

Twiplomacy and Twitter: Perception of Twiplomacy by Talk shows anchors in Pakistan

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Abstract

Twiplomacy holds great importance in today's world. Various studies have been conducted on digital diplomacy. However, this study analyzed the Twiplomacy in the opinion of Pakistani mainstream talk show anchors. It explored the perception of anchors regarding the significance and execution of Twiplomacy in Pakistan. Therefore, the program anchors were taken to find their views and opinions as they are potential opinion makers, and a large number of people listen to them to know about their opinions on various issues. For this, ten prime-time talk show anchors from the top ten news channels were chosen for in-depth interviews on the basis of their Twitter followers. The in-depth interviews were conducted via telephone as well as Skype on account of their availability. The findings suggested that Twitter appears to be the most direct, fast and convenient way of communication. Moreover, the former PM Imran Khan kept on executing Twitter diplomacy efficiently and effectively. The role of PTI and former PM Imran Khan has been quite significant in Twitter diplomacy and Twitter politics both, nationally and internationally. However, the leadership and politicians need a little cautious approach towards it. Also, the foreign office needs to add Twitter more to influence and active performance of their diplomatic operations. Twitter diplomacy was found more effective than mainstream media diplomacy as Twitter diplomacy had access to an international audience.

Keywords: *Twiplomacy, Twitter Diplomacy, Program Anchors, In-depth Interviews*

1. Introduction

Twitter has emerged as an online political public sphere to facilitate domestic and international relations (Chhabra, 2020). The frequent use of Twitter by world leaders for diplomacy resulted in the invention of the term "diplomacy". The significance of Twitter diplomatic communication can be easily observed according to a study by Burson Marsteller, "Twiplomacy" (2018) around 187 countries own 951 Twitter accounts which are handled by heads of countries and institutional bodies

and their diplomats. The effectiveness of Twitter for leaders and government bodies can be measured by the global attention given to the tweets posted by US President Donald Trump, regardless of what the tweet contains (Vale, 2017). Various digital media platforms are employed as news sources in traditional media. Broadcast media use tweets as news 'sources which eventually made Twitter a reliable platform for news. It signifies that media has changed greatly in this digital era (Standstrom, 2013). Moreover, as journalists report and disseminate news for traditional media, they consume social media to keep in line with the digital age. In addition to this, a great number of people follow journalists to determine their opinions. Hence, in Pakistan, the program anchors are followed by consumers for their views and analysis. Thus, the study tends to investigate the perception and views of program anchors towards twiplomacy in the digital world.

2.1. Research Objectives

The study aims

- 1 To investigate the perceptions of anchors regarding the significance of Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan.
- 2 To explore the opinion of talk show anchors regarding the current execution and future of Twiplomacy in Pakistan

2.2. Research Question

RQ1. How do the anchors perceive the importance of Twiplomacy in Pakistan?

RQ2. How do the anchors view the current scenario and future of Twiplomacy in Pakistan?

3. Literature Review

Twitter Diplomacy and Leadership

The recent trend of digital diplomatic communication has brought new terms to the diplomatic digital era i.e., Twiplomacy and e-diplomacy which have been employed by governments and their state representatives for diplomatic purposes (Chhabra, 2020). The awareness of technology could ultimately lead to the implementation of the same. Once the reaction of people is shaped then gradually the media users and community try to transform their society with sophisticated technology (Raza & Parvez, 2019). The government system of any country is significant in Twiplomacy as Iakhnis and Badaway (2019) analyzed Twitter interactions of the leadership of 193 states of the United Nations from the year 2012- 2017. The communication analysis showed that heads of state dealt with other heads on digital media like they dealt in a face-to-face meeting. Duncombe (2017) asserted that social media is facilitating countries to maintain their image across the world in the international arena in contrast with traditional diplomatic channels. Twitter changes the dynamics of traditional diplomatic communication by restricting bureaucratic pressures which obstruct dialogues between diplomats and countries. However, regardless of the threats of online media, it can easily become a significant tool of diplomacy given that it is employed strategically (Kurbalija, 2016). In a similar manner, Wang (2019) claimed that Twitter diplomacy helps leaders to have direct access to a large audience spread worldwide while controlling the narrative of messages, and getting the advantage of quick feedback on their tweets in terms of

retweets and comments to gain public recognition and diplomatic goals. Apart from the benefits, Twitter diplomacy has associated threats of diplomatic tensions. Considering the effectiveness of Twitter diplomacy, the leaders are required to reflect on social media instructions and strategies to avoid Twitter war.

