

#HumanRights: Digital Diplomacy for Human Rights Advancement¹

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Abstract: How do international human rights systems use digital diplomacy to foster the advancement of human rights? Beyond traditional institutionalized mechanisms and background negotiation, international human rights bodies increasingly rely on digital diplomacy to pursue multiple objectives. Through social media, they make way to diffuse norms and ideas, they collaborate with a range of actors, spread reliable and real-time information and engage with audiences. Digital diplomacy also helps to overcome limitations and manage institutional image. At the same time, it poses challenges regarding transparency, coordination, coherence and assimilation. Twitter is the main social media used by all three existing regional human rights systems. Comparative analysis suggests that tweeting in the Americas and Europe is more frequent, better orchestrated and multi-purposed than in Africa, where Twitter is still a novel toolbox towards human rights advancement.

Keywords: Digital Diplomacy; Public Diplomacy; Human Rights; International Organizations; Inter-American Human Rights System; European Human Rights System; African Human Rights System; Twitter.

Resumo: Como os sistemas internacionais de direitos humanos usam a diplomacia digital para promover o avanço dos direitos humanos? Além dos tradicionais mecanismos institucionalizados e negociações nos bastidores, os órgãos internacionais de direitos humanos dependem cada vez mais da diplomacia digital para perseguir múltiplos objetivos. Por meio das mídias sociais, elas abrem caminho para difundir normas e ideias, colaboram com diversos atores, divulgam informações confiáveis em tempo real e envolvem-se com o público. A diplomacia digital também ajuda a superar limitações e gerenciar a imagem institucional. Ao mesmo tempo, coloca desafios quanto à transparência, coordenação, coerência e assimilação. O Twitter é a principal mídia social usada pelos três sistemas regionais de direitos humanos existentes. A análise comparativa sugere que o uso do twitter nas Américas e na Europa é mais frequente, melhor orquestrado e com múltiplos propósitos do que na África, onde o Twitter ainda é uma nova ferramenta para o avanço dos direitos humanos.

Palavras-chave: Diplomacia Digital; Diplomacia Pública; Direitos Humanos; Organizações Internacionais; Sistema Interamericano de Direitos Humanos; Sistema Europeu de Direitos Humanos; Sistema Africano de Direitos Humanos; Twitter.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In 1944, at Dumbarton Oaks, during very exclusive meetings, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin negotiated the draft proposal of the born-to-be United Nations. Such original draft did not envision more than collective security lines. When the leaders met the rest of the world at San Francisco, smaller powers had bigger thoughts on the project. Their expansive vision included the protection of human rights in the new organization. Indeed, Panama, soon joined by several new democracies in Latin America, submitted a draft declaration on human rights. Glendon (2003) narrates that the reaction of the major powers to the human rights initiative ranged from coolness on the side of the United States and to outright hostility on the part of Soviet Union, France and Britain. Although the twenty Latin American States were the largest single bloc pressuring the human rights agenda at the time, a decisive factor for the continuity of the work on the advancement of human rights in international politics were...pictures! As soon as the Holocaust images started to arrive from the first media coverages at the liberated concentration camps in Europe, major powers - in shock - stepped back in their oppositions against human rights references in the United Nations Charter and the creation of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Those powerful pictures not only saved the human rights language in international politics, but its first international body as well.

In 2015, in the wake of Europe's immigration crisis, the picture of a drowned lifeless Syrian toddler on a beach caused a lot of distress worldwide. It went viral among major international press channels, quickly becoming a trending topic on Twitter under the hashtag #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik (humanity washed ashore). Among thousands of videos, photos, interviews, documentaries registering the refugees and migrants drama at least since a couple years before called a crisis, this shocking image tuned into a tragic symbol of the the worst refugees crisis since World War II. The immediate impact of its publication was a massive surge in donations and in the medium-term, it helped to hit a tipping point towards changing attitudes, awareness³ and political will: the settlement for negotiations at the United Nations for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the same year did not

³ FAHEY, J. The Guardian's decision to publish shocking photos of Aylan Kurdi. Available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/07/guardian-decision-to-publish-shocking-photos-of-aylan-kurdi>>. Access: 27 Feb. 2019.

came as a mere coincidence. Once again in history, an image - this time followed by a few characters - contributed to the aprimoration of international responsibility of human beings.

Both tales narrate how the means of communicating human vulnerability framed political questions at International Organizations and how - given the existing conditions - they were more or less efficient in spurring positive change. In the oldest case, there are accounts that some governments (Great Britain and potentially all Allies) did know about the existence of concentration camps in Europe as early as 1942⁴. Those facts remained kept in secrecy until 1945, when Richard Dimbleby made the first broadcast, as he toured Belsen concentration camp, shortly after its liberation. The description of the scenes depicted such an unimaginable horror, that the BBC initially refused to play the report, as people could not believe on the radio transmission.⁵ On the other hand, the most recent case concerning the refugees' crisis has been consistently reported - with no shortage of image and sound - over the years. Information crossed the world and got inserted into political spheres in almost real-time. Governments, not only in Europe, and International Organizations made public statements as for to accomplish cooperation and advance public interests on the matter. Yet, it took time to grow effective mobilization and to define goals, besides faster communication.

In between seventy years of time-lapse of the two cases above, a strong predictor of transformation affecting equally the nature of diplomacy and the dynamics of human rights advocacy is the Internet Revolution (Copeland, 2013; Kingston; Stam, 2013). The application of digital technologies transformed the way actors get involved in processes of international relations in ways that immediacy and interactivity force governments to be more transparent, consistent and - hopefully - honest. Hence, political change and human rights advancement are increasingly linked to Internet usage. NGOs gave a strong turn on the new business, mostly because they can take advantage of the internet to supersize fund-raising, fasten mobilization and get support for campaigns (Kingston; Stam, 2013). International Organizations are not far behind. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for instance, stands as a pioneer, since it holds the oldest website among all international human

⁴ Buncome, A. Allied forces knew about Holocaust two years before discovery of concentration camps, secret documents reveal. Available at: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/world-history/holocaust-allied-forces-knew-before-concentration-camp-discovery-us-uk-soviets-secret-documents-a7688036.html>>. Access: 27 Feb. 2019.

⁵ BBC only broadcasted it after Dimbleby threatened to resign. Available at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/holocaust/5115.shtml>>. Access: 25 Feb. 2019.

rights body. and keeps a highly active profile at social medias. But how digital diplomacy is applied by International Organizations to foster human rights advancement, given its potentials and pitfalls?

This paper researches Twitter accounts from regional human rights systems to examine this question. Twitter is a social media platform that offers a social networking and a microblogging server, which allows users to send and receive personal updates from other contacts through the service website, SMS and specific management software. Twiplomacy is a growing phenomena, with more and more ministries of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions, international organizations, NGOs, other groups and individuals hold one (or more) official accounts at Twitter. As such, Twitter, the only social media in common among the three existing regional human rights systems, represents an acceptable startpoint to investigate digital diplomacy used by international organizations and its impacts on human rights advancement.

2 DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Modern diplomacy has been through a fivefold change. World politics has witnessed the rapidly expansion (in number and types) of actors, the broadening of public policy issues, the multiplication of levels of action, the enlargement of foreign relations apparatus and the diversification in the modes, types and techniques of diplomacy (Cooper; Heine; Thakur, 2013). The Internet Revolution adds complexity to this last feature particularly. A large part of the discussion about the new/modern diplomacy has been driven by the adoption of digitally-based systems of data creation, transmission and storage using the Internet, social media platforms, computers, and a variety of electronic devices (Copeland, 2013). The very qualities of Internet (immediacy and interactivity) have brought potentials and challenges for every player around the globe.

Reacting to transformations taking place in a click-time, the literature displays an abundance of terms used in reference to the arrival of international actors to the online world, including “net diplomacy”, “virtual diplomacy” (Wehrenfennig, 2012), “cyber diplomacy”(Potter, 2002), “public diplomacy 2.0”(Hallams, 2010) and more recently “digital diplomacy”(Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015), according listed by Manor (2016). Unfolding

from the notion of Public Diplomacy, Digital Diplomacy is now an instrument used not only by States, but by International Organizations and other non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes and behaviors, to build and manage relationships and to mobilize actions that advance one's interest (Gregory, 2011). As for its content, digital diplomacy is a broad term that refers to the impact of digitalization on the practice of diplomacy, ranging from the email, website, and social medias. Then, digital diplomacy encompasses more than social media and can be modeled in a variety of choices. In turn, social media is defined as a set of online tools that are centered on social interaction and aimed at facilitating two-way communication or interaction. As such, social media are virtual platforms where issues may be debated and defined (Parker; Reber, 2008; Smith, 2010).

Major International Organizations have been performing at world politics since 1945. Transformations in world affairs required International Organizations to adapt as well to more complex forms of diplomacy. Where in the past, International Organizations' diplomacy was almost exclusively traditional (or elite) diplomacy, today it is a mix of traditional and network diplomacy (Karns & Mingst, 2013). In less than twenty years ago, they started to migrate to the online world, institutionalizing the new operating mode in different degrees. While some host websites, others take part at social medias additionally. However, hosting a website or migrating to social media does not guarantee that one practices digital diplomacy. Such practice rests on a willingness to interact with online publics through engagement and listening (Manor, 2016), although the last has been less frequent than the first.

Digital diplomacy can be more than means to get an updated version of International Organizations. By helping to overcome International Organizations' major limitations (power restrictions, financial dependence and geographical scope), digital diplomacy can be strategic on the pursuit of the multiple mandates entrenched in their constitutive Charters. Through the exploration of social media potentials, International Organizations can make way to diffuse norms and ideas, they can collaborate with a range of actors, they can spread reliable and real-time information and also engage with targeted audiences. As for a selfie's approach, diplomacy can serves as a tool to self-manage institutional image. We created six categories to accommodate the potential uses of digital diplomacy by International Organizations. The ideas are designed in the following picture.

Table 1 - Potential Uses of Digital Diplomacy for International Organizations

Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Manage image and reputation; ● Author its own institutional narrative.
Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive feedback from public; ● Offer participatory option and engage with audiences.
Diffusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diffuse Human Rights norms and information; ● Create and differentiate mass and niche audience.
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draw information from a range of actors on human rights issues to reveal to the public; ● Create transnational networks with non-state actors, civil society and individuals.
Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● React to events in near real time and frame events consistently with its agenda; ● Circumvent local press.
Gather information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collect info about events and press reads. ● Assessment of own performance

Source: Created by the author.

At the same time, digital diplomacy brings challenges to International Organizations. Migration to the online world requires International Organizations to invest in specialized communication teams, qualified not only in digital literacy and languages, but also attuned to the institution's themes. As the number of International Organizations keeps expanding (Karns & Mingst, 2013), international bodies must coordinate efforts with other mother- or peer-organization. A confluency of digital diplomatic actions among them contributes to the pursuit of objectives, when such actions are coordinated. Coherence matters as well, either being coherence between International Organizations and its derived bodies or agencies or coherence within an International Organization. However, guarding against contradiction could turn out into a tough task considering the hyper-structures and broad mandates of some International Organizations. The formulation of an institutional guideline of policy recommendations on the web can align practices. The challenges described until this point relate to engagement actions in digital diplomacy. However, when International Organizations

decide to adventure themselves in the almost unexplored camp of listening to their audiences - something that rarely occurs - direct criticism and flood of information can be experienced. The challenge here is how International Organizations control over criticism during the communications process and how they accommodate the results of the participatory opportunities given to the followers. Similarly, when International Organizations are perceived to be in the reach of every citizen, pressure for greater transparency can occur. We organized five categories to set the challenges of digital diplomacy for International Organizations. The ideas are outlined in the following picture.

Table 2 - Challenges of Digital Diplomacy for International Organization

Training and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specialized Communications Staff; ● Intensive Training of Senior Staff.
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordination of efforts among International Organizations.
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Between Affiliated International Organizations; ● Within the International Organization.
Assimilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Control over criticism ● Accommodation of feedbacks
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Openness to own information and archives.

Source: Created by the author.

In turn, diplomacy on human rights matters - either on traditional, public or digital mode - is not for the simple-minded. Let us demonstrate why human rights add yet more nuance to digital diplomacy, when employed by International Organizations.

3 ADVANCING INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Many decades before the urge of digital diplomacy, the efforts to move human rights up in the international agenda depended on a delicate arrangement between States, newly-established International Organizations and a few other actors. In 1948, such conformation translated universal consensus into international norms with the adoption of The

Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations. The process of building universal human rights consensus involved an intense flow of ideas, information and people. It also depended heavily on the coalition of Latin American democracies and newly independent countries, which were far from the circles of high politics at the time (Glendon, 2003; Humphrey, 1984). For two years, keeping the momentum for policy change (the sense of urgency) in human rights matters was a major challenge. The history of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adoption is one that happened in a time marked by intense use of traditional diplomacy combined with low available technology.

Albeit tough, the development of a worldwide human rights project turned out successful (Pinker, 2018; Sikkink, 2017). If until mid-40s, human rights were deemed almost completely as domestic affair-issues, a few decades later, the world saw an ‘industry of human rights’ set forth (Engstrom, 2010). Today, more than hundreds of international human rights treaties, international organizations and human rights bodies, a dozen major human rights NGOs and recognized activists work to protect individuals around the globe. On the State-level, it became harder to simply avoid human rights in world politics, since human rights increasingly overlap with other spheres of interest - like trade, environment, international aid and participation in elite clubs. The international human rights project continues to make progress, however, in a different environment that combines the increasing multiplication of actors, the diversification of diplomacy modes and the diffusion of advanced communications technology. How such combination of factors impact the international human rights advancement?

While human rights are still rising in international agenda, States’ commitment to international human rights varies broadly. A State’s foreign policy is always the result of mixed motives, even if the State is bonded in stronger or lesser extent to international human rights treaties. Sometimes States engage on human rights diplomacy for genuine and valid moral reasons, like in the case of Latin American States and the approval of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in the early 40s. But most of the times, this move is driven primarily by strategic interests, meaning that non-human rights matters can affect States’ human rights diplomacy. On the other hand, International Organizations and NGOs’ diplomatic approach in the pursuit of human rights is generally single-minded: the focus is clearly set on the advancement of human rights. There’s a puzzle on such mismatching

multiple- v. single-minded interests among actors. Reconciling different and conflicting interests is the first reason why digital diplomacy could work in the advancement of human rights (Forsythe, 2013).

There's still much need of diplomacy to create new norms and policies (LGBTI, Business-, Climate-, Corruption- human rights approach), to refine existing ones (Intolerance, Refugees and Development) and mostly, to bring actors to fulfill their responsibilities. When International Organizations frame events as human rights claims through digital diplomacy and target specific actors (repressive governments, violent groups, and corrupted companies) they are more effective at limiting an actor's response regarding human rights violations. In this case, a tweet can be more effective than private reprimands because more than sounding public, it engages other audiences to put pressure on almost real-time. In this sense, digital diplomacy instills a better version of the naming-and-shaming, with the virtuous of closing the time gap. As Forsythe (2013) suggests, digital diplomacy can be used as a political weapon to try to delegitimize target governments as well as advance the cause of human dignity in a balanced and even-handed process.

Another reason why digital diplomacy works in the advancement of human rights regards to the fact that both concepts are attuned to the same means: the use of non-coercive ways of influencing. One of the distinctive features of the human rights regimes in international politics is that they are not generally enforced by interstate action (Moravcsik, 2000). In other words, international human rights regimes must guide State (and other actors) towards the proper behavior without resorting to violence. Accordingly, digital diplomacy rests on the idea of influence, which is the ability to have an effect on others without appeal to coercion or payment. In this sense, international human right and digital diplomacy are both linked to the concept of "social power" (Van Ham, 2013), "soft power" or smart power (Nye, 2013). As such International human rights bodies can carry out the variety of their functions also through digital diplomacy. They are helpful at collecting and analyzing information, monitoring trends and performance, delivering services, providing forums for debate, negotiation and decision-making and, interestingly, even to the adjudication of disputes, depending on the mandate's extension..

However, besides low-cost and high-effective, digital diplomacy comes at a cost for International Human Rights Organizations, especially when applied by secretariat office and agency heads. Along with international human rights bodies, the top secretariat office and various agency heads are expected to undertake appropriate diplomacy, either by engaging with quiet diplomacy or speaking out through public/digital diplomacy on human rights matters. This is true for the UN Human Rights Commissioner, as it is for executive secretariats and heads of international human rights bodies. But at the same time, these are the personnel expected to directly maintain the support of the member states of the International Organization. As such, in the use of public and digital diplomacy, they have to calculate when and how to engage so as not to push key members too far. The risk of backlashes is real: United States quitted United Nations Human Rights Council in 2018, Brazil cancelled its financial subsidies to the OAS in 2012 and the ongoing Brexit proceedings also affects human rights issues in Europe. History has shown that those withdrawals - albeit relevant - were not sufficiently to deter movements pushing human rights forward (Pinker, 2018; Sikkink, 2017). Criticize and praise among international actors and human rights stakeholders can be expected as part of the dynamics involving human rights in world affairs. Let us move on now to understand how living regional human rights systems engage on digital diplomacy.

4 DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AT REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEMS

Digital diplomacy within regional human rights systems can vary significantly because they hold varied backgrounds and institutional design apart from operating in different political contexts. We turn, therefore, to examine how such variations affect digital diplomacy. We mapped the digital presence of regional human rights bodies through their website and social media accounts in the Inter-American, European and African Human Rights System. Twitter is the single common social media used by all three existing regional human rights systems, and also one of the most followed social media platform, as summarized in the table below.

Table 3 - Digital presence at Regional Human Rights Systems

Regional Human Rights System	Regional Human Rights Body	Social media Platform	Followers and subscribers	Total of followers and subscribers per human rights body	Total of followers and subscribers per human rights system
Inter-American Human Rights System	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	Twitter	463134	998263	1808628
		Facebook	526206		
		YouTube	8425		
		Flicker	498		
	Inter-American Court of Human Rights	Twitter	294316	810365	
		Facebook	515176		
		Vimeo	622		
		Flicker	51		
		SoundCloud	200		
European Human Rights System	Commissioner on Human Rights	Twitter	31700	41013	85099
		Facebook	9313		
	European Court of Human Rights	Twitter	39900	44086	
		Youtube	4186		
African Human Rights System	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	Twitter	452	452	13056
	African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Twitter	5601	12604	
		Facebook	6038		
	Youtube	965			

Source: Compiled by the author on feb. 21st, 2019.

Considering that Twitter enables a comparison between the regional human rights system, we collected a sample of the latest 200 tweets from the most followed Twitter accounts of each regional human rights body⁶. Each tweet content was organized according to the potential uses of digital diplomacy for International Organizations, displayed in Picture 1. The 140-characters policy may sound limiting. But, when skillfully tailored, one tweet can serve multiple uses. Whenever this happened, we counted more than one use in a single tweet.

⁶ Tweeting at the African Human Right System has started recently. In that case, the sample accounts 30 tweets only.

