digitaldaya

Research Note: World Leaders on Twitter Ranking Report

December 2015

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World Leaders on Twitter

How heads of government engage their citizenry on the Web

he **Digital Policy Council's (DPC)** research continues to present analyses on world leaders and institutions of government employing social media outlets to discover how they govern and connect with their citizenry. This research note provides an update to the ranking of heads of state engaged on the social media website Twitter.com as tracked by the DPC since 2009¹.

Updates to World Rankings

New Twitter Adoption By World Leaders Stagnates After Two Years of Flat Growth

In 2015, the Digital Policy Council observed only a minuscule growth in the number of governments embracing social media; reinforcing the fact that adoption continues to stall significantly.



Trends: World Leaders Who Tweet

¹ The DPC has been tracking this activity since 2009. Reports include: <u>REAL LEADERS TWEET</u> December 2009, <u>WORLD LEADERS ON TWITTER: RANKING REPORT</u> October 2010, <u>WORLD LEADERS ON TWITTER: RANKING REPORT</u> August 2011, <u>WORLD LEADERS ON TWITTER: RANKING REPORT</u> December 2012, <u>WORLD LEADERS ON TWITTER: RANKING REPORT</u> December 2013 and <u>TOP 10</u> <u>RANKINGS 2014 - WORLD LEADERS WHO TWEET</u> December 2014.

Analyses as of December 2015 reveals that 83% heads of state are active on Twitter. A total of 139 world leaders out of 167 countries² had accounts on Twitter set up in their personal name or through an official government office. This represents a growth of 2.2% over 2014. In 2011, only 69 out of 164³ countries had embraced Twitter, but in 2012, the Digital Policy Council observed a tremendous growth (78% increase) in the number of governments embracing Twitter. Despite the fact that Twitter has altered the political landscape, in 2015, there remain leaders in government who have yet to harness the benefits of a platform that grants direct interaction with their constituents.

91.5% of the World's Democracies Tweet

The DPC's analyses indicated that 86 countries out of the 139 tweeting countries were classified as fully democratic⁴. With a total of 94 countries in the world classified as fully democratic ⁵, this signifies approximately 91.5% of the leaders of the world's democracies tweet. In

DEMOCRACIES NOT TWEETING

- I. Austria President Heinz Fischer
- 2. Comoros President Ikililou Dhoinine
- 3. Guyana President Donald Ramotar and Prime Minister Sam Hinds
- 4. Lesotho Prime Minister Tom Thabane
- 5. Niger Prime Minister Mahamadou Issoufou and President Brigi Rafini
- 6. Solomon Islands Prime Minster Manasseh Sogavare
- 7. Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou and Premier Mao Chi-kuo

contrast, only 64.4% of non-democratic nations have leaders that tweet.

There are only 7 democracies in the world whose leaders are not tweeting to their citizenry down from 10 in 2014. The three deomcracies moving off the "shame list" from last year include Denmark, Nicaragua, and Mauritius. The current "shame list" is delineated above.

Further, the DPC's analyses reveals that 87.3% of the countries in the world considered politically stable have leaders that tweet, reconfirming that heads of state who are confident in their leadership role and assured of their political legitimacy are most comfortable with social media -- regardless of the form of government whether they serve in democracies, monarchies, or autocracies. In contrast, only 61.2% of politically fragile nations have leaders that tweet.

The political leadership of the most fragile nations, or those with a high degree of political instability did not maintain or initiate accounts due to lack of resources, poor public response or a limited understanding of how they could employ Twitter effectively as a means of strategic communication.

² The DPC uses for its research the 167 countries (as of 2013) in the Polity dataset of political regimes tracked by the U.S. government's Political Instability Task Force. The Polity dataset monitors countries with populations over 500,000 and provides coding on the types of government and political stability of these countries.

³ Prior to 2013, the Polity dataset contained 164 countries.

⁴ Countries with a Polity Score greater than or equal to 6. Polity score measures degree of democracy on a

²¹ point scale (-10 to +10) ranging from autocracy to fully institutionalized democracy with the range being -10 to -6 "Autocracy", -5 to +5 "Anocracy", +6 to +10 "Democracy".

⁵ Polity dataset contains 94 fully democratic nations and 73 anocracies / autocracies (non-democratic nations)

Noteworthy Changes in the Top 10

The heads of state in the Top 10 list shift since 2014 and one new entrant, the Indonesian President, Joko Widodo, takes the #10 spot.





U.S. President Obama continues to

reign supreme amongst all world leaders, with over 67 million followers, having added a whopping 16 million followers in the last year alone.

In May 2015, after six years of being elected as President, Obama finally got his own Twitter handle @POTUS. Alex Wall, Deputy Director of Online Engagement at the White House explained, "President Obama is committed to making his Administration the most open and participatory in history, and @POTUS will give Americans a new venue to engage on the issues that matter most to them."

However, the official twitter handle, @BarackObama remains his primary account and serves as a powerful mouthpiece for his administration - from promoting policy updates and campaigns to engaging directly with the people of America. The recurrent themes in his tweets in 2015 included: stricter Gun Control regulations, Marriage Equality, Climate Change and Health Care Reforms.



#2 Prime Minister Narendra

Modi of India with nearly 17M followers is firmly rooted

to the second spot, having more than doubled his followers within a year! He is also the third most-followed person on Twitter in India after Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan.

In 2014, Modi used Twitter extensively in his diplomatic efforts to reach out to Fortune500 CEOs, thus giving impetus to his #makeinindia campaign. Even though he continued to receive flak from Twitterati for his frequent trips to countries such as Seychelles, Mongolia, Mauritius, US, UK, UAE and China, he managed to generate positive chatter with his continuous engagement with world leaders and CEOs so much so that his May 2015 selfie with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang was considered the most-powerful selfie in the world. The photo was shared over 5000 times on Twitter and it registered 31.85 million hits on the Chinese micro-blogging site, Weibo.

From congratulating the Indian cricket team to promoting his pet campaign #SelfieWithDaughter that took Twitterati by storm, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the most talked about person on Twitter in India, according to data compiled by social media analytics firm Blueocean Market Intelligence.

#3 President Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan of Turkey held on to the #3 spot even as

he amassed 7.5 M followers and continued his love-hate relationship with Twitter.

In Oct 2015, a court in Turkey issued an arrest warrant on Friday for the editor-in-chief of the English-language newspaper Today's Zaman on charges of defaming President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Twitter. On the same day, another Turkish journalist, Necati Doğru, was convicted of insulting Erdoğan and sentenced to 11 months and 20 days in prison.

Previously the President had compared social media to the "murderer's knife", proudly declared he does not "tweet or schmeet" and overseen blanket bans on Twitter. In fact his government had blocked Twitter and YouTube in March 2014 after they were used to spread a torrent of audio recordings implicating the prime minister and his inner circle in an alleged corruption scandal. The ban on social media was however later overturned by the country's top constitutional court.



#4 His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of

Dubai continued to make waves as he climbed up two spots and grew his account by almost 2 million followers in 2015.

"The significance of these (social media) channels lies in their ability to reach out easily to all members of the society through personal devices," he said at a Social Media Influencer Summit, which he convened in 2015 to discuss legislation to insure the "best use of social media platforms."

"It is our duty to help our young people and future generations by building a knowledge platform to protect them from any destructive and negative thoughts that affect their full potential and create constructive paths for Arab societies," he further remarked. His Twitter feed is a testament of his vision for UAE as a pioneering state that believes in, using technology to fuel innovation in every walk of life.

Interestingly, at the second annual Dubai International Art Symposium, thirty artists from all over the world transformed humanitarian tweets by Sheikh Mohammed into works of art, aptly titled 'Coloured Tweets'.

An avid poet, the PM also shares candid moments from his personal life with his fans including tweeting a picture of himself cooking food for his friends during a forest trip.



#5 Mexico's President Enrique

Pena Nieto moved up four spots, further strengthening his

position as the most followed Latin American leader and among the 10 most followed world leaders on Twitter. Although he sends out almost three tweets per day, he's not very conversational as only 2% of these are direct @replies to his followers.

In August 2015, the President got embroiled in a rather 'incon-sockquential' controversy when Twitter exploded over a picture of him running a 10-kilometer road race in Mexico City in which he appeared to be wearing his socks backwards. Matters took a turn for the worse when he decided to clear the air by tweeting a picture of said pair of socks, proving that he hadn't worn them wrong.

Unfortunately for him, this led to even more criticism with journalists pointing out that his administration is more concerned about trivial #sockgate issues rather than discussing crucial topics such as the sharp decline in the nation's peso, the mystery of 43 missing Ayotzinapa students and the daring escape of drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman from Mexico's highest security prison the month before.

Today, Peña Nieto faces dwindling public support halfway through his six-year term. A Reforma.com poll showed that only 34% of Mexicans support him while 64 % oppose him, a historically low level for a Mexican leader.





#6 Russian Prime Minister

Dmitry Medvedev slipped two spots in 2015, despite garnering over 0.5M followers since last year.

His tweets are mostly diplomatic in nature. In a bid to strengthen ties with China, he sent out a series of tweets in Dec 2015, commenting on a positive diplomatic relationship with China and his government's plans to increase mutual trade by \$200 bn by 2020. On the other hand, he took a stern stance with Turkey and tweeted that "No country, especially Russia, can sacrifice security. By 2020, 70 percent of Russian military equipment will have been upgraded." He also criticized Turkey for the downing of a Russian war plane and warned that Turkey's act of aggression "will not go without a response".

Interestingly, Barack Obama (@BarackObama) mutually follows only three other world leaders, namely Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (@MedvedevRussiae), Norway's Prime Minister @Erna_Solberg and Estonia's former Foreign Minister Keit Pentus-Rosimannus @KeitPentus.



#7 Queen of Jordan Rania Al

Abdullah, one of the two females in the top ten list this year, also slipped two spots. In her capacity as Eminent Advocate for UNICEF and Honorary Chairperson for UNGEI, she continues to spearhead projects geared towards quality education, women's rights and youth employment and community empowerment.

A passionate advocate of peace in the region, she condemned the Paris attacks with the tweet: "From Beirut to Paris, terrorism knows no borders & no religion.Humanity must unite against enemies of humanity #ParisAttacks #ThisIsNotIslam"

Overall, her Twitter feed is a wholesome representation of a deeply compassionate Queen Consort going about her day attending events, promoting entrepreneurship and tourism in Jordan, and returning home to her kids and "homework".



#8 President Dilma Rousseff of

Brazil climbed up two spots and added an impressive 1.2 million followers. Touted as Brazil's 'Iron Lady', President Roussef has become Latin America's fourth most followed leader on Twitter.

However, her party has been embroiled in controversy in the last few months. Brazil's Federal Court of Accounts ruled that the President broke the law last year while attempting to manage her nation's budget. According to the court, Rousseff's economic irregularities amount to over \$26 billion. Brazilian opposition's efforts to unseat President Dilma Rousseff advanced when the speaker of lower house of Congress opened impeachment proceedings against her, a move that threatens to mire the government even as she faces corruption scandals and sinking popularity in her country.

#9 Juan Manuel Santos President

of Colombia saw his ranking drop by two spots. However,

his endeavour to end the armed conflict with FARC guerrilla rebels seems to be bearing fruit with the FARC leader, Timochenko, finally stating that the era of conflict might end soon.

The President has vowed to end the armed conflict in 2016 and has extensively used the hashtag #2016EnPaz (#2016inPeace) in recent tweets. In a national address published on his Twitter account, the President remarked: "My wish for 2016 is that we can end the armed internal conflict and from this point on all Colombians, together, united, can build peace for Colombia."

Interestingly, President Juan Manuel Santos has had to reverse a celebratory Tweet after discovering that Miss Colombia had been mistakenly named the winner of the Miss Universe contest in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Before the error was discovered, Santos wrote: "Colombians! The most beautiful in the world. Miss Universe 2016!!!! What pride!" However, just seconds later it was announced that Miss Colombia Adriadna Gutierrez Arevalo was the first runner-up rather than the winner. Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach of the Philippines was named the winner of the international beauty contest. Santos wrote to Gutierrez in a subsequent Tweet: "For us you'll always be our Miss Universe. We feel very proud."





#10 President Joko Widodo of

Indonesia made it to the top ten list this year which isn't surprising considering Indonesia is one of the world's most active Twitter-using country.

Barely a year-and-a-half into his five-year term, the President finds himself losing favour with his countrymen. If trending hashtags such as #SudahlahJokowi (Enough already, Jokowi) are anything to go by, young Indonesians are expressing dissatisfaction with their President. Worsening Australia-Indonesia relationships and his keenness on enforcing capital punishment for drug smugglers have cost the president credibility among human rights supporters and the international community.

Gender

Out of the 112 leaders with their personal names assigned to their accounts, 102 are male and 10 are female. Of those ten females, four fall into the top half of the 2015 ranking, with two of them being in the top ten list.

As per a BBC Trending analysis of Twitter activity in Britain, women are still very much a minority in the political chatter there. Twitter, with its 15 million users in the UK, seems to shape the online political debate more than any other platform. However, an analysis of main parties' Twitter hashtags over a month revealed that they were overwhelmingly being used by men and not women. Across all the parties, male users seem to be using these hashtags far more often than female -- 75% of the political party tweets in Britain were from males, 25% female.

Interestingly, the Greens and the Welsh and Scottish nationalists - all of which are led by women - had the highest female participation rate. The #SNP tag had 69% male users and 31% women. The #PlaidCymru tag had 38% women compared to 62% men and the Greens had 60% male users, 40% female

Laura Bates, who runs the Everyday Sexism project, told BBC Trending that they regularly receive examples of women being threatened with rape, or violent assault as a result of expressing their political opinions online.

"Women are being cut out of the political debate because they do not feel safe posting their political views online" she says. "When I visit schools and speak to young children, they tell me that the trolling and abuse they see directed especially at female MPs puts them off pursuing a career in politics or even offering a political opinion" Twitter told BBC Trending that it's trying to encourage a greater diversity of opinions, but that it relied on users to report trolls.

National Offices

In addition to a head of state using Twitter, many countries also had their national office represented with a Twitter account such as the @WhiteHouse in the USA, India's @PMOIndia, Turkish Presidency @tccankaya, and the United Kingdom's @number10gov, among many. Also of note, out of the 139 tweeting "heads of state," 27 of these were national offices.

For some countries, their national office Twitter account was the main or even sole Twitter voice for that government; these included the accounts in the top half such as Germany, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay, Morocco, Qatar, and Croatia.

The world's "most democratic Twitter account" is run by Sweden, which became the first country in the world to hand over the country's official Twitter account to its citizens. Titled 'Curators of Sweden' the account @Sweden is managed by the citizens of Sweden. The curators are nominated by fellow Swedes, and the only stipulation is nominees must be Swedish citizens.

The idea is that: "...the curators, through their tweets, create interest and arouse curiosity for Sweden and the wide range the country has to offer. The expectation is that the curators will paint a picture of Sweden, different to that usually obtained through traditional media."

Regional Concentrations

"Twitter has proven to be a revolutionary social network even in politics. It is an extraordinary channel of diplomacy and of communication." -Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Cofremmission.

Latin America

Gone are the days when a leader's long-drawn fiery speeches won vote banks. For global leaders today, Twitter's 140 characters or less are enough to do the campaigning and the connecting. Tweets now serve as a powerful channel of communication whether it is to forge alliances or to voice out 'differences'. The medium is especially popular in Latin America, especially South America, with top leaders from Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia and Peru actively engaging with their citizens via Twitter.

Argentina's former Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is well known for her prolific tweets, at times tweeting up to 60 times in a single day. She often criticized her political opponents as well as the media for slandering her reputation and publishing false stories about her. She again created headlines when she refused to give up her official Twitter account after she lost the presidential elections in October. She even indulged in a series of questionable spats with her successor to the presidency, Mauricio Macri.

In a politically charged country such as Venezuela, politicians often use to advocate their political agenda and win over their citizens. According to comScore, almost one out of four Venezuelans in the country use Twitter regularly. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is also known to use Twitter to argue with former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin.

Venezuelan officials "don't communicate first by television, radio or a speech, but through Twitter," said Javier Pereira, the El Nacional newspaper's website coordinator. "That has caused us to be alert, monitoring constantly."

Brazil (rank #8), Colombia (rank #9) and Venezuela (rank #12) rank among the world's top 12 in the use of Twitter.

Europe

This year too, Europe failed to make an appearance in the Top 10 list. Leading the tally amongst the European leaders is Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzil at #15, having moved up by one spot since last year and amassed over 2.1 million followers. French President François Hollande ranks at #17 with 1.38 million followers, having all but doubled his followers within a year. Close on the heels of Hollande is Prime Minister David Cameron from the UK with 1.31 million followers.

Africa

Rwanda's @PaulKagame has become Africa's most followed president with 1,325,231 followers, and is consistently ahead of Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta @UKenyatta (1,226,596 followers). South Africa's new President Jacob Zuma has increased his Twitter presence after being re-elected in May 2014. He currently ranks at the 35th place, with 396,661 followers.

The Middle East / Muslim World

In 2015, five out of the top 15 heads of state using Twitter were predominantly Muslim countries. Furthermore, of the countries using Twitter, 32% are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, an international organization founded in 1969 consisting of 57 member states that works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony."

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo jumped up a spot to make it to the top ten list. In fact Widodo (4,119,812 followers), is almost neck to neck with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, who is positioned at the 9th spot (4,194,920 followers).

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi made a huge leap from rank #37 in 2014 to #24 in 2015, more than doubling his twitter followers with a year. Heads of states of both Saudi Arabia and Iran remained almost static in terms of their global rankings.

In the war-torn Syria, President Bashar al-Assad continues to make a feeble attempt to put up a brave front and post hopeful messages including Christmas greetings thought the National Office account. He also seems to take a firm stance against Western politics and its influence in the current state of affair in the region. Some of his recent tweets read:

"#ASSAD TO #NPO2 TV: #Crisis will end in less than one year if responsible countries take actions against terrorists' flow and support."

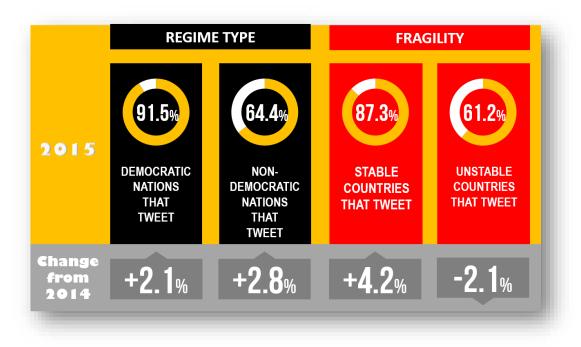
"#ASSAD TO #NPO2 TV: Europe is exporting #terrorists to us. We do not export them; they came to #Syria, and then they go back to #Europe."

A few new entrants but mostly static rate of adoption

The adoption rate shows a negligible upward tick as compared to the 2014 report published by the Digital Policy Council. 2015 had 139 countries with leaders that tweet, representing 83% of all nations included in the study (compared to 136 countries and 82% of total in 2014). So again this year the growth is flat.

A few interesting new entrants did emerge this year. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece (@tsipras_eu) who came into office on 26 January 2015 is a case in point. He created his twitter account on 15th Jan 2014 and grew his account to 250K fans within a year to be positioned at #39 in the global list. Another case in point is President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, who joined Twitter in late Dec 2014 and grew his account to 516K followers to grab the 29th spot, way ahead of his predecessor Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who was placed at #51 in the 2014 list.

Similarly, newly elected Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau (@JustinTrudeau), who not only lead his party to victory in the 2015 federal election, moving the third-placed Liberals from 36 seats to 184 seats, the largest-ever numerical increase by a party in a Canadian election – but also caused a mild stir by grabbing the 20th rank in the global list as a first time entrant (up from #23 with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2014).

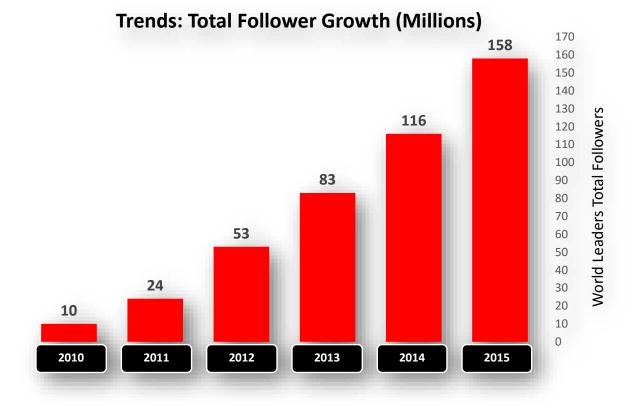


In terms of the democracies tweeting or not tweeting, here are the stats:

In 2014, the percentage of unstable countries that tweet was 63.3%; in 2015 the number further dropped down to 61.2%. In 2014, the percentage of stable countries that tweet was 83.1%; in 2015, the number increased to 87.3%.

Comparing the 2015 data with last year, there have been encouraging increases in terms of the number of leaders of democracies and stable countries tweeting. On the other hand, the decline in the number of unstable countries is discouraging.

On a solid positive note, while the adoption amongst world leaders has slowed, the number of people following their political leaders is growing at a healthy rate. In 2015, 158 million people followed world leaders or their national offices representing a 36% increase over 2014.



In 2014, the number was 116 million people and in 2013 it was 83 million. In 2012 it was 53 million. In 2011, the total was 24 million and a mere 10 million in 2010.

Klout Scores:

President Obama had the highest Klout⁶ score at the writing of this report at 98 (as compared to 99 in 2014), followed by the leaders of Spain, UK, France, India, Brazil and Mexico). Those with Klout scores from 70-80 are "thought leaders that are not only referring content, but creating original content and ideas." Eighty and above reflects that the personality is extremely well known.

Name	Country	Klout Score 2015	Ranking 2015
President Barack Obama	United States	98	1
Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey	Spain	93	22
Prime Minister David Cameron	United Kingdom	92	19
President François Hollande	France	90	17
Prime Minister Narendra Modi	India	89	2
Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	Israel	88	27
President Dilma Rousseff	Brazil	87	8
President of Ecuador Rafael Correa	Ecuador	87	14
Prime Minister Mark Rutte	Netherlands	87	26
President Enrique Peña Nieto	Mexico	86	5

⁶ Klout is a website and mobile app that uses social media analytics to rank its users according to online social influence via the Klout Score, which is a numerical value between 1 and 100, with 100 being the most influential. In determining the user score, Klout measures the size of a user's social media network and correlates the content created to measure how other users interact with that content. Social influence measurement is an evolving field with standards yet to be agreed upon and the scores currently remain volatile.

Conclusion

The data we have been tracking for the last six years shows a 33% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in adoption of Twitter by Heads of State. The CAGR is appreciably reduced from the figure of 93% from the end of 2012 and that of 42% in 2014. Due to the pattern of retrenchment in both 2013 and 2014, the Digital Policy Council views penetration on Twitter for world leaders to have plateaued in 2015.

#Hashtags

2015 was a year mired in controversy and tragedy. From the huge outpouring of support on Twitter as people **#prayforparis** and say they are **#notafraid** to the First Lady Michelle Obama joining efforts in Nigeria to **#BringBackOurGirls** kidnapped by Boko Haram to the White House tweeting its commitment to absorb refugees with **#RefugeesWelcome** – twitter was dominated by hashtags. Other popular hashtags were: #BlackLivesMatter #PlutoFlyby, #FIFAWWC, #LoveWins (#MarriageEquality)

#Selfies

The #selfie craze only got crazier in 2015. Notable selfies include first ever Papal selfie, Ellen DeGeneres's celebrity Oscars selfie, the monkey selfie, the first selfie in space, and many more. However, not all of them were celebrated by the Twitterati; the infamous "funeral selfie" with Barack Obama and David Cameron captured by Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt during the funeral ceremony for Nelson Mandela came under attack on the internet. India's PM Narendra Modi made history with a selfie in the election booth in 2014.

Transparency

In a recent ruling, Twitter has reversed its stance on politicians' deleted tweets. Politwoops, a digital archive of public tweets deleted by politicians, is coming back online after reaching an agreement with Twitter. In August 2015, Twitter had shut off access to 31 accounts that chronicled and archived the deleted tweets of politicians, diplomats and embassies around the world. And now, in 2016, the return of Politwoops marks a first step towards transparency. Twitter is now delivering on its promise of demonstrating its commitment to open dialogue, allowing powerful voices to be held accountable in public.

Today, Twitter is not just a bulletin board where a campaign staffer can relay political manifesto with the sole aim of garnering votes. It is a platform for political leaders to showcase their individuality, commitment to their country, to advocate the causes they believe in and to connect with real people, as real person would, spelling mistakes et al.

Appendix

APPENDIX A – DETAILED RANKINGS OF HEADS ON STATE ON TWITTER

APPENDIX B – EXPLANATION OF POLITICAL FRAGILITY SCORES



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