Relationship between Twitter and journalists

The existing literature talks about the relationship between Twitter and journalists in several ways. Khan (2019) asserted that in recent years, the journalists, social activists and showbiz personalities have seen growth in their following on Twitter which allowed them to amplify their viewpoints across the Twitter feed. Similarly, according to Manor (2018), the role of the journalist is quite significant in helping the diplomats achieve Twitter's diplomatic goals. This requires a strong bond and relationship between ambassadors, ministers and journalists. Journalists play a significant role in increasing the credibility of followers on ambassadors by tweeting and retweeting the foreign policy stance of the embassies and their envoys. Also, another study discussed a different aspect relevant to Twitter and journalists which found that journalists and politicians were equally reliant on each other. It observed that discovering and disseminating news appeared as a dynamic source of power between journalists and politicians on Twitter linkage (Verweij, 2012). Another research talked about a different aspect of Twitter with respect to journalists and media persons, as Parmelee (2013) found that Twitter appeared to exert great influence on journalistic practices as compared to other digital media platforms. Moreover, Neuberger, Hofe and Nuenbergk (2014) observed the strong relationship between Twitter and journalism by surveying the news department of Germany that newsrooms found Twitter as a medium for mutual communication with the masses and news sources. Also, Twitter served as a significant platform for providing suggestions for news content. In the same way, Mourao (2014) asserted that Twitter emerged as a vital reporting channel for media persons during the 2012 U.S. elections as Twitter was actively used by journalists to construct narratives. Also, Twitter facilitated political journalists in creating new job-related 'restrictions for political communication as depicted by the viewpoints given by the journalists in their tweets regarding political practice.

4. Theoretical Framework

The study attempts to explore the perception of anchors in the age of diplomacy. The talk shows anchors' preferences and perceptions are significant as they are considered credible sources of receiving and sharing information on certain political issues. Hence, the study is based on Twitter Diplomacy. Twitter diplomacy is the usage of new media by states or state persons as a technique to gain diplomatic objectives and to advance foreign policy stance. Twitter diplomacy is also known as twiplomacy, digital diplomacy, e-diplomacy and hashtag diplomacy (Harvey, 2014). When international leaders, government bodies institutions and diplomats present their diplomatic position and response on Twitter, this act of diplomacy is termed as Twitter diplomacy. Over the years, it has turned into a popular digital media venue for states and government officials to disseminate their foreign policy stance (Wang, 2019). Since Twitter usage was expanding, the United States Ambassador to Russia, Michael, A. McFaul was the first ambassador who established the usage of Twitter as a tool for diplomatic purposes, as he tweeted in both English and Russian language in 2011, to reach a larger audience (Landler, 2014). Moreover, according to 'Twitter Diplomacy' 2019 Twitter has appeared as one of the most commonly chosen mediums for e-diplomacy where a large number of public leaders, influencers, activists and journalists can be seen. Additionally, the

ambassadors and governmental bodies have become quite conscious, regardless of their doubts in tweeting their foreign policy stance in 280 characters. The ambassadors have found that Twitter appeared as an essential source of disseminating news and statements. Hence, it is rightly said that Twitter has emerged as a dynamic diplomatic weapon, and it must be used effectively in diplomatic communication (Lufkens, 2016). Twitter diplomacy or twiplomacy is relevant to the study as talk shows anchors being opinion makers are significant to study regarding their perceptions and views as people watch their shows and base their opinions and perceptions on the content being discussed in their talk shows.

5.1. Research Methodology

The nature of this study required in-depth interviews. For this purpose, in-depth interviews of the top ten prime-time program anchors were taken. The qualitative method was applied to this study to determine the perception of news channel anchors regarding twiplomacy. The in-depth interviews were taken by employing six filters which are as follows; ten anchors were taken from the top 5 news channels which are Geo News, ARY News, Dunya News, Express News and SAMMA TV (Medialogic 2020, January) report. The anchors were selected from the top 10 prime-time talk shows which start from 7 pm to 11 pm (Medialogic, 2020) report. Convenient sampling was employed for this purpose. The anchors were interviewed via Skype and telephone keeping in view their convenience and availability. Three female anchors were selected due to the filter of highest followers on Twitter, and the criteria as per the Medialogic report (2020). The semi-structured interview technique was used in this research.

In this study, the following prime-time program anchors were selected:

1. Aleena Farooq Sheikh (Anchor at Geo News)
2. Rehman Azhar (Anchor at Express-News)
3. Kamran Yousaf (Express-News)
4. Amber Shamsi (SAMAA TV)
5. Syed Ali Haider (SAMAA TV)
6. Ajmal Jami (Dunya News)
7. Kamran Shahid (Dunya News)
8. Waseem Badami (ARY News)
9. Maria Memon (ARY News)
10. Muneeb Farooq (Geo News)

The interviews were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The data was arranged into themes. Also, the study comprises of subsequent stages; firstly, the audio was transcribed and quotes of anchors were typed by underlining principal themes for coding the interviewed data. Secondly, the quotes of anchors were attributed with codes to give a brief account of the gathered data. Thirdly, during the data collection process, the themes were assigned to the data. Fourthly, the given codes emerged as broader themes. Then, the themes were revised. The themes were given names. Finally, the results were presented with quotes from the anchors (Mortenson.n.d.).

