

Real Leaders Tweet  
**How Heads of State are  
Engaging Their Citizens  
On The World Wide Web**





**Governments are turning more and more to social media to put a “face” to government and to express political views and agendas.**

# Real Leaders Tweet

## How heads of state are engaging their citizens on the World Wide Web

**W**ith the increase in information velocity brought about through the use of technology, and more specifically, through the use of social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, Plurk, LinkedIn, Brightkite and other networking sites, more and more government leaders and institutions of government are turning to these outlets to engage the populations that these individuals and government entities lead.

Governance is no longer an abstract concept – something you read about in the newspaper or see on the evening news report. Today, enlightened governments and their leaders have turned to social media to connect with constituents. Governments are turning more and more to social media to put a “face” to government and to express political views and agendas.

So who is leading the charge? Is the nature of the government leading the population whether open democracy or closed autocracy of significance? The results may surprise you.

### Government Types

Governments take many forms across a broad spectrum, from fully democratic states to entrenched autocracies found in many countries in which government is centralized and, in many cases, distant.

In addition to democratic and autocratic states, there’s a broad range of mixed and/or incoherent authority regimes broadly classified as ‘anocracies’. These include governments that have democratic and autocratic aspects of governance to varying degrees.

The Polity IV Project, a well-respected research group, tracks the characteristics and transitions of regime characteristics to quantify and compare political schema over time, and on a global scale.

Begun in 1975, Polity is based on foundational research conducted by the collaborative work of Harry Eckstein in his seminal thesis, *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry*. Since its inception, Polity has tracked trends in governance on a worldwide scale, and has become the “most widely-used data resource for studying regime change and the effects of regime authority.”

The most recent rendition, the Polity IV Project, collates data through 2008 at the Center for Systemic Peace and George Mason University, with its main campus located in Fairfax, Virginia, U.S.

---

**Democracy is difficult, messy, frustrating, but is a basic universal human aspiration.** 11:14 AM Jan 7th



**Barham Salih**  
<http://www.twitter.com/BarhamSalih>

## The Polity Spectrum of Governance

The Polity approach to analysis employs a unique methodology, examining “concomitant qualities of democratic and autocratic authority” in institutional governments, assigning a quantifiable score based on a 21-point scale that ranges from hereditary monarchies, which are scored at -10, to consolidated and stable democracies which are given a score of +10.

The organization makes no value judgments in its scoring model. It is simply a means by which change can be measured, evaluated and assessed and data collated. It should be considered an index – a measurement used to compare the status quo over time. As governments evolve, as new regimes gain or lose power, their scores change, providing a measureable means of tracking change in the way countries govern their people.

**As governments evolve, as new regimes gain or lose power, their scores change, providing a measureable means of tracking change in the way countries govern their people.**



## The Changing Role of Government

The data set collated by the most recent publication of Polity covers 163 countries currently recognized by the United Nations and spans the time frame from 1800 through 2008. The results aren't surprising, given the changing role of both government and technology.

For example, the United States – perhaps the leading “democratic” country today – is in fact NOT a true democracy. It is a representative democracy. Voters elect local and state officials who represent the people in elective bodies. At the federal level, voters choose representatives to the Electoral College, the agency that officially selects the President of the United States.

This form of representative democracy was designed over 200 years ago at a time when communications were much slower than they are today. A direct democracy, one in which the people voted on individual laws and mandates, was simply not technologically possible. And even in this digital age, the U.S. presidential election of 2000 was considered controversial – even suspect. Many U.S. citizens believe the 2000 election of President George W. Bush was manipulated by the famous recounts that took place in the state of Florida, which happened to be governed by Mr. Bush's brother, Jeb Bush. Indeed, they still believe that Al Gore actually won the 2000 election. However,



Even countries governed by consolidated, democratic institutions are not, in the truest sense, democratic states. These democracies are representative democracies with agencies such as parliaments, congresses and other entities.

after endless recounts, the U.S. Supreme Court made the ultimate decision that Mr. Bush won the election. The votes of millions of Americans were cast aside whether red or blue and the election was decided by nine men and women who sit on the U.S. Supreme Court.

