



# To Be or Not To Be: Twitter Presence among Turkish Diplomats

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**Abstract:** The article studies Turkey's twiplomacy - how Turkish diplomats use Twitter in performing their diplomatic outreach and public diplomacy. The literature review shows that there is a lack of a comprehensive large N study of Turkey's twiplomacy. The article fills in this gap by collecting and analyzing data set of Twitter posts by 76 diplomats from 2010 to 2020. It helps understand how and to what extent Turkish diplomats maintain their presence on Twitter. We achieve this goal using two groups of methods. Firstly, we derive descriptive statistics for several user metrics including raw numbers of tweets per user and per date as well as retweet, reply, and like counts per user. Secondly, we analyze content of tweets through calculation of their sentiment scores. The main findings indicate that the Twitter presence of Turkish diplomats is relatively limited and reliant on a few prominent figures. Though Turkish diplomats are selected from well-educated individuals who can make the greatest use of available opportunities provided by social media, relatively few of them are active on Twitter. Another significant conclusion is that Turkey's twiplomacy is inconsistent and driven by individuals rather than a part of a wider strategy or framework. Online activities of different state institutions are not synchronized for efficient use of social media and so-called twiplomacy. Finally, according to the results of the content analysis, Turkish diplomats usually employ positive language in their tweets, as seen by the most frequently used terms, related emotions, and sentiment scores. It confirms the idea that Turkish diplomats tend to promote messages demonstrating Turkey's endorsement of international cooperation.

**Keywords:** Social Media Analysis, Twitter Analytics, Turkish Foreign Policy, twiplomacy

The most dramatic changes are likely to emerge as new technologies continue to transform businesses, institutions, governments and all the various relationships that exist among and between them<sup>1</sup>. It has been observed that new tech-

<sup>1</sup> Slaughter A.M. 2011. A new theory for the foreign policy frontier: Collaborative power. *The Atlantic*. URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/11/a-new-theory-for-the-foreign-policy-frontier-collaborative-power/249260/> (accessed 23.06.2022)

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nologies, especially in the field of communication, have already greatly changed the relationships between citizens and governments, and those of states with each other<sup>2</sup>. In this new area, social media and its analysis are rapidly developing topics. Social media is defined as platforms that allow users to create and share information globally (Gupta, Brooks 2013). In this way social media is a phenomenon that has recently spread rapidly throughout the world, and this is a vital trend to be considered in all research fields, including international relations and foreign policy analysis.

In this context the notion of public diplomacy, which dates back to the second part of the twentieth century, has taken new directions and gained prominence. Edmund Guillon is considered to be the person who coined the term in 1965 (Collins, DeWitt, LeFebvre 2019: 80), and although there are various definitions of public diplomacy, most contain similar elements (Dumčiuvienė 2016: 96). Public diplomacy is “...direct communication with foreign peoples with the aim of affecting their thinking and, ultimately, that of their governments” (Malone 1985: 199). States can use a variety of public diplomacy tools to engage in direct communication with foreign publics in order to persuade selected sections of foreign opinion to support or tolerate a government's strategic priorities. However, among these instruments, information and communication technologies have grown in importance in recent years. Television, radio, the Internet, computers, tablets, smartphones, and social media make global communication easier than it has ever been, allowing both developed and developing countries to communicate with each other (Adesina 2017: 2). The use of information and communication technologies by governments as a foreign policy tool is called digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy is considered a form of public diplomacy and is often referred to as ‘diplomacy 2.0’ or ‘net diplomacy’, inspired by Web 2.0<sup>3</sup>. Digitalization in diplomacy brings new dimensions to diplomats’ and politicians’ communication with society.

The Internet is changing ways of communication, with increasing numbers of people using social media to share information with other people. There are more than 6.5 billion active accounts on social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Snapchat<sup>4</sup>. The use of social media for communication between individuals in large numbers motivated politicians to make use of this arena as well. Barack Obama forged his election campaign around digital rather than traditional media and achieved positive results (Collins et al. 2019: 81). The power of social media during the Arab Uprisings was a remarkable example in the context of

<sup>2</sup> Schipani A., Pilling D., & Munshi N. 2021. Youth vs the gerontocrats: A potent political force tests Africa's ageing rulers. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/b9198e0f-379c-4c80-9171-58e1c820e655> (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>3</sup> Manor I. 2017. The Digitalization of Diplomacy: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Terminology. 9 August 2020. *Digital Diplomacy*. <https://digdipblog.com/2017/08/08/the-digitalization-of-diplomacy-toward-clarification-of-a-fractured-terminology/> (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>4</sup> Bagadiya J. 2021. 367 Social Media Statistics You Must Know In 2021. 28 May 2021. *Social Pilot*. <https://www.socialpilot.co/blog/social-media-statistics> (accessed 23.06.2022).

social movements. As states have realized the opportunities offered by the Internet in the field of public diplomacy, they have started to make efforts to use it more effectively. In particular, official social media accounts are increasingly used by foreign ministries as tools for presenting and shaping their country's image around the world (Bjola 2015: 7).

Today, ministers, embassies, ambassadors, and other officials use social media platforms to communicate with the wider public. In an era of widespread disinformation and fake news, ambassadors actively use online social networking platforms to promote their countries' official narratives (Khan, Ittefaq, Pantoja, Raziq, Malik 2021). Among the various social media platforms, Twitter differs from others in terms of sending messages and receiving feedback and news. While many social media channels are designed to facilitate making friends, communicating with family, and sharing activities related to social life, the design of Twitter focuses on the ways how people follow individuals and institutions in which they are interested. Twitter positions itself in this way. In 2009, it replaced its opening question of 'What are you doing?' with 'What's happening?' (Yağmurlu 2019: 1286). Twitter is used more than other social media channels to follow national and international agendas, and is widely used by state leaders, politicians, government agencies, foreign ministries, and diplomats within the framework of public diplomacy activities. It is the most popular platform for digital diplomacy as many diplomatic institutions opened an account on Twitter earlier compared to other social media platforms (Collins et al 2019: 81). The reason is that Twitter is useful for delivering messages to large masses and getting feedback on messages from other users. On Twitter, states, institutions, diplomats, and politicians attempt to influence other users by explaining their ideas and goals using brief notes<sup>5</sup>. Twitter is also a tool for dialogue. Governments, diplomats, and politicians can bridge the gap between their own ideas and those of other users through receiving feedback from the latter (Dumčiuvienė 2016: 97–99).

There are various basic metrics for assessing the usage of Twitter that may be applied to any ambassador. For example, the number of followers, the number of posts, the language of the postings, the number of likes, the number of retweets, and so on (Gilboa 2016). The study's major question concerns performance of Turkish diplomats in relation to these criteria. The primary goal of this study is to evaluate Turkish ambassadors' Twitter presence using Twitter data from January 2010 to January 2020. The research consists of three components. The first section (literature review) deals with the studies of Twitter use. The second section presents our research design. To identify the amount and manner in which Turkish diplomats are present on Twitter, we undertook various descriptive analyses across many crucial variables as well as a sentiment score test on Twitter data collection. The third section examines and displays the activity of Turkish diplomats in 16 different categories.

<sup>5</sup> Twitter has increased the character limit of a tweet to 280 characters, up from the previous 140-character limit. URL: <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/twitter-api/rate-limits> (accessed 23.06.2022)

## Literature Review

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu at the 12<sup>th</sup> Ambassadors Meeting on 10 November 2020 stated that their embassies and consulates are adapting to diplomacy in the digital environment. He described digitalization as occurring via corporate social media accounts, the transfer of consular services to the digital environment and meetings held in the digital environment<sup>6</sup>. In the 2021 budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey approximately one-tenth of expenditures is devoted to information technologies (Babacan 2021: 134).

Multiple scientific studies deal with Turkish digital diplomacy and the use of Twitter by Turkish diplomats (Salihi 2021: 546-547). For example, Nur Uysal and Jared Schroeder examined Turkey's use of social media within the framework of the public diplomacy (Uysal, Schroeder 2019). In the paper 'Turkey's Twitter public diplomacy: Towards a "new" cult of personality' they examined seven accounts (@TC\_Basbakan, @TKA, @RT\_Erdogan, @ByegmENG, @trpresidency, @MFATurkey, and @Mevlut-Cavusoglu) related to Turkish foreign policy. A sample was created from 2769 tweets sent by these institutions over a four-month period in 2017-2018. With this statistical data, the study concluded that the Twitter account of the Office of the Presidency was the most effective among the seven. The research revealed numerically that messages from these seven accounts made references mostly to North Africa and the Middle East. Another conclusion was that Turkey's President created a new personality cult on Twitter. Turkish diplomatic institutions directly retweet his posts. At the time of the research, Myanmar and Palestine were sensitive topics for the President in his posts. The paper also concluded that the President undertook the mission of 'savior of the Islamic world'.

Some research articles have analyzed Turkey's Twitter diplomacy within the framework of Turkey's "Peace Spring" military operation in 2019 and 2020. Operation "Peace Spring" was a cross-border operation in Syrian territory, and thus Turkey felt it was important to explain the background and reasons for the operation given that Ankara had stated that it did not intend to invade Syrian territory. Turkey explained the need for the operation to create a 'safe zone' on its southern borders and to ensure the safety of refugees. During "Peace Spring" Turkish army faced the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Turkey claims is an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the armed group that Turkey considers an outlawed terrorist organization<sup>7</sup>. However, the United States (US) supported SDF activities in Syria. That's why Turkish military action affected US-Turkey relations. The resulting twitter communications

<sup>6</sup> Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu Twitter'da. 2020. 3 December 2020. *Twitter*. URL: <https://twitter.com/MevlutCavusoglu/status/1326118047602647040> (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>7</sup> Uras U. 2019. Turkey's Syria Operation: How It Unfolded. 3 June 2021. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/8/turkeys-operation-peace-spring-in-northern-syria-one-month-on> (accessed 23.06.2022).

between these states on the subject of “Peace Spring” operation provided data to researchers on Turkey's use of Twitter in diplomacy.

Yenal Göksun, in his study “Operation Peace Spring and Twitter Diplomacy”, investigated the use of Twitter by both sides during the “Peace Spring” operation in line with their diplomatic objectives (Göksun 2019). He used the content and discourse analysis methods to analyze a sample of tweets produced by politicians and decision makers who stood out with their discourses during the operation. The main research question focused on how the discourses were built on Twitter and how Twitter diplomacy affected relations between the parties. Göksun concluded that the US authorities attempted to limit Turkey's mobility by blaming it during the operation process. Turkey, on the other hand, made efforts to inform the public about the scope and content of the military operation from its own perspective, while at the same time responding to the misinformation produced about Turkey. Another conclusion reached in the study was that Turkish authorities created posts not only for the foreign public but also for their domestic audience.

In another study Murat Özdemir examined Turkey's Twitter Diplomacy activities during the “Peace Spring” operation (Özdemir 2020). In light of the purposes of digital diplomacy, in his paper “Digital Diplomacy and Social Media: Twitter Use of Turkish Embassy in Washington in the Scope of Operation Peace Spring”, he analyzed how this embassy employed Twitter in its support for the “Peace Spring” operation by studying the Twitter content shared by the embassy under the hashtag #OperationPeaceSpring during the operation. Özdemir concluded that the use of Twitter by the Turkish Embassy in Washington was ineffective in the context of the operation.

Turkey's digital diplomacy performance during the “Peace Spring” operation was also the subject of another study, this time via an examination of the Twitter accounts of Turkey's Paris and Berlin Embassies and that of the Paris Ambassador. The paper “Digital Transformation in Public Diplomacy: Examining the Digital Diplomacy Activities of Ambassadors via Twitter”, was carried out by Mesut İris and Tansu Akdemir (İris, Akdemir 2020). The study selected social media accounts as samples and evaluated their performances. It concluded that the accounts were used efficiently to justify the operation, but their lack of sufficient numbers of followers of the accounts negated its efficiency.

Ali Şevket Ovalı discussed Twitter diplomacy in the context of Turkey-US relations in his article “Twitter Diplomacy in Turkey-US Relations” (Ovalı 2020). In his paper, the scholar investigated the influence of Twitter on bilateral relations as well as how and for what purpose Turkish and US foreign policy makers use Twitter, and what topics they refer to. In the study, Ovalı tried to learn which subjects were touched upon in tweets. He found that US officials mainly mentioned the PKK/YPG and the Preacher Brunson case in the context of Turkey in 2016-2019, while their Turkish counterparts dwelled mostly on Palestine/Jerusalem and PKK/PYD issues. Ovalı concluded that the way in which Twitter was employed had had a negative impact on bilateral relations. Donald Trump's use of threatening language in his tweets, mainly to impress

his own public, and his exacerbation of the disagreements exemplify these negative impacts.

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, people began to spend more time at home and social media usage increased<sup>8</sup>. This situation provided more opportunities to study Turkey's digital diplomacy activities. Emel Tanyeri Mazıcı's "Digital Diplomacy in the Covid-19 Pandemic Period: A Research on T.R. Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (Tanyeri Mazıcı 2020) examined the English language Twitter account of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (@MFATurkey). The scholar used the content analysis method to look at posts posted by the @MFATurkey account between 11 March and 11 June 2020. He classified the tweets according to their content and revealed that the share of tweets for information and news sharing was high. The tweets frequently mentioned the medical aid provided by Turkey to other countries during the pandemic. According to the study's findings, the Ministry used its account more and more efficiently with each passing month.

This literature review demonstrates that there is no any study which would make an overview of Turkish diplomatic presence on Twitter. As mentioned above, this article aims to fill this gap by analyzing a larger data set consisting of 76 Twitter accounts posts published between 2010 and 2020.

## Methodology

Social media analysis carries significant potential for the determination and implementation of foreign policy, as it provides information about the perspectives, thoughts, and communication patterns of a wide range of users. Through their public posts, both organizations and individual users contribute to potentially rich social media datasets. For example, social media platforms can provide important information about the demographics, size, and organizational structure, areas of activity and network access of a group or audience.

Social media and related data may be analyzed with various methodologies. They differ in their applicability and suitability, and some of them tend to be more difficult to use because they are complex or because they require advanced technical training (Gupta, Brooks 2013: 329). While there are some limitations to using social media platforms and analytical tools in terms of technique and application, social media data are undoubtedly an important source of data for foreign policy analysis.

Within the scope of this article, we carried out an analysis mainly of Twitter data<sup>9</sup>. We compiled a list of tweets sent by Turkish diplomats between January 2010 and January 2020. Our data collection technique scrapes tweets from Twitter profiles with

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<sup>8</sup> Koeze E., Popper N. 2020. The Virus Changed the Way We Internet. *The New York Times*. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html> (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>9</sup> Codes and files for this research are available at this article's public GitHub repository: <https://github.com/HakanMehmetcik/turtwidip.git>



an option for filtering the stream's output by user account. Given the fact that we study only the presence of relatively small groups of Twitter accounts, the volume of the compiled Twitter data is appropriate and representative<sup>10</sup>.

The number of diplomats in the retrieved data was 76, and the total number of tweet posts was 113432. Although Twitter was founded in 2006, we decided that it would be more appropriate to start the investigation from 2010 onwards. The 76 diplomats examined in the study were diplomats who were on active duty during 2010-2020 and had a twitter account. While we did not exclude any types of tweets based on any category, we removed accounts of diplomats who retired prior to 2019 and whose accounts had inactive/private status. For this reason, Turkish diplomats such as Namık Tan who were active in Twitter diplomacy, were not taken into consideration because they retired before 2019. Some active accounts are also excluded because they began service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after January 2020 or very close to that date. We had to go through such a classification within the framework of the conditions presented to us by the software used in the research.

As we mentioned above, several diplomats (including are not included in the dataset. Some of them are extensively engaged in Twitter after retiring (i.e., Namık Tan) while others were very involved before becoming diplomats (i.e., Egemen Bagis). That is, their tweets have nothing to do with diplomatic means and ends. In these circumstances, we may have chosen a temporal scope for every and each individual diplomat, but this would have resulted in huge discrepancies in the total data analysis in terms of time periods. That's why we didn't include these diplomats.

Since the launch of Twitter in 2006, a lot of new research papers examining various facets of the Twitter data have emerged (Goonetilleke, Sellis, Zhang, Sathe 2014). Among these are studies dealing with a wide range of issues: from opinion mining (Kaur, Gupta 2013; Liu 2012; Pak, Paroubek 2010) to event detection (Abdelhaq, Sengstock, Gertz 2013; Atefeh, Khreich 2015; Weng, Lee 2011) and political discourse analysis (Johnson, Goldwasser 2016; Kasmani 2019; Yaqub, Chun, Atluri, Vaidya 2017). Several distinct methods and approaches to Twitter data emerged in recent years. Comparative and descriptive statistics derived from raw numbers of tweets per user and per date as well as retweet, reply, and like counts are particularly insightful key metrics and they are among the accepted standard for the quantitative description of user activities on Twitter. These metrics identify specific aspects of Twitter data, such as the most prolific users and node users within a given social network. This study primarily uses these types of metrics in order to analyze Turkish diplomacy's presence on Twitter.

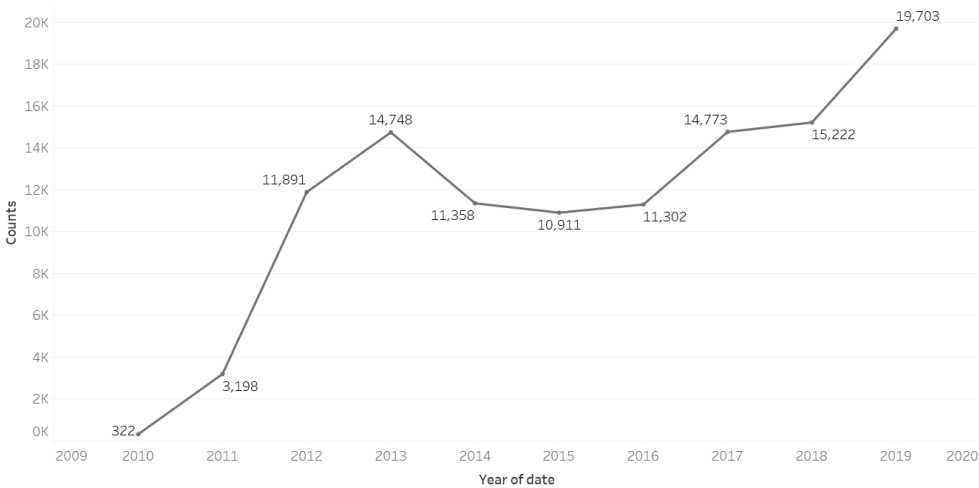
Another way to look at Twitter content is to analyze the tweet-text itself. One way to do this is to calculate the sentiment scores. The field of study that examines people's

<sup>10</sup> There is limitation in terms of the data extraction. For more detail on the rate limits for available Twitter APIs see: <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/twitter-api/rate-limits>.

opinions, sentiments, assessments, attitudes and emotions from written language is known as sentiment analysis and opinion mining. Twitter sentiment analysis is an area that has recently captured researchers' interest. It is one of the most active study fields in natural language processing and data mining (Liu 2012). There are several techniques for sentiment score calculation, of which lexicon usage is the most frequently employed one. Using the opinion lexicon compiled by Hu and Liu (Hu, Liu 2004) we have conducted a sentiment analysis of the texts of 26554 tweets posted in English by the selected Turkish diplomats between January 2010 and January 2020.

## Results and Discussion

Figure 1 shows the temporal pattern indicating that tweet numbers have increased significantly in more recent years. This is in part due to the fact that Twitter, although launched in March 2006, became a significant platform for digital diplomacy only in the 2010s. Most Turkish diplomatic accounts were also activated only around the mid-2010s, and hence we have relatively small entries in terms of posted tweets before 2012. According to the data gathered, more than two out of every three accounts for Turkish diplomats were formed after 2015.

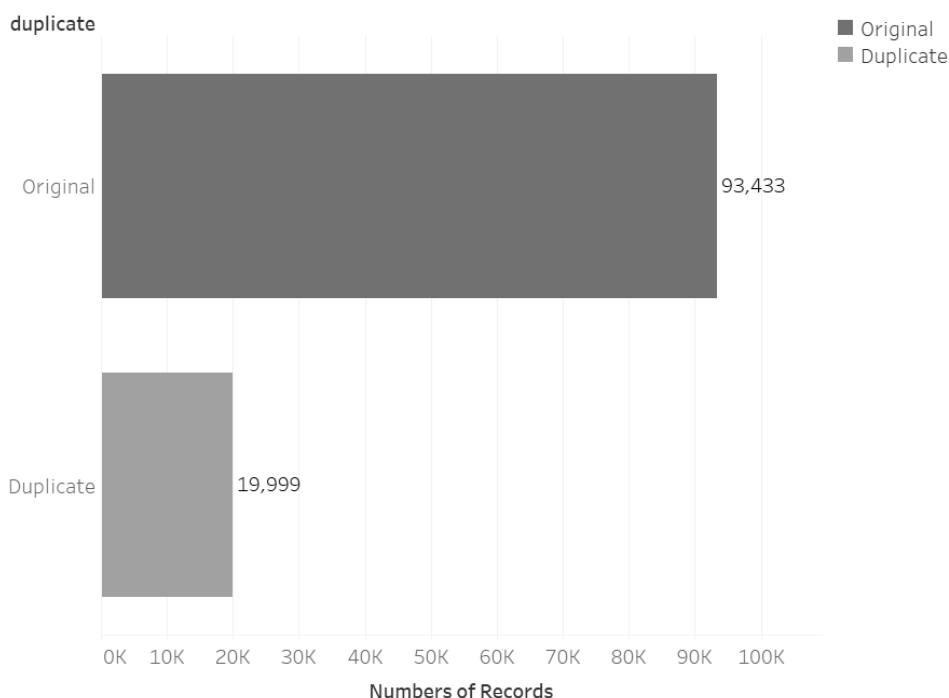


*Figure 1: Tweets per year*

These metrics can also be used to simply show the total number of tweets in a dataset. It is also possible to keep track of original tweets, replies, likes and retweets separately. As it may be seen in the figure 2, around 17 percent (19999 tweets) of the entire body of tweets are duplicates which means that they reproduce the content of other tweets but not in the form of retweets in the technical sense. A retweet is one of the things that may be done on Twitter with a tweet that implies giving full credit to the original post. More than 82 percent of the tweets (93433) are original tweets. However, this does not also necessarily mean that they are posts with genuinely new content.



They could be copy-and-paste of other contents, including tweets, news, or any other entries available on the Internet, yet not in our sample data. However, 113432 tweets are sufficiently representative for evaluating the social media presence of Turkish diplomats on Twitter. Duplicate tweets have identical text to other tweets, but they are not retweets. They may have been duplicated and copied on by different persons at different times, but their substance is identical. Retweets, on the other hand, are a Twitter feature that allows users to republish the same information while giving credit to the original post. A diplomat, for example, can retweet a tweet directly from @GoTurkiye, one of Turkey's official government accounts. This is known as a retweet on Twitter. On the other hand, another diplomat can replicate the original material without any reference. We classify the latter situation as a duplicate tweet.



*Figure 2: Duplicate vs. Original Tweets*

Twitter data also provides several informative user metrics. As with tweet content, tweets per user varies a lot, with some users quite prolific in terms of sharing. Users may be categorized and ranked in a variety of ways. One way to look at the data is to take the average and compare user activity against this average figure. In the raw numbers, the average number of tweets per user is 1123. However, only a small fraction of Turkish diplomats tweeted more than this average, as may be seen in figure 3. Only 23 out of 76 diplomats pass this average. This indicates that a small number of highly active users dominate the dataset. Indeed, the data indicate that more than 50% of the whole bodies of tweets (91192 tweets) were posted by only 10 diplomats. More than 50 diplomats out of 76 are relatively inactive on Twitter.

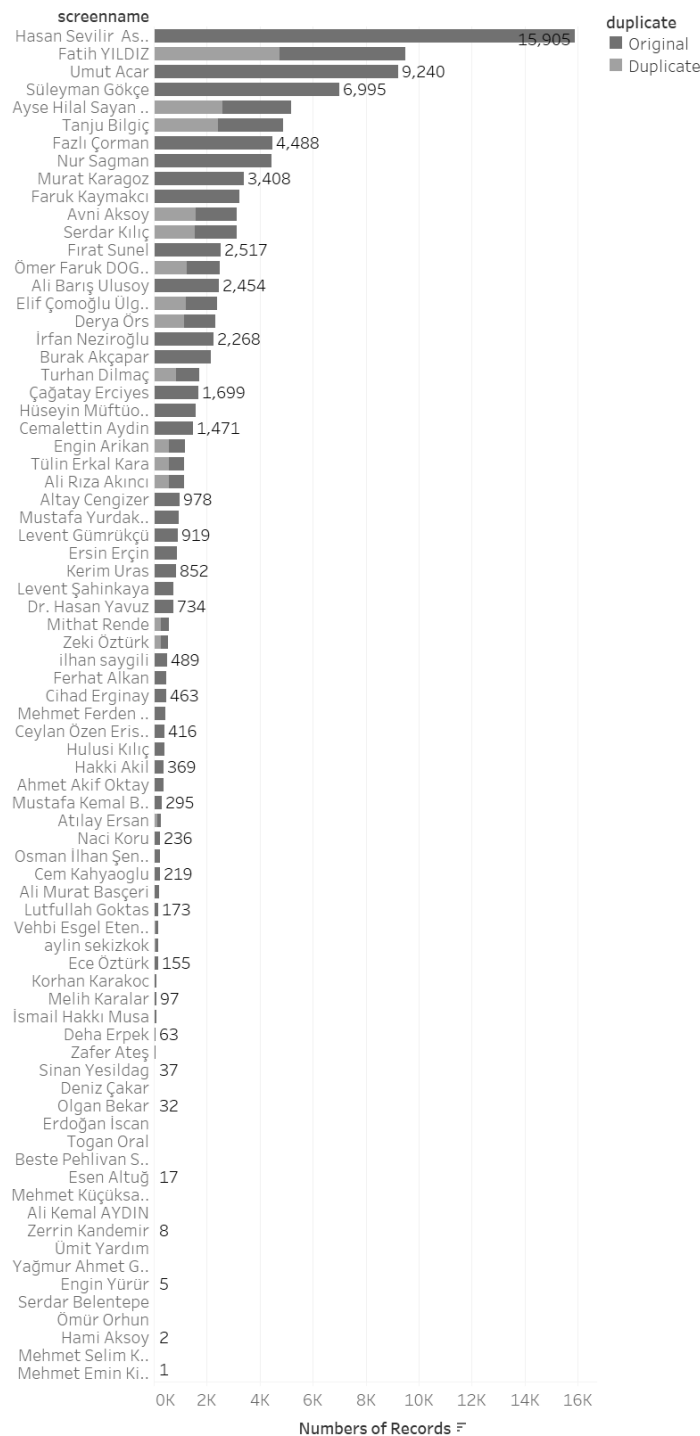
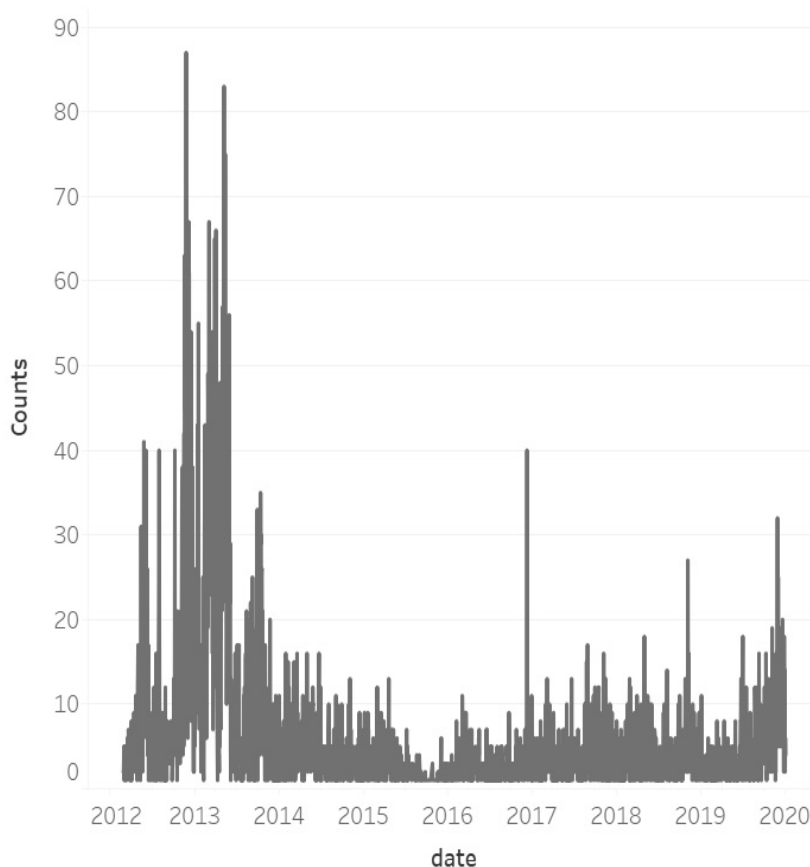


Figure 3: Tweet counts per user

The most prolific twitter users among the selected Turkish diplomats are Hasan Sevilir Aşan, Fatih Yıldız and Umut Acar. These three diplomats are interesting cases.



*Figure 4: Hasan Sevilir Aşan tweets*

Hasan Sevilir Aşan has recently retired from his post in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but most of his tweets were posted before his retirement, as may be seen in figure 4. The latter two of these three diplomats are still on active service in Turkish diplomacy, and of the three, Fatih Yıldız leads in terms of number of followers (see Figure 5).

Even though the design of Twitter places limitations on evaluating influence in the follower counts (Gibson, Sutton, Vos, Butts 2020), it is nevertheless an important metric in Twitter analytics. With respect to the follower count metric, Fatih Yıldız has a much larger Twitter presence than any other Turkish diplomat in our sample. He recently served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Turkish Ambassador in Baghdad before returning to Ankara, and he has demonstrated a genuine interest in a Twitter presence and twiplomacy since joining the Twittersphere. Former Turkish Ambassador to Washington, Serdar Kılıç ranks second in follower counts. His popularity on Twitter partly derives from the fact that he served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Turkish Ambassador to Washington at a time when US-Turkish relations were considerably volatile. He also has a significant leaning towards the use of Twitter as a communication channel.

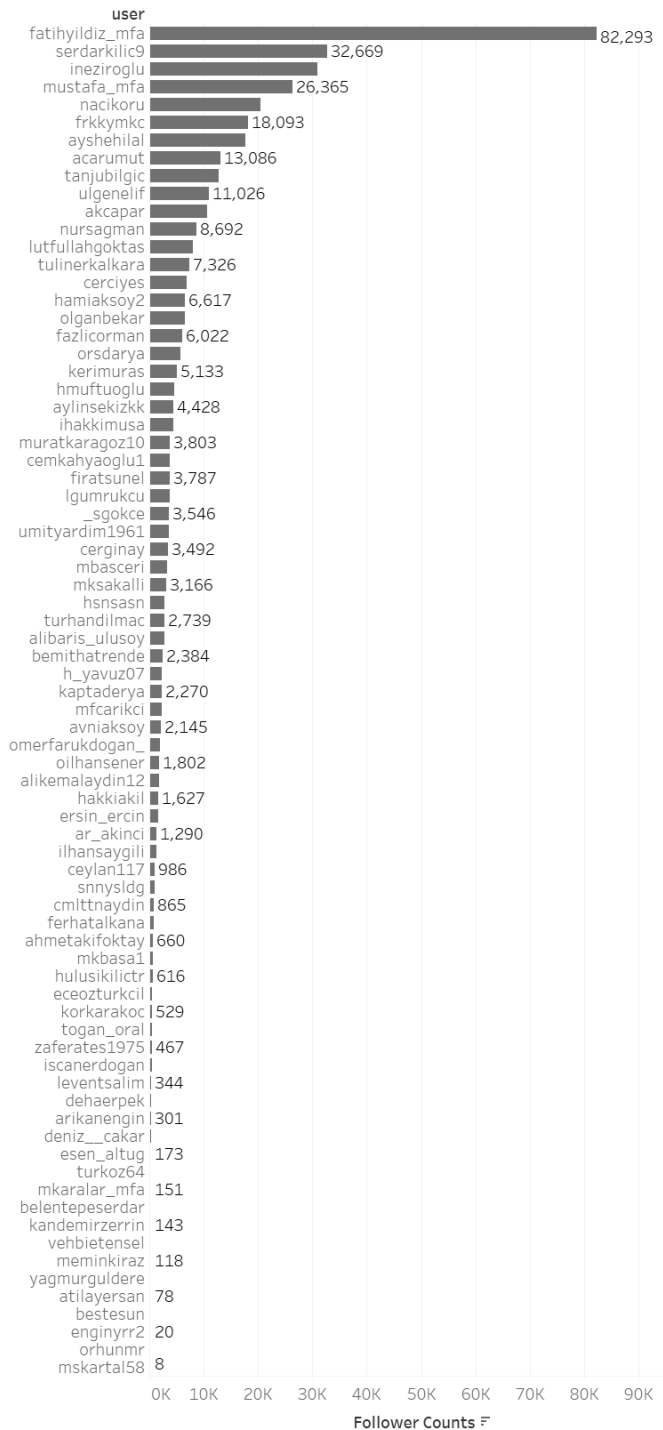


Figure 5: Follower Counts

Follower counts are only one metric in quantifying user social media influence. Retweet, like and response counts also make sense for this purpose. In general, these

metrics are used to evaluate specific tweets' virality. However, from the raw numbers, they indicate a wider influence. From the figure below, we may suggest that there is a positive correlation between follower count and these metrics. In terms of retweet counts, former Washington Ambassador Serdar Kılıç is followed by Fatih Yıldız, İrfan Neziroğlu, Süleyman Gökçe, Umut Acar, Tanju Bilgiç and Mustafa Yurdakul. Even though the order varies slightly, the list is the same for likes and reply counts. Such measurements may be interpreted as an assessment of each user's visibility and relevance to their followers. In other words, among the selected Turkish diplomats, Serdar Kılıç, Fatih Yıldız, İrfan Neziroğlu, Süleyman Gökçe, Umut Acar, Tanju Bilgiç and Mustafa Yurdakul are the most influential Twitter users in terms of these metrics.

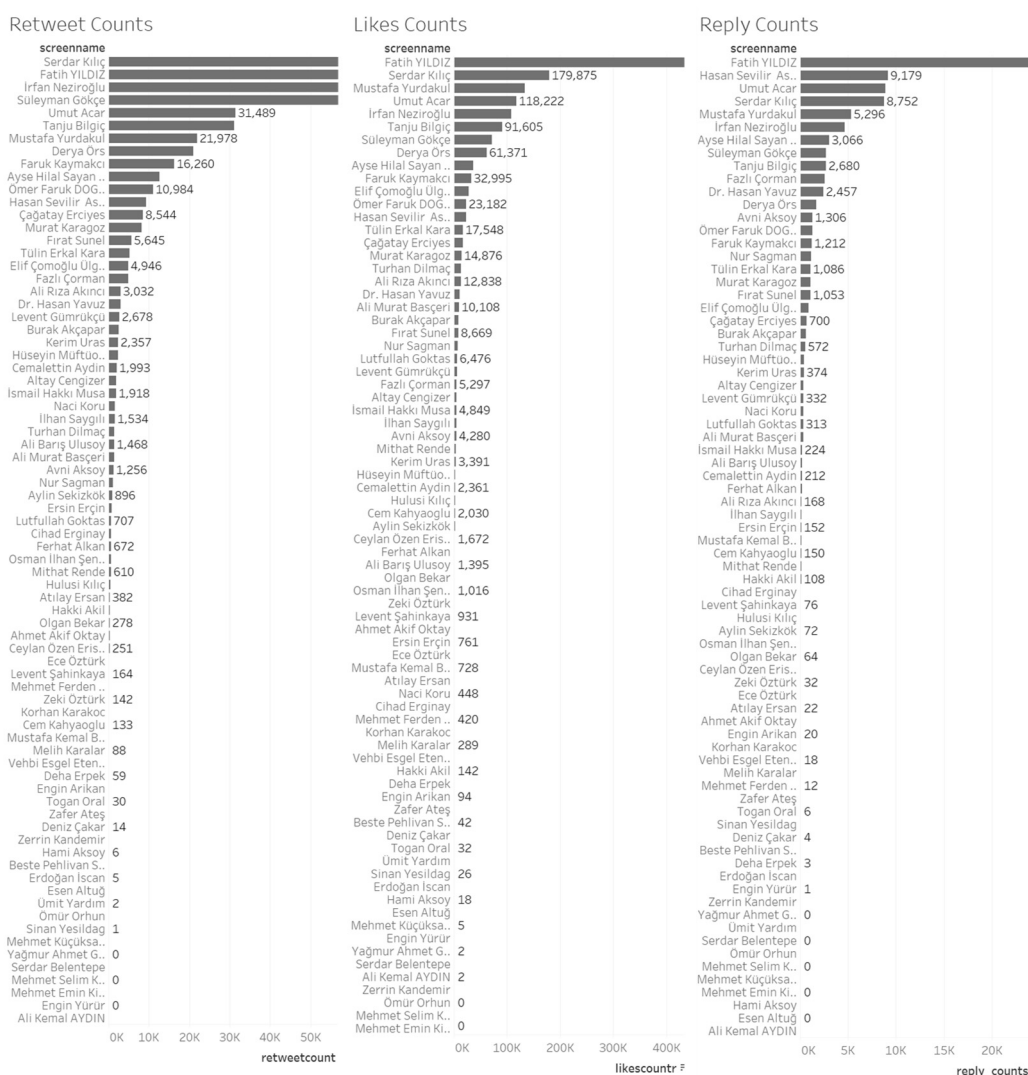


Figure 6: Retweet-likes-reply counts per user

While per-user metrics are insightful for identifying the most active and visible user in a dataset, it is useful to aggregate these metrics for the entire group as well. If we take the entire sample as a single entity, the total retweets, replies, and likes count per year may be seen in the figure below. This figure highlights the increasing influence in terms of these metrics of Turkish twiplomacy.

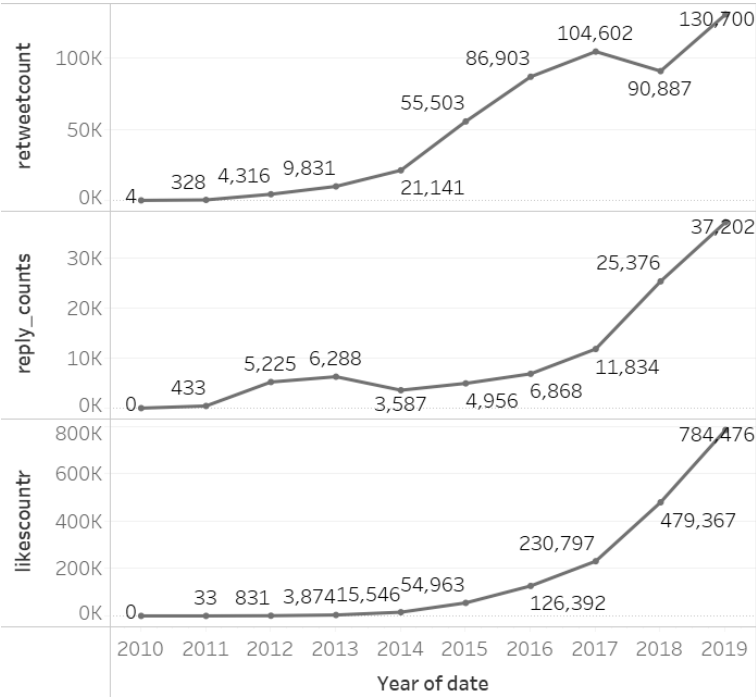


Figure 7: Retweet-reply-like counts per year

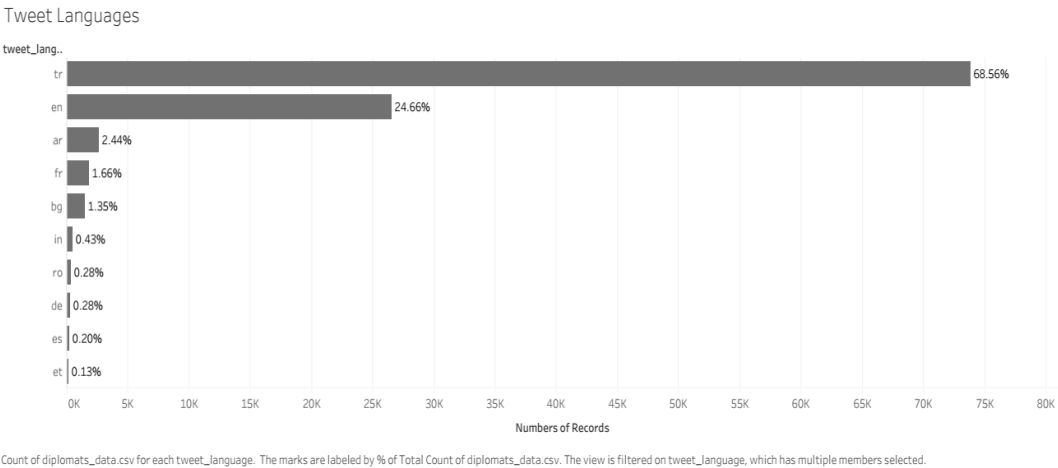


Figure 8: Tweet languages



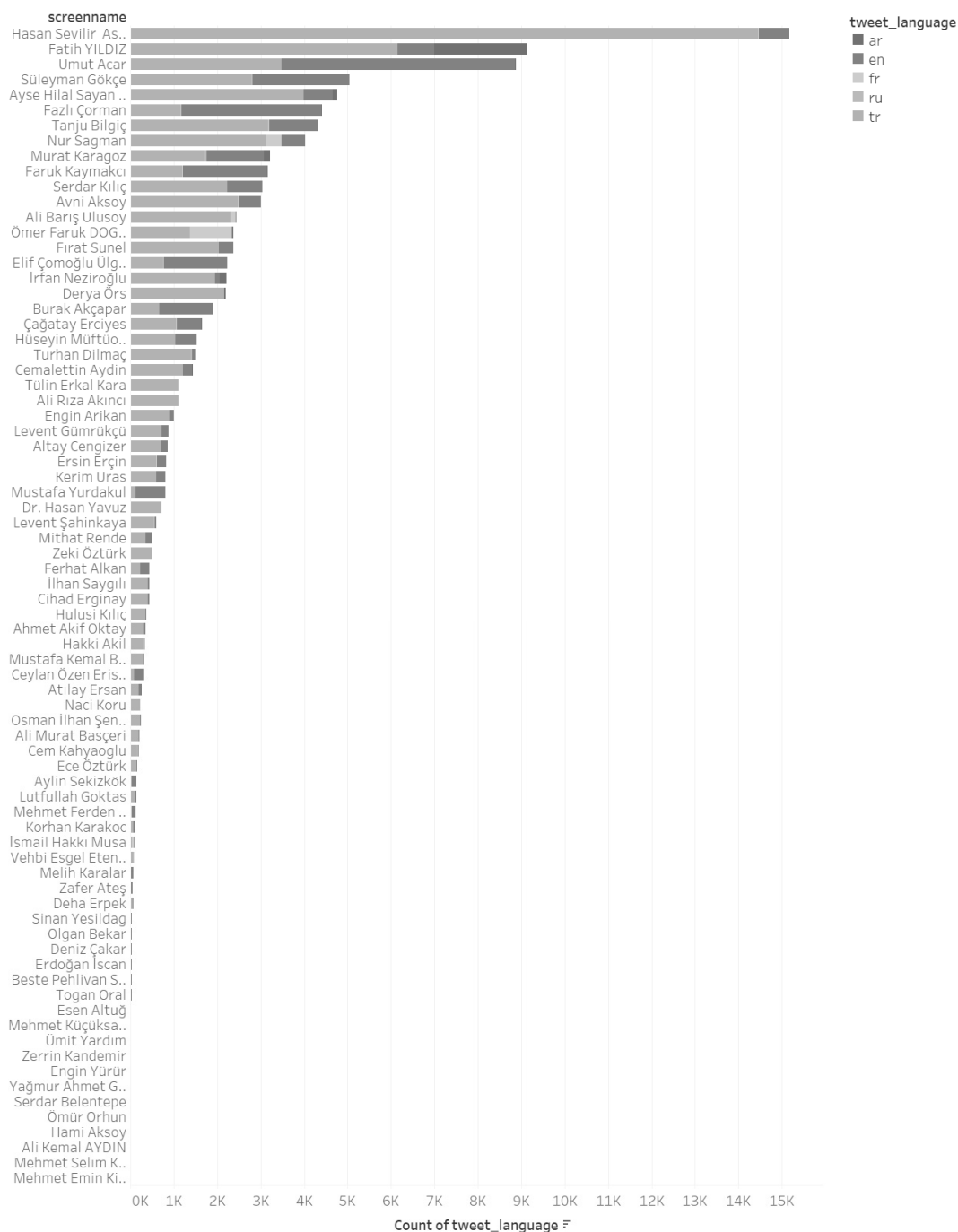


Figure 9: Tweet Languages per user

The use of language in diplomacy is important for all aspects, since it is a critical tool and vehicle for the exchange of ideas and communication (Kurbalija, Slavik 2001). Diplomats communicate with locals in their native language, while English is used as a neutral language for global communication. The use of Turkish, however, may indi-

cate that Turkish diplomats do not use Twitter as a platform for communicating with foreign state peoples. But at the same time intensive use of Turkish in tweets can be explained by the desire of ambassadors to share information concerning the Turkish diaspora.

In figure 9, we see the distribution of languages used by users. It is not surprising that those who have more visibility in terms of raw tweet numbers, retweets, replies, and likes counts, have used foreign languages more frequently. However, again for all the diplomats in this sample, Turkish is the top language of choice for communication on Twitter.

Such predictive and numerical metrics are important for understanding the dynamics of communicative interactions taking place on Twitter. Yet another, and possibly a more meaningful metric, can be derived from the content of tweet texts. In this context, hashtags (#) are one of the most significant elements of tweet content. A hashtag is a commonly used feature on Twitter that allows a user to generate a tag that refers to a particular subject or theme of posts he or she wants to refer to. In other words, hashtags accurately identify, and track tweets as related to a given topic. Figure 10 shows corresponding retweet numbers of tweets grouped by hashtags. We see that many hashtags refer to cultural aspects of foreign policy such as #Turkey, #Istanbul, #Ankara etc. However, there are other Turkish foreign policy subjects hashtagged in tweets such as #lethistorydecide, #operationfriedensquelle, #operationpeacespring etc. One such foreign policy slogan, “Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy”<sup>11</sup> was hashtagged very few times. As it is known from the related literature, Turkey is happy to make its humanitarian and development aid efforts a niche diplomacy field by presenting itself as a humanitarian/virtuous state<sup>12</sup>. Turkish NGOs run humanitarian aid campaigns that result in public diplomacy outcomes, and these actions boost Turkey's soft power in recipient countries while also bolstering the country's attempts to promote itself as a ‘humanitarian power’ (Mehmetcik 2019). Given this fact, it is surprising to see very few mentions of this aspect of foreign policy. Findings seem to suggest that Turkish diplomatic authorities do not engage in central planning of collective strategic Twitter use of Twitter among Turkish diplomats. In contrast, individual interest and endeavor of Turkish diplomats guides them to use Twitter as a communication platform.

<sup>11</sup> Turkey's Enterprising and Humanitarian Foreign Policy. (n.d.). 2021. *Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa> (accessed 23.06.2022).

<sup>12</sup> Virtuous power new defense doctrine: Turkish president. 2017. *Hürriyet Daily*. URL: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/virtuous-power-new-defense-doctrine-turkish-president.aspx> (accessed 23.06.2022)

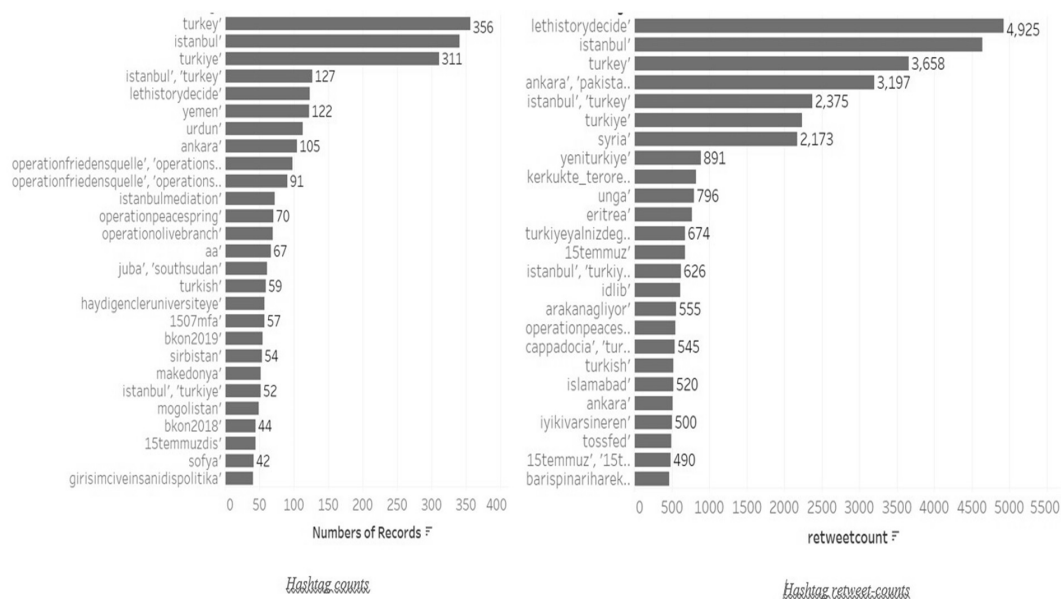


Figure 10: Hashtag

Another way to look at Twitter content is to analyze tweet-texts themselves using quantitative analysis. One way to do this with twitter data is to utilize a sentiment analysis, which here deals with whether the words in the tweet-text carry a more positive or negative sentiment. It is often noted that positive sentiments are evoked when something is defined with positive connotations, while something having a negative connotation generally creates uneasiness (Ford, Feinberg 2020). For any type of public diplomacy outreach, positivity in the text is an indication of value and invitation, while negativity is generally associated with defensive or offensive attitudes. Thus, negative sentiment refers to the greater use of negative words while positive sentiment refers to the more use of positive words. Figure 12 shows the exact numbers of tweets with respect to their sentiment scores. It should be noted that we only included tweets in English because we use the English opinion lexicon.

Results demonstrate that tweets produced by Turkish diplomats are generally on the positive sentiment side, which basically suggests more frequent use of positive words. Again, it should be noted that tweets paired with a sentiment score can provide a quantitative assessment of the tweet text, but says nothing about the actual content of the tweet.

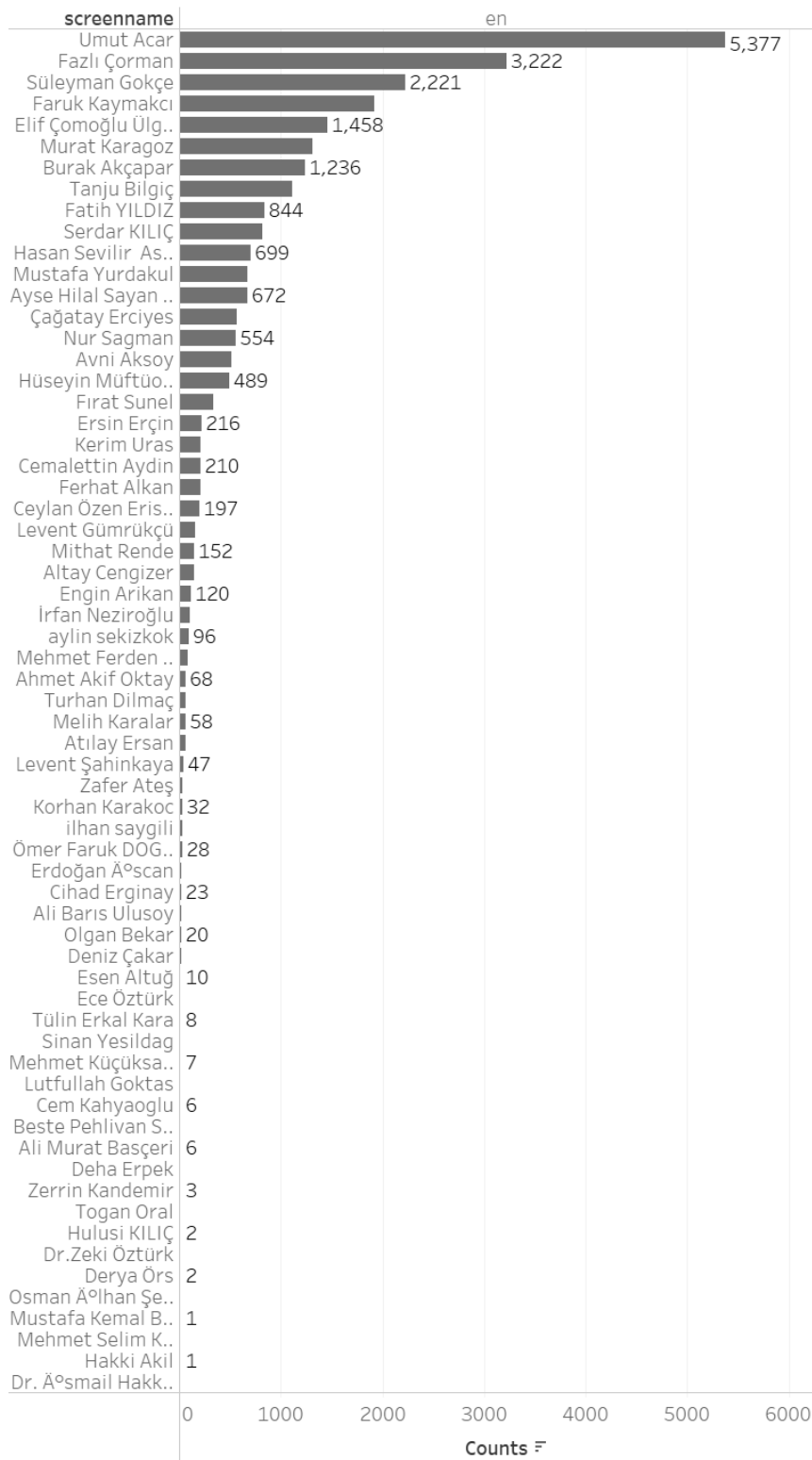


Figure 11: English tweets per user

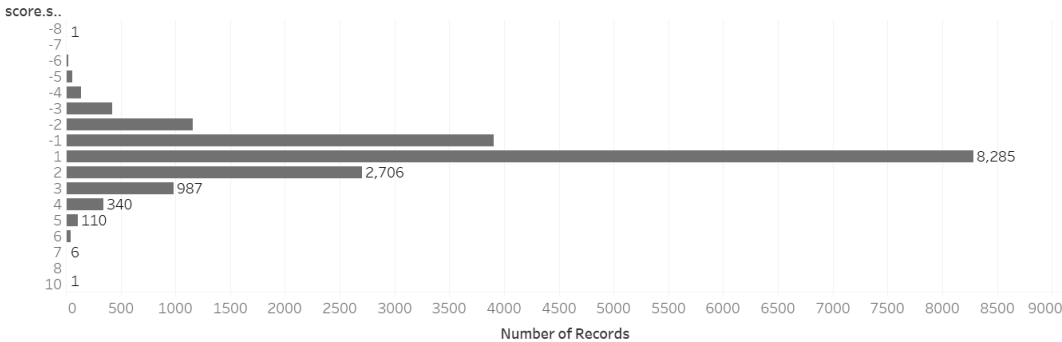


Figure 12: Sentiment Scores

Figure 13 provides a general assessment of the specific words contributing to sentiment scores. We can see that negative sentiments generally derive from specific kinds of events (such as terrorist attacks, killings, etc.) and their condemnation in the tweet-texts, while positivity aligns with corporation and collaboration messages.

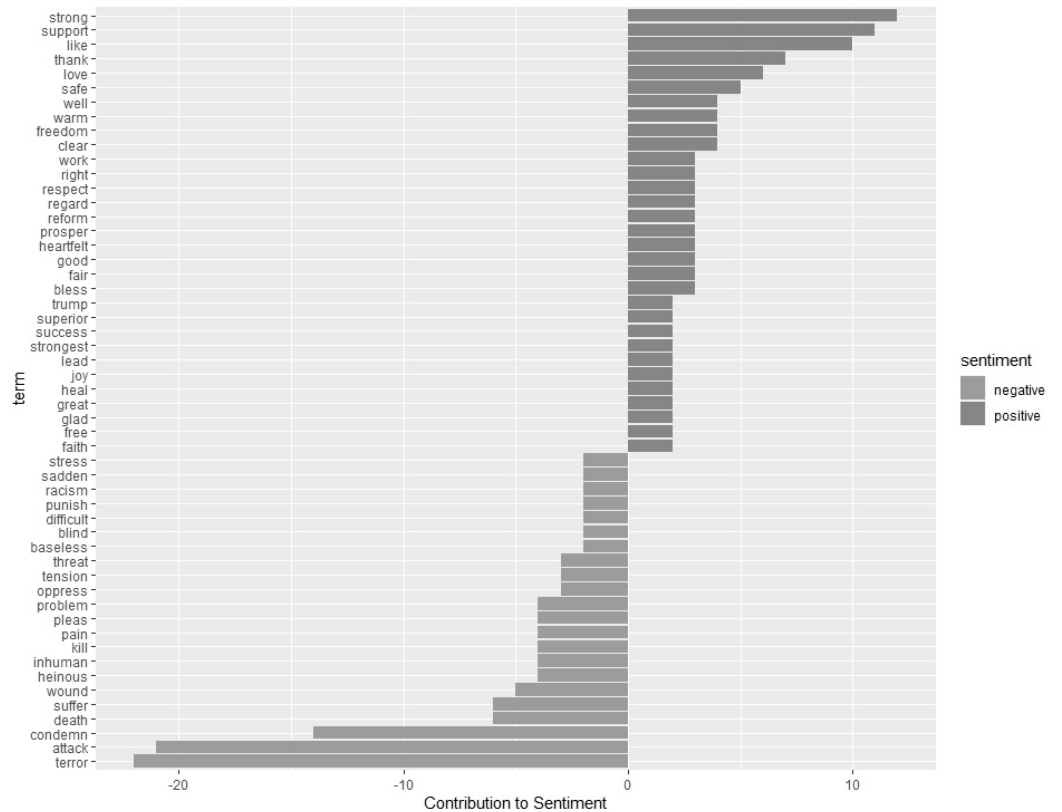


Figure 13: Most-used words contributing to sentiment scores

Figure 14 shows sentiment scores for individual diplomats and highlights the fact that only 13 accounts out of 76 use more negative words than positive ones in their

tweet text. According to the corresponding sentiment scores, Murat Karagöz, Elif Çomoğlu Ülgen, Fazlı Çorman, Faruk Kaymakçı and Fatih Yıldız's message on Twitter carry more positive sentiment than the remainder of the sample.

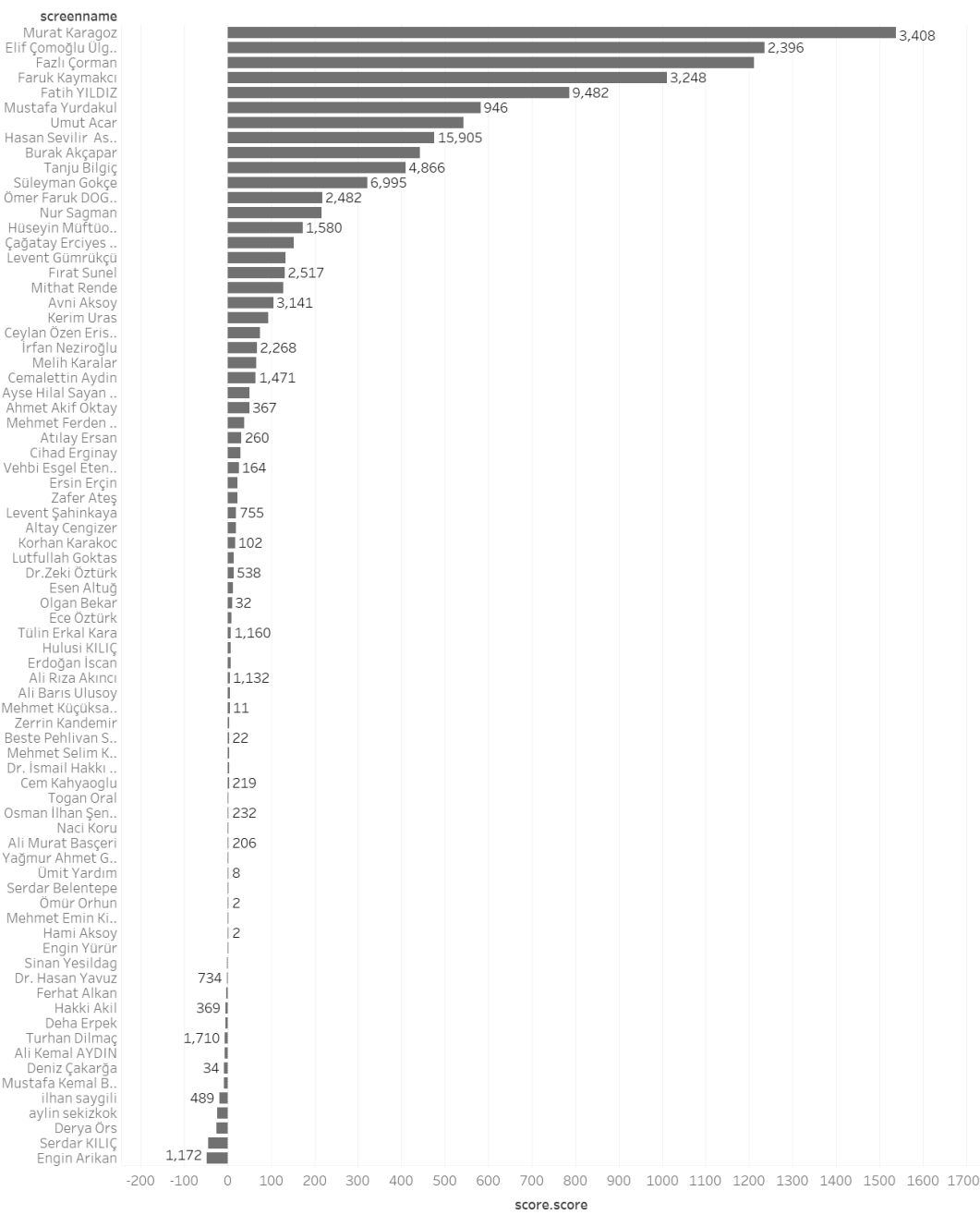
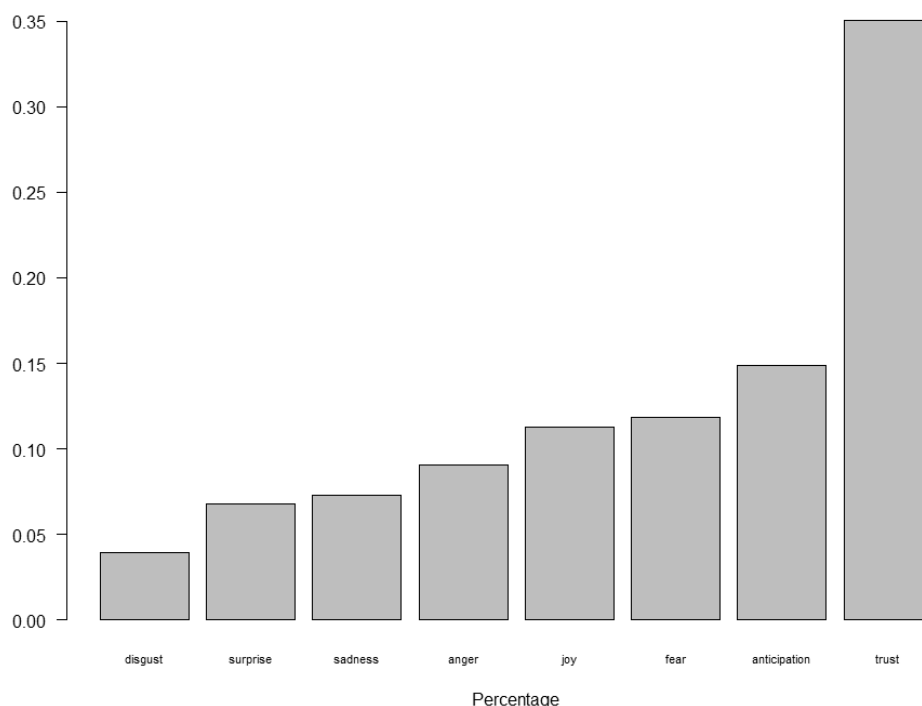


Figure 14: Sentiment scores per user



We can also identify emotion in tweet-texts. The following figure demonstrates the general emotions in tweet-texts derived from our sample's English tweets. It confirms that Turkish diplomats tended to post tweets with positive sentiment.

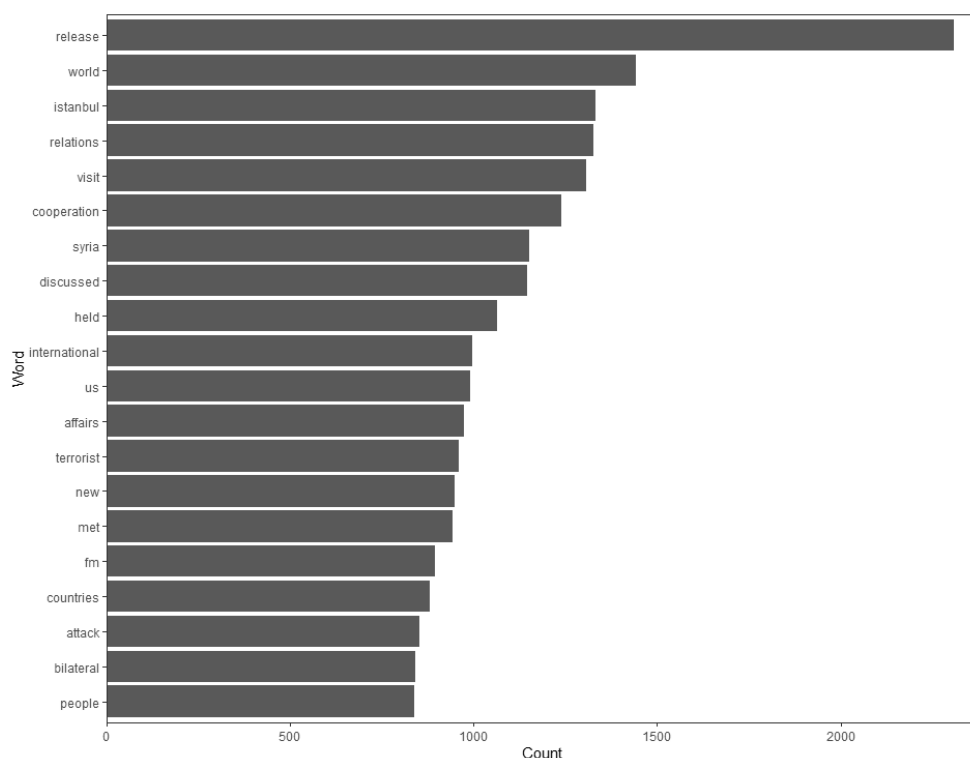


*Figure 15: Emotions in tweets*

Finally, in figure 16 we list the words which Turkish diplomats used most frequently in their English tweets. This result allows us to suggest that they primarily use informative and annunciative approaches for constructing their tweet contents.

\* \* \*

The notion of public diplomacy has existed since politicians discovered that they could communicate directly to 'the masses'. In this endeavor, digital diplomacy is a new medium. Twitter has grown from a niche service to a mass phenomenon since its inception in 2006 and has become a source of real-time information as well as a forum for discussion in the field of diplomacy. On a daily basis, an increasing number of ambassadors use Twitter to engage with worldwide audiences as well as with their colleagues, bridging the gap between citizens and government officials. Researchers from various backgrounds use Twitter data to address a variety of questions, ranging from simple information about specific persons or events to complicated queries (Weller, Bruns, Burgess, Mahrt, Puschmann 2013: 55).



*Figure 16: The words used most frequently by the Turkish diplomats*

The use of Twitter by Turkish diplomats for diplomatic outreach and public diplomacy was the main subject of this study. We used data from this social media outlet to learn how and to what extent Turkish diplomats are present on the platform. Our research found that compared to their counterparts in many countries Turkish diplomats have a limited Twitter presence, with only very small numbers being really active on Twitter, engaging with the wider public through this worldwide form of microblogging. For diplomacy today, its traditional form and its Twitter incarnation should be viewed as complementary and supportive tools (Göksun 2019), not as substitutes for each other. However, our findings suggest that Turkish Twitter diplomacy is led by a few individuals who are not guided by a larger strategy or framework.

Despite the fact that the study examines data as far back as 2010, the number of posted tweets prior to 2012 is very modest. As for originality, the majority of them are first-hand posts, but this does not always imply that they contain original content. Many states provide training to their diplomats so that they can correctly use social media (Adesina 2017: 8) following which they become well-trained in interpreting the current political situation and in accurately conveying their thoughts through social media. After such training, states must ultimately trust their diplomats. We think that it would be beneficial for Turkey to also engage in such training. Arturo Sarukhan, one of the first ambassadors who used Twitter, also advocates the free-

dom of diplomats in their use of social media. He emphasizes diplomats should not be supervised by the center because speed is an important factor in social media use (Sandre 2015: 71).

We also observe that Turkish diplomats did not attempt to establish dialogue on Twitter by sharing questionnaires or questions. Replying to comments on posts may serve to make the 'listening' process better. After the listening process, it is possible to influence opinions of the interlocutors by writing a new comment. Public diplomacy is not just about winning the hearts of the interlocutors, it is also an important activity that facilitates the defense of a country's foreign policy. Dialogue must be maintained in order to make the persuasion process successful. However, Turkish diplomats do not continue the dialogue after sharing.

As for user metrics, only a small fraction of Turkish diplomats are prolific with regard to their retweet, like and response counts. This result is quite informative of the networks with whom they engage in their Twitter usage. The majority of the diplomat sample is either inactive or ineffective on Twitter and the prevailing approach among the sample diplomats is an enunciative one that implies an effort to explain or affirm the position taken. As for the content-based metrics, this study finds that Turkish diplomats generally use positive language in their tweets, which is also verified by the scores for most frequently used words and corresponding emotions.

One of the primary recommendations resulting from this study is that online activities of different state institutions should be synchronized for efficient use of social media and so-called twiplomacy. It can be observed that relatively few Turkish diplomats cast a prolific figure on Twitter for several issue areas. But diplomats are selected from well-educated individuals who can make the greatest use of available opportunities. As a result, the criteria that demonstrate diplomats' effectiveness in utilizing social media diplomacy should be identified, diplomats should be taught for better use of the social media, and free space should be given to them.

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# Быть или не быть: присутствие турецких дипломатов в «Твиттере»

Х. Мехметчик<sup>1</sup>, Э. Салихи<sup>2</sup>[DOI 10.24833/2071-8160-2022-3-84-175-201](https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2022-3-84-175-201)<sup>1</sup> Университет Мармара, Стамбул, Турция<sup>2</sup> Университет Нигде Омера Халисдемира, Нигде, Турция

**Аннотация:** Статья посвящена турецкой «Твиттер»-дипломатии, тому, как турецкие дипломаты используют «Твиттер» в своей традиционной работе и в публичной дипломатии. Обзор научной литературы о «Твиттер»-дипломатии Турции показывает нехватку всеобъемлющих исследований с большим количеством наблюдений. В своей статье мы устранили этот дефицит, собрав и проанализировав базу данных постов 76 дипломатов, написанных в сети «Твиттер» в период с 2010 по 2020 гг. Наше исследование помогает понять, каким образом и в какой степени турецкие дипломаты поддерживают своё присутствие в «Твиттере». На достижение этой цели были направлены две группы методов. Во-первых, мы определили значения описательных статистик нескольких пользовательских метрик, включая количество твитов на пользователя или за дату, также количество ретвитов, ответов и лайков на пользователя. Во-вторых, мы изучили содержание твитов, рассчитав оценки их сентимента.

Главный результат работы состоит в том, что присутствие турецких дипломатов в сети «Твиттер» относительно ограничено. Оно зависит от небольшого числа видных деятелей. Хотя турецкие дипломаты отбираются из числа высоко образованных людей, который могут качественно использовать доступные возможности, предоставляемые социальными медиа, относительно немногие из них вели активную деятельность в «Твиттере». Другой важный вывод состоит в том, что присутствие турецкой дипломатии в Твиттере не носит систематического характера, развивается в результате деятельности отдельных дипломатов, а не вследствие реализации более широкой стратегии. Активность различных государственных институтов в онлайн-среде не синхронизирована, что препятствует эффективному использованию социальных медиа и реализации так называемой «Твиттер»-дипломатии. Наконец, согласно результатам анализа содержания сообщений в сети «Твиттер», турецкие дипломаты чаще используют слова с позитивной коннотацией, что подтверждается данными о наиболее часто используемых словах, наиболее распространённых эмоциях и числовых оценках сентимента постов. Это говорит о стремлении турецких дипломатов продвигать сообщения, в которых выражается одобрение международного сотрудничества Турцией.

**Ключевые слова:** анализ социальных медиа, «Твиттер»-аналитика, внешняя политика Турции, «Твиттер»-дипломатия

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