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Twiplomacy or Twitter Diplomacy in Pakistan

The talk show anchors were asked about their opinions regarding Twitter as a medium of communication. The responses reflected that Twitter is a fast way of sending and receiving information in this modern era. Twitter has emerged as a significant tool of communication. One of the senior anchors asserted,

“A leader can convey his message directly to the public. For direct communication, it’s a breakthrough”.

Moreover, another anchor highlighted the role of Twitter in a digital age by stating that,

“In Pakistan, Twitter is used as a quick dissemination tool, be it a government decision or any policy, it is announced on Twitter. So, I think, like all other countries, Pakistan is adopting it.”

It shows that Twitter has emerged as a quick and fast channel for leaders to execute their political purposes. Social networking sites were excessively utilized as sources of information during the 2016 American Presidential elections. Having masses of followers of both political candidates, Twitter emerged as a venue for their vast communication and also functioned as a primary digital information tool for both contestants (Enli, 2017).

Explaining the current scenario of twiplomacy in Pakistan, the majority of the anchors had an opinion that Twitter diplomacy has seen an increase in its expansion in recent years.

An anchor emphasized that,

“Twitter was not much known in the last decade but Prime Minister Imran Khan has mobilized social media, and his inclination to use Twitter made Twitter popular among masses even before he came to power. It was PTI and Imran Khan who reached to masses through social media.”

Likewise, a young anchor responded that,

“Twitter Diplomacy has seen an increase in its growth in the last two to three years in Pakistan. The credit is given to PTI and Imran Khan for introducing revolution into politics by presenting and portraying their stances on Twitter as it did not happen earlier in Pakistan unless the developed countries”

The above discourse reflects that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf has played a crucial role in introducing Twitter in politics by using it for domestic politics to mobilize the masses and grab their attention towards politics. In the same way, another anchor firmly stated,

“We have seen that PM Imran Khan has been actively giving his stance via Twitter on Kashmir since August 5, 2019. We don’t usually receive any press releases from the Press Information Department and PM office, but we see tweets directly coming from PM”.

The above findings indicate that Twitter as a tool of diplomacy has been increasingly used in the PTI

regime. Twitter has been used excessively and effectively by PTI and Prime Minister Imran Khan to present his party's narrative across the world or at home. The world leadership is using digital media to have direct access to their followers. Social networking sites are employed by political candidates to access their devotees and electorates which results in success. Hence, the Twiplomacy study showed that Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan stood fifth on Twitter among the world powerful and influential leaders in 2019 ('King Salman', 2019)

5.2. Execution of Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan

When talk shows anchors were asked about their perception regarding how Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan is being conducted by leadership, statesman and ambassadors. One of the senior anchorpersons said,

'From my point of view, Twitter Diplomacy in Pakistan is being very effectively executed by Statesman'.

Another anchor expressed his views that,

'If diplomacy is how we run our state affairs, whether we present our point tactfully or how we represent our narrative, so in my opinion, I see Twitter diplomacy at its peak'.

While a young anchorperson stated,

'As far as the usage of Twitter is concerned by the head of state for giving statements, for the sake of building foreign affairs, and for creating diplomatic channels which is frequently being used timely and precisely. So, in my opinion, Pakistan is using Twitter accurately'.

It reflects that Twitter diplomacy is being effectively done by the Pakistani government as the tweets are seen discussed on international media and various forums whenever statesmanship tweets their stance on international relations.

Whereas another senior anchor asserted,

'Twitter Diplomacy in Pakistan at its formative stage. Pakistan is keeping pace with it. A lot of improvement is needed'.

Similar views are narrated by another senior anchor,

'I believe in terms of Twitter diplomacy; Pakistan is doing as much as it possibly can. But it has been really productive in the last three to four years'.

The Pakistani leadership is trying its best to follow modern trends of diplomacy by putting across their point of view and narratives on Twitter. This shows that a large number of the respondents believe that Pakistan is performing its diplomatic functions on Twitter quite effectively. Also, Pakistan is conducting Twitter diplomacy quite well in terms of presenting its stance, counter-narratives, and building diplomatic relations. In recent years, PM Imran Khan's tweet in response to President Donald Trump's interview regarding the War on Terror roared a debate all over the world and that response fell in the top 10 digital diplomacy moments of 2018. His powerful and composed

stance grabbed appreciation from the audience on Twitter which became a crucial venue for global diplomacy (“PM Imran’s Twitter response”, 2018).

6. Suggestions for better Twiplomacy

When program anchors inquired how twiplomacy or Twitter diplomacy should be executed in Pakistan, the majority of the anchors opined that Twitter diplomacy needs improvements and development in Pakistan.

As emphasizing how Twitter diplomacy should be executed in Pakistan, an anchor person asserted that,

‘Twitter Diplomacy in Pakistan is being done actively but improvements are needed. President Donald Trump, PM Boris Johnson, PM Justin Trudeau, and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s presence on Twitter create an impact or hold value. In a similar way, our Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign minister are quite active and hold value, but our foreign office is a little weak. Moreover, other countries’ foreign office and their spokesperson are very active on Twitter such as United States diplomats and the German Ambassador appointed to Pakistan. Also, as there is a South Asia desk in Pakistan, the foreign desks of Pakistan must be inducted in the U.S., Germany and Europe to deal with matters related to education and visas directly through Twitter’.

It suggests that our foreign offices need to be active and should come to the forefront of executing Twitter diplomacy which is essential to today’s modern diplomacy. The Pakistan ambassadors should come forward in order to gain public trust and build image perception in foreign countries both on digital and traditional grounds.

Another anchor reported a similar narrative,

‘There is a lot of room for improvement. Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan is not very coordinated as it has much focus on an individual level, such as PM Imran Khan used to tweet when he was in opposition and continued to do so after becoming PM. Since the PM is not the only one who should pursue policies, there are officials who also need to be more interactive and active’.

In a similar fashion, another anchor argued,

‘In Pakistan, Twiplomacy is not functioning on that level as President Trump presents his policies or announces his decisions bluntly on Twitter; such Twitter diplomacy is not being executed in Pakistan. Our Foreign minister is doing it rightly. Though, our PM Imran Khan’s tweets reflect responsibility it needs to be more factually correct, especially towards India. Moreover, our few ministers need to check their tweets by experts in order to eliminate any ambiguity. I think, there must be a responsible approach from those who hold significant government positions’.

Thus, the leadership needs to be more cautious while tweeting their stance since it holds national and international significance. The office holders need to reflect a serious attitude and must consult experts before making a tweet to avoid embarrassment later. Also, the officials are required to be

active to maintain their presence and influence on Twitter in the international arena.

Another senior anchorperson claimed,

“The responses from PM and Foreign ministers are calculated and carefully crafted keeping inview their sensitivity since the tweets are made in less frequency at the international level. So, Twitter diplomacy and Twitter politics need little improvement at the international level, in local politics, it needs more maturity and improvement”

It suggests that Pakistan needs more development in its domestic politics as compared to international politics.

Hence, the majority of the anchors expressed concern regarding the improvement in the execution of Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan. Twitter being a significant medium of communication among different countries needs responsibility and a careful approach from leadership. Moreover, the foreign office needs to put effort into digital diplomacy. Though, Pakistan’s diplomats and envoys have demonstrated their diplomatic potential they need to raise their position more by adopting Twitter diplomacy to build strong counter-narratives on Kashmir. However, Prime Minister Imran Khan via his Twitter handle took a strong and powerful stance on Kashmir by identifying the atrocities committed by India in the region. His individual struggle, stance, tweets, and announcements on Kashmir cannot be harmonized by the foreign office. The diplomats need to expand their visibility on both conventional and digital media to maintain Pakistan's stance as it seems that Imran Khan has become a one-man army by presenting his strong stance via his Twitter account (‘Kashmir: War of Narratives’, 2019).

7. Role of officials and institutions in Twitter Diplomacy

Commenting on the role of officials and institutions in Twitter diplomacy, one young anchor claimed that,

“With the rise of Twitter as a forum of expression, it is seen that institutions joining Twitter, such as the PM office, PIA, and mainly ISPR release their Press Releases and statements on Twitter. Among these institutions, ISPR is a pioneer in introducing Twitter usage for communication”

Another young anchor asserted,

“ISPR is one of the most active institutes on Twitter which is seen sharing statements and messages with China, India and the U.S.”

Inter-Service Public Relations ISPR emerged as a vital institution which has seen conducting Twitter diplomacy quite efficiently across the world. The ISPR has been seen giving its stances frequently via Twitter on national issues too.

In a similar way, one of the senior anchors shared that,

“Pakistan ISPR has reinvented the diplomacy in past five to six years. Particularly, General Asim Bajwa and Asif Ghaffor gave a new dimension to diplomacy. Additionally, Pakistan

ISPR is a way ahead as compared to India's army Twitter handle''

The ISPR has been quite important in diplomacy in the last years since it has been strongly promoting Pakistan's narrative across the border to counter-narratives on Twitter. The ISPR is observed tweeting in a befitting response to counter-propaganda designed by India.

Similar narrative shared by another program anchor regarding Twitter diplomacy of ISPR that,

'' Twitter Diplomacy under DGISPR Asif Ghafoor has remained active. He and his institution played a significant role, especially during retaliation day, 27th February 2019, where the whole war was fought on Twitter via DGISPR's official Twitter handle. ''

The findings show that the majority of the anchors were of the view that ISPR has played a significant and influential role in executing Twitter diplomacy. The Pakistan Army is a pioneer institution which introduced Twitter as a medium for Twitter diplomacy. Particularly, the last year has seen the ISPR's dynamic role in presenting Pakistan's strong position via Twitter, and the then DGISPR himself has been quite vocal and bold in countering war on Twitter against Pakistan. Hence, it was the responsible approach of DGISPR on Twitter which resulted in projecting Pakistan a strong and assertive nation. As Ittefaq (2019) stated both Pakistan and India have acknowledged the impact of digital media in diplomacy but these states are found less interactive

with the international public. It was also found that Pakistan's National Press Bureau and its military public relations department were far more active on Twitter than other departments of the nation.

8. Significance of Twiplomacy in Pakistan

The discussion and results signify that the significance of Twitter has expanded over the years with the ongoing developments and innovations in the digital world. So, the program anchors were asked about the significance of Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan,

In this regard, a senior anchor asserted that,

''Twitter diplomacy is very important. The entire world is connected through Twitter. Twitter is easily accessible. With a single click, the leaders and officials can issue their statement without going through a press conference or inviting hundreds of reporters''.

The significance of Twitter can be easily assumed from the above-mentioned discourse as Twitter allows the leaders to access the public easily and quickly which makes Twitter a vital tool of communication. The increased usage of Twitter by political candidates to present their views, the large number of public retweets, and popularity of their tweets among journalists and media houses during their political campaign made Twitter a significant venue of communication (Buccoliero et al., 2020).

Another anchor reported,

''It is feasible. It is very direct and has a wider audience. Politicians and leaders get a chance to respond timely or immediately''.

Another anchor reported a similar statement,

“The politicians and ambassadors are found using Twitter since its outreach is maximum. It increases the goodwill gesture. They can restore the faith of people by actively using it for diplomatic or political purposes.”

So, Twitter facilitates politicians in achieving their political goals as Roth, Peters, and Sergua (2013) stated that Twitter has been quite prevalent in political communication. Politicians were also found using Twitter for political debates and discourses

Another senior anchor emphasized the importance of Twitter diplomacy as,

“It has become a new, important and most relevant phenomenon of Twitter. The leaders know the effectiveness of this medium, for instance, if a leader wants to send his statement directly across the world over Israel-UAE agreement, what can be the easier and more convenient than this that through one click, the leader can reach the entire world, and convey his stance both directly or indirectly”.

Thus, Twitter offers the opportunity to leadership to disseminate their message to both local and international audiences within seconds. Its importance is growing across the globe since world leaders are actively addressing the people and other heads of state via their Twitter handles to keep in line with the new digital diplomatic trends. Equally, it is observed that PM Imran Khan is also actively found executing Twitter diplomacy keeping in view its importance in this new digital diplomatic world.

Whereas another anchor argued that,

“It is convenient and instant. To be bound in a modern and effective way, it is the only thing which is different in it. In a world, countries are following traditional norms as diplomacy is executed in foreign offices traditionally. On Twitter, one can manage image perception and public relations management. Except for Trump, no one speaks bluntly about their policies on Twitter. So, no country can run its foreign policy through Twitter or social media, but they can use Twitter to shape up their foreign policy, yet they have to use traditional practices”

This shows that Twitter diplomacy has significance across the world. It's necessary to use Twitter to convey statements in this modern digital age to keep pace with the world. It has made communication easier and quicker for the world leaders. As Wang (2019) stated that Twitter eased the process of diplomacy in international relations by allowing government bodies to disseminate their foreign policy stance. Twitter diplomacy helps leaders to have direct access to a large audience spread worldwide while controlling the narrative of messages and getting the advantage of quick feedback on their tweets in terms of retweets and comments to gain public recognition and diplomatic goals.

Moreover, some anchors are found claiming that Twitter has changed the nature of politics as Twitter provides such a venue for politicians and media persons to send and receive messages to gain their desired goals which entirely changes the way politics is being done these days. In the same way, the respondents also opined that Twitter has introduced changes and modifications in politics.

One of the senior program anchors reported that,

“Twitter is very important in that it has changed the entire dynamics of politics. As if a leader wants to address another leader diplomatically, he would choose Twitter for this purpose”.

Hence, Twitter has changed the dynamics of politics be it local politics and international politics. As it is found that digital media holds a significant place in influencing politics (Kasmania, 2014).

Another young program anchor reported,

“The politics has seen a rapid and current change in it due to Twitter. The politicians are using Twitter instead of going to mainstream media to achieve their party’s goals and to counter allegations against each other”.

Thus, Twitter is changing the process of politics. The changes through which politics is going have a big impact on the ways political actors engage with journalists, the process of news production and distribution and how the audience receives the information (Cillizia, 2013). This whole mechanism which is practiced on Twitter has changed the entire mechanism of politics as it used to happen in earlier days on mainstream media.

Though, Twitter diplomacy has its cons along with its number of benefits. A few respondents shared their views regarding the disadvantages of Twitter diplomacy or Twitter politics while commenting on its significance.

Hence, an anchor argued,

“On Twitter, you give yourself to the audience and masses. So, when you tweet, it has pros and cons. Whenever a leader or a politician gives an opinion on any issue, he will receive both good and bad reviews”.

Similarly, another anchor responded,

“When you tweet a lot, you would lose the significance and seriousness of your stance over issues, so you need to be a little selective when it comes to using Twitter, especially the Prime Minister and big office holders”.

The recent years have seen a rise in Twitter usage to achieve diplomatic goals. The leaders managed to put their complicated diplomatic stance into 280 characters of tweets. The growing usage of Twitter to address local and international audiences carries a threat to worsen the clashes accidentally. Twitter is also likely to create propaganda and half-truths mistakenly and deliberately. Hence, the ambassadors and leaders must be conscious that anyone can have access to the Twitter handles of leadership which may cause a war (Drew, 2020).

9. Effectiveness of Pakistani Twitter Diplomacy

Furthermore, the program anchors were asked how much Pakistani Twitter diplomacy is effective

across the world, the popular views reflected that the effectiveness of the Pakistani narrative can't be determined.

A senior anchor shared his views that,

“The impact that is created by the speech of the leaders, the same impact is being created by Twitter diplomacy. The Pakistani Twitter diplomacy is effective but one can't apprise the impact it's creating abroad”.

It indicates that Pakistani Twitter diplomacy is effective, and the influence of the statements of the government and the military on Twitter is similar to that of statements given at any gathering. Though, the influence of Twitter diplomacy cannot be measured.

A similar stance was reinforced by a young anchor,

“I think Pakistan's Twitter diplomacy is effective across the world and its impact is increasing the way Pakistan is putting forward its stance, for instance, last year Pakistan dealt with everything on Twitter when the situation escalated between India and Pakistan”.

As per the responses, the status of a country and the person is relative to the significance of their responses on Twitter. Thus, Pakistan is conducting its Twitter diplomacy by far quite efficiently.

Moreover, another anchor expressed his views,

“The effectiveness of narratives is hard to quantify whether they are correct or not, especially in terms of international relations. Since every country has their own interest, so, in international relations, the primary thing which governs the countries is their interest. So, it has become the norm of diplomacy that countries think less ideologically and focus more on their interest”.

It also shows that the narratives of the countries reflect their interest which ultimately rules their foreign policy. However, the effectiveness of the narratives is difficult to assess.

A few anchors emphasized that foreign offices and ambassadors need to put forward and activate their Twitter handles to create an impact across the world.

Likewise, an anchor argued,

“Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan is not as effective as PM Imran Khan has impact in the international arena but our foreign office, embassies and ambassadors are way behind in creating an impact across the world. We don't have an ambassador who can meet the standard the German ambassador has set. So, Pakistan needs to work on it”.

In a similar tone, another anchor responded,

“Our foreign office and embassies need to do a little more to create an impact. I think they are a little behind. They need to embrace technology in their diplomacy not only against hostile countries but also to build relations and bring Pakistan into conversations. As quick responses are important to Twitter, so foreign office needs to keep pace with digital diplomacy. For instance, a number of ambassadors came to Pakistan and built relations with people, such as the German Ambassador left an important example”.

The responses indicated that the Pakistani foreign office and ambassadors need to be active to gain the diplomatic goals of the country. Also, they should use Twitter to follow the changing digital trends of international relations, thereby gaining a reputation and maintaining relations with people.

As Weinstein and Rasool (2020) asserted the German Ambassador to Pakistan Martin Kobler realized the significance of learning a foreign language such as Urdu to interact with the common masses apart from using the English language on Twitter to reach the limited segment. So, the German Ambassador learnt the skill of economical Twitter diplomacy based on candid interactions by visiting small towns, interacting with local people and building a strong digital connection. China’s foreign minister, Zhao Lijian also got fame by using Twitter diplomacy from his office in Pakistan. The United States also need to follow suit by leaving its elite foreign policy codes behind. This shows that Pakistani Twitter diplomacy is actively conducted by the prime minister but the foreign office and our ambassadors need to work on Twitter diplomacy to be more influential and remain operational.