The point? Even countries governed by consolidated, democratic institutions are not, in the truest sense, democratic states. In virtually all instances, these democracies are representative democracies with agencies such as parliaments, congresses and other entities of government designed to represent the will of the people.

## The Fragile Role of Governments

In addition to the creation of a tracking index to measure change in how states are governed, Polity also develops what it calls its State Fragility Index. This index is a yardstick of how stable current regimes are – how entrenched the system of government is.

States with high fragility scores are more inclined to change than governments of countries with low fragility scores, indicating that governance around the world is in a constant state of flux.

The map below, developed by Polity, shows those countries that are most stable in terms of governance. The map indicates those countries that are most and least stable in 2008. Countries with high fragility scores are more susceptible to change, either peaceful change or revolutionary change, but change nonetheless.

Aspects of “fragility” include such elements as factionalism, important policy changes that affect broad segments of the population, autocratic “backsliding,” auto-coups and the collapse of the state government (state failure). A quick review of the map indicates that world governance is in a constant state of evolution. Change, in many parts of the world, is the norm, primarily in poorer countries or countries in transition from autocratic to democratic governments.

An excellent example of the changing role of government can be found in Iraq, a country that is moving toward democracy, with hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens risking their lives to vote and proudly displaying their ink-stained thumbs – a symbol that these citizens voted, in most cases, for the first time in their lives. Even so, the fledgling democracy in Iraq, supported by U.S. troops, remains fragile.

Democracy is still in the experimental stages in this war-torn region in which tribalism still holds sway, at least at the local level. For this reason, Iraq’s democracy is considered fragile while the democracies throughout Europe and North America are stronger, simply because they’ve been in place longer and are accepted by the populations governed by these representative governments.

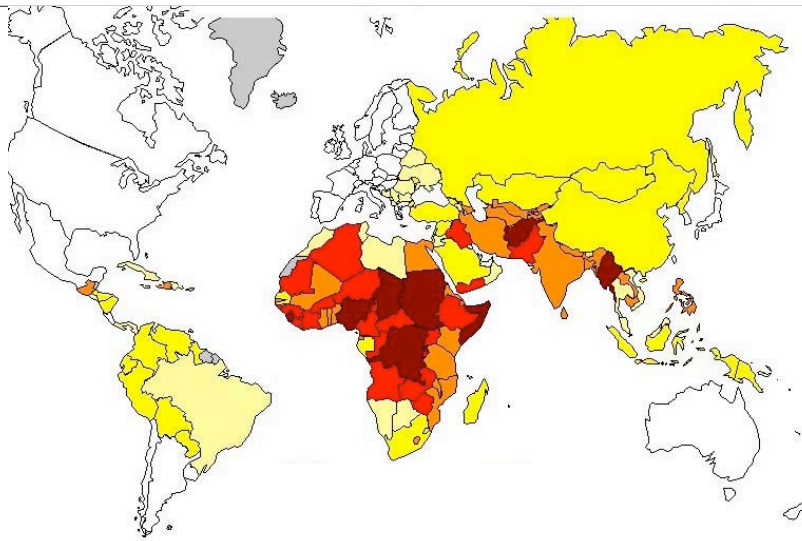
---

**We want our money back  
and we’re going to get it.**

3:43 PM Jan 15th



**Barack Obama**  
[http://www.twitter.com/  
BarackObama](http://www.twitter.com/BarackObama)



## State Fragility Index 2008

- Extreme | 20-25
- High | 16-19
- Serious | 12-15
- Moderate | 8-11
- Low | 4-7
- Little or No | 0-3

## The Move Toward a Democratic World

Classifying the nature of a country's government structure most take into account a number of factors according to scholars. However, trend lines clearly show that the world is becoming more democratic with the passage of time and with advances in technology. In a global economy, in a world that is shrinking through the use of various media, people see rising standards of living in democratic nations and demand that autocratic governments adapt.