4.1 The Inter-American Human Rights System

The Inter-American Human Rights System is a regional human rights system within the Organization of American States (OAS) responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in the Americas. Its formal creation dates from 1948, but bodies were established a bit later: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACommission) in 1959, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACourt), installed in 1979 (Organization of American States, 2015). The Inter-American Human Rights System arose institutionally in a one-of-a-kind scenery, when most of the countries were authoritarian governments, the military dictatorships. The adverse political context resulted in the rapprochement of the Inter-American System and the civil society. This very preeminent characteristic of the Inter-American System of interacting with its stakeholders prompted public and, later, digital diplomacy.

The Inter-American System's digital presence is the largest among the three regional systems, mostly due to the work of the Inter-American Commission. Indeed, digital diplomacy seems to have come for stay in the Americas. In December 2015, the Organization of American States first established its Department of Strategic Initiatives and Public Diplomacy linked to the General Secretariat.⁷ Such work has yet to have a meaningful impact in areas of public diplomacy in the organization as a whole, and it is even farther away from having a big impact on human rights issues.

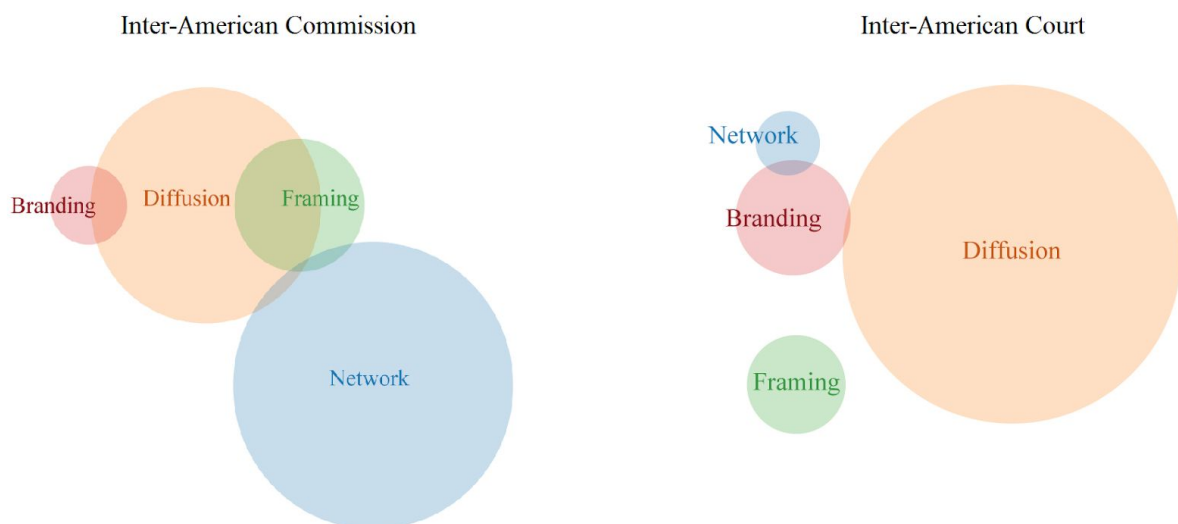
The Inter-American Court of Human Rights shows a low-profile at engaging in public diplomacy. Fewer instruments at the Inter-American Court could be used for public and digital diplomacy purposes, like informing target audience and monitoring. This accounts to the Court's protective role, mostly attached to the judicial proceedings. Still, Court's digital presence includes Press Releases platform, Publications webpage, and social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and Vimeo.⁸ Quite differently, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights practices public diplomacy through a wide range of instruments, such as: public hearings, seminars, courses, questionnaires to the public, press releases, internships, fellowships, reports, roundtables, lectures, special visits, and agreements with other

⁷ Organization of the American States. Executive Order No. 08-01 Rev. 9 (OAS, 2015)

⁸ To access the Inter-American Court's press release platform, visit:
<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/cf/jurisprudencia2/comunicados_prensa.cfm?lang=en>

organizations and States. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights protagonism in public diplomacy clearly reveals also a more prominent role using digital diplomacy⁹. In addition to an informative presence on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, and LinkedIn, the Inter-American Commission uses its platforms to create poignant narratives on human rights-related topics by exporting content to various interactive media websites. The Inter-American Commission has also used documentary and animated films to inform the international community about human rights issues through their YouTube channel. On top of that, it releases official publications that provide data on international human rights trends and advocate for improved human rights policies.

Image 1 - Uses of tweets by the Inter-American Human Rights Bodies



Source: Compiled by the author.

Such digital presence and activity puts the Inter-American bodies as the most active ones. The Venn Diagrams representing our sample suggest that the Inter-American Commission emphasizes networking and diffusion at Twitter. This data validates the original bond set between the Commission and civil society. Through diffusion of ideas and norms, the Inter-American Commission exchange information with multiple stakeholders and, then, turn them public. As such, it connects with a broader audience. Interestingly, when the Inter-American Commission uses Twitter to frame events along with its own agenda, it does so strategically by taking advantage of the facts to address related ideas and norms. This is the

⁹ To access the Inter-American Court's publications platform, visit: <<http://www.corteidh.or.cr/publicaciones-en.html>>

singular most expressive achievement of the sample, which allow us to dive next in to comparisons among the other two regional systems. Data on the Inter-American Court also validates the idea that the body makes use of Twitter according to its particular nature of a judicial body. Hence, networking is scarcely used, while diffusion of norms is the main and singled activity at Twitter. In common, both bodies tweet in a non-automatic way, meaning that someone had to create the tweet content specifically for twitter before posting it. In the Inter-American Court 61.5% were tweeted from the Twitter Web Platform, 32.5% from the Twitter for iPhone app, 4.5% from the Twitter Android App, and 1.5 from the Twitter Web App. Through all of them, the Twitter user must post the content without any scheduling or automated tool. Among the platforms used by the Inter-American Commission, we found that 83% of the tweets came from the Twitter Web Platform, 8% from the TweetDeck Platform, 7.5% from the Twitter iPhone App, and 1.5% from the Twitter Android App. This data suggests that there should be some kind of strategy behind the tweeting in both accounts. In this case, we assume that the Inter-American System privileges resources and training in digital skills.

4.2 The European Human Rights System

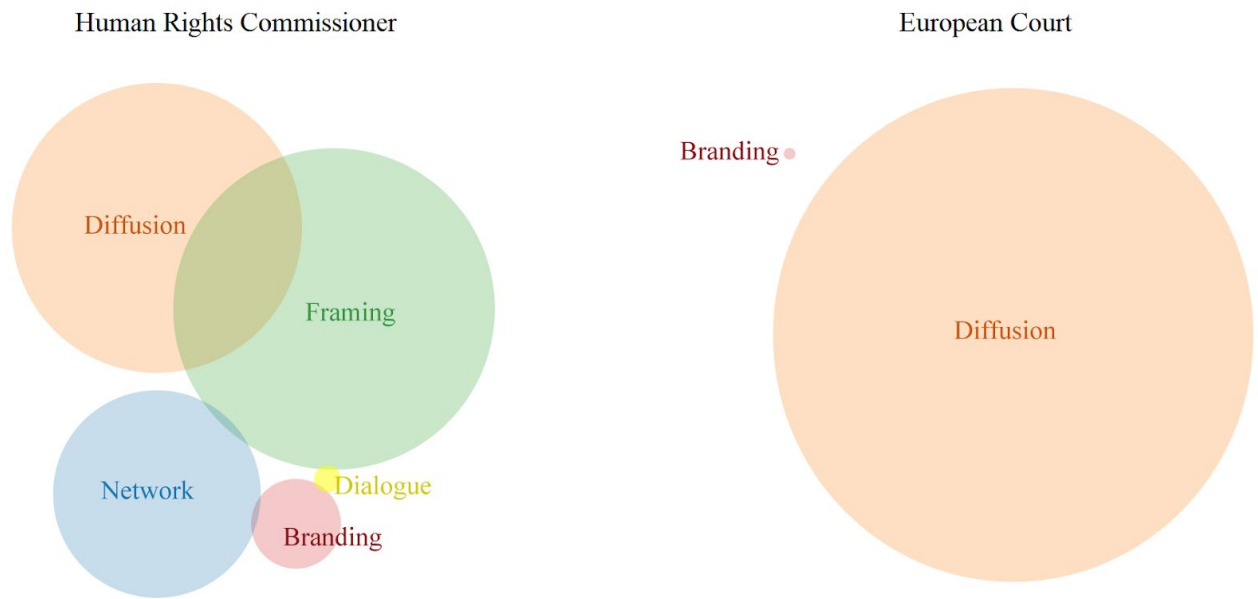
The European Human Rights System emerged right after the end of World War II. The Council of Europe, created in 1949 at the Congress of Europe, built path to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1953, which was the starting point of the European Human Rights System. Originally, it was composed of two bodies, an European Commission on Human Rights and an European Court of Human Rights, but later the they were fused into a single body. Regarding the political context, the European System emerged from the support of democratic States, which were the majority at the time. The favorable political context resulted in the rapprochement of the European System and the governments, a feature that shapes close relations among them until today. The institutional design of the current European Human Rights System is complex. After the European Commission was extinguished in 1998, a year later, the Commissioner for Human Rights was established to promote awareness of and respect for human rights as an independent and impartial non-judicial institution. Complexity lays in the fact that all major bodies of the Council of Europe are engaged with human rights issues to some extent, including the

Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, the Office of the Secretary General, beyond the European Court of Human Rights and the European Human Rights Commissioner.

Our sample comprises tweets from the European Court of Human Rights and the European Human Rights Commissioner. We decided to exclude intergovernmental committees dealing with human rights issues, such as the Steering Committee for Human Rights and its bodies, the Committee on Bioethics, and the Committee of Experts on the System of the European Convention on Human Rights, since these European institutions are highly influenced by States and government institutions. Such exclusion does not mean that these bodies do not practice public diplomacy in human rights matters. All of them dispose a range of public diplomacy activity which impact the Council of Europe's strategies for human rights as a whole. Exclusions here are methodologically-driven, since Europe displays a large commitment to human rights within all Council of Europe's main organs.

Our research could not find evidence that the Council of Europe and the European Human Rights System have institutionalized public and digital diplomacy through an specific body, as the Inter-American Human Rights System has done recently. Even though, all major bodies in the Council of Europe engage in some level of public and digital diplomacy. European Human Rights Commissioner engages in public diplomacy by providing advice and raising awareness through the publication of thematic documents and celebrating events and workshops. In its own webpage, the European Human Rights Commissioner display its activities and agenda as an independent organ. In addition, it also manages two social media accounts: one at Facebook and the other at Twitter.

Image 2 - Uses of tweets by the European Human Rights Bodie



Source: Compiled by the author.

As for the Twitter, digital diplomacy is used more to framing and diffusion.

The European Commissioner for Human Rights' Twitter account shows a similar pattern observed in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: tweets are used more for framing and diffusion and these uses are also conjugated. One of the main reasons why the European Commissioner call attention on framing events, besides Europe's traditional closeness to States, is that the Commissioner does not hold permanent seat. The substitution of the position every six years allows the Commissioner to be more vocal when it comes to human rights violations. This feature also explains the use of tweets for dialogue, even though employed in a lesser extent. However, it is notable that the European Commissioner for Human Rights is the only international human rights body practicing both engagement and listening regarding digital diplomacy in our sample.

Turning to the European Court of Human Rights, it also counts with an informational web page, displaying documents, publications, a video gallery, and a link to the channel of the Court at Youtube, among other resources. Additionally, the European Court has its own Press Release database, accessed by following the Court on Twitter at the Court's Press Account, subscribing to RSS feeds or mailing list. Alongside with this, the Court has a Publication's account, where it spreads links and information.

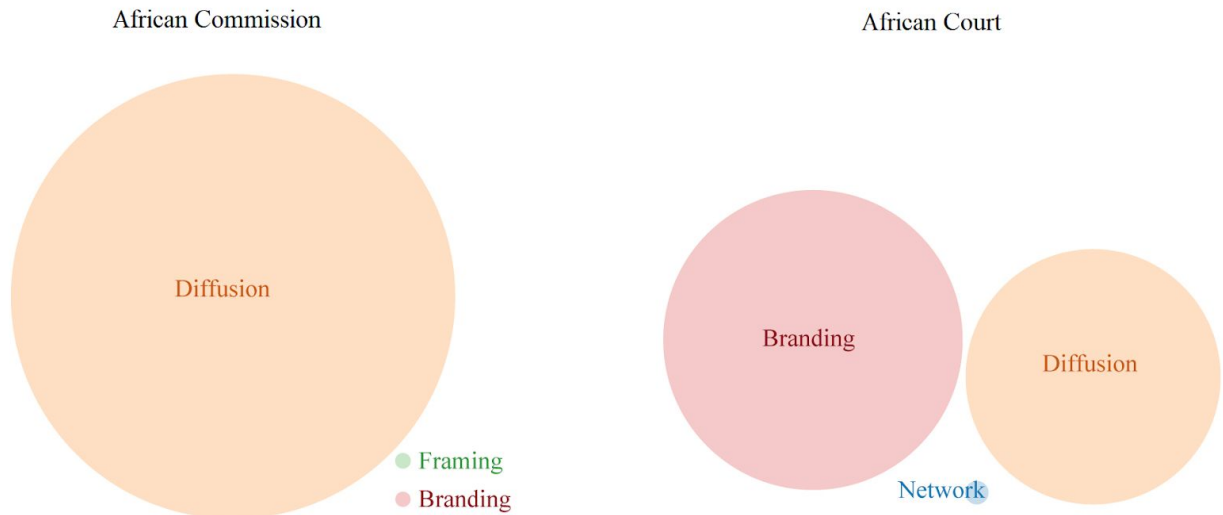
Our sample shows that the European Court tweets less frequently and for diffusion majorly. Those tweets were posted 79.5% from the RSS Broadcaster, meaning that the content tweeted was generated automatically from the European Court RSS feed, and only 20.5% was tweeted from the Twitter Web Platform. This finding reflects the European Court's strict policy for digital diplomacy, as informs its institutional guideline for Twitter.¹⁰

4.3 The African Human Rights System

The African Union inherited the more recent African Human Rights System from the Organization of African Unity. This regional human rights system was established with the adoption of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1981. Likewise the European Human Rights System, the dual Commission-Court original institutional design was to be replaced, in 2004, by a single body: the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. But still, up today, these two organs keep working as two separate organs. In all of African Union official instruments, there is no mention to public diplomacy as a form to achieve its mandate. This lack of a public diplomacy strategy is easily recognized: besides developing significant activities, including seminars, reports, country visits, workshops and work abroad, the African Commission's website has an informational tone. Such digital presence is yet to achieve its potential for human rights advancement. The African Commission has only one twitter account created in 2018. With only 31 tweets so far, most of them being used for diffusion.

¹⁰ It states that: "The Court's Twitter accounts have been established purely as a line feed for the Twitter community. Users will not receive a response to any Twitter reply or direct message. ECHR_PRESS tweets will give direct links to the documents referred to in English and/or French. ECHRPublication tweets will give direct links to documents in English, French and/or non-official languages. Please note that the Court cannot offer any legal advice and cannot enter into discussion about published judgments or documents. You should also note that you cannot contact the Court via its Twitter accounts.", Use of Twitter at the ECHR. Available at: <https://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=twitter&c=>. Access: 27 Feb. 2019.

Image 3 - Uses of Tweets by the African Human Rights bodies



Source: Compiled by the author.

In, turn, the African Court of Human Rights displays in its webpage an array of reports, and a Media section, where it publishes press releases, information about the African Court in the press, media advisory notes, speeches, news about the African Union, announcements, and its calendar of events. The African Court also possesses a photo and video gallery.

The African Court follows the same trend as the African Commission on Human Rights regarding digital diplomacy. The main difference is that the African Court employs more instruments to connect with its audience, alongside with its website: it performs at Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, but still falls short when considering the potential uses of these tools. Our sample accounts that African Court tweets for branding more than anything. A reasonable explanation for this is a search for consolidating the African Court as an authority in the region. Another relevant aspect is that the African Court tweets for one purpose only. Differently from the previous regional human rights systems, the African Court misses the chance to multiply uses of digital diplomacy at Twitter.

5 CONCLUSION

This study of the digital diplomacy activities of regional human rights bodies reveals that all the six mechanisms are involved in some level of engagement with their target audiences through social media, but still don't have institutional capacities to address this issue as digital diplomacy. But the question that lingers is: Do they recognize the importance of effective communication and engagement for human rights advancement? To answer that we referred to literature review where we were able to draw the potential uses and challenges of digital diplomacy for international institutions, which helped us mapped its uses from an important tool shared with all the regional human rights bodies, the Twitter microblogging platform.

And by doing that we were also able to verify how the context and interests of regional human rights mechanisms predetermine the use of their digital diplomacy involvement. For example, in the Inter-American Human Rights System, with its history of strong ties with different stakeholders among civil society and advocacy networks, the Inter-American Court flourish where no other equivalent mechanism analyzed (European and African Court) was able to, using tweets for framing. Considering that this type of activity for human rights purposes requires strong statements about issues, and it is usually within the mandate of human rights promoting bodies and not the exclusively reporting ones (which is the case of the Inter-American Court).

In addition, in the European Human Rights System, we saw how the connections between the state member's governments and their human rights bodies were prioritized in the past in a way that caused two different outcomes. First a digital diplomacy apparatus less formal, decentralized, and nonhierarchical within the mandate of the Human Rights Commissioner. Enabling the institution to act more freely to frame human rights issues. And a very strict guideline for the European Court, to preserve its old ways of restraining themselves in a way that can keep its institutional image and reputation in line with state member's government.

While in the African Human Rights systems the struggle not only with their digital diplomacy strategy but also if their institutional image and reputation doesn't allow the

African human rights bodies to reach the potentials of digital diplomacy. Making us believe that the system as a whole has yet to come a long way, but we only have one thing to say about that, they had from where to learn.

Each mechanisms have its own approach to the practice. Some more developed than others, such as the Inter-American Human Rights System bodies, that all together can reach almost two million users in different platforms, and through the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Twitter main account alone can reach almost half a million people in the platform. And even with just a small sample we were unravel some major findings, imagine what further research can uncover in the matter.

The Internet Revolution deeply transformed world affairs. As such, it required International Organizations to adapt to more complex forms of diplomacy. Digital diplomacy is a modern mode of advancing one's interest. International Organizations can make use of the new toolbox of social medias while advocating for the human rights advancement. Potential uses may be greater when inherent challenges get considered. Regional human rights systems already started to explore digital diplomacy, despite of the fact that they use social medias for engagement more than for listening to the audiences. While the digital diplomacy at regional human rights systems does not reach full interactivity, regional bodies experiment mostly with diffusion of norms and ideas, personal branding and framing of events consistently with the human rights agenda. Comparative analysis suggests that tweeting in the Americas and Europe is more frequent, better orchestrated and multi-purposed than in Africa, where Twitter is still a novel toolbox towards human rights advancement.

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