. The authors also noticed that the analyzed accounts used emoji, namely pictures of flags of countries to which a post was directed. It is a visualization of the content - in this case, the recognition of the country. It can be seen in the "exchange" of tweets between P. Poroshenko (on the Great Britain's Ministry account) and B. Johnson (on the Ukrainian Ministry account). This interaction helps to keep track of Ministry's official reactions to some events. The authors confirmed this by the example of the situation on the West of Ukraine, where the presenter of OSCE was killed. Every account published its official opinion and used hashtag of formal account of OSCE on Twitter.

Picture 4. The connection of accounts in mutual events

Source: Twitter



Effectivity index

For the authors, the primary purpose of the research was the calculation of the effectivity index of accounts mentioned above. Media researchers give many techniques [Gackowski, 2014, p. 163–208] how to measure the efficiency of leading the social networking site. But it was decided to choose the one that is the most measurable and pertinent for this study [Leonowicz-Bukafa, Martens, 2016, p. 212].

Picture 5. The formula of effectivity index

$$\left(\frac{\text{amount of comments}}{\text{amount of tweets}} + \frac{\text{amount of retweets}}{\text{amount of tweets}} + \frac{\text{amount of likes}}{\text{amount of tweets}} \right) : 3$$

According to above ranking, it is noticeable that the first place got @BorisJohnson. This is a surprising result taking into account the previously presented data. Boris Johnson published only ten own posts during the analyzed period. Despite his lack of activity, his efficiency turned out to be supreme. What is more, the number of his followers was around 312 thousand. In comparison with Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs account, which had 1,26 million followers and got the fourth place, the result can be astonishing. This result proves that the number of followers does not indicate the efficient use of the Twitter.

Also, the difference between first (316,6) and second (60,6) place is noticeable. The discrepancy of 256 between Boris Johnson and Pavlo Klimkin's effectivity index can be observed. According to the authors, it is caused by the popularity of English language. The extent of Boris Johnson's posts was much greater and reached much more Twitter users. But also the international impact of an individual country has a huge affect on effectivity index. The authors want to indicate that the effectivity index measure only quantitative stage. There are many external factors, which have an impact on the efficiency of Twitter. However, those were not included in the authors' research.

Picture 6. The effectivity index

Source: author's own research

Country	Account	Effectivity index	Place
Great Britain:	@foreignoffice	55,4	3
	@BorisJohnson	316,6	1
Poland	@MSZ_RP	4,7	6
Ukraine:	@MFA_Ukraine	17,4	5
	@PavloKlimkin	60,6	2
Russia	@MID_RF	22,8	4

Also, it is crucial to add that the accounts lead by Ministers had better results. This trend may be due to the trust from the recipients. The society has confidence in people, who are well-known. The impersonality of Ministerial accounts can lead to a decrease in effectiveness. Last place belongs to @MSZ_RP. In spite of the fact that there was a large number of published tweets by this account, it can be seen that it has no effect on the efficiency of leading accounts on Twitter.

Conclusion

The main aim of the research was to analyze the Twitter activity of four Ministries of Foreign Affairs and two Ministers. There are no general rules of diplomacy on the Internet, but according to the broad vision of diplomacy, it is possible to decide, what is a norm and what is not. The authors claim that in their opinion there is some inappropriate tendency of using Twitter by Russia and Poland. It is connected with posting tweets on some topics, which are not related to the Ministerial activity. As an example, Russian Ministry posted a tweet about the military situation in the country, whereas Poland published tweets connected with past historical events. The language also affects the effectivity of accounts. By using English, Great Britain can reach more users. Russia and Poland also have additional accounts, which are maintained in English, whereas Ukrainian Minister duplicates his tweets in English or French. The effort of using foreign language enables the Twitter account owner to reach more users.

It was also noticed, that the phenomenon of diplomacy 2.0 creates new diplomatic canones:

1. publishing opinions about international events;
2. simplifying the diplomatic statements (the information becomes more interactive, shorter and more accessible by using clippings, hashtags, and emojis);
3. shifting the political communication to publicly available platform (it gives the Twitter users an opportunity to observe and to control e-diplomacy by using the Twitter tools);
4. connecting with citizens by using a variety of multimedia applications.

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<https://twitter.com/PavloKlimkin>

https://twitter.com/mfa_russia