

DOES TWITTER MOVE DIPLOMACY CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE?  
AN ANALYSIS OF U.S. EMBASSIES' TWITTER PRESENCE  
ACROSS THE GLOBE

By

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## **DEDICATION**

Primarily, I want to dedicate this to God for he has allowed me to continue learning.

I also dedicate this to my parents, Andy and Marina, who have always stressed the importance of education. Thank you for showering me with love and encouragement throughout my academic career.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

For hundreds and even thousands of years countries have engaged in diplomatic relations in order to resolve issues and advance interests. Although global, political and social systems continue to change, the relevance of diplomacy as a tool for international relations continues to be of importance. Before the arrival of new technologies such as the Internet and social media, messages were sent to a foreign audience in a one-way monologue, with little feedback from the public. Most people think of diplomacy in a traditional sense, with government bodies or officials communicating solely with each other. Although traditional diplomacy continues to be at the core, nowadays, the public is engaged in a two-way dialogue whether that be state-to-state, state to people, people to state and/or people to people. The public has become more powerful by letting culture, beliefs and way of life play a significant role in today's interconnected world.

With the help of social media it is now possible to interact with government officials and representatives, which allows them to assert themselves and to interact and build relationships with the public. Alongside traditional diplomacy the term "public diplomacy" since the 1960s has been significant in foreign affairs. Public diplomacy generally refers to, "A government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about an understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture as well as its national goals and current policies" (Tuch, 1990, p.3). For diplomats and the government public diplomacy is not just about the ability to speak to a vast audience, as important as that is, it is really about listening to the interactions and building a relationship with the public.

In many instances, “Listening is used by diplomats and representatives to understand the public’s culture and needs and then look for an area with a common cause” (Leonard, Stead & Smewing 2002, p.48). According to J. Gregory Payne, “Strategic listening is needed to decode and recognize such culture cues that enables one to appreciate and assimilate different values of body language, time, place, scene and acts, both figurative and literal and other variables that can cause communication breakdowns” (Payne, 2009, p.581). Listening allows diplomacy to build on trust and understanding. In addition, Fitzpatrick suggests that a relational approach will essentially strengthen the moral and ethical dimensions of public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Building on this will allow both parties in a two-way dialogue to give quick feedback while having mutual respect and therefore tackling issues of conflict and interest.

According to the Pew Research Center, six in 10 adults in the United States get their news from social media (Gottfried & Sherear, 2016). These new information technologies have expanded the interrelations among countries and people. As a result, many national governments have come to realize the significance of social media in public diplomacy. Therefore, according to the Department of State, “The United States has more than 2.6 million followers on 301 official Twitter feeds communicating in 11 languages. We have over 15.5 million fans, friends and followers on 408 Facebook accounts department wide and we communicate daily with millions on multiple different social media platforms around the world. Including the multiple social media platforms we utilize, we communicate with about 20 million individuals across the globe” (Department of State, 2016). These active social media accounts have the ability to reach local, national and an international public in a matter of seconds.

In December 2010, the U.S. Department of State Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review stated, “These technologies are the platform for the communications, collaboration, and commerce of the 21st century. More importantly, they are connecting people to people, to knowledge and to global networks” (“21st Century Statecraft,” 2010 p.7). Twitter, among one of these technologies, is a micro blogging service, that allows one to not only speak in 140 characters but to listen and connect with people in the same format. Twitter is a media tool that helps information spread. “Congress members are primarily using this tool to disperse information, particularly links to news articles about themselves and to their blog posts and to report on their daily activities” (Golbeck, 2010, p.1612). With over 1 million followers on Twitter among all three accounts, @USEmbassy\_France, @USAinUK and @USEmbassy\_Turkey, the platform has become a prominent outlet for the U.S. Embassy to engage with the host country citizens as well as Americans living there. This paper contributes towards analyzing the interactions between the official U.S. embassies and the public during a time of crisis versus not. There are many definitions for a crisis. For the purpose of this study a crisis is considered a significant threat to operations and a time when a difficult decision that can have negative consequences must be made (Coombs, 2007).

One aspect that is underrepresented in public diplomacy is culture. Akira Iriye, a historian who studies American diplomatic history stated something very relatable at a conference. He stated, “Each country has its own cultural identity in that it is defined by people who share certain traditions, memories, and ways of life ... [this includes] intangible factors such as a nation’s ideas, opinions, moods and tastes. Symbols, words,

and gestures that reflect its people's thought and behavior patterns comprise their cultural vocabulary in terms of which they relate themselves to other people" (Iriye). Culture plays a huge role in the way a person interprets information and the topic of communication the government or an organization should have on a social media post. Understanding a country's cultural identity will enhance the effectiveness of public diplomacy now and in the future.

It is the central thesis of my paper that the Twitter accounts of three U.S. embassies, in the U.K., France, and Turkey deliver primarily informative communication whether a post is regarding a crisis or not. There are various types of communication (e.g. informative, demonstrative, persuasive and entertaining), which will be analyzed in order to answer the hypothesis. Sometimes these categories are separated and sometimes they overlap. This study will focus on the tweets that fit into these specific categories separately. Informative communication serves to provide interesting and useful information to the audience, it can be in a form of processes, events and/or concepts that inform with a purpose. "Demonstrative communication is similar to informative communication however it differentiates in the sense that it informs one about something by providing a demonstration" (McKenzie, 2012). Persuasive communication is used to convince people to change in some way whether that is altering their views and thoughts by getting them to think and view something in a different way (McKenzie, 2012). Similar to the after "dinner speech" entertaining communication provides pleasure and enjoyment to the audience (McKenzie, 2012). In order to compare the interactions that foster relationships by these three accounts and the public, I will examine the replies and retweets. This study will begin with an examination of literature surrounding social media and Twitter usage, excellence theory in relationship building online then narrowing it down to diplomacy

and Twitter usage from embassies during a crisis. In the 21st century, during a period of live crisis, Twitter often attracts the most people. I will fill the current gap in our knowledge of the comparison between the topics, type of communication and interactions of each U.S. Embassy analyzed during a crisis as opposed to no crisis at all.

With these gaps in mind, I will then move on to the central focus, which is a study of the following Twitter accounts, @USAinUK, @USEmbassy\_France and @USEmbassy\_Turkey for a time period of six weeks, June 10, 2016 - July 26, 2016. This time frame is relevant because a significant crisis occurred in each country: Turkey, United Kingdom and France. On June 23, 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, a historical controversial moment. A couple of days later, on June 28, 2016, the death toll on the Istanbul airport in Turkey was “36, with 147 injured,” according to CNN (Tuysuz & Almasry, 2016). Less than a month after that in Nice, France on Bastille Day, July 14, 2016, a truck drove through the crowd. According to CNN, “the death toll was “85 with 202 injured” (Park, Ansari & Fawzy, 2016).