10. Mainstream Media Diplomacy vs. Twitter Diplomacy

When program anchors were asked how they see the difference between mainstream media diplomacy and Twitter diplomacy, the majority of the program anchors opined that Twitter diplomacy has its own benefits being executed on a quick and international platform, addressing an international audience.

As a senior anchor expressed his views that,

“The legacy media is slower as newspaper comes next day. Well, Television is giving 24/7 news. You get more depth and details via Television over an issue, but on Twitter, there is nothing deep, so that’s the key difference”.

Another senior anchor stated that,

“Indeed, the tweet has access across the world but the debates regarding tweets are conducted on electronic media. In this way, Twitter debates have less impact”.

These responses suggest the main difference between both mediums is that mainstream media provides more details than Twitter. Indeed, the tweets address the entire world, though; the mainstream media discussions generate more influence.

Similarly, a young anchor asserted while explaining the differences that,

“The difference between both mediums’ diplomacy is of reach. Twitter’s reach is limited due to the literacy rate as it caters only to educated people. But mainstream media can be

accessed by anyone. I think Twitter is effective, but only when Twitter is picked up by mainstream media, it gets significance. So, the basic difference is of reach''.

Hence, it suggests that Twitter's reach is restricted in Pakistan since it's in English whereas electronic media can be viewed by any layman. So, in certain ways, mainstream media is found effective.

Contrarily, a senior anchor clearly summed up the difference between both mediums,

''If the leader tweets instead of addressing on TV, then the whole world gets to know the stance of a leader on a certain issue, and in the same way, the relevant organizations also get notice of this. So, in certain aspects, Twitter is the kind of platform which is more effective than mainstream media as it has more reach than mainstream media''.

A similar argument was made by another program anchor,

''The mainstream media is a little slower in responses, but Twitter is quick and timely to respond whenever the event occurs. Twitter does not confine you within boundaries. Our mainstream media caters to the local audience since its language is Urdu. But social media is catering to international audiences as well''.

So, the big difference that appears between both mediums is in terms of the reach and effectiveness of the platform. Some of the responses assert that Twitter's reach is unlimited as the tweet aims for the worldwide audience while the mainstream is only accessed by the local audience. The conventional media lags behind in breaking news as Twitter is taking a step way ahead in breaking news culture. The breaking news procedure is quite complex on Television in contrast to Twitter as the former entails a workforce for news distribution while the latter merely needs a tweet to make. It eases Twitter to break news quickly, though its reach is comparatively limited. The Twitter reach increases in range when users start retweeting news as well as the conventional media debate about it (Standstrom, 2013).

Moreover, the majority of the anchors were of the view that Twitter has decreased the dependence on long press Conferences as well as press releases. So, Twitter has made this process easier and quicker.

As one of the senior anchors asserted,

''I believe the era of press releases and press conferences has gone. Earlier, we used to wait for press releases, now we are following politicians and leaders on Twitter, so, whenever they tweet, we get notifications at the same time''.

The response indicates that Twitter has facilitated the dissemination process by reducing reliance on long press releases; thereby Twitter gets the edge over mainstream media.

11. Conventional Diplomacy Vs. Twitter Diplomacy

Commenting on Twitter diplomacy, one program anchor and journalist emphasized,

“ Twitter can’t be a substitute for our conventional diplomacy. It can be one part or aspect of diplomacy, but it can’t be called entire diplomacy. By tweeting four to five times, one can’t say that diplomatic functions have been performed ”.

Similarly, a renowned anchor throws light on traditional diplomacy while commenting on Twitter diplomacy,

“ I think we should keep our diplomacy dial down like we are keeping it already. I am in favour of traditional or back-door diplomacy rather than digital diplomacy. Our traditional diplomacy needs to be more focused. The big policy decisions are not announced on Twitter. So, I don’t remember Twitter diplomacy happening yet in Pakistan. I don’t think any groundbreaking development will be ever made over Twitter diplomacy ”

In contrast to this, another program anchor opined that,

“ Twitter and digital platforms have increased the speed of diplomacy ”

It shows that Twitter is an effective tool of diplomacy in the digital age but traditional diplomacy still holds significance. Though technology should be utilized in order to overcome the conventional ways, it is not necessary, and not ought to substitute the entire process of diplomacy. The conventional means of diplomacy still hold significance, since in foreign relations; innovations can’t change the skill that is multiplied from sending envoys and ambassadors to other states to visit (Verrekia, 2017).