An example of this can be seen in the current state of affairs in Iran. Though the country did hold "elections" in 2009, the people of this troubled nation had little or no faith in the results of those elections.

Hundreds of thousands of protestors have taken to the streets in protest of what they view as a "rigged" election and the illusion of democracy. And these protestors, who risk imprisonment and even death, have received strong support from democracies around the world – people who want the freedoms that come with democracy, not the civil rights constraints imposed by the current regime that, in fact, rules day-to-day activities in Iran.

This support is shown in many ways. Newspaper and media editorials have shown support of Iranian protestors who take to the streets every weekend – months after "election" results were made public. Support also comes through various social media sites like Twitter.

Individuals added green borders to their Twitter avatars to show support for the Iranian protestors. And information from within Iran's closed borders is disseminated via Twitter and other social media sites, despite the government's attempts to close down these social and networking portals.

The genie of social media is out of the bottle, and no matter how hard autocratic and/or corrupt governments try to prevent the use of social media, it remains a powerful, unmitigated



The genie of social media is out of the bottle, and no matter how hard autocratic and/or corrupt governments try to prevent the use of social media, it remains a powerful, unmitigated force

**PM: crucial meeting with Premier Wen of China, and then 5 minutes to grab a steak.** 9:55 AM Dec 17th, 2009



**10 Downing Street, UK PM Gordon Brown**  
<http://www.twitter.com/DowningStreet>

force – one every government leader and all government institutions must recognize.

Today, 94 of the 163 states recognized by the United Nations (54%) are considered to be fully democratic, or to put it another way, more than half the world's population lives under a consolidated democracy as free citizens with a say in the role of their governments.

In 1940, the number of autocratic nations far outweighed the number of democratic governments. When compared with today's data, there is a clear trend toward a more democratic world – a trend that continues to grow as social media expands its sphere of influence. Indeed, governments attempt to control access to social and networking web sites. Facebook is banned in a number of countries, though any technically-savvy citizen can access and post to this social media site.

Skype, the popular VoIP telephony service is also banned in many countries, yet the messages of hope and freedom still get through. Despite the efforts of government to isolate their people from the rest of the world, the world wide web has brought us all closer together.

The Center for Systemic Peace and Center for Global Policy's fragility index points us toward a more stable world. Measuring each country's political, economic, social and security stability, this organization's fragility index indicates that 36% of all countries have serious to extreme fragility.

In other words, approximately two-thirds of the world's population live under stable or somewhat stable government structures based on the criteria employed by this respected "think tank." No one can refute that the trends toward democratization and social and economic stability are increasing.

The question then becomes rather simple: under this accelerating trend toward stable democracies what should we expect from these governments and the heads of state who lead them?



## Leaders Who Twitter

In the world of social media there is no more prolific and up-to-the-minute communication platform than Twitter. With 15.8 million Twitter profiles and a whopping albeit non-unique 2.29 billion followers, this micro-blogging platform has become the World's chatter box. The trending bits of information that spread through Twitter influence what's being talked about around the world and spark actions of unprecedented scale.

So in our World where over half the planet has turned democratic and under the precept that true democracy is founded on an inclusive government always ready to engage directly with its citizenry, the Twitter platform offers an unique opportunity for heads of state to bring discourse and debate directly to the public.

Our research shows that of the 163 countries recognized by the U.N, only 24 countries have leaders or government-sanctioned agencies that

use social media platform Twitter. That's a mere 15% of all countries worldwide and only 22% of today's democracies.

Interestingly, data indicate that 21 of the 24 countries with leaders or agencies that use Twitter are stable, consolidated democracies. In other words, 84% of governments that deploy social media are fully democratic, and nearly all of these countries are stable.

## Is Social Media a Threat to the Stability of a Regime?

U.S. President Obama has a huge following on Twitter and is a regular contributor to the Tweet board. He's also been employing Twitter longer than any other leader, entering his 140 character messages since 2007.

President Obama also employed social media during his election campaign to raise funds. Many pundits and talking heads have labeled the U.S. president the "first official elected through social media," and there's certainly enough empirical data to support that claim.

However, democracy is not necessarