The EU Management of Crisis Communication on Twitter: from Afghanistan to Ukraine

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INTRODUCTION

- Is there a joint social communication strategy launched by the EU in times of crisis? What are the hallmarks of the messages issued by the EU crisis management actors?

- **MAIN GOAL**: To gain an insight into the functioning of the European Union in the field of crisis management through the time.

- **There is a lack of confidence coming from EU Citizens in the activities of its institutions.** Close to half of Europeans trust the European Union, 49% **(European Commission, 2021).**

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Literature Review Overview

1. **EU AS A CRISIS MANAGER**

2. **COMMUNICATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

3. **ABOUT CRISIS**

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Comparative content analysis

- **Quantitave**

- **Qualitative**

- **Discursive**

Time frame: 57 days. Two periods:

a. Afghanistan (28d): 15th August 2021-11th Septemberl 2021

b. Ukraine (29d): 24th February 2022-24th March 2022

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RESEARCH DESIGN

- Our study analyzes the social messages posted by political leaders at the inter-state level in the context of the European Union. Twitter and tweets → the impact that this social platform has in terms of the reproduction and virilisation these messages can achieve (Pérez Curiel and García Gordillo, 2020).

<u>Three social media profiles, three EU Bodies:</u>

Sample

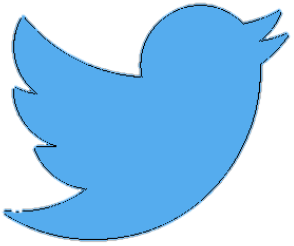Ursula von der Leyen. President of the European Commission

Josep Borrel. HRVP European Commission

Charles Michel. President of the European Council

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RESULTS

Tweets

- The use of the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 has been employed.

- 479 tweets were analyzed. The number of units was distributed in a **homogeneous way among the actors**. However, there was a greater presence of social messages posted by HRVP, Josep Borrell.

Military Conflict Referenced by Actor

			Military Conflict Referenced			
			Afghanistan	Ukraine	None	Total
EU Actor	Ursula von der Leyen	Count	17	137	0	154
		% of Total	3,5%	28,6%	0,0%	32,2%
	Josep Borrell	Count	34	144	5	183
		% of Total	7,1%	30,1%	1,0%	38,2%
	Charles Michel	Count	31	111	0	142
		% of Total	6,5%	23,2%	0,0%	29,6%
Total		Count	82	392	5	479
		% of Total	17,1%	81,8%	1,0%	100,0%

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- Figure: Thematic-Actor-Conflict
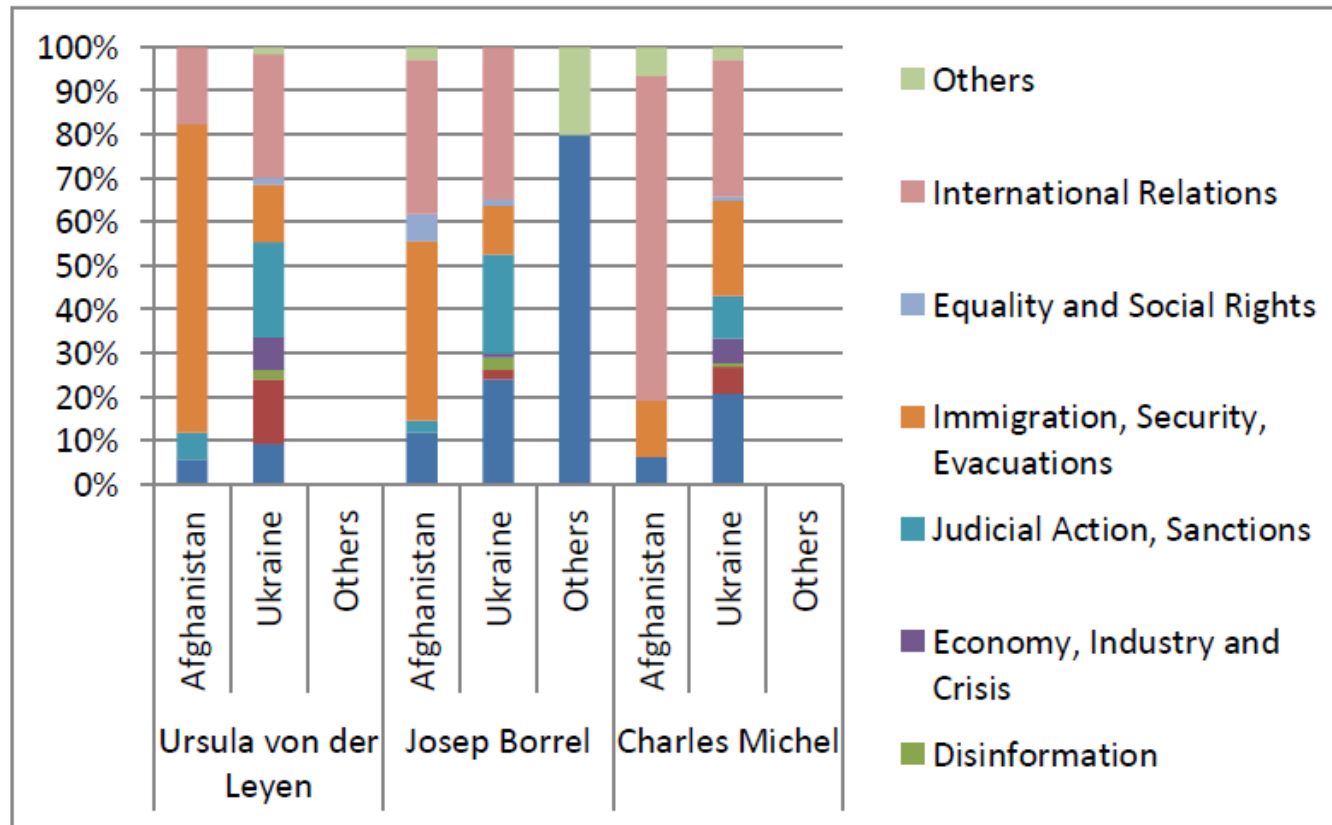
Use of Language

			Military Conflict Referenced			
			Afghanistan	Ukraine	Other Conflict	Total
Language	English	Count	77	341	2	420
		% of Total	16,1%	71,2%	0,4%	87,7%
	French	Count	1	13	2	16
		% of Total	0,2%	2,7%	0,4%	3,3%
	German	Count	0	2	0	2
		% of Total	0,0%	0,4%	0,0%	0,4%
	Ukranian	Count	0	21	0	21
		% of Total	0,0%	4,4%	0,0%	4,4%
	Other	Count	4	15	1	20
		% of Total	0,8%	3,1%	0,2%	4,2%

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Tweet Format

EU Actor
- Ursula von der Leyen
- Josep Borrell
- Charles Michel
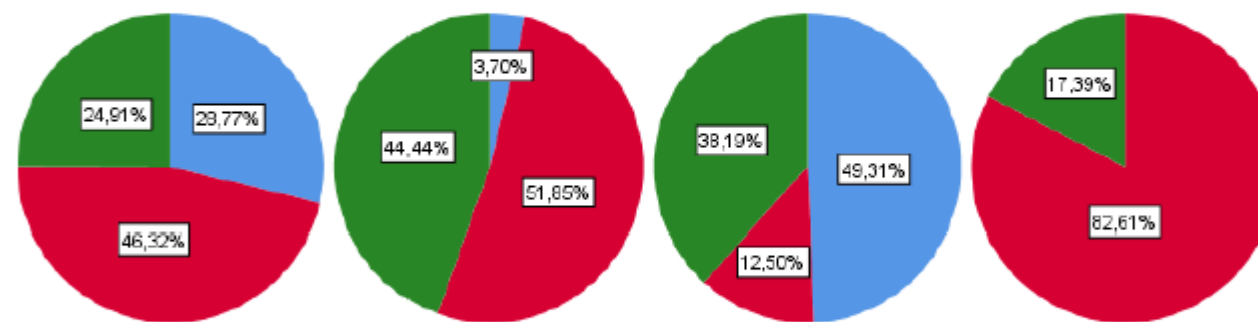
Tweet Format Own Production: 24,91% / 29,77% / 46,32%