12. Future of Twitter Diplomacy in Pakistan

As Twitter diplomacy is quite significant for being fast and direct, so, the future prospects of Twitter diplomacy will be quite interesting in this regard. Additionally, the program anchors were asked about their opinion on the future of twiplomacy in Pakistan. The majority of the respondents feel that it’s going to increase in the coming years.

An anchor reported,

“ The reliance and utility for conducting twiplomacy will increase more ”

Some of the anchors believe that Twitter diplomacy will grow more in the coming age, especially in international relations. The significance and dependence for executing Twitter diplomacy will advance more.

Similarly, another senior anchor said,

“ The Twitter diplomacy is here to stay, but our foreign office and ambassadors also need to be active on Twitter in this digital age ”.

Moreover, another statement appeared,

“ The next age is off Twitter and social media platforms, so in the coming years, people who are not on Twitter will start joining Twitter. Hence, Twitter diplomacy will grow more as

there is a lot of potential''.

The responses feel that Twitter will witness more rise in its users, as the world is going digital in every field. In recent years, journalists, social activists and showbiz personalities have seen growth in their following on Twitter which allows them to amplify their viewpoints across the Twitter feed. Likewise, the majority of the Pakistani ambassadors appointed to various countries are observed using Twitter accounts for diplomatic communication. Undoubtedly, most significant names in the Pakistan Foreign Office own Twitter accounts but efficient public diplomacy requires a consistent and powerful policy (Khan, 2019).

While a young anchor argued,

''The future is bright, but I feel, it would be regulated in future. Since, when it comes to giving responses, the leadership gets impulsive, so on the state level, it would be regulated a little''.

Some of the anchors feel that the future of Twitter is bright but it may regulate in the coming years since the statesmanship sometimes tweets in a spontaneous manner.

Likewise, another senior anchor emphasized while giving his opinion on the future of Twitter diplomacy,

''It will increase more but it needs to be handled cautiously and seriously by government officials. There is a need to put some filters on it''.

Some of the anchors feel that the future of Twitter is bright but it may regulate in the coming years since the statesmanship sometimes tweets in a spontaneous manner. But the future of Twitter diplomacy will increase more with the passage of time.

13. Conclusion

With the rise in Twitter usage in recent years, Twitter has appeared as a preferred tool for diplomatic communication. The new term; Twiplomacy has resulted from observing variations in diplomatic communication through Twitter. In addition, the growth in Twitter users has resulted in increased growth of Twitter as a platform of communication which led to the popularity of Twitter as a news source. Thus, the research investigated the opinions of talk show anchors regarding Twiplomacy. The findings indicated that a large number of program anchors believed that Twitter diplomacy in Pakistan has seen expansion in the last few years. The majority of the program anchors found that Twitter diplomacy is being effectively done. Also, Twitter appeared as an effective and easiest way of sending and receiving messages of diplomacy; however, diplomacy is not only limited to Twitter. Some of the anchors asserted that traditional diplomacy is significant regardless of the importance of twiplomacy. Similarly, it was observed that Twitter has modified the dynamics of politics. The majority of the anchors believed that PTI and Imran Khan even before coming to office made Twitter popular among the masses by portraying their views on Twitter and other social media platforms. Also, Imran Khan has used Twitter diplomacy quite effectively in his tenure. However, the foreign office of Pakistan needs to be active and set a precedent like other foreign countries. Besides, ISPR as an institution employed Twitter diplomacy quite efficiently as the retaliation war on 28th February was primarily fought on Twitter by ISPR's Twitter handle. Moreover, a large number of anchors believed that Twitter diplomacy would grow more in future with new innovations. However, a little

cautious and responsible attitude is required with improvement on the part of tweets of leadership. Additionally, Twitter has decreased reliance on press releases and press conferences since messages are conveyed via Twitter. Some anchors believed that traditional diplomacy is less effective as TV channels and press cater local population who understands Urdu. Also, some anchors were of the view that Twitter has more reach with respect to international affairs as it addresses both local and global audiences while a few said that TV has more reach since it caters to local audiences who can't access Twitter. Consequently, Twitter was observed more effective than conventional media to gain diplomatic goals being an international platform.

14. Recommendations

The study showed some recommendations which are as follows:

1. The interviews of ambassadors and political leadership can be taken to determine their usage regarding twiplomacy.
2. The interviews of ambassadors and politicians can also be taken to learn about their views regarding twiplomacy.
3. The content analysis can be done on the Twitter profiles of diplomats, executives, and foreign office holders to investigate their usage of Twitter for diplomatic goals.
4. The research of Pakistan's talk show anchors can be compared with other countries' talk show anchors to know about their perception about Twiplomacy.

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