School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Faculty of Economic and Political Sciences

How Twitter is used by various European political leaders:
A study of four European heads of state – Angela Merkel, Theresa May,
Alexis Tsipras & Emmanuel Macron

BY
Marie. P Ryckmans

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse and compare the use four European heads of state make of the social media Twitter. Those politicians are the German Chancellor - Angela Merkel, the British prime minister - Theresa May, the Greek prime minister - Alexis Tsipras, and the French president - Emmanuel Macron. Through the content analysis of their Twitter activity included between the 1st of September 2018 and the 1st of November 2018, it becomes evident that each of those politicians has a specific communication technique when it comes to Twitter. Merkel does not adopt it at all in order to communicate with her citizens or other people. May is rational and constant in her contacts with her followers. In addition, she employs a considerable amount of accompanying media. Tsipras, using his two accounts, reaches different audiences and overlooks the usage of media for a more conservative approach. Macron is using Twitter to bypass the mainstream media acting as a middle man, failing however to settle in a two-way online communication with his followers.

Keywords: Twitter, social media, political communication strategies, comparison, Europe, political leaders.

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Introduction

“Twitter is now a publicly traded stock. But long before any Tom, Dick or Harry […] could buy stock in Twitter, the micro-blogging service was in the process of fundamentally reshaping the way in which politics is practiced and covered. The changes, which are still in process, are profound” (Cillizza, 2013).

The social media platform Twitter has been around in the communication world since May 2006 (Wikipedia, 2018). However, it was not always a natural tool chosen while considering a political communication strategy. This thought was put forward around the time the then candidate to the US presidency, Barack Obama, created his first presidential campaign, in 2008. Nowadays however, the outlook on Twitter usage in day to day politics has drastically shifted. Meeks highlights this idea in her 2016 study: “in today’s Internet-driven, 24/7 communication milieu, many candidates communicate online first and most often” (p. 2). This aspect of Twitter and this relatively new way of taking advantage of online communication has been thoroughly studied in the past, under various pretences. Nevertheless, some areas of this topic have not been observed in depth yet. One of them is the comparison of various politicians and the similarities and differences they present while being active on social media, and in this specific case, on Twitter. This is what this dissertation is aiming to achieve by doing research on the Twitter use made by four politicians: Prime Minister Theresa May for the United-Kingdom, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras for Greece, President Emmanuel Macron for France and Chancellor Angela Merkel for Germany. By observing their Twitter habits, style, consistency,
and Twitter usage data, we are hoping to put different social media communication strategies to light. It is significant to note in the opening statement of this paper that Angela Merkel’s case is going to be covered much more lightly than the three other selected politicians. Indeed, the German chancellor will only appear as a counter example, seeing as she does not own a Twitter account. This is an attention-grabbing point and is considered as a calculated communication strategy on her (and her communication team’s) part.

Politicians have various reasons to communicate to their citizens and to the world. The most prominent being to paint a picture of themselves to others, or more specifically to potential voters. When stating reasons to nurture one’s communication style, three of them are put forward by Fenno in 1973 “members of the US Congress have three main goals: re-election, good public policy and power. One important way to achieve their goals and communicate with the public is sending messages through the media” (cited by Aharony, 2012, p. 590). This is when a global communication strategy come into play, working around the politician’s ideas and personality. Nevertheless, it is crucial to point out that a political communication strategy includes, nowadays, more than just messages to mainstream media, such as television, radio or newspapers. The switch to online communication has had drastic impacts on the way elected officials convey their ideas, while not leaving traditional media completely out of the picture.

According to Ayankoya, Calitz, and Cullen, social media in politics can be adopted for multiple reasons. First, building relationships between politicians and citizens, where barely any existed before. Second, it helps politicians build their network and their campaign community. Third, it also allows politicians to crowdsource, thus reaching to the masses to start a debate or find a solution (2014, p. 5 - 6).

This research’s central question, which is going to be the basis of this paper, is the following: “in what ways and why do European leaders differ or coincide in their use of Twitter? The case of Germany’s Angela Merkel, the United-Kingdom’s Theresa May, Greece’s Alexis Tsipras and France’s Emmanuel Macron”.

In order to develop this analysis, we will attempt to answer four sub-questions.

1) How often do the chosen politicians tweet (this will include a general context count and an additional specific period of time count) and how constant are they in their tweeting schedule?

2) How many followers does each leader have? How many people do those heads of state follow and whom do they follow?
3) For what reason(s) do the selected politicians tweet? What is their motivation behind this use of Twitter (for example: agenda setting, information, interaction with other elected officials, reaction to current events etc.)?

4) What kind of media do politicians share on Twitter (be it pictures, videos, audio, longer texts, links, etc.)? And do they physically appear in the media they share?

Those four sub-questions will be the structure of the research. Each one of them will be answered through content analysis and statistical descriptive analysis of the Twitter account of T. May, A. Tsipras, E. Macron, and the non-existent account of A. Merkel. The study will be focused on the two months period of time comprised between the 1st of September 2018 and the 1st of November 2018. The objective is to identify a specific Twitter communication strategy for each analysed politician, discern the similar ways they work, and pinpoint the differences which exist between them.

In a world where communication, media and online technologies are booming and scrutinised, it is essential to observe the link between those topics and politics, to uncover their flaws and point the ways they interact or sometimes manipulate citizens.

0.1 Literature Review

Twitter has been a part of the political communication world for a while now, however, its uses by politicians are only growing more important and diverse with the years passing. From the president of the United States, Donald Trump, constantly tweeting unapologetically, to the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, not owning a Twitter account at all, the uses and approaches of this social platform can drastically vary. By comparing a few of the main current European leaders in the way they handle Twitter to communicate in a political context, this research hopes to put forward differences and similarities in that regard.

Multiple scholars have examined the Twitter uses made by politicians in the past, commonly starting with the previous North American president, Barack Obama, and his iconic Twitter campaign in 2008 (Hellweg, 2011, p. 22). Countless aspects of political Twitter communication have been studied. One side of this topic which has frequently been overlooked, however, is the way different elected officials observe different strategies while communicating on the same social media platform.

Five main aspects are central when analysing the way Twitter is utilised in terms of political communication. First, there is a current context we need to be aware of when discussing
politicians and their use of Twitter. Worldwide, the usage of this social platform is booming. Second, there are different ways of using Twitter, as a politician, in order to create a communicative relationship with the potential voters. Third, Twitter should be a tool to create more dialogue with the citizens, rather than be used as one more one-way communication channel. It is consequential to take this into account while analysing international heads of state and their Twitter usage. Fourth, Twitter might be one of the new ways for politicians to communicate, although traditional media stay very much in the loop when it comes down to political communication. The links between mainstream and modern media are central. Finally, the appearance of Facebook and Twitter in the late 2000s changed the conventional top-down political communication or hoped to achieve a transformation in that way. This is a key point frequently studied by researchers on the topic.

This literature review will focus on those five themes in order to structure the main thoughts exploited previously by pundits in this domain.

Twiplomacy is the first and leading article this dissertation will be based on. Every year, the American communication and public relations firm “Cohn & Wolfe” (Wikipedia, 2019) analyses the Twitter application of heads of state worldwide and summarises the major trends, and significant numbers created during the last year. Working with this paper in mind will allow us to be up to date with the political Twitter usage that happened in 2018.

When it comes to the different political communication strategies operated by politicians while addressing people on Twitter, the paper written by Alonso-Muños, Marcos-García, and Casero-Rippolés is central. Indeed, this team of Spanish scholars produced an article in 2016, analysing the Twitter practices of Spanish politicians during their 2015 campaigns, and the following elections. They put forward the idea that there are numerous variables which have to be taken into account when studying the similarities and differences in the ways different politicians employ Twitter. The team most importantly puts forward that a dialogue between the politician and their audience should exist on social media, and highlight the asset that Twitter is capable of having in that regard, when used correctly. Hellweg, as an addition to the previous mentioned paper, studied, in 2011, the different roles Twitter can represent in a political campaign, adding education and mobilisation to the list. An important addition from her was the idea that Facebook and Twitter are, and should be, managed differently, and should not simply be a copy of the content from one platform to the other.

When it comes to the practical and analytical part of this research paper, we will mainly work with the methodology Noa Aharony applied to her 2012 paper, in which she compared the usages three worldwide leaders made of their Twitter presence, choosing Benjamin Netanyahu,
Barack Obama and David Cameron. Her choice of adopting statistical descriptive analysis accompanied by content analysis was applied in this paper.

An additional crucial idea is the fact that it is not because social media has appeared that mainstream media has no role left in political communication. Adi, Erickson, and Lilleker (2014) have analysed the Twitter communication patterns of the Labour party in the House of Lords and the fact that they combine the advantages of new media with the practicalities of established regular media.

Finally, a central concept concerning political communication on Twitter is the fact that people see an evident division between the mainstream, long-established, communication system, which involves a one-way and top-down way of transmitting information, compared to the supposedly equalitarian, two-way communication that Twitter represents. This specific idea has been scrutinised by diverse experts and, for this paper, it has been decided to focus on the work of Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Muños in 2014. They focused on the Spanish general election in order to analyse the change in communication throughout the years.
Chapter One
Definitions and Context

“The degree of diffusion reached by social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the capacity to access non-partisan and abstaining voters, and the potential to give the electoral campaign a touch of personal, interactive and fast style make these platforms an essential tool during campaign periods” (Criado, Martinez-Fuentes, and Silván, cited by Alonso-Muñoz et. Al., 2016, p. 73).

In order to understand this topic as best as we can, defining a few terms which are going to be mentioned in this paper is useful.

- **Political communication**: is the communication process applied to a political context. “It includes the production and generation of messages by political actors, the transmission of political messages through direct and indirect channels, and the reception of political messages”. There are different kinds of political communication. In the traditional way, it takes the form of politicians talking to mainstream media, in a more modern and current way, it can be promoting their programme or persona on social media (Christian, 2016).

- **Social media adopted in political communication**: social media has become increasingly more important in the world of political communication. They “are believed to have the potential for increasing political participation” (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012, p. 2).
- **Twitter**: is a social media platform created in 2006 by the American Jack Dorsey. Originally, the messages posted on the platform had to be less than 140 characters long, but since 2017, the length has been doubled to 280 characters (Wikipedia, 2018).

- **@ handle**: is the name chosen by the Twitter user. It is used to address someone specific while tweeting. When using the @ handle, the person mentioned will get a notification.

- **# hashtag**: is the symbol utilised to tag a discussion theme or a word. This will rank the tweet in a topic category. It also allows people to follow a topic or a discussion efficiently.

- **Tweet**: is a message posted on Twitter. It can be as long as 280 characters, can include media, links or simply text. Anyone with a Twitter account can “tweet” publicly or privately.

- **Retweeting**: is the act of sharing a tweet with one’s followers. The message that is being retweeted can be the persons’ own tweet or any other public tweet posted on the social media platform.

- **Follower**: is a person who chose to follow a public Twitter account and is automatically getting the content posted by that person on his own timeline.

- **Subtweet**: is tweeting about someone without using their @ handle. It is a technique adopted when wanting to mention someone without officially tagging them in some content.

1.1 **The General Use of Twitter in Politics:**

In 2016, the yearly survey Twiplomacy found that Twitter was the most adopted social media when it came to politics. European leaders count on their Twitter presence to create a substantial impact on their decisions, policies, etc. As Rega disclaimed, “Politics, after all, is about marketing - about projecting and selling an image, stoking aspirations, moving people to identify, evangelize, and consume” (n.d., p. 3 - 4). However, when we compare the number of followers of European leaders to the number of people following American politicians, or celebrities, for instance, the figures are lower (Chadwick and Guardia, 2016). This is meaningful when talking about the interest shown by voters for their own political system and representation.
1.2 The Importance of Personal Interaction: a Hope for a One on One Communication

Twitter is growing. “Its capacity to foster direct and personal communication and interaction with the citizenry are two of the factors that explain its growth” (Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripolles, 2016, p. 71). In addition, “unlike most media, the ‘receiver cares about the sender’” (Hellweg, 2011, p. 24). Twitter changed the political communication game drastically. New strategies have been created and new publics have appeared. This social media development theoretically gives a chance to the people and politicians to enter in direct and uncensored contact. “Political leaders have particularly exploited this opportunity, using social networks as a potent channel to highlight their profiles and to show the more human side of politics”. With this in mind, they try to be more humorous or likable on their social media platforms (Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripolles, 2016, p. 72). Furthermore, it is clear that the way politicians address the voters on social media, especially on Twitter, is dissimilar to the way the public receives messages from television appearances, or at least, how they or did receive in the past. In his research “Who benefits from Twitter”, Hong argues that even though, in the 1960s or during the TV golden years, politicians could reach the public more widely than the restricted pool of followers they now talk to, the small screen public was “a more ‘inadvertent’ audience […] and less likely to change their positions in response to the information provided” (2013, p. 465).

However, Twitter is not always employed correctly according to Stoddart. Social media platforms “could have the consistently to end the old ‘top-down’ model of political communication and help close our democratic deficit” (n.d., p. 1). The dilema is that politicians operate social media as a tool to communicate about their own ideas to a distant public, and not as a double channel open for discussion and exchange. “By continuing to use web 2.0 communication platforms in a web 1.0 manner political figures further frustrate an already disaffected public” (n.d., p. 2). According to Ali Stoddart still, politicians might misuse social media platform as a result of being wary of losing the communication control that they are used to having (n.d., p. 3). “Online communication is the ideal method of constructing dialogic relationships between an organisation and its public, allowing for the creation of bonds of trust between both” (Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripolles, 2016, p. 75). However, Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-Garcia, and Casero-Ripolles add that, “on Twitter, political leaders, more than being in interaction, are in action, launching messages but renouncing dialogue with the citizenry” (2016, p. 86).
It is not uncommon to find politicians using Twitter as a one-way communication tool. They are followed by thousands, however, might not follow anyone back or barely. Often, this results in a Twitter communication with slogans, or buzz sentences, and yet no proper, deep, meaningful messages or exchange. As Maroun Taraud points out in her analysis, “except for a few rare exceptions, politicians master less the use and codes of social media than the citizens they are speaking to” (2011, p. 10). “We share the idea that social networks have managed to "democratize" political participation because any citizen can now interact with his or her political representative as well as monitor or criticize their work or make suggestions—activities which undoubtedly enhance transparency” (Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Munoz, 2014, p. 86).

However, in practice, politicians do not adopt social media this way. The communication is hence not a two-way one (Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Munoz, 2014, p. 86). The proper interaction actually does not occur with the public, but mainly with other politicians (López-Meri, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripollés, 2017) or with journalists.

1.3 Some Advantages of Twitter Communication

The application Barack Obama made of Twitter in his 2008 campaign marks a turning point for the usage of various social media in politics. Currently, “Parties and their leaders also use Twitter to mobilize voters and encourage participation”. The utilisation of Twitter is, or should be, constant and relatively regular, nevertheless, we can observe a clear rise of that use during political campaigns preceding elections, and consequently, a drop afterwards (López-Meri, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripollés, 2017, p. 796). In the 2008 United-States’ elections, social media assumed a colossal role in fundraising, but also in educating the voters. For example, “10% [of Americans] said they had used social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to gather information about candidates and become involved in their campaigns”. Traditional media are not the only source for voters to get educated anymore. They can take their political future into their own hands and see for themselves what messages politicians are publicly sharing. This phenomenon is also linked to the voting trend: a person who takes the time to get informed on social media will be more likely to go vote when the elections come (Hellweg, 2011, p. 24).

Twitter is equally operated to humanise politicians, to make them appear personal and reachable to the voters. “To gain empathy from voters, some politicians use an informal tone and humor”. (López-Meri, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripollés, 2017, p. 797). If a politician appears to be more personal while posting on Twitter or Facebook, voters associate them quicker with the
idea of a candidate they would vote for. Yet, this sharing of personal information, pictures and videos cannot go into extremes, as the politician would then seem to be unprofessional to his audience (Hellweg, 2011, p. 29). Naturally, different social media are applied differently. Twitter, according to Hellweg, is put into action in a more informal, personal manner for example. Furthermore, she notices that Twitter is updated by the user more regularly than Facebook. The latter seems to be more of a professional website, compared to Twitter (2011, p. 30). In the case of personalisation, now and then, parties exploit their leader’s personality to communicate about their ideas. In this case, “social media “removes the barrier between professional and consumer, showing the latter how the former works and allowing the latter to actually contribute immediately to the work of the former.”” (Hellweg, 2011, p. 24). An additional strategy is to focus on the politician’s private life. Twitter is not adopted as a lone communication tool, it is included in a wholesome media strategy that includes older and newer tools. The employment of personalisation varies according to politicians’ preferences of course, however, there seems to be a pattern in the way politicians on the left or on the right of the political spectrum manage it. Which is what Hellweg points out when she claims “Republicans and Independents are more likely to value “professionalism” and “trustworthiness” in a social media site, whereas Democrats are more likely to value “personable” content. Republicans and Independents overwhelmingly noted “professionalism” or “trustworthiness” as a reason they chose the politician they did as having the most effective site, whereas Democrats overwhelmingly stated a politician’s site being “personal” or “candid” or “approachable” as most important.” (2011, p. 31). Personalisation happens with Twitter and additionally, negative personalisation about the opposing candidates is put in practice. This latter concept describes the attempts to undermine an adversary by attacking their personal life / choices / character and not their political ideas (López-Meri, Marcos-Garcia, and Casero-Ripollés, 2017, p. 799). Hellweg specifies in her study that this very aspect is one of the limitations to being personable on Twitter. The author explores the fact that the audience does not appreciate when a politician bashes another one on social media (2011, p. 30).

1.4 The Various Worldwide Uses of Twitter

In a general context, the usage of Twitter is crucial in the political world, as Twiplomacy’s annual research proves. In 2017, 97% of the United Nations’ leaders had a Twitter presence. Only six countries’ governments do not (2018). “Twitter is the prime social network used by 276 heads of state and government, and foreign ministers, in 178 countries, representing 92
percent of all United Nations (UN) member states.” After Twitter, Facebook is the second most adopted social media by politicians. Usually, official political Twitter accounts are managed by communication teams, and not directly by politicians themselves. However, this is not the case for Donald Trump, for instance, who is unsurprisingly an exception (Burson-Marsteller, 2017). Leaders around the world make drastically different applications of social media. This is an idea mentioned by Graham, Broersma, and Jackson in their cross-national comparison research. “Cross-national comparisons allow us to understand how and to what extent politicians’ tweeting behaviour is affected by conditions rooted in different political and media systems” (2016, p. 2). In order to prove that numerous political representatives from various countries employ Twitter differently, the researchers studied the campaign of British and Dutch politicians. They put forward stimulating interpretations. “One possible explanation here may be linked to the history and popularity of social media use in the countries. In the Netherlands, social networking sites have had a longer history than in the UK” (p. 16). Other examples are found daily in our media. To mention the most famous current tweeter, Donald Trump operates his private Twitter account in order to make his personal thoughts vocal, and he does not hesitate to be critical or every so often insulting towards other leaders. On the other hand, the German chancellor, Angela Merkel has no Twitter presence whatsoever, which reflects on the low social media’s uses in her country. On a more international scale, Nicolas Maduro, the present-day struggling Venezuelan president has fourteen Twitter accounts, each of which tweets in a different language according to the context (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Additionally, leaders and governments interact through Twitter, inter-following each other, or on the contrary, purposefully ignoring each other. This online modern diplomacy has the ability to communicate a strong message on how countries want to be in touch with each other, publicly or privately. “The existence of mutual connections on Twitter is a good indicator of the state of the diplomatic relations between two countries or the personal relations between their leaders” (Twiplomacy, 2017).

1.5 New Media and their Relationship to Mainstream Media

As Aharony pointed out in her 2012 study, “using various channels of media in order to influence the public is not a new phenomenon” (p. 590). It is clear that social media, in the context of political communication, has changed communicational strategies forever. Journalists are not the guardians of the shared content anymore, as Moody, Cohen, and Fournon express it in their research. “The growth of social media from a fringe activity to a significant
communication source illustrates an important change in gatekeeper functions” (2013, p. 1). This is also an idea that Aharony adds in her 2012 research: “as the political leaders use Twitter, they use a channel that is not filtered by local or national media, thus they are able to convey their own unique agendas without being censored or filtered” (p. 600). However, as it was pointed out in Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripolles’ article in 2016, the public is suddenly able to, through various social media, regulate the content they will see coming from politicians’ online publications. Among “new” social media, “Twitter has become one of the social media platforms of reference in virtual politics” (p. 74). Politicians work with Twitter not solely to be read directly by the people, but also to be covered by mainstream media, and hence disseminate their message to a more varied and wider audience. The adoption of Twitter as a mean of communication does not absolve the elected officials from using regular media in addition. Political leaders still rely on mainstream media to share their Twitter messages. They take advantage of social media in very specific ways. One of them is to post on Twitter or Facebook, hoping to attract mainstream media’s attention, and be talked about on the news (Adi, Erickson, and Lilleker, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, this technique is more about building a communication channel between politicians and media, than a channel between politicians and citizens / voters. It is the proof of “hybridisation of the political communication” (Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-García, and Casero-Ripolles, 2016, p. 87). Moreover, as Howard explained, “Research on political campaigning supports the notion that traditional media exposure synergistically amplifies online reach, while online messages likewise find their way back into traditional media channels” (2006, cited by Adi, Erickson, and Lilleker, p. 2). Similarly, the idea of connecting with important communication experts rather than with the citizens is supported by Adi, Erickson, and Lilleker. They explain that on Twitter, a message is best shared and received when the followers of the politician retweet the post. The followers can consequently themselves be retweeted, etc. “This tendency would suggest that political interests are best served by collectively mobilizing via online social networks, targeting influential users […]. In practice this involves forming connections with allies, building a support network that aids in the counteraction of opposition forces, and reaching out to other mediators; so, increasing the likelihood of setting the agenda through uptake of messages by traditional media journalists and bloggers” (2014, p. 6).

Tweets have different kinds of power. One of them is shaping the journalists’ agenda, when the tweets are well-thought-through. Politicians are influencers, consequently, if a message is shaped in a dramatic way, it might get taken up by media, and then reach people / voters that generally are not active on Twitter. Picking a fight, for example, with another public figure, is
the “perfect” way to attract free publicity (Hinsliff, 2016). The main new point of social media for politicians is that it allows them to bypass mainstream media communication. It means that their messages get carried across as pure as they were created, untouched by another person/communicator (Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Munoz, 2014, p. 87). Less than a decade ago, this kind of political Twitter feud would have happened in private corridors and rooms. However, they have now turned incredibly public as it is not filtered, and it is accessible to anyone (Hinsliff, 2016).

1.6 The Sharp Edge of Twitter Communication

“Twitter was designed to lower barriers to communication and encourage impulsive, off-the-cuff comments” (Friedersdorf, 2018). In this way, it ignites conflict easily in popular practice, so why should it be any different in the political world? And the consequences would be much greater on a world scale. According to Friedersdorf, Twitter is not needed by politicians to communicate with voters. To do that, they can easily turn to television (2018).

An additional distortion that Twitter induces is the way elected officials now orally communicate with future Twitter content in mind. We can witness this sort of strategy in the politics in the UK for instance. British politicians have changed the way they communicate in parliament. They try to be more adversarial and have some bold, condensed, spoken statements that will easily be edited for social media and reach younger crowds through political ideas and messages. This is a new way to engage people (BBC, 2018).

Another problem in the Twitter communication style is that politicians frequently tend to fall into succinct messages which will buzz, rather than trying to be informative. The usage of hashtags is primordial, this is what is going to attract an audience towards a constructive discussion. Before Twitter, politicians would polish their public messages before publishing them. Now, communication must be fast and consequently suffers from this new time frame. “The risk is to consider that [Twitter] is the only way to talk with the population” (Eyries cited by De Montigny, 2016). “In practice, candidates currently seem to understand social networks as a vehicle for short-term propaganda rather than long-term public interaction” (Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Munoz, 2014, p. 85). According to Vanderbiest, for elected officials, Twitter has become an obligatory route on the political profession, their account disappearing after their term is over (2015).

One additional disadvantage of Twitter is that it reaches only the people who are subscribed to politicians. Thus mostly, it touches the people who are already convinced of the message that
is being carried across (Zamora Medina and Zurutuza Munoz, 2014). Hellweg advocates for the same argument, adding that Twitter and social media in general are an “effective marketing tool, enabling succinct communication with individuals who have already expressed an interest” (2011, p. 23). It has been noticed by pundits that politicians, in real life and online, share their content with a rather small (yet proportional) group of people, that mostly already approve of their views. “The problem with clustered, or closed, networks is that they have a limited ability to reach beyond that community […] to capture wider attention” (Adi, Erickson, and Lilleker, 2014, p. 6).

The more active the politician is, the more public their profile ends up being. A non-prolific profile will only touch their personal followers, while an assiduous “tweeter” will attract the attention of people outside their direct follower circle (Vanderbiest, 2016).
Chapter Two
Presentation of the Four Case Studies

2.1 The Case of England and its Prime Minister, Theresa May

Image 1. The official account for Theresa May, Nov. 2018. Source: twitter.com/theresa_may

Some facts about Mrs. May and her Twitter activity:
Theresa May works with one official Twitter account, which is named “Theresa May” and is known under the handle “@theresa_may”.
Table 1. Twitter facts about Theresa May. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/theresa_may

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Date of creation</th>
<th>June 28, 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tweets</td>
<td>1,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>683,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Theresa May was appointed prime minister in July 2016, her Twitter account was not put to work at first. Her communication aides at the time (namely Timothy and Hill) did not put emphasis on her social media presence. Her opponent, Jeremy Corbyn and his Labour party took advantage of this social media silence to operate the platform to its fullest extent (Simon, 2019). It is believed that social media, and especially Twitter has played a role in the 2017 political campaign opposing Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May. Corbyn used to tweet much more than the current prime minister. In fact, he tweeted more than four times more than May. The Tories are traditionally known to have a weak social media strategy, however, since 2018, May has tried to settle this issue. Corbyn’s content was additionally shared much more, partly due to him being involved in national affairs. May does not adopt hashtags adroitly and does not publicly support projects on social media (Turner, 2018). Theresa May tweets lightly, without going over the top. Indeed, her average is one tweet per day (Twitter, 2018). Nowadays, May and her party have adopted a modern strategy, it has been described as: “Interesting, professional and compelling video content is now at the centre of the engagement strategy [...]. Number 10 is once again placing digital at the heart of its communications strategy, aiming directly at users’ social media feeds” by Simon, in 2019.

When it comes to traditional communication, the British prime minister has been overlooking specific media channels or at least does not want to answer all the questions asked by the press. The media companies are getting nervous concerning this behaviour, comparing it to Donald Trump’s bumpy relationship to the press, television and radio (Barlett, 2018).
2.2 The Case of Greece and its Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras


Some facts about Mr. Tsipras and his Twitter activity:

Alexis Tsipras employs two Twitter accounts.

- One of them is named “Alexis Tsipras” and goes by the handle “@atsipras”: it is his personal account from which he communicates in Greek, mainly to the Greek population, and on topics concerning national matters.
The other is called “Alexis Tsipras” as well, but uses the handle “@tsipras_eu”: it is an account from which he tweets in English, it consists mainly in communication about European matters, and the links between the European Union institutions and Greece.

For his Greek-speaking account using the handle “@atsipras”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of creation</th>
<th>July 13, 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tweets</td>
<td>5,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>517,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Twitter facts about Alexis Tsipras (Greek). 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/atsipras

For his English-speaking account using the handle “@tsipras_eu”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of creation</th>
<th>January 15, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tweets</td>
<td>2,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>304,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Twitter facts about Alexis Tsipras (English). 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/tsipras_eu

Greece has always been comparatively late on the use of political marketing, mainly for historical and political reasons. For example, partly because the country was under a dictatorship in the late ’60s, early ’70s, or because of the state-owned television stranglehold. In the last decade, these long-established habits have matured, and politicians, as well as political parties, have started using new media and internet to adapt their communication to a more modern system. “Political issues ‘Americanized’ and the focus turned to individual candidates; furthermore, the focus started being on their personal characteristics rather than their ideology” (Markaki, n.d., p. 4-5).

Alexis Tsipras, when he first appeared as a potential candidate for the prime minister post, was younger than most politicians, he also had an easy, straight to the point language without abandoning a certain linguistic cleverness. Besides, he brought new ideas and concept to the dusty political debate table. All of these points, and an abundance more put him in the spotlight. Tsipras “used innovative techniques and tools of political marketing to promote himself and to attract voters” (Markaki, n.d., p. 11).
A good example of a peculiar use of Twitter in the case of Greek politics, is the one Alexis Tsipras and Yanis Varoufakis (the then minister of finance) made during the Greek crisis, which they live-tweeted. They dealt with social media very cleverly. For instance, the two men manipulated subtweets skilfully (Parkinson, 2015) As a reminder, this is the equivalent of talking behind someone’s back in real life, but really publicly. It is talking about someone either by naming them, but not @ing them, or without naming them while making it clear whom you speak about. The two Greek representatives managed to throw shade at the Troika or at other EU politicians. Furthermore, Alexis Tsipras tweeted from some relevant EU meetings or worked with the social platform to announce the July referendum.

The results of the Greek bailout referendum were 61% against austerity and 39% supporting it. Mr. Tsipras however, decided to ignore those results (Matsa, 2015). As noticed earlier, Twitter is an important tool to rally and convince people, including (or especially) in politics. Tsipras exploited it as a tool to keep his citizens informed and hold pressure on the future deal (Boyle, 2015). Greece organised the referendum on the 6th of July 2015. On the 12th, the Greek prime minister accepted the bailout against better judgment, and against the referendum’s results. Greek and international Twitter instantly went crazy, tweeting with the hashtags #ThisIsACoup or #TsiprasLeaveEUSummit (Papapostolou, 2015). However, European Union office-bearers realised the power the two Greeks ministers had and decided to strike back. For example, Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission started tweeting about the topic as well, giving his arguments and details about the conversation that was happening in the EU about the Greek crisis.

On top of the Twitter communication surrounding the Greek crisis, Tsipras also communicates from time to time with the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, through the social media. This happens from his English-speaking account. For instance, he referred to Turkish pilots invading the Greek airspace and shooting down a Russian plane (The Associated Press, 2015). The tweets, which were directed at Turkey, were shortly deleted from Tsipras’ Twitter account afterward (Noack, 2015). According to Greek officials, those tweets should not have been sent and they were deleted from his English-speaking account, but their translations were left public on his Greek Twitter a bit longer. The content of the tweets was later discussed between the two leaders during a private meeting (Chadwick, 2015).
2.3 The Case of France and its President, Emmanuel Macron

Some facts about Mr. Macron and his Twitter activity:

Emmanuel Macron manages one Twitter account. It is named “Emmanuel Macron” and uses the handle “@EmmanuelMacron”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of creation</th>
<th>October 20, 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>French (now and then English, German and Armenian translations of French tweets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tweets</td>
<td>7,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followers</td>
<td>3,384,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Twitter facts about Emmanuel Macron. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

E. Macron’s account was created in 2013. Since then, he tweeted more than 6600 times. Since he was elected president in 2107, he tweeted even proportionally more, around 3000 times. This means, he posted more than the “tweeter in chief”, Donald Trump. When it comes to his Twitter use, Emmanuel Macron says he does not tweet himself or does not follow people personally, considering it is incompatible with his governance. He thinks he needs some distance in order to work properly. Reacting constantly and in the heat of the moment is not healthy in politics according to the French president. He highlights the idea that he needs fact checking, time and analysis before he communicates on any topic. He says his reaction is also the presidential reaction, and hence cannot be his own, and cannot be later downplayed (LCI, 2018). Usually, what one can find on his Twitter account is communication about the president’s national and
international visits, speeches, reactions on international matters, and details on his politics (Beuth, 2017).

Each statesman or woman clearly has their own media strategy, including journalistic media, but more specifically for this research: social media strategy. In the case of the French president, he wants to prioritise his communication on his own social media, rather than speak to journalists. He confirmed it himself: “Journalists do not interest me. It is the French people who interest me”. This is a strong statement in a country where presidents were historically always inclined to openly speak to the media (Randall, 2017). This attitude towards the press, TV and radio is a massive shift compared to how Emmanuel Macron and his team interacted with journalists during his presidential campaign (Bock, 2017). In this understanding, the French president does not talk to the press regularly. It was especially the case at the beginning of his mandate. For example, when he is travelling abroad for political reasons, he established he would not comment on French national current events. This is one of his recurring rules. Besides, he settled on not commenting on “daily vagaries” or juridical cases. This results in a rather dire public communication situation. “All channels or nearly all are nowadays cut between the president of the Republic and the journalists” (Louis, 2017). The communication became one-sided, with Emmanuel Macron addressing the traditional media (in occasions such as press conferences etc.), but not answering questions. This does not only concern the president but his whole cabinet as well. This is more or less how the previous North American president, Barack Obama, used to treat the media - in a steadfast, controlled manner. The French president prefers to be in control of what he publishes, hence his deep usage of social media, and image in particular. This is completely the opposite of the last French president, François Hollande, who adored speaking to the press, and actually became close friends with a few journalists during his mandate (Louis, 2017). “Emmanuel Macron is, by far, the president who masters his media intervention strategy the best […]. He works as a CEO does” (Arnaud Benedetti, cited by Werly in 2018). Macron seems to operate media and social media in miscellaneous ways: social media is for his everyday use, and for basic communication, especially to stay in touch with the youth, whereas he nearly only talks to traditional media when there is a crisis to be resolved (Werly, 2018).

Before Emmanuel Macron was president, he was Minister of Economy. At that point, he barely employed social media, even though his ministerial competences did include “numeric matters”. Apparently, he never publicly had an online presence, even before his political career. Some explain this fact saying it is in behalf of his deep sense of privacy. To not be on Twitter for a minister, and a young one at that time, was peculiar (Duplin, 2014). When Macron came
to power, he appeared on Twitter at the same time and instantly gained a great deal of followers. He also adopted subtweet by posting his most famous short message about the Paris Accords on Climate: “Make our planet great again”. He is the most retweeted French person with this tweet. The most reactions to this message came from the US (20%), then France (5%), then the UK (3%). By tweeting this, the president broke the record of French-speaking tweet (Lelièvre for Les échos, 2017). It was retweeted more than 232,000 times (LCI, 2018). However, the official Elysée account (which is separate from the president’s account) is not as busy as it used to be during François Holland’s presidency. Mr. Macron and his communication team do their best to be present on as many communication platforms as they can, involving Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, etc. (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Emmanuel Macron’s employment of Twitter after one year of the presidency has been analysed by Visibrain, a social media watch organisation. He utilises his fair share of the “live” function on various social media, such as Facebook, where it allows him to directly answer questions from his citizens (Le denn, 2017). Additionally, Emmanuel Macron often uses Periscope through Twitter to live stream his speeches and press conferences (Twiplomacy, 2017).

Emmanuel Macron has been talked about in more than 44 million tweets worldwide. People do not hesitate to ask him about his politics and new projects on Twitter (Visibrain, 2018). Not to mention, on a lighter note, people seem to take interest in a selection of his linguistic expressions which get retweeted easily, such as “poudre de perlimpinpin” (snake oil) or “carabistouille” (non-sense) (Visibrain, 2018).

2.4 The Case of Germany and its Chancellor, Angela Merkel

In general, the German population does not use Twitter extremely often. Germany is the 31st country in the Twitter use ranking (59 million tweets per year come from this country and there are only four million Twitter accounts registered in Germany. As Redek and Godnov mentioned in their 2017 study, “while social media are popular across the EU, they are least popular in Germany and Austria and in most of Italy and Greece” (p. 693).

The German head of state, Angela Merkel, does not have an official account herself (The Economist, 2013). On the other hand, at times, she adopts it, through her communication aides, to check Donald Trump’s profile for instance. She says that media cover enough of what leaders say on Twitter for her not need to operate it herself (Associated Press, 2017). She adds she does not wish to create a Twitter account because she will then be compelled to be constantly active on it and she prefers giving this communication job to her government’s spokesman.
Accordingly, when she desires to convey a message to her online audience, her communication team is in charge of making it clear and concise in her behalf (Novinite, 2017). Merkel once communicated through her press secretary’s Twitter (named Steffen Seibert) which was unusual and unexpected compared to the way she usually communicates. After the tweet went live, the German population had questions about the press secretary’s communication. A number of journalists thought that this was a sign from the German government that they were turning to Twitter. Needless to say, “in terms of social media evolutions, the German political system has some catching up to do” (Stein, 2011).

However, Angela Merkel’s team is present on Facebook and Instagram and assures her online presence. She does not recognise the need of having Twitter, especially since it is not the most adopted social media in her nation. In Germany, it is mostly utilised by journalists, as it was in France five years ago. In 2015, only 5% of the German population used Twitter when the worldwide trend was 11% (Le JDD, 2016). There are various reasons why the German population, and Angela Merkel, are not interested in using Twitter as much as the rest of the world seems to be. The justifications for this are cultural rather than technological. To start with, the language barrier is prominent: German is a complex and “long” language that is arduous to use in 140 characters. Additionally, privacy reasons weigh in: in East Germany, before 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Stasi had countless informants spying on the population. Nowadays, Germans are convinced, and rightly so, that Americans snoop on them through electronics (The Economist, 2013). Contradictorily, Facebook is widespread in Merkel’s country. Supposedly this platform is more secure and private.
Chapter Three
Methodology

This research will use content analysis and statistical descriptive analysis as a methodology. Indeed, the best way to compare the way politicians adopt Twitter is to analyse their Twitter production, namely their tweets. In order to be able to compare the three candidates on Twitter, and Merkel off Twitter, we have selected a period of two months of tweeting between the 1st of September, and the 1st of November of the year 2018. For none of the representatives selected was this duration a campaign period or a time of special events. The content should therefore be fairly spread, and not influenced by any special cases. As mentioned earlier, three politicians’ Twitter accounts will be analysed: the Greek prime minister – Alexis Tsipras’s two accounts (an English-speaking account one, and a Greek speaking one), the United-Kingdom’s prime minister – Theresa May, and the French president – Emmanuel Macron. What is more, the lack of Twitter usage from Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, will be touched on in comparison.

In order to achieve stable results, we will base this research mainly on the technique applied by Noa Aharony in her research paper “Twitter use by three political leaders: an exploratory analysis”. In her dissertation, she proposes to work in two ways: “(1) statistical descriptive analysis; and (2) content analysis” (2012, p. 591). This means that we will first count and gather data allowing us to answer the four major questions we decided to focus on. Once this data has been collected, it will be decisive to analyse it properly using categorisation of the tweets, followers etc., and later, approach the topic through content analysis. The categorisation used
in this paper was inspired by Aharony’s, even though it was correctly adapted to this dissertation’s findings discovered along the way.

We decided to analyse the content surrounding four major questions stated earlier, each of them using either quantitative methods or qualitative methods, or on occasion both were combined.

1) **How often do the chosen politicians tweet (this will include a general context count and a specific period of time count) and how constant are they in their tweeting schedule?**
   This question unequivocally deals with quantitative research in order to be answered. The number of tweets is analysed, the constancy of tweeting is taken into account, etc. This helps quantify the attitudes of European leaders tweeting in a general context.

2) **How many followers does each leader have? How many people do those heads of state follow, and whom do they follow?**
   This part of the research marries quantitative and qualitative methods in order to best answer the question of who follows the selected subjects, and who they follow. By studying the first half of the question, we adopt quantitative methods, whereas, the second part applies a rather qualitative method, classifying the chosen statesmen and women in categories, and analysing their online superficial relationships.

3) **For what reason(s) do the selected politicians tweet? What is their motivation behind this use of Twitter (for example: agenda setting, information, interaction with other elected officials, reaction to current events etc.)?**
   This chapter and this question will mainly involve qualitative research. Indeed, for this one, we investigate why office-bearers tweet. Of course, data is gathered, and tweets are sorted through different categories, but the qualitative aspect of it is trying to find a reason behind the brief online message. This is reached through analysis and thought process rather than through numbers.

4) **What kind of media do politicians share on Twitter (be it pictures, videos, audios, longer texts, links, etc.)? And do they physically appear in the media they share?**
   Once again, this question will best be answered by combining quantitative and qualitative research. By counting the number of each media present, we quantify the question, whereas by investigating and explaining why each politician chooses a favoured media, we work with more of a qualitative research.
Chapter Four
Analysis of the Case Studies, and Potential Answers to the Research Questions:

“The use of Twitter and other social media for political promotion likely depends on the size and characteristics of the target market” (Redek and Godnov, 2017, p. 693).

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the Twitter use of four European leaders and try to point out differences and similarities between them and their Twitter communication strategies. In order to achieve this goal, we prepared four questions that will help approach the topic wholly. Every one of those questions is answered by studying the Twitter posts published by candidates in the September-November period of time.

4.1 The Occurrence of Twitter Usage
To answer the question: “How often do the chosen politicians tweet (this will include a general context count and a specific period of time count) and how constant are they in their tweeting schedule?”

The first aspect scrutinised in this chapter is the occurrence of Twitter usage for each head of state. In order to answer, as you will perceive in the following tables, we first have gathered the number of tweets produced by each representative during the whole period of their Twitter use
(beyond the chosen September-November period). This has been counted in order to have a general context and overview of the leaders Twitter usage.

4.1.1 In a general context:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>No. of tweets</th>
<th>No. of tweeting days (as of 22nd of Nov 2018)</th>
<th>Average No. of tweets per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>1.40 tweet per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>1.23 tweet per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>5,473</td>
<td>2,689</td>
<td>2.04 tweets per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>7,650</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.63 tweet per day (average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>7,731</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>4.16 tweets per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Comparison of Twitter data in a general context. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

As we can observe here, on average, Theresa May, is the politician who tweets the least, with a bit less than a tweet and a half per day. To be fair, she also is the leader who joined Twitter the latest (having only had around 900 days of active tweeting so far). This makes sense if we compare the date when each leader was elected:

- Theresa May was elected as Britain’s prime minister on the 13th of July 2016 (she created her Twitter account less than a month before that, on the 28th of June).
- Alexis Tsipras was elected as Greece’s prime minister on the 25th of January 2015 (he created his first (Greek) Twitter account a full year before being elected, on the 15th of January 2014).
- Emmanuel Macron was elected on the 14th of May 2017 (he created his account nearly four years before that on the 30th of October 2013. As a reminder, Mr. Macron was first working as Deputy Secretary-General of the Élysée, in 2012, followed by his post as Minister of Economy and Finance, in 2014. It is only after that, in 2017, that he became president of the French Republic). Moreover, this Twitter account creation date explains why his number of published tweets is noticeably higher than his homologues. He, however, is on average the most prolific of them when it comes to tweeting.
As complementary information on this topic, it is thought-provoking to inspect what time of the day the selected politicians tweet. For Theresa May, for example, she adopts the blue bird social media mainly on Wednesdays and Mondays, tweeting the most between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on average. This would mean that she addresses her citizens mostly during their office hours.


Emmanuel Macron’s schedule seems to be different. His mornings are uncommunicative when it comes to social media activity, and he seems to prefer communicating on Twitter between noon and 11 p.m. His busiest days are Thursdays, and his quietest are Wednesdays. One of the reasons may be that Wednesday’ mornings are always dedicated to his talks with the prime minister, restricted defence councils and ministers’ councils. On Thursdays however, the French president is often busy visiting places, companies, or taking part in events (Cohen, 2019), which would be prime time to communicate about what he is doing.

When it comes to Alexis Tsipras and his two Twitter accounts, it is significant to compare both differential usages between his English-speaking account and his Greek-speaking one. Here is his daily usage for his Greek-speaking one:
As we can observe, he is not terribly active altogether. When he employs his Greek account, he is busy mostly in the evenings, during a peculiarly condensed period of time. His busiest days are Thursdays in general, while Wednesdays seem to be off days.

Here is Alexis Tsipras’ English-speaking account activity:

Let’s remark that Thursdays are still his busiest days even though the difference with the other days of the week is not as profound as for his Greek-speaking account. It is constructive to point out that the nearly monthly European Councils’ meetings mainly happen on Thursdays (European Council, 2019), which would partly explain why the Greek prime minister tweets most on this day, from both of his accounts.
### 4.1.2 The constancy of Twitter usage

In order to better understand how the chosen politicians utilise of the blue bird’s social media, we need to take into account how constant their usage is. The constancy drastically varies from one political representative to the other as the Table 6 will clarify. The next numbers have been studied taking into account only the chosen period of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>No. of personal tweets</th>
<th>No. of retweets</th>
<th>Total No. of tweets</th>
<th>No. of tweeting days</th>
<th>Average No. of tweets per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76 in September and 84 in October <strong>160 in total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.62 tweets per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26 in September and 3 in October <strong>29 in total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.48 tweet per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 in September and 46 in October <strong>47 in total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.77 tweet per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27 in September and 49 in October <strong>76 in total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.25 tweets per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>136 in September and 93 in October <strong>229 in total</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.75 tweets per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Constancy of the Twitter usage. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron
- Out of 61 days of the chosen period, Theresa May tweeted 53 days (26 in September, and 26 in October, which shows constancy coming from the British prime minister). On her most busy day, she tweeted 18 times (this was on the 29th of October), which rarely happened later or earlier on.

- Alexis Tsipras tweeted (when combining his two accounts) fourteen days out of 61. When looking at both of the account prolificity, the Greek prime minister tweeted 10 days in September and 4 days in October. His most busy day was the 13th of October with 23 tweets in a row (from his Greek-speaking account).

- Emmanuel Macron tweeted 37 days (18 days in September and 18 in October, again proving capable of having a constant way of communicating on Twitter). The day the French president tweeted the most was on the 25th of September, with 36 tweets.

This, in practice, means that the British prime minister, even though she has a lower number of tweets to her credit, is communicating more consistently than the other two statesmen. This allows her to have a more constant discussion or at least communication with the population. Another characteristic to be taken out of the previous table is the way the three selected politicians tweet. We notice that some representatives tend to tweet only their personal thoughts (such as Alexis Tsipras, be it through his Greek-speaking account or his English-speaking one), while others, such as Theresa May, employ the retweet function of Twitter in order to inform people. The retweet allows the person tweeting to share content posted by another user. Mrs. May retweets a great deal of content created by the account @10DowningStreet, the official head of state Twitter account for the United Kingdom or the official Twitter account for the British Conservative Party. Four times out of ten, she shares content created by another account. Coincidently, whenever the British prime minister adopts retweets, it is regularly in order to inform her followers about ongoing policies, about a live stream coming up, etc.

4.2 Followers and Following

To answer the question “How many followers does each leader have? How many people do those heads of state follow, and whom do they follow?”

4.2.1 Number of followers and following

One way to answer this question is to examine the number of followers each candidate has. When compared to each leader’s country population, we can get an idea of what percentage of
the population follows their leader on Twitter (keeping in mind, of course, that among the followers, we find quantities of international individuals who are not part of the national population).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>No. they follow</th>
<th>No. of followers</th>
<th>Country’s Population</th>
<th>% of general population following the politician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>683,336 followers</td>
<td>66,724,375 inhabitants</td>
<td>1,02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>304,822 followers</td>
<td>11,135,290 inhabitants</td>
<td>2,74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>517,499 followers</td>
<td>11,135,290 inhabitants</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>310,321 followers</td>
<td>11,135,290 inhabitants</td>
<td>2,79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>3,384,497 followers</td>
<td>65,331,295 inhabitants</td>
<td>5,18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Number of following and followers in comparison to the number of citizens. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

As we can notice, Emmanuel Macron is the most popular statesman of the selected heads of state. He has the most followers, reaching over three million followers, while the English-speaking account of Mr. Tsipras is the least followed. This reflects the prominent role leaders such as May or Macron have in the European Union, and how their communication seems to matter to Twitter users in their respective countries but also around the world.

In addition, the number of accounts that each politician follows themselves gives us an appropriate overview of how they work with Twitter. For instance, it is clear that Theresa May does not follow an abundance of Twitter accounts compared to Emmanuel Macron. It is evident that they each have a distinct strategy. One way to notice this is to compare numbers. For example, Theresa May follows only 29 people on her personal account, whereas the official UK prime minister account, using the handle @10DowningStreet, follows 273 people.
It is the exact opposite of what is happening in France where Emmanuel Macron follows 702 people and the official Élysée page only follows 286 people.

It is rather noteworthy to inspect some data visualisations of those numbers in order to better understand how the number of people following the different chosen politicians is diverse. In the following graph, you will observe that the heads of state rank in the following decreasing order when it comes to their numbers of followers: Emmanuel Macron, Theresa May, Alexis Tsipras (Greek-speaking account) and Alexis Tsipras (English-speaking account).
Once it has been visualised, it is striking that Emmanuel Macron has nearly four times the number of followers Theresa May has. Additionally, when researching the interactions each office-bearer gets, we can equally learn from the next graph. “Interactions”, in this context, is understood as the number of likes, shares, and comments a Twitter post receives. In order to render it relevant, the number of interactions is counted per 1000 followers. This way, we can compare the four selected politicians fairly. It is obvious that the British prime minister is getting more reactions from Twitter users than her French or Greek counterparts. Besides, it is striking to observe that Alexis Tsipras is far behind his two European colleagues, having barely any interaction on his Twitter accounts (be it the English-speaking one or the Greek-speaking one). This is an effective way to highlight that Greek politics, as mentioned earlier, is less accustomed than the rest of the European Union political sphere to the use of social media in the case of political communication.
4.2.2 Whom do politicians follow?

The sort of people each statesman's account follows tells us equally about their online communication strategies. We have divided the following accounts into seven categories: charities, national politicians, international representatives, other heads of state, official pages (such as newspapers, political parties, governments, etc.), celebrities, and others (mostly including civilians, ex-politicians, and most regularly journalists).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>Charity</th>
<th>National politician</th>
<th>International politician</th>
<th>Heads of state</th>
<th>Official page</th>
<th>Celebrities</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Whom do the politicians follow. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

It is consequential to point out that Theresa May’s official account only follows 29 other accounts and out of the 29, all of them are charities. This can be understood as a wish to shed light on the work of those charities.
On the other hand, Alexis Tsipras, using his Greek-speaking account has a distinctive strategy: the Greek prime minister barely follows any charities. However, he does follow numerous of his national political peers, mainly from his party, SYRIZA. Furthermore, he follows plenty of official pages, mainly from SYRIZA’s regional cells, other Greek parties or newspapers. He does follow a few journalists, however, much less than his French counterpart. It is worth pointing out that from his Greek-speaking account, Alexis Tsipras only follows four international heads of state’s accounts: his own English-speaking account, the official Greek prime minister account, Emmanuel Macron’s account, and Martin Schultz’s account.

Using his English-speaking account, however, the Greek prime minister follows a few more heads of state’s accounts (nine, including two of his own accounts, two accounts from the European Union officials: Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schultz, plus the leaders of Bolivia, France, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Portugal). He does, however, follow more international political accounts than with his Greek-speaking account, proving an interest towards European Union and world politics.

Emmanuel Macron seems to be willing to show his interest towards international relations, through his Twitter following trend, which is a suitable parallel to his real-life, very active international meetings with heads of state all around the world. The French president follows 35 international leaders’ accounts. The other important number that appears in this part of the
research is the number of journalists and official media accounts he follows (journalists are taken into account in the “other” column and make up the great majority of the 241 accounts counted. Official media pages are counted in “official pages”). We can observe that the journalists and media pages followed by Emmanuel Macron are mainly from France, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The rest of his following is made up by French representatives’ accounts.

4.3 Reasons for Tweeting

To answer the question: “For what reason(s) do the selected politicians tweet? What is their motivation behind this use of Twitter? (for example: agenda setting, information, interaction with other elected officials, reaction to current events etc.).”

In order to answer this question, we have chosen to work with nine general tweet categories, which were partly based on a list of categories applied by Aharony in her study comparing the Twitter use of B. Netanyahu, B. Obama, and D. Cameron, in 2010. Each candidate has preferences when it comes to the topics they express themselves on.
One constant is that none of the politicians, except for an extremely slight exception on Theresa May’s side, decided to practice personalisation to get closer to their citizens and/or audience. That is, at least, during the studied two months period. None of them were taking part in an electoral campaign at the time, consequently, it is understandable that they did not focus on “selling” their person by using personalisation. Theresa May is the only head of state from this research who indulged, in two instances, in making a personal comment, occasionally using humour, in order to promote the image of her being “closer to the people”, or “easy going”. You can observe below both times the British prime minister made use of humour on her Twitter account.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>International relations/visits</th>
<th>Europe/Brexit</th>
<th>Personal information</th>
<th>Statement about</th>
<th>Congratulations</th>
<th>Thanks</th>
<th>Blessings</th>
<th>Comments against opponents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>45/16 0</td>
<td>15/160 9.38%</td>
<td>19/160 11.88%</td>
<td>4/160 2.5%</td>
<td>42/160 26.25%</td>
<td>17/160 10.63%</td>
<td>10/160 6.25%</td>
<td>4/160 2.5%</td>
<td>4/160 2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>0/29 0%</td>
<td>13/29 44.83%</td>
<td>8/29 27.59%</td>
<td>0/29 0%</td>
<td>6/29 20.69%</td>
<td>1/29 3.45%</td>
<td>1/29 3.45%</td>
<td>0/29 0%</td>
<td>0/29 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>3/47 6.38%</td>
<td>2/47 4.26%</td>
<td>13/47 27.66%</td>
<td>0/47 0%</td>
<td>26/47 55.32%</td>
<td>0/47 0%</td>
<td>0/47 0%</td>
<td>0/47 0%</td>
<td>4/47 8.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>3/76 3.95%</td>
<td>15/76 19.74%</td>
<td>21/76 27.63%</td>
<td>0/76 0%</td>
<td>32/76 42.11%</td>
<td>1/76 1.32%</td>
<td>1/76 1.32%</td>
<td>0/76 0%</td>
<td>4/76 5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>22/22 9</td>
<td>78/229 34.06%</td>
<td>26/229 11.35%</td>
<td>0/229 0%</td>
<td>92/229 40.17%</td>
<td>2/229 0.87%</td>
<td>7/229 3.06%</td>
<td>1/229 0.44%</td>
<td>1/229 0.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, she tweeted “Get in touch if you need any tips... #Strictly” when commenting on the TV show performance on BBC Strictly Come Dancing.

She then also tweeted “CPC18 begins with a cup of tea with Ruth Davidson” while welcoming the guest in her office.

As explained by Meeks (citing Van Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer) in 2016, personalisation of office-bearers can be explained through three components:

- Individualisation: when the media does not focus on the political parties anymore, but rather on the individual politicians.
- Privatisation: when the policymaker is not recognised as a public servant anymore, but rather as a private individual or citizen.

- Emotionalization: when the politician’s feelings and emotions are put forward in the communication strategy.

“Being likeable is a key attribute for candidates. Likeable candidates are praised, and unlikeable candidates struggle” (Meeks, 2016, p. 20). In the case of Theresa May, for the two examples cited earlier, she is using emotionalization to reach her public, and make herself seem more human, more fun, and light-hearted. Neither Emmanuel Macron nor Alexis Tsipras adopted the personalisation technique to get closer to their followers. However, this is only a limited use of humour and personalisation coming from Theresa May and is in no way a standard behaviour coming from her communication team.

Among the studied candidates, the British prime minister is also the one who adopts Twitter the most to congratulate, thank or bless various people. Proportionally, she does not utilise that function often, although she does it noticeably more than her homologues.


“Congratulations to Paul Davis who has today been elected Leader of the Conservative in the Welsh Assembly. There has never been a more vital time for us to hold the failing Labour-run Welsh Government to account. I know he’ll do a fantastic job speaking up for the Welsh people”

“A fantastic opening to CPC18 – thank you Andy for the warm welcome to have put together an excellent programme for the coming days.”


“I would like to wish Jewish people across the United Kingdom and around the world a happy, peaceful and prosperous Rosh Hashanah. As the Jewish New Year begins, I want to renew my unwavering vow to stand by our Jewish community now and for the years to come.”

When we scrutinise a broader Twitter use style, we can observe that the British prime minister tends to work with her account mainly to inform her people, her followers. She takes advantage of the public platform by posting information about politics going forward, numbers etc. This often happens, as mentioned earlier, when she employs the retweet function.

In Alexis Tsipras’ case (when using his English-speaking account), it is clear that his social media profile is mostly employed to communicate about his international visits. The most use he makes is to post about international leaders he has met or international visits he has made.

“Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, at Maximos Mansion.”

Not to mention he is the head of state that communicates the most about Europe (at least when investigating the percentages). This may be attributed to the fact that the English-speaking account of the Greek prime minister is mainly dedicated to his European Union related business.
“The EU’s failure to provide democratic & functional responses to modern challenges, will result in the triumph of chauvinism and the revival of nationalist antagonisms. It will transform Europe into a fragmented continent, without unity, consistency, and prospect.”

This is not the case for his Greek-speaking profile where only 4% of his content is dedicated to international matters. Indeed, when he addresses his people, he prefers highlighting national topics, and comments on what is happening in the Greek parliament more for instance, often mentioning his own party in the hashtags.

“Από την 21η Αυγούστου και έπειτα, ανοίξαμε μια νέα σελίδα. Με στόχο να αποδείξουμε ότι η Ελλάδα της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης, του σεβασμού στα εργασιακά δικαιώματα, της ισότητας, της ισονομίας, δεν είναι ουτοπία. #ΣΥΡΙΖΑ”

(Translation: “From August 21 onwards, we opened a new page. In order to prove that Greece's social justice, respect for labour rights, equity and equality, is not a utopia.”)

Emmanuel Macron has a peculiar style of tweeting that gives the impression that his posts are actually excerpts of his previous speeches. He often tweets multiple times in a row about the same topic, trying this way to subvert the 280 characters limits. One of the specific techniques he practices correspondingly is to translate a number of his tweets in different languages,
depending on the topic of his posts and who he addresses. For example, when the French-
Armenian singer Charles Aznavour died, the French president paid homage to him by
expressing his respect in Armenian.

(Translation: “Through Charles Aznavour, it is today an opportunity to remind what we, as a nation, owe to all
those Armenians who, fleeing their nation, came to grow old in ours.”)

### 4.4 Media Used on Twitter

To answer the question: “What kind of media do the politicians share on Twitter (be it pictures,
videos, audios, longer texts, links, etc.)? And do they physically appear in the media they
share?”

We examined the sort of media employed by the three policymakers, expecting to notice a trend
appearing for each one of them. The posts from the two months period were sorted in four
media categories. Moreover, the tweets not displaying any media use were likewise counted.
4.4.1 Types of media used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>No. of tweets</th>
<th>No. of tweets with media</th>
<th>No. of tweets without media</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>Live video</th>
<th>Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.75%</td>
<td>96.25%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
<td>53.13%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>4.38%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>29/29</td>
<td>24/29</td>
<td>5/29</td>
<td>17/29</td>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>0/29</td>
<td>3/29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>47/47</td>
<td>14/47</td>
<td>13/47</td>
<td>11/47</td>
<td>2/47</td>
<td>1/47</td>
<td>0/47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>76/76</td>
<td>38/76</td>
<td>38/76</td>
<td>28/76</td>
<td>6/76</td>
<td>1/76</td>
<td>3/76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>229/229</td>
<td>133/229</td>
<td>96/229</td>
<td>50/229</td>
<td>53/229</td>
<td>29/229</td>
<td>1/229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.08%</td>
<td>41.92%</td>
<td>41.92%</td>
<td>21.83%</td>
<td>23.14%</td>
<td>12.66%</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Types of media used on Twitter. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

The only politician who uses more tweets with media than without is Theresa May. 94% of her content is complemented by a picture, a video, a link or shares a live video footage. Here, you will get numerous examples of her mediatic tweets’ application:

“As we negotiate a bold new partnership with the European Union, we will continue vital work at home to build an economy that works for everyone. (+ Facebook link)”
The English-speaking account of Alexis Tsipras also uses a considerable number of pictures while nevertheless keeping away from video or live-streaming. Moreover, the lack of media coming from his Greek-speaking account brings his general statistics down.

For Theresa May, her predilection media is the adoption of pictures, with more than 50% of her tweets being accompanied by a photo. Despise that, she does not exploit live videos extensively, compared to the French president for instance. Indeed, Emmanuel Macron employs the use of
the live video feature extendedly, not hesitating to post live footage of his press conferences or public speeches abroad or in France.

4.4.2 Physical presence in the shared media

Politics and narcissism, or the use of one self’s pictures have always been linked. The political posters expose the statesmen’s face, mainstream media constantly show the selected leaders appearing at events, and the more the politician displays his or her face, the better the public will recognise and remember them when election time comes. This is why we decided to investigate this aspect of Twitter communication as well. What part of the media posted on Twitter contains a picture or video of the candidate tweeting?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the politician</th>
<th>Media with the politician in frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Media without the politician in frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angela Merkel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>39 in September &amp; 47 in October 86 in total</td>
<td>86/148 58.11%</td>
<td>28 in September &amp; 34 in October 62 in total</td>
<td>62/148 41.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (English)</td>
<td>22 in September 1 in October 23 in total</td>
<td>23/23 100%</td>
<td>0 in September 0 in October</td>
<td>0/23 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Greek)</td>
<td>1 in September 9 in October 10 in total</td>
<td>10/13 76.92%</td>
<td>0 in September 3 in October 3 in total</td>
<td>3/13 23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis Tsipras (Both)</td>
<td>23 in September 10 in October 33 in total</td>
<td>33/36 91.67%</td>
<td>0 in September 3 in October 3 in total</td>
<td>3/36 8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>76 in September 33 in October 109 in total</td>
<td>109/130 83.85%</td>
<td>8 in September 13 in October 21 in total</td>
<td>21/130 16.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Is the politician in frame or not. 2018-2019. Source: twitter.com/Theresa_may, twitter.com/atsipras, twitter.com/Tsipras_eu & twitter.com/EmmanuelMacron

By observing the content of the media each office-bearer posts, it is noticeable that all of them prefer posting content which focuses on their person. For example, all the pictures that Alexis Tsipras posted on his English-speaking Twitter account feature him, in one shape or another. Be it in an international meeting, shaking hands or in a group picture, etc. not one picture or video posted on that platform is missing his presence. He does apply this technique a little bit less on his Greek-speaking account, where we already observed that he employs fewer media in general. On that account, only three-quarters of his media content has his person present in the frame. The rest might be focused on more informational matter for instance.
"Η Αριστερά, οι τέχνες και ο πολιτισμός, έχουν μια σχέση διαχρονική και αλληλένδετη. Οι νέοι και οι νέες της Αριστεράς, με οδηγούς τη δημιουργικότητα και τις ιδέες τους, ανοίγουν και φέτος τις πόρτες του #Sputnik_fest2018 στο Άλσος Στρατού στο Γουδή.

(Translation: “The Left, the arts and culture, have a relationship that is timeless and interdependent. The youth and young people of the Left, with their creativity and ideas, are opening this year's doors # Sputnik_fest2018 in the Army Grove in Goudi.”)

When the results of both of his accounts are merged, Alexis Tsipras is the most “narcissistic” of all the politicians analysed in this dissertation. In the second place, we find Emmanuel Macron, the French president, with 84% of his media-post showing his face or his person on a picture or on a video. When he does not appear on posted media, it is often due to the fact that the media shared comes from a retweet or is an archive picture.

For example, here, Emmanuel Macron retweeted a post from Malala, not showing his face/person.
“Let’s prepare girls today for the jobs of tomorrow – and reduce the global pay gap. Read @malalafund’s new report (+ the fund’s website link) #FullForce”

Moreover, the French president used pictures not depicting himself when he paid homage to security and emergency services. However, that was an exception compared to the rest of his Twitter habits.
Le visage de la République qui n’a plus peur de rien parce qu’il a une vie à sauver, qui ne craint plus parce qu’on doit faire et qui a permis de sauver tant de vies il y a une semaine lors des inondations dans l’Aude”
(Translation: “The face of the Republic who is not afraid of anything anymore because there is a life to save, who does not fear because we must act and who enabled the saving of so many lives a week ago when the flooding in the Aude department occurred.”)

Theresa May is the one policymaker to stand out on this part of this paper’s analysis. Nearly half of her tweets featuring any kind of media does not picture her person. She works with pictures and brief videos rather often when it comes to educating or informing her followers, however, those regularly do not show her face.


“Nothing can take away the distress and trauma of being a victim of crime, but ensuring people get the support they need as they rebuild their lives is vital.” That’s why we’re launching the first ever cross-government Victims Strategy” (+ Conservatives’ website link).

She also takes advantages of picture posting without herself present on Twitter to wish happy holidays or bless religious events periodically.

“I would like to wish all muslims welcoming the #HijriNew Year a very peaceful and prosperous season.” – PM @Theresa_May

Another reason for her to tweet a picture, a video, or a link without her presence in it is to congratulate a colleague or a celebrity on a milestone.


“Since attending their opening in 2000 local PM @GregHands has been a proud supporter of @BCHLondon, based in his Fulham constituency. I wish them well as they continue their vital work supporting women through breast cancer treatment.”
Chapter Five
Discussion About the Results and Findings:

“More and more political actors utilize these digital tools as an enhanced possibility to address voters and to communicate key messages, especially during times of elections. Social media have become integrated parts of professionalized and strategic political campaigning communication.” (Anastasiadis, Einspänner & Thimm, 2016)

This research paper has been structured around four sub-questions aiming to answer the main research question: “in what ways, and why do European leaders differ or coincide in their use of Twitter? The case of Germany’s Angela Merkel, United-Kingdom’s Theresa May, Greece’s Alexis Tsipras and France’s Emmanuel Macron”. In this last chapter, we will observe the answers produced by the content and analysis statistical descriptive analysis of the four chosen politicians’ Twitter activity during the period of time included between the 1st of September 2018 and the 1st of November 2018.

5.1 Summary of the Results Concerning the First Question
The first sub-question that we contemplated concerns the occurrence and consistency of tweeting for each leader. The leading findings that emerge from this first part of the research are that, in a general context, the French president of the Republic has been the most prolific Twitter user out of the four chosen representatives. This is the case in a general context, but also in the chosen period of time. Currently, the second place for tweeting the most in the last
few months is given to Theresa May, and far behind comes Alexis Tsipras with his Greek account, and his English account.

When it comes to constancy, Theresa May is the most consistent Twitter user, having tweeted 53 days out of 61. Emmanuel Macron comes next. Even though he produces more tweets, he tends to tweet abundantly on a specific date and thenceforth stays silent for a few days afterwards. Finally, the Greek minister comes far behind, with a few weeks where he only tweeted once, and otherwise some specific days where he is much more prolific on Twitter.

Those results show a different aim coming from different politicians. Theresa May seems to be willing to stay in constant touch with her voters and her citizens, while Emmanuel Macron is satisfied having a heavy yet sporadic presence on Twitter. However, as mentioned earlier, Emmanuel Macron is trying to loosen his ties to the traditional media in order to communicate more independently to the French population and the rest of the world, without mainstream media interfering. Alexis Tsipras does not show a specific strategy when it comes to social media or at least Twitter consistency. The Greek statesman seems to adopt Twitter for extremely punctual occasions, neglecting his various accounts the rest of the time.

5.2 Summary of the Results Concerning the Second Question

The second aspect of the three politicians’ Twitter communication that we pondered on was the followers and following habits. One of the main results that came out of this analysis is that Emmanuel Macron is the most followed European leader, in the context of this research, but also in a more global context (Twiplomacy’s 2018 report). Far behind, we find Mrs. May and Mr. Tsipras (on either of his accounts). If the only people following those leaders were coming from their respective countries, Emmanuel Macron would have more than 5% of all of his citizens following him on Twitter. One interpretation of these numbers is to mention that Mr. Macron emerged as a promising leader for the European Union, as well as for his own country after he was elected, promoting a supposedly deeply European agenda. This might partly explain his popularity on social media.

When considering the users the three leaders follow, we notice that Theresa May hardly follows any accounts and that all of them are charities. It is a positive sign that the British prime minister is trying to promote those associations and does not use Twitter as way to get information from other users. Emmanuel Macron is rather generous with his follows and has a variety of accounts he wants to keep in touch with. This goes from world leaders to independent journalists or even
citizens. Alexis Tsipras and his two accounts are more focused on following politicians’ and ‘political parties’ official pages.

5.3 Summary of the Results Concerning the Third Question

The third question we asked ourselves was to know why candidates were using Twitter. Mr. Macron and Mr. Tsipras seem to prefer reacting to current events on the blue bird’s social media. They barely employ it for other reasons (such as congratulations, thanks or blessings). On the other hand, Mrs. May seems interested in Twitter and its ability to share information with her citizens. She accepts this platform mainly to educate her followers on current policies or on what 10 Downing Street or the Conservatives are doing. In this context, there is barely any use of personalisation, which would ideally include appearances from the leaders’ families, humour or personal notes. Theresa May was the only one to adopt it very discreetly and rarely used during the analysed two months period.

5.4 Summary of the Results Concerning the Fourth Question

The last question we chose to ask, was to know what kind of media the European leaders adopted in order to communicate to their respective audiences. Alexis Tsipras distinguishes himself from the rest by his lack of media use on Twitter. He barely showcases any media at all on his Greek account, and when he does adopt them (on either one of his accounts), it is generally by posting a picture. Theresa May, however, is using the exact opposite technique. More than 93% of her tweets contain some kind of media, which is more attractive to online users. Users tend to be more willing to read the caption accompanying a picture, or to learn about a new policy by watching a video. Emmanuel Macron is a balanced combination of the two strategies, punctually preferring the sobriety of a bare text, other times choosing to add a picture, a video, or his predilection online tool: the live video stream to allow his citizens to keep in touch with everything he is taking part in.

When it comes to the three selected politicians appearing in the media they post, Alexis Tsipras is the most “narcissistic” of them, with barely any picture or video not including himself in the frame. Emmanuel Macron comes close second, with a majority of shots containing his face. Finally, Theresa May is rather balanced with less than 60% of her media content showcasing her own image. She is less shy about posting media for the sake of information, or in order to put other people in the spotlight.
5.5 Overview
To summarise we will examine each European head of state individually, in order to try and understand the rough idea of their political social media strategy, or at least their political Twitter strategy. Theresa May seems to go for the rational, steady and constant approach. Not taking copious risks while staying in continual touch with her citizens and followers, at least online. She employs a great deal of media in order to captivate her audience and inform it as best as she can. She does not always put her person in the centre of attention by posting media where she is the focal point.
Alexis Tsipras is juggling with his two official accounts in order to cover different topics and reach different audiences. From his Greek-speaking account, the Greek prime minister is rather conservative in his strategy. He does not adopt Twitter extendedly, and when he does, he barely uses media and keeps his comments mainly to national politics. From his English-speaking account, the Greek head of state seems to be a bit more open to the employment of social media, posting pictures and videos more often, and commenting on worldwide politics or events.
Emmanuel Macron has a specific strategy. Indeed, as mentioned before, the French president started his mandate by trying to considerably cut traditional ties with mainstream media and addressing his citizens directly on social media. Even though that was his plan, after having analysed a selection of his Twitter use, we notice that this aim has not completely been reached. On the plus side, the French president does make extended use of the live stream Twitter option, enabling a willing audience to follow his political discourses or actions. On the negative side, the president addresses his followers mostly by reacting on current events and not taking advantage of the social media platform to inform his citizens or truly interact with them. This, unfortunately, goes for all three analysed office-bearers in this paper.

5.6 Recommendations
This research paper does not pretend to have covered every aspect of various social media, or specifically Twitter, political communication strategies for the four chosen European leaders. We are aware that some aspects could be scrutinised deeper, or that a number of questions are left unanswered. It could be possible to remedy this if a team of academics dedicated their time to those questions and if all the appropriate analytic tools were available.
To begin with, it would be enlightening to investigate who the audience of each politician is. Indeed, by being aware of the age, the nationality, the social class all their followers come from,
we could extract more information regarding the communication strategies that the four European heads of state and their teams have applied to their use of Twitter as well as other social media platforms.

An additional aspect that would have been enlightening to add to this research, would have been the study of the hashtag and tagging system. By looking into which policymakers use it, and how they apply it, we could better understand their global social media strategies.

Moreover, if we had had the time and resources, it would have been fascinating to analyse a wider period of time of tweeting. Indeed, analysing how each one of those cases acts on Twitter during an electoral campaign, for example, it would add valuable information to this paper. Undeniably, it is significantly likely during an electoral campaign period that officials call on more drastic techniques such as personalisation and a better-assumed use of opponent bashing.

The findings that have been put forward in this chapter are valid, however, as mentioned earlier, it is only by analysing a broader and more complete slice of the European leaders Twitter usage that the findings would benefit a better understanding of new and various social media political communication strategies.

It has become clear throughout the research that this analysis will not ever be truly complete for three major reasons. First of all, we only studied four European leaders in this paper, and a broader, more complete analysis of different leaderships from countries of the European Union would be beneficial to a better understanding of the political communication strategies in the case of Twitter. Second, there are abundant aspects of a social media political strategy that have been left out. For example, we did not analyse the language chosen by the selected heads of state. It would be captivating to investigate the vocabulary and level of French, English, and Greek adopted by the European leaders. This would tell us if they choose an informal or formal language when they speak to their online followers. Comparing this language to the one they use in their public speeches would also add to the results. And third, it was quite complicated to find out relevant information about who is directing the Twitter communication (specifically) for those politicians. Who is behind the tweeting keyboard? We can safely assume that a community manager is in charge of country leaders’ accounts, and that most of the time, Macron, May and Tsipras do not tweet their messages themselves. It would be relevant and riveting to find out more about those community managers, where they studied the art of online political communication and what their role actually consists of. Those would be the three recommendations we have for future researchers that would be interested in looking deeper into the topic.
Conclusion:

Twitter has undoubtedly entered political communication at full speed a bit more than a decade ago. Nowadays, it is fully part of any politician’s communication strategy, with some outstanding exceptions, such as Angela Merkel. This, however, does not mean that the traditional communication plans are obsolete, or that they can simply be applied to social media as they are. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and other online media each have a particular edge that can be used by representatives to reach their audience, their voters. In order to do this the best they can, they, accompanied by their team, should set up a specific strategy that fits their personality and their goals. To attract attention, candidates must reach a balanced mix of personal information, educational content and appeal to the heart of the people. Some statesmen and women get close to such an equilibrated communication. Although, rare are those who fully master the art of creating an informal dialog with their citizens and the rest of the world. It is now evident that those specific strategies are impacted by personality (such as being an introvert or an extrovert), background (education, family or wealth), age (influencing the social media approach and communication in general), political affiliations, ethnicity (allows different politicians to get in touch more easily with various parts of the population), nationality (and hence country of origin of the representative, traditions and culture of the population when it comes to political communication etc.), language (such as demonstrated with the example of the German language, not fitting the Twitter mould quite well) and so many additional concepts. This is the main reason why this research is a good start for a broader, deeper study of European
leaders and their communication, not only for the sheer interest of it, but also to picture how each policymaker perceives their citizens, and how they should address them on social media. All in all, the analysis of those three Twitter case studies, accompanied by a “non-Twitter” case, sheds light on the differences and similarities that can be found in European leadership and their online communication. It is compelling, for once, to focus the research on the old continent, avoiding the more dramatic and arguably entertaining Twitter usage currently happening across the Atlantic Ocean.

It is equally riveting to focus on how candidates choose to balance their relationships to traditional media and social media. As Aharony pointed out in her 2012 paper, “political leaders use Twitter, they use a channel that is not filtered by local or national media, thus they are able to convey their own unique agendas without being censored or filtered. […] they release many tweets categorised as “information about” and “statements about”, expressing their own independent opinions concerning various topics” (p. 600). We can absolutely observe this when it comes to the three Twitter oriented leaders. Even with Alexis Tsipras, who is still traditionally mainstream media oriented, we notice that he comments on events and political decisions.

To be able to round up the topic, it would be rewarding to start looking into how politicians connect and interact with their citizens, or with the world population. According to the papers we have analysed and dissected so far, this specific characteristic that social media has to connect the masses to their elected leaders is not fully taken advantage of, or sometimes not at all. One way some policymakers, such as Theresa May and Emmanuel Macron do choose in order to open more of a discussion on Twitter, is the live-stream of their public appearances. However, they do not answer direct questions from the viewers even though such programmes are created to enable direct discussion between live-streamers and audience. This type of communicational behaviour has been neatly described by Alonso-Muñoz, Marcos-Garcia, and Casero-Ripollés) “in practice, political leaders do not exploit the interactive potential of Twitter because they do not consider this social media to be a channel to dialogue with the citizenry” (2016, p. 86). A good example of what a two-way Twitter communication could look like, was Barack Obama in 2012, when he tweeted “Hey, everyone: I'll be taking your questions online today. Ask yours here: http://OFA.BO/gBof44 -bo” (Barack Obama, Twitter) motivating people to interact directly with him.

It is undeniable that more communicational political changes will arise, on and off social media, and that soon the political communication strategies will be revolutionised once again by a new
tool or platform. It is strategic to keep investigating and intellectually criticising the system in order to stay relevant and informed as professionals, but equally, as citizens.
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