Tweet Format Retweet: 44,44% / 3,70% / 51,85%

Tweet Format Thread: 38,19% / 49,31% / 12,50%

Tweet Format Quoted Tweet: 17,39% / 82,61%

Tweet Format

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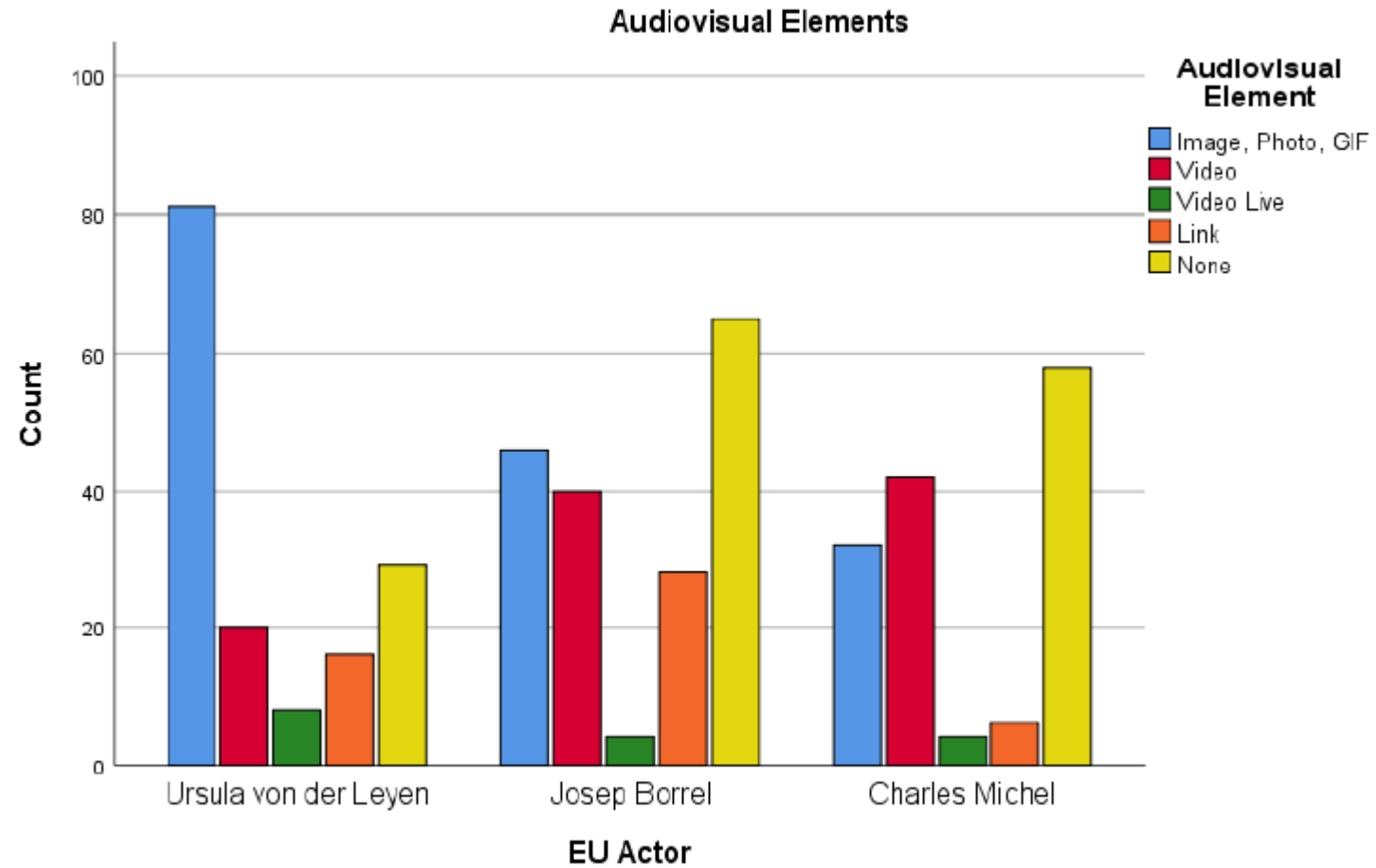
Tweet's Specific Topic and Audio visual Element Crosstabulation

| | | | Audiovisual Element | | | | | |
			Image, Photo, GIF	Video	Video Live	Link	None	Total
Tweet's Specific Topic	Attacks, Condemn	Count	13	18	3	11	37	82
	Energy, Environment and Climate Change	Count	16	5	0	3	6	30
	Disinformation	Count	3	1	0	1	3	8
	Economy, Industry and Crisis	Count	9	2	0	1	5	17
	Judicial Action, Sanctions	Count	15	18	3	10	30	76
	Immigration, Security, Evacuations	Count	30	18	1	10	29	88
	Equality and Social Rights	Count	3	2	0	2	0	7
	Diplomacy	Count	70	35	6	10	41	162
	Others	Count	0	3	3	2	1	9
Total		Count	159	102	16	50	152	479
		% of Total	33,2%	21,3%	3,3%	10,4%	31,7%	100,0%

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FINDINGS

HYPOTHESIS I. The European Union shows a greater degree of commitment to events determined by proximity criteria. An approach that can be observed in the dissemination of messages on Twitter about the conflicts in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

HYPOTHESIS II. The degree of the European Union involvement in international conflicts will be greater in the early stages of conflicts. This trend can be seen in the case of Ukraine, to the detriment of Afghanistan, as the first conflict is a new cycle in international relations.

HYPOTHESIS III. The multiplication of voices in the European Union fails to unify the message and to achieve a common position and a common voice in times of crisis. This approach is observed during the conflicts in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

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FINDINGS

1. The social trace that the Ukraine conflict (392) has had is three times the media importance of the Afghanistan conflict (82).
2. The Ukraine conflict, provoked by Russian Federation invasion is in an early stage, a new cycle of the conflict that involved international 49 community. On the other hand, the scenario developed in Afghanistan represents the end of a cycle.
3. Not all actors have had the same involvement in both conflicts, finding that for the President of the European Commission the conflict in Afghanistan was not as relevant in terms of the social messages generated
4. The proximity factor is explained by the EU's involvement in the resolution of the conflict.
5. Different social agendas in the conflicts: Ukraine (judicial issues and sanctions) and Afghanistan (immigration, security and evacuation of civilians)
6. The fact that there is no unification of the message or a common position among the three public representatives is clear from the presentation of the results (language, tone, presentation of audiovisual elements)

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DISCUSSION

- It became clear that there is no coordination in terms of communication strategy planning between the different actors and their teams. Through the study of the social messages they have posted on Twitter, it has been possible to see the lack of cohesion, thus identifying that each actor develops its own communication strategy.

- At the EU level, this differentiation may come to be perceived by the public spotlight as an internal struggle between different actors. The final consequence this scenario may lead to is the weakening of institutions.

- If we follow this inductive sequence, it can be identified as a final consequence that the lack of cohesion between the different actors can provoke: **the increase of a negative perception towards the EU institutions.**

- The importance of communicative actions in crisis mediation is evident, as the perception that citizens can develop towards the EU at this time can be crucial, and the legitimacy and trust in the European Union can be jeopardised.

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MAIN TAKE AWAYS

- Coordination and cooperation between actors (or teams) when communicating

- On the basis of the social message, further elaboration and dedication is needed on the social media Twitter → **Social Media Communication Strategy**

Thank you for your attention

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