Government Twitter accounts came to the fore during these crisis events, which sparked my interest in the civic engagement these accounts had with the public during the challenging times. This study will compare the difference in interaction between all three embassies and the topics discussed among them. There are various definitions for each of the topics. Economics is the study of the flow of wealth, politics is the activities associated with government individuals, parties or politicians discussing relations or influencing policy in some way. Environmental is used to categorize all the tweets that talked about the natural world conditions (e.g. rainforests, trees, global warming). The contest topic categorized any tweet that mentioned an activity where twitter users were

competing for prizes. The U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom Twitter account was the one that actually conducted a contest in order to engage public diplomacy. The account had the public tweet and mention the embassy in pictures of national parks in the U.K. or the U.S. for a chance to win a flight. This really sparked the engagement between both the public and the embassy. The emergency information topic is a serious and dangerous situation requiring immediate posting on Twitter to inform the public and keep them safe. The social issues topic categorizes tweets that discuss a problem that that influences an influential number of people within a society (e.g. Gay Marriage). The security/terrorism topic categorizes tweets that focus on the prevention and protection of people and countries through deliberate action regarding terrorism, which is the unlawful use of violence against civilians. The cultural topic categorizes tweets that focus on ideas, customs and way of life of a society (parades, beliefs, religion). The other topic categorized any tweet that did not fit into any of the previous topics.

In addition, it will compare the type of communication these embassies are using to reach their audience. “During times of crisis and emergencies, Twitter’s live, open and public features have been leveraged by NGOs, citizens, government agencies and the media to share and exchange information” (Kaul, 2015). Through an analysis of the patterns of interaction with the public among these three accounts, this paper will show that the U.S. Embassy accounts use informative communication to reach the public. From the data, this study hopes to find a correlation thread between interactions embassies have with the public during a crisis and as opposed to when there is no crisis.

## **II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *2.1. Public Relations in Public Diplomacy*

One framework for the examination of this study is J.E. Grunig's 1992 excellence theory in public relations, which has been applied to public diplomacy. Signtzer, Coombs and Benno (1992) discuss how public diplomacy and public relations share similar assumptions. The two-way symmetrical model uses communication to resolve conflict and build a mutual understanding. The communication allows feedback from the receiver to the sender and is used to inform and cultivate relationships through dialogue by listening. Furthermore, with evaluation and feedback from the public, the three embassies analyzed are able to build a relationship, which allows them to post content that will be relevant to the public in that country, but most importantly, build trust. In scholarly debates many researchers have mentioned the importance of two-way symmetric communication, which is vital for mutual trust and understanding (Fitzpatrick, 2007; L'Etang, 2009; Payne, 2009). Open and genuine dialogue between the public and these three accounts establishes trust and a relationship that is critical to have when and if a crisis were to occur using two-way dialogue to foster relationships takes time to build. Therefore, interaction through the usage of replies and retweets allows embassies to inform the public of news in a more personable way.

## **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *3.1. Public Diplomacy*

The term 'public diplomacy' was coined by Edmund Gullion in the 1960s and then used in the context of the United States Information Agency (Simonin, 2008, p.24). As much as traditional forms of diplomacy are still very dominant, it is a very



interdisciplinary field. It relates to public relations, while also blending the international communication and international relation theories (Gilboa, 2008, p.57; Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012, p.810). Since the 1960s many historical moments have altered the meaning of the term. In FIGURE I. One can see the three phases and the definition given to public diplomacy during that time.



**Figure I. Definitions influenced by distinct global paradigms** (Auer & Srugies, 2013, p.9)

During the Cold War public diplomacy was defined as, “The means by which governments, private groups and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other people and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions” (Cull, 2006). After the Cold War was over in 1989, the meaning of public diplomacy evolved from persuasion to the understanding by the foreign public. In 1990, Hans Tuch defined public diplomacy as, “A government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies” (Tuch, 1990, p.3). Ultimately, after the tragic 9/11 event, there was an abundant desire for mutual understanding. “Public diplomacy is about building relationships; understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communicating our points of view; correcting misperceptions; looking for areas where we can find common cause” (Leonard, Stead & Smewing, 2002, p.8). The latter definition differs from the rest in that it focuses on building relationships and understanding in a two-way symmetric dialogue

and does not necessarily limit the interaction to one specific actor as in the previous definitions. Symmetric dialogue allows the sender to send a message and the receiver to give feedback, which essentially helps reduce vagueness and ensures clarity of the message. As the world becomes more interconnected, this definition will continue to evolve to fit a different era, as it has in the past.

### *3.2. Public Diplomacy as a form of international public relations*

In the 21st century, Public Diplomacy has surpassed the focus on mutual understanding and become more prominent on building relationships government to people. However, with the lack of studies on this topic, L'Etang (2006) argued:

“Public relations should properly be considered in tandem with international relations, not simply because it performs a (publicity) function in the process of diplomacy and international relations, but because it is linked to fundamental positions about the way individuals organize themselves into collectivities” (L'Etang, 2006, p.388).

According to Signitzer and Wamser, “In a world that has become increasingly ‘diverse, complex and intertwined’ the time to attempt a coordination of theoretical concepts, theories, and models [in public relations and public diplomacy] appears to have come” (Signitzer & Wamser, 2006, p.444). Therefore, merging of both public diplomacy and public relations is logical given that public diplomacy may be seen at times as a form of public relations since it also involves relationship building through strategic communication to the foreign public. A public relations scholar, Seong Hun Yun, found similarities; “The concept of relationships is associated with publics possessing first hand experience with the organization or the foreign government” (Yun, 2006, p.309).

Furthermore, Yun found that 113 embassies in Washington D.C., “That symmetrical and asymmetrical communication overlaps among them all” (Yun, 2006, p.307). On the contrary, Joseph Duffy, the last head of the U.S. Information Agency, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March of 1995 and once again May of 2001,

“Let me just say a word about public diplomacy. It is not public relations. It is not flacking for a Government agency or even flacking for America. It is trying to relate beyond government-to-government relationships the private institutions, the individuals, the long-term contact, the accurate understanding, the full range of perceptions of America to the rest of the world” (as cited in Smyth, 2001, p.422)

Individuals in public diplomacy believe that merging both research traditions is not the right way to go about public diplomacy; they envision both public relations and public diplomacy being completely separate forms.

### *3.3. Post 9/11*

In such an interdependent world, since the tragic 9/11 attacks, the United States government has come to realize the importance of the Internet and other new media tools in order to engage in public diplomacy. Post Cold War, America believed that they had defeated their enemy, therefore no public diplomacy efforts were needed. However, the new secretary of state at the time, Colin Powell, knew something needed to be done so he moved fast into the 21st century by enforcing the use of Blackberries and websites among diplomats and embassies. This played a role in the interconnected world with connections and relationships. New approaches came for the United States when the Obama administration took office in 2009. Obama continued to place emphasis on the importance of the Web in relation to the Public Diplomacy 2.0. After Obama’s election,

The New York Times wrote: “One of the many ways that the election of Barack Obama as president has echoed that of John F. Kennedy is his use of a new medium that will forever change politics. For Mr. Kennedy, it was television. For Mr. Obama, it is the Internet” (Miller, 2008). On May 18, 2009 President Barack Obama became the first U.S. President to send out his first Tweet and since then has continued to engage with the public through many social media platforms, but especially on Twitter.

### *3.4. Excellence Theory*

The excellence theory ties into public relations and forms a two-way dialogue with the public to cultivate quality long-term relationships. This framework started from a four-model typology focusing on press agency, public information, two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). “The four-model typology was, however, reconstructed into a four dimensional framework in the late 1990s out of the recognition that in reality the four models coexist, overlapping with each other” (Grunig, 1997a, p.8) This theory should have practitioners strive for symmetrical communication, however, as situations come up in the world organizations must push forward their own agenda and policies in an asymmetrical way (Heath, 2006).

In the study conducted by Seong Yun Hun it was found that, “Excellence in public relationships has direct effects on relationship quality between organizations and the public” (Yun, 2006, p.309). In a conference it was said, “Relationships with the public provides the best indicator for the effects of excellence in public relations rather than reputation or image” (Grunig & Hung, 2002). Deatherage and Hazelton in their study mentioned, “Practitioners who adhere to a symmetrical worldview are supposed to have mutual understanding as a primary goal for public relations. The symmetrical

worldview influences the selection and use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, and leads to effective public relations” (Deatherage and Hazelton, 1998 p.58). The excellence theory in public relations is an attribute that, “Helped build quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies” (Grunig L, Grunig J. & Ehling, 1992, p.86).

### *3.5. Knowing your audience*

U.S. embassies have a purpose to build relationships among people and countries with various issues to foster peace with the rest of the world. In order to build international relationships embassies have to post messages that will resonate and contribute to two-way dialogue between embassy accounts, which makes it complicated. The interpretations the public has of the message vary by country, origin and people, which some scholars attribute to cultural differences (e.g., Entman, 2008; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Government agencies, embassies, must have a good understanding of the culture not only from their country but also in the country that embassy is located. The reason being is as Khakimova’s study found, “Differences in cultural values and social structures could be an obstacle to effective public diplomacy” (Khakimova, 2013 p.32). The topic of social media posts have to be adjusted and at times filtered in order to minimize offensive content to individual cultures however be specific to that host country and its people. Khakimova also found that, “Governments are able to enhance their public diplomacy by understanding the cultural similarities and differences and their influence on public relations models varying on country” (Khakimova, 2013, p 40). Understanding the culture allows embassies to interact in a more relatable way with the public, given that different locations of embassies have a different audience to build a

relationship with.

### *3.6. Social media*

New information technologies have accelerated and expanded inter relations among countries and their people. Zaharna stated, “Connectivity and interactivity have become the defining features of the new media, as well as the defining communication activity of their users” (Zaharna, 2010, p.87). According to Kitchen and Ponopoulos, “Social media has enabled a shift from the Web as passive information highway to a dynamic platform for the exchange of real communication and experience, since self expression, participation, dialogue and creation and maintenance of relationships within virtual communities is now possible” (Kitchen and Ponopoulos, 2010, p.222). With the help of social networking sites, among many new media tools, the public is able to communicate with other people, corporations and/or government agencies. This two-way dialogue allows the public to perceive agents as being relatable rather than impersonal (Cull, 2013).

### *3.7. U.S. Embassy and Social Networking Sites*

According to the U.S. Department of State, there are 163 U.S. embassies that use Facebook, 99 that use Twitter, 18 that use blogs, three that use Pinterest, 46 that use Flickr, nine that use Instagram, 101 that use YouTube and one that uses Google+ in order to connect with the public around the world (“Global Social Media,”2016). “An embassy’s social media account has a purpose to collaborate with other international organizations and their people. Embassies, consulates and ambassadors establish networks and maintain relationships with the country, which the embassy is based” (Dinnie et al. 2010; Waters & Williams, 2011). These social networking sites, (SNS),

allow the interaction and communication of information at a fast pace. According to a survey done by *Southern Weekend*, an influential Chinese journal, students, more than 20% of its followers, are the most active participants in the U.S. embassies' micro blogging communication (Qin, 2011). "In Indonesia the U.S. Embassy acquired over 200,000 additional friends on Facebook. The embassy noted ample evidence of real dialogue online and not just pleasing numbers: posts sometimes received hundreds of comments within 10 minutes of being posted online" (Cull, 2013, p.133).

On the contrary, many individuals disagree with social media assisting embassies in building relationships through public diplomacy. "There is a disconnection between social media's potential to build relationships with the public and how the channels are being utilized" (Uysal, Schroeder and Taylor, 2012, p.354). In order to understand the public, building on the excellence theory is important. In a study by Wiebke Renken on German embassies and consulates the results showed that, "The social media of the German embassies is not a two-way dialogue as we would like to believe. Three German embassies tried to engage in dialogue with their public but only got one reply" (Renken, 2014, p.38). So just because there is a new media tool at the disposal of embassies across the globe that does not necessarily mean the public will interact. Jeanette Gaida, as part of the Global Communication program at George Washington University, conducted a research project on the use of social media by embassies in Washington D.C. She found, "46% of the U.S. embassies in DC used social media and 54% did not. As well as 24 embassies used two social media accounts in order to engage in public diplomacy while 21 embassies used three or more platforms" (Gaida, 2013). Twitter is the top two social media platform that embassies use in order to reach and interact with the public.

### 3.8. *Twitter*

In 2006, a micro blogging platform, Twitter, was created that changed how people and organizations interacted with each other. According to Pew Research Center, “Six in ten Twitter users get their news on Twitter” (Gottfried & Sherear, 2016). “Twitter usage in government enables citizens to be informed about current events, policies, or programs, heightening their perception of transparency in government” (Song & Lee, 2015, p.443). Being one of the most prominent platforms with an average of 313 million active users, it has become a platform for real time events and news. Erin Griffith asked Jack Dorsey, Twitter CEO since 2015, how Twitter is defined and Dorsey stated, “Twitter is live: live commentary, live connections, live conversations to inform, persuade and interact with the mass audience” (Griffith, 2016, p.118). A new form of public diplomacy has recently come into play, “Twitplomacy, where the government, state, NGOs, or individuals are who communicate on Twitter” (Strauß, Kruikemeier, Van der Meulen and Noort, 2015, p.370). In a study, “67.6% of users were not followed by any of the people whom they followed (i.e., their followees)” (Kwak, Lee, Park & Moon, 2010 p.594). The authors determined that the users were using Twitter for information instead of social networking. Hong, Convertino and Chi found, “That 49% of tweets analyzed contained a mention, @username” (Hong, Convertino, & Chi, 2011, p.520). Essentially, a mention is used to bring attention to the other users and encourage interaction through replies and comments related to the topic at hand.

In addition, the same behavior on Twitter by various users is non-existent, for example, “Compared to the odds of including a URL in an English tweet, the odds of the same behavior in a German tweet increase 89% (1.89) and decrease 56% (0.44) in



Indonesian or Japanese tweets” (Hong, Convetino & Chi, 2011, p.520). In a commentary by Dhiraj Murthy in the Media, Culture and Society Journal she mentions, “His tweet – ‘couldn’t get to work. Missing a board meeting. #uksnow’ – uses the hashtag ‘uksnow’ to make clear that they are missing work because of the 2009 blizzards in the U.K.” (Murthy, 2011, p.781). Any user that searches the hashtag #uksnow will be referred this tweet and others that have that same hashtag. Waters and Williams found in their study, “In regard to two-way communication, government agencies were more likely to engage in asymmetrical communication than in symmetrical dialogue on Twitter (Waters & Williams, 2011, p.358). In addition, to engage in legitimate conversations on Twitter, “Government agencies had to address others specifically. This is generally done on Twitter by using the ‘@’ symbol followed by the user’s account name” (Waters & Williams, 2011, p.358).

On the other hand, “Turkish state actors use Twitter merely to disseminate information not necessarily to build relationship within public diplomacy” (Uysal, Schroeder and Taylor, 2012. p.354). Strauß, Kruikemeier, Van der Meulen and Noort conducted a study about strategies for social media diplomacy and found that, “Even though Western embassies and ambassadors seemed to interact on Twitter by providing @mentions and retweets, overall the embassies and ambassadors lacked the engagement with their followers, they failed to engage by asking questions and giving responses” (Strauß, Kruikemeier, Van der Meulen and Noort, 2015, p.375). Also, Arab embassies attempted to use “Facebook, Twitter and blogs, the purpose was to communicate and provide information rather than listening and engaging in conversation” (Khakimova, 2013, p.29). In Yepsen’s study, “Out of 30 network members, 7 followed the U.S.

Embassy's Twitter in Venezuela even though the embassy failed to follow any of them. According to Yepsen, "Users in the network look to the embassy for information" (Yepsen, 2012 p.33)" expecting nothing more. Because of this type of interaction some individuals have a negative impression of using social media for public diplomacy efforts.

### *3.9. Twitter message intent during a crisis*

Many times during a crisis (ex. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks) an eyewitness with a phone will report and share the situation online (Oh, Agrawal & Rao 2011; Oh, Kwon & Rao 2010, p.408). These eye witnesses also known as citizen journalists, "Typically use social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Google and Twitter to disseminate real-time news and first-hand accounts of sometimes startling events" (Ellis, 2017). On January 5, 2011 there was a huge fire at the chemical plant Chemi-Pack in Moerdijk, a town in southern part of the Netherlands. On that day alone there were, "About 20,000 tweets posted per hour by citizen accounts" (Helsloot & Groenendaal, 2013, p.178). However, according to the media, the key players, Breda and Moerdijk, were invisible on Twitter (Helsloot & Groenendaal, 2013, p.178). Helsloot and Groenendaal found, "Most tweets do not contain any new and relevant information for governments and the tweets posted by Breda and Moerdijk got buried under an avalanche of citizen tweets" (Hersloot & Groenendaal, 2013, p.178). These situations have proven the potential citizens have of being the first responders during an emergency.

Furthermore, public citizens might be the first responders during a crisis before the mainstream media becomes aware of the situation. However, according to the Huffington Post article, there are several problems that surround citizen journalism (Ellis,

2017). Primarily, one of the problems is verification and credibility (Ellis, 2017). “A recent examination of some of Google’s real-time search results for Twitter and blogs reveals that real-time information was mostly, “Fabricated content, unverified events, lies and misinterpretation” (Metaxas and Mustafaraj 2010, p.1). During the Mumbai bomb blasts in 2008, “Twitter was used to circulate news about the attacks” (Beaumont, 2008). After the first blast, Twitter users were providing live news from Mumbai. For example, in a conference, Chakraborty, Agrawal and Rao stated, "During the Mumbai terrorist attacks, the police control room was flooded with incorrect reports of explosions at leading hotels such as the J. W. Marriott” (Chakraborty, Agrawal & Rao, 2010). “According to a survey of citizens affected by the Southern California wildfires in 2007, many respondents felt that the institutional mainstream media did not provide local information, desperately needed by residents of the affected areas, in a timely manner” (Oh, Agrawal & Rao, 2013, p.409). In this case many citizens turned to social media, especially Twitter to fill the gap.

Language is very important but it is even more important when dealing with a problem or crisis. With the use of retweets and replies the topics discussed are easily tracked and shared. According to Yepsen, “Not all users utilize hashtags, and searching for those who do use the particular one with which the study is concerned often means these users are influential and informative over other users who follow that hashtag” (Yepsen, 2012 p.16). In addition, Twitter relationships are less defined therefore, rather than an intent to seek the public’s interaction for example by posting, retweet this if you feel or like a certain topic, an etiquette of mutual benefit is at hand, especially during a crisis, interaction is indirectly built on the platform. “Nonprofits and media organizations

are using social media to communicate during crises and it appears to be an emerging public relations tool. During the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, Kaigo observed from the findings, “Terms related to transportation, water and electricity, supplies were frequent, however, so were the terms related to calling out to people, expressions of gratitude and cooperation” (Kaigo, 2012, p.29). Twitter was developed post earthquake, however was extremely effective and efficient in communicating, given that most if not all other forms of telecommunication channels were out of service. Twitter is used as a platform to disseminate live information about disasters. For example, “On 6 November 2008, the day of the attacks, @ Shrinagesh tweeted ‘a gunman appeared in front of U.S., carrying machine gun-type weapons & started firing [...]’ and @Dupree tweeted ‘Mumbai terrorists are asking hotel reception for rooms of American citizens and holding them hostage on one floor’ (BBC, News, 2008). “Traffic on Twitter with the #Mumbai hash tag grew to such a volume on 27 November that the Indian government asked for Twitter users to halt their updates” (BBC News, 2008). Oh, Agrawal and Rao mention that in the Mumbai Terrorist Attack, the public turned to Twitter not only to get information but reliable information. Some people tweeted, “Twitter rocks – I am getting accurate and better information than MSM like Times Now!” or “CNN has been playing catch up to Twitter” (Oh, Agrawal & Rao, 2013, p.412). In addition, Ross McCulloch mentioned, “Twitter became considered a potentially legitimate source of breaking news after flight 1549” (McCulloch, 2009). Many users of Twitter use it to report on natural disasters and relief operations.

And yet, despite the gaps in our understanding of how to make the most of social media, specifically Twitter, embassies are aware of the importance it plays in public

diplomacy. “Unfortunately, nonprofits and media are not utilizing social media to its full potential” (Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson and Shin, 2011, p.177). That is why it is critical that this paper also contributes to the process of analysis of the “possible solutions” for the utilization of social media, in order to achieve public diplomacy effort on these accounts. Government agencies are using social media technology, however. There is limited literature that discusses this topic, especially regarding Twitter and public diplomacy in regards to U.S. embassies usage. Therefore, it is imperative that I contribute to the minimal research that has been done on this topic.

#### *4.0 Media Freedom*

McQuail argues that media freedom has two factors, one that is freedom of media and the other is citizens’ ability to access the media content produced. “The essential norm is that the media should have a certain independence, sufficient to protect free and open public expression of ideas and information. The second part of the issue raises the question of diversity, a norm that opposes concentration of ownership and monopoly of control, whether on the part of the state or private media industries.” (McQuail, 2000, p.144-145) “The question of who has control is the critical consideration as to whether the media is free and independent” (Becker, Vlad, T & Nusser, 2004, p.2). Rozumilowicz sees media structure that is free from, “Interference from government, business, or dominant social groups better able to maintain and support the competitive and participative elements that define the concept of democracy and the related process of democratization” (Rozumilowicz, 2002, p.12).

According to the Freedom House, with a population of 64 million in France, “There is a strong tradition of independent journalism and generally a free media

environment” (“France Freedom of Press,” 2017). However, it is still number 45/180 in the World Press Freedom Ranking (“France *World Press Freedom*,” 2016). In France, journalists have free access to official documents and have a right not to disclose sources. However, “Defamation cases and new security laws have raised concerns about legal framework for the media and terrorist attacks in the past year have put a rise on the amount of violence against journalists” (“France Freedom of Press,” 2017). France has a history of government censorship since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it has taken a sharp climb in 2016. According to Raphael Satter, “French authorities can block sites without a judge’s order under a 2011 law that was brought into effect in after jihadist attacks” (Satter, 2016). Furthermore, in order to ensure safe content online French authorities ordered the blockage or removal of more than 2,700 websites in 2016 (Satter, 2016), which dealt with terrorism and pornography. Given the amount of terrorist attacks that have been going on in France in the past year and online terrorist groups that are seeking members through the web the, “Government pushed through legislation allowing mass surveillance of personal communications with little judicial oversight, and authorities arrested 54 people for hate speech or for allegedly defending terrorism” (“France Freedom of Press,” 2016).

In addition, it is important that the U.S. Embassy is aware of the amount of media freedom within their host country when posting content on social media accounts. Many countries take violations of media regulations very seriously and at times it ends up with journalists in prison or even killed. According to the Freedom House, the United Kingdom with 65 million people has a 92% Internet penetration rate and more importantly maintains a largely open media environment (“United Kingdom Freedom of Press,” 2017). In comparison with France, the United Kingdom is ranked 38/180

countries in the (“United Kingdom World Press,” 2016). Therefore it has a slightly freer environment of the media.

Furthermore, Turkey, a parliamentary republic, has a population of 79 million. According to the Freedom House, “Turkey does not have freedom of the press” (“Turkey Freedom Press,” 2017). Altun and Çağlar found, “In Turkey the culture of fear, shaped in parallel with the social ideology, has had an impact on the language and the content of the news in the media”(Altun & Caglar, 2016, p.137). Reporters without Borders, an international non-profit organization has ranked Turkey as 151/180 countries in media freedom (“Turkey World Press,” 2016). Since 2015, Turkey has had a rise in terrorism attacks in the cities of Ankara and Istanbul. Therefore the Turkish media had faced complete restriction and strict supervision as news and commentaries were adapted to the conditions of coup periods” (Altun & Caglar, 2016, p.135).

#### **IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES**

The prominent use of Twitter to relay relevant information to the public leads to the question of whether each U.S. Embassy posts on different topics, communication types, replies and retweets based on the audience and what is occurring in the host country at that time. This platform easily ties in public relations given that the language use posted is either informative to the public and the host country or builds relationships, excellence theory, with the public. Depending on what each U.S. Embassy posts on, that might alter what the host country and U.S. citizens that reside there view as important or less important. This study compares the replies and retweets posted to various U.S. Embassy accounts, @USAinUK, @USEmbassy\_France and @USEmbassy\_Turkey during a crisis versus when there is no live crisis to determine if the content posted during

a live crisis builds more of a relationship, as a tool for public diplomacy. Therefore leading me to the following.

**H1:** Crisis or no crisis the content of a tweet from @USEmbassy\_Turkey, @USEmbassy\_France and @USAinUK focuses primarily on informative communication.

**RQ1:** How do each of the embassies most used topics compare?

**RQ2:** How do @USEmbassy\_France, @USEmbassy\_Turkey and @USAinUK compare in amount of retweets during a crisis as opposed to no crisis?

**RQ3:** How do @USEmbassy\_France, @USEmbassy\_Turkey and @USAinUK compare in replies during a crisis and no crisis?

## **V. METHODOLOGY**

This study analyzes the two-way dialogue of three official U.S. Embassy Twitter accounts with the public. The three Twitter accounts are comprised of @USEmbassy\_Turkey, @USAinUK and @USEmbassy\_France. The two-way dialogue focuses on retweets and replies of those specific accounts. For the purpose of this study, the word “public” refers to the following and followers of each individual Twitter account, @USEmbassy\_France, @USAinUK and @USEmbassy\_Turkey. These embassies were selected because they rank among the most used. In addition, the countries where these embassies are located underwent a crisis event within days of each other. Therefore, these embassy locations are a prime factor compared to other locations. These embassies have, collectively over 1,000,200 cumulative followers on their Twitter accounts. The study analyzes the tweets from these accounts within the following time frame: June 10, 2016 - July 26, 2016. This time frame is relevant because a significant



event occurred in each country, Turkey, United Kingdom and France during that time. On June 23, 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. A couple of days later, on June 28, 2016, the Istanbul airport in Turkey was attacked. Less than a month after that on July 14, 2016 in Nice, France there was an attack during Bastille Day.

Furthermore, these three accounts have a blue checkmark, which determines that they have been verified by Twitter and are authentic accounts. Given the hypotheses, this platform is the best option because of the significant role it plays in the lives of 313 million active users around the world.

“Content analysis is typically used for analyzing quantitatively the patterns within messages in categories” (Stemler, 2001, p.138). This study seeks to analyze the trends and patterns within the following variables:

- 1) Topic of the content
- 2) Interactivity are replies and retweets
- 3) Crisis or no Crisis
- 4) Type of communication

Thereby, the crisis days, June 23, June 28 and July 14, corresponding to the embassy account location will be analyzed. In addition, a constructive bi week random approach will be taken for the duration of the time frame. The author examined and analyzed all the tweets for each embassy on June 10 week 1, followed by June 13 on week 2, June 21 on week 3, June 29 on week 4, July 7 on week 5, July 15 on week 6 and so forth. There were a total of 257 tweets altogether between the three accounts. The U.S. Embassy United Kingdom had 88 tweets, U.S. Embassy in Turkey had 83 tweets and the U.S. Embassy in France had 88 tweets. The tweets for each account were individually

selected printed and translated if necessary using the translation button on the tweet. A codebook was made to easily allow the ability to track and compare the three accounts. Prior to analyzing the tweets categories such as: retweets, replies, topics, communication types and crisis or no crisis, were used to analyze each individual tweet from each embassy.

#### *4.1. Intercoder Reliability*

Intercoder reliability is the widely used term to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message and reach the same conclusion. (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000). Mackey and Gass explain that the researcher codes all the data. Then, after some time has passed the author is able to recode the data or a portion of it for intercoder reliability (Mackey and Gass, 2005). After the steps for content coding and analyzing were taken, a fellow trained Master's graduate student and the author began looking over the data to negotiate meaning on terminology. Both went through the process for the coding as well as the reasoning behind the categories selected. A pilot data coding of two tweets was carried out with the coder and author. The goal for this was to confirm coders knew how the process should work. In order for tweets to be randomized by both coders, coders asked a random person to pick any number, they picked 4. The author chose 40 random tweets to be coded because it is 15% of the total amount of tweets for this study, which makes it a good choice, for inter coder reliability. Then divided 40 tweets by the total tweets, 257 and got roughly 7, therefore both coders started at tweet 4 and examined every 7<sup>th</sup> tweet. Given that coding was three weeks later the author whom was the second coder coded the same 40 tweets as well. The authors' hypothesis or coding of 257 tweets was not shared with either of the coders. Without communicating with each other both

coders examined and coded each individual tweet before the next tweet was analyzed.

Following both coders completion, to make certain the randomness of the tweets, the author went through answers and ensured that all variables were present. The variables were crisis, topic, country and type of communication. Then the variables broke down into specifics in the codebook. There were an extra nine that were missing therefore, nine extra tweets were needed for the coders to code and analyze. There were 49 tweets coded total after this process. Into the first two columns of excel, the first and second coder's data was entered respectively, one unit of analysis per row, ensuring that each row represents the same tweet. Given that there are multiple variables in this study, the second data pair was recorded in the third and fourth column. The paired column variables were crisis: (yes, no), topic: (economic, political, environmental, contests, emergency, social issues, security/terrorism, cultural, other) and type of communication: (informative, demonstrative, persuasive, entertaining). A unique number represents each of the code values. Codebook was submitted to Recal2: Reliability to determine the Scotts Pi for two coders. "Scotts pi takes into account the number of categories as well as the distribution values across them" (Lombard, Synder-Duch, Bracken, 2002, p.591). The reliability was in a range between .456 and 1 between all paired variables. Calculated Scotts pi for each variable by using:

$$\frac{\% \text{ Observed agreement} - \% \text{ expected agreement}}{1 - \% \text{ Expected agreement}}$$

A reliability of .95 for variable 1 was then added to the Scotts pi reliability for the following 27 variables =24.319 then divided by 27 gives the mean, which is the average of all the variables from table 1, comes out to .9 or 90%. So there was an agreement in the coding between both coders meaning that the data used is reliable and therefore adds

more validity to the study and the results.

**Table I. Intercoder Reliability for all variables using Scott’s Pi**

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	N Agreements	N Disagreements	N Cases	N Decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	98%	0.951	48	1	49	98
Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4)	91.80%	0.456	45	4	49	98
Variable 3 (cols 5 & 6)	93.90%	0.847	46	3	49	98
Variable 4 (cols 7 & 8)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 5 (cols 9 & 10)	95.90%	0.728	47	2	49	98
Variable 6 (cols 11 & 12)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 7 (cols 13 & 14)	95.90%	0.479	47	2	49	98
Variable 8 (cols 15 & 16)	98%	0.921	48	1	49	98
Variable 9 (cols 17 & 18)	98%	0.656	48	1	49	98
Variable 10 (cols 19 & 20)	95.90%	0.728	47	2	49	98
Variable 11 (cols 21 & 22)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 12 (cols 23 & 24)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 13 (cols 25 & 26)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 14 (cols 27 & 28)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 15 (cols 29 & 30)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 16 (cols 31 & 32)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 17 (cols 33 & 34)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 18 (cols 35 & 36)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 19 (cols 37 & 38)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 20 (cols 39 & 40)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 21 (cols 41 & 42)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 22 (cols 43 & 44)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 23 (cols 45 & 46)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 24 (cols 47 & 48)	98%	0.898	48	1	49	98
Variable 25 (cols 49 & 50)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 26 (cols 51 & 52)	100%	1	49	0	49	98
Variable 27 (cols 53 & 54)	98%	0.656	48	1	49	98

## VI. RESULTS

### 5.1. Type of Communication

**Table II: Type of communication for all U.S. embassies analyzed**

Type of Communication	No Crisis (159)	Crisis (98)	Total (257)
Informative	96%	98%	97%
Demonstrative	3%	0%	2%
Persuasive	1%	2%	1%
Entertaining	1%	0%	0%

H1 stated that the U.S. Embassy United Kingdom, U.S. Embassy France and U.S. Embassy Turkey would primarily have informative communication being posted onto their Twitter account regardless of tweets posted dealing with a crisis or not. By conducting a Chi Square test the author found Hypothesis 1 to be supported. The author

also found the relation between these variables was not significant,  $X^2(3)=4.8$ ,  $p=.19$ . Therefore, crisis and no crisis did not have any significant association. The author found that informative communication was the most prevalent with 97%. The other types of communication: demonstrative, persuasive and entertaining fell far behind. Regardless of crisis or no crisis tweets demonstrative communication had a total of 2%. Compared with persuasion communication that had a lot less, a total of 1% lastly entertaining communication had a total of 0%.

### 5.2. Topics within tweets

**Table III: Topics within each embassy**

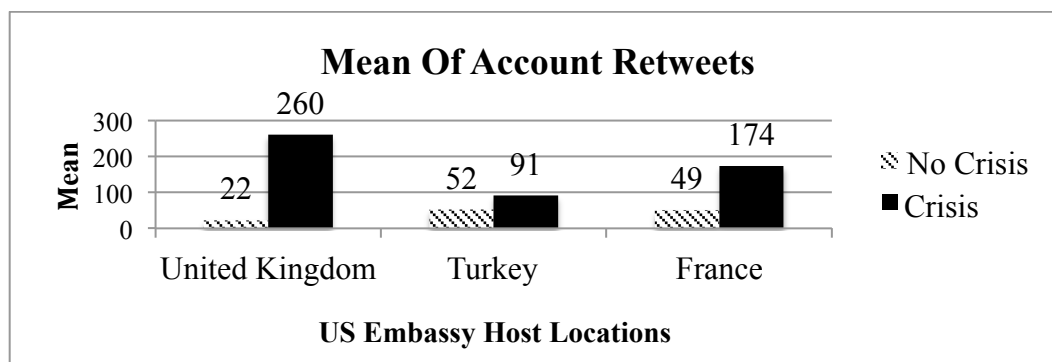
Topics	Total	US Embassy host country		
		United Kingdom	Turkey	France
Economic	2%	1%	5%	1%
Political	28%	42%	14%	27%
Environmental	2%	5%	1%	0%
Contests	10%	25%	3%	1%
Emergency Information	25%	2%	41%	32%
Social Issues	3%	0%	6%	2%
Security/Terrorism	9%	1%	22%	6%
Cultural	5%	6%	3%	8%
Other	16%	18%	6%	23%

For RQ1, the association between the U.S. Embassy and the topics of the tweets was analyzed. Therefore, a chi square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between topics and embassies. The relation between these variables was significant,  $X^2(16)=119.2$ ,  $p=.001$ .

The most common topic within all U.S. Embassy host locations was political with 28%. Which was the most prevalent topic in the U.K., with 42%, followed by 27% in France and lastly 14% in Turkey. Another most common topic among all U.S. Embassy

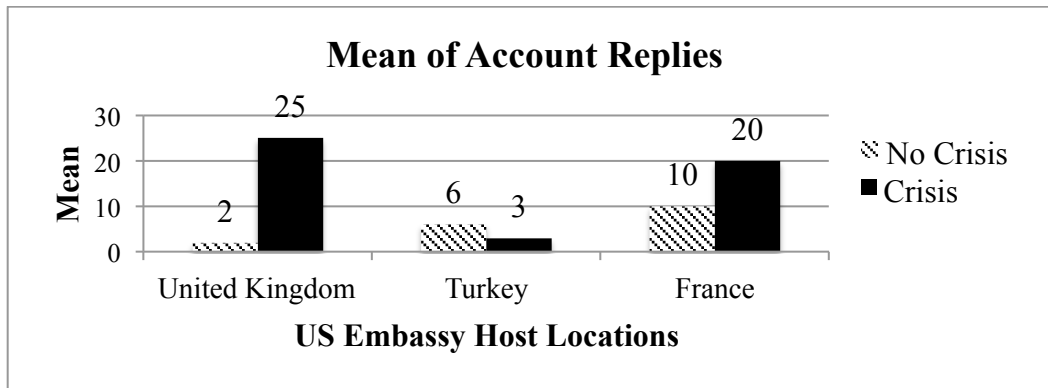
locations was emergency information with 25%. Within the 25%, it's the most frequent in Turkey with 41% followed by France with 32% and lastly 2% in the U.K. Other topics had a 16% total and being the most prevalent topic in France 23% followed by U.K. with 18% and lastly 6% Turkey. Contests accounted for 10% of all tweets among the three embassies. The contest topic is more common in the U.K. 25% followed by Turkey 3% and France 1%. The security/terrorism topic had a total of 9% among all U.S. Embassy locations. Within that topic Turkey had the predominant amount 22%. France had 6% and the U.K. had 1%. The cultural topic had a 5% total with France having the most tweets on this topic 8%, followed by the U.K. with 6% then Turkey with 3%. The social issues topic with a 3% total was the highest used in Turkey 6%, followed by 2% in France and lastly 0% in the U.K. A topic with very minimal tweets among all three U.S. Embassy locations was environmental with a 2% total. The environmental topic is most prevalent in the U.K. with 5% followed by Turkey with 1% and France with 0%. Similarly, the topic with the most minimal tweets was the economic 2%. The economic topic was the most frequent in Turkey with 5% followed a tie between France 1% and U.K. with 1%.

### 5.3. Interaction between U.S. embassies and the public



**Figure II: Mean of retweets within each U.S. Embassy account during crisis and no crisis.**

In RQ2 author inquired about the correlation in amount of retweets from the U.S. Embassy United Kingdom, U.S. Embassy Turkey and the U.S. Embassy France when there was a crisis tweet versus when there was not. The mean of the retweets for each of the embassies during a crisis and no crisis is averaging all the retweets of all different topics, types of communication then by embassy and then breaking it into crisis or no crisis. Essentially, the mean adds the entire amount of retweets within that one embassy during a crisis and then it divides that by the amount of tweets that had retweets because not all did. It was found that the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom had a higher average of retweets during a crisis ( $M=260$ ,  $SD=36.2$ ) than did U.S. Embassy United Kingdom when there was no crisis ( $M=22$ ,  $SD=56$ ),  $t(86)=5.47$ ,  $p=.001$ . Therefore, there was a significant correlation between crisis and no crisis in retweets within the U.S. Embassy in United Kingdom. It was found that the U.S. Embassy in Turkey had a higher mean of retweets during a crisis ( $M=91$ ,  $SD=11.2$ ) as opposed to mean of retweets when there was no crisis ( $M=52$ ,  $SD=14.8$ ),  $t(79)=1.4$ ,  $p=.18$ . Given the means are very close together there is no significant correlation between both variables. The U.S. Embassy France had a higher mean of retweets during a crisis ( $M=174$ ,  $SD=538$ ) than mean of retweets when there was no crisis ( $M=49$ ,  $SD=122$ ),  $t(84)=1.6$ ,  $p=.11$ . There is no significant correlation among the mean of retweets and whether they were categorized as a crisis or not within the U.S. Embassy in France.



**Figure III: Mean of replies within each U.S. Embassy account during crisis and no crisis.**

In RQ3 author inquired about the correlation in mean of replies from U.S. Embassy United Kingdom, U.S. Embassy Turkey and U.S. Embassy France when there was a crisis tweet versus when there was not. The mean of the replies for each of the embassies during a crisis and no crisis is averaging all the replies of all different topics, types of communication, by embassy and then breaking it into crisis or no crisis. It was found that the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom had a higher mean of replies during a crisis ( $M=25$ ,  $SD=38$ ) as opposed to the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom mean of replies when there was no crisis ( $M=2$ ,  $SD=5$ )  $t(86)=5.2$ ,  $p=.001$ . It was found that there is a significant correlation between crisis and no crisis and mean of replies for the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom. Over the time frame, in the U.S. Embassy in Turkey there was a lower mean of replies during crisis ( $M=3$ ,  $SD=4$ ) as opposed to the mean of replies of U.S. Embassy in Turkey during no crisis ( $M=6$ ,  $SD=14$ ),  $t(79)=-1.1$ ,  $p=.29$ . It was found that there is no significant correlation between mean of replies and crisis or no crisis within the U.S. Embassy Turkey account. The author found that the mean of replies in the U.S. Embassy in France account was higher during a crisis ( $M=20$ ,  $SD=52$ ) as opposed to the mean of replies during a non crisis ( $M=10$ ,  $SD=46$ ),  $t(86)=-.96$ ,  $p=.34$ . There is no significant correlation between the mean of replies during a crisis and no



crisis in the U.S. Embassy in France.

## VII. DISCUSSION

Social media especially Twitter has allowed many individuals to obtain live information in a matter of seconds on what is occurring around the world. As a tool for public diplomacy, it has allowed government officials and agencies to communicate directly with a foreign audience facilitating the speed of information to almost instantaneous. In addition, Twitter allows quick feedback from a mass audience that could be anywhere within the host country or even the world. Boundaries within Twitter do not exist and that is partially why Twitter is such a great form of communication. From this two-way dialogue, the U.S. Embassy accounts are able to use the instant feedback through replies, retweet and even likes to understand and serve the U.S., people and improve relations with the host country. Twitter, essentially allows U.S. embassies' to undergo public diplomacy in a more relatable processes than in the past by connecting people to people, people to government and government to people. Social media, especially Twitter has taken over the traditional communication form of reaching the public within different countries. Twitter allows communication to move at a faster pace, however does over simplify topics into 140 characters. This platform fosters a relationship between accounts completely free while press releases; subscriptions and campaigns cost thousands of dollars and might even take weeks to reach the publics' doorstep.

Based on the results of the retweets and replies within each embassies' host country, one can conclude the importance of Twitter as a form of communication for these embassies. Especially, during a crisis when many people want answers and are

confused of what the steps for safety should be. However, given that Twitter is such an important social media tool for public diplomacy, embassies should and must beef up their Twitter efforts to not only promote the United States relations with other countries but to continue serving the people and informing the public of news which ultimately increases the interaction among the public and the accounts for a more interconnected world.

It is definitely clear that there are opportunities for two-way dialogue within social media, especially on Twitter. Regardless of the amount of followers or following none of the three accounts were ignored by the public. The public actually interacted quite often with the accounts, especially during a crisis. One can conclude that people follow these U.S. Embassy Twitter accounts primarily to get information, however the efforts by the U.S. Embassy accounts to interact with the public were very minimal. Most of the time it was the public interacting with other public users based on the information being posted. Furthermore, during a crisis people are more prone to want to know what is happening and how to seek help if needed therefore it is no surprise that the three U.S. embassies analyzed had a greater amount of interaction between the account and the public via retweets and replies during a crisis as opposed to when there was no crisis. A crisis can impact a person's life significantly and the anxiety and need for answers during one can have many people going to the U.S. Embassy account for clarity and to retweet for others. Which ultimately casts a wider informed audience during a crisis situation.

All three accounts attempt to interact with the public, however the interactions in the form of replies fall short for the U.S. Embassy in Turkey during crisis. It is very interesting that Turkey had a lower mean of replies during a crisis as opposed to no crisis.

This reinforces the concept of the public possibly using Twitter for information and not necessarily to interact. The level of interaction is present in this paper's research and supports the utilization of Twitter for public diplomacy efforts.

Prior to this study, I expected that crisis or no crisis tweets would have no impact on the type of communication posted. This appears to bear the initial hypothesis that each U.S. Embassy analyzed posted informative type of communication regardless of crisis or no crisis. Given that many people use Twitter to get quick information it would only make sense for the U.S. embassies analyzed to use Twitter as a platform to inform the public of relevant information. Primarily, it is interesting yet not surprising to find the total average of type of communication from all three U.S. embassies; United Kingdom, Turkey and France focusing the most on political information. When Twitter users follow a U.S. Embassy account the users are interested in keeping up with politics and interrelations among countries' therefore it only makes sense for the embassies to post more frequently about politics.

In the past couple years Turkey and France have had many unfortunate terrorist attacks and therefore one can understand why the emergency information topic is the highest among both the U.S. Embassy in Turkey and France. The U.S. Embassy in Turkey had a higher percentage of security and terrorism topics than the other two accounts given as a country it is a high target for terror. Turkey deals with the Syria quagmire, the Kurds, political polarization and lastly the geographic location between a civil war, which makes it more of a target. Many users follow embassies' to get live and accurate information regarding an emergency within their country. While the U.S. Embassy in Turkey and France had the highest amount of topics focusing on emergency

information, the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom had very minimal posts about this topic. The reason being is that Brexit, a historic decision to leave the European Union, would have a huge impact on the countries' economics and politics making the issue more political than an emergency. That's possibly the reason why it had a high total of political topics and less of the emergency information topic compared to the other two embassies analyzed in this study.

Furthermore, the environment is immensely important. It directly relates to the wellness of humans and our planet Earth. All three U.S. embassies': United Kingdom, France and Turkey have the lowest response on the environment topic. As important as the environment is to human well being, there should be more strategies and information regarding that being posted online. Twitter users follow other accounts for different information they want to know and the embassies are aware of that. For example, if a user wants to know about the environment they would go follow the United States Environmental Protection Agency or Department of Environment and Climate Change to obtain accurate information about the environment. But there is an agreement among many that it should be talked about more frequently and brought to the forefront of the news.

From the data gathered, the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom was the only embassy from the analyzed that interacted with the public in a form of a contest. This strategy for public diplomacy was very effective in attracting the public to follow the account as well as get them interacting with each other. The U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom interacted with the public in a contest form to attract people to the page, given that among the three U.S. Embassy accounts the U.K. had one of least number of

followers and following.

To conclude, the efforts made to use Twitter as a platform by these different accounts varied widely- resulting in various limitations causing restrictions on the methodology and conclusions presented. Primarily, as a result of this study, the data is not broad enough to be scientifically conclusive to all U.S. embassies around the world and more research is needed. The time frame, June 10, 2016-July 26, 2016 limits the amount of tweets and information collected. Another limitation is the constructive bi week random approach for the methodology; future research should expand the time frame analyzed and take a deeper look at several days out of the week for more substantial data. The three U.S. embassies' are in three different host countries, two of them in Western Europe and one that straddles between two countries. Therefore, the U.S. embassies selected limit the analysis of the study. Using Twitter for public diplomacy is a limitation in this study. With 140 characters in length the language used is very limited and informal. A limitation was the designed codebook, which limited the topics and type of communication the tweets were categorized into. The crisis days analyzed, mostly terrorism, in each host country limit the results given. Crisis days focusing on environmental or political crisis that have an overall impact to all three U.S. embassies would present different results.

Twitter, a real-time communication platform, makes interactions in a form of replies and comments by the embassies and the followers almost impossible. Another limitation is related to communication in the form of language barriers. The U.S. Embassy in Turkey and the U.S. Embassy in France accounts have employees that run their social media, however the individuals might not be as fluent in the language of the

host country while the host country population might not speak English at all. Leaving a language gap that makes reacting and engaging with the public and vice versa complicated and limiting the data gathered by the accounts.

After an analysis of the data gathered in the study, it is clear that while interactions exist between the U.S. embassies and the public, there is definite room for improvement for future research. Picking three U.S. embassies in various regions across the globe would allow a broader perspective when comparing public diplomacy efforts. For example, Norway and Canada have been praised for their innovative style of doing public diplomacy (Melissen, 2005, p.13). These two countries tend to blend all the communication topics I analyzed in order to get the most out of Twitter but more importantly engage their users and attract them to interaction with the embassies. They must be using social media to its full potential then. Furthermore, this study focuses on the interactions on Twitter, however examining another social media platform such as Facebook would spark a difference in the type of communication and topics discussed given it has a different audience. In addition, taking a closer look at personal accounts of government officials such as diplomats could alter the two-way dialogue and speed of interaction with the public.

In addition, for future research I would take a deeper look at the interactions: replies and retweets given that there are many spam accounts that could have skewed results for this study. In addition, examining the type of followers (ex, diplomats, citizen of U.S., citizens of host country) that are interacting would be beneficial to know. Primarily, future studies should build on existing research to deepen our understanding of excellence theory generally and the approach embassies are taking in order to build

relationships and interactions through public diplomacy.

### **VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA**

Twitter is a platform that will continue to be used by government agencies for public diplomacy. So after analyzing the interactions between the embassy and the public I have three recommendations that can be applied or considered in order to use Twitter to its full potential. To start off, get more visual use of Twitter as a text platform and including an image alongside the text could essentially increase the amount of interactions by the public. It is easy to see when scrolling through the feed and if the image is powerful enough then it will trigger an emotional appeal. In addition, using hashtags that are relevant to the post would allow a wide array of audience to reach the post given that some users chose to search hashtags to get information, especially during a crisis. When dealing with hashtags one or two would be great, more than that I believe would just be too much and would defeat the purpose of interacting with the public.

Lastly, my third suggestion is based on the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom. This embassy did a great job interacting with the public by tweeting out about a contest. The contest allowed the public to post an image and text of them at a national park in the United Kingdom and mention the embassy. Many public users of Twitter were involved in this contest and the U.S. Embassy in the United Kingdom would retweet to their feed some of the images they were mentioned in. I believe this is a great strategy that the U.S. Embassy in Turkey could take advantage of in order to encourage more followers and interactions. Using Twitter to its full potential comes with strategies that many agencies still struggle with. Trying out one of these recommendations could essentially elevate the

interaction between the public and the embassies but primarily build more trust and relationships. Ultimately, bringing diplomacy closer to the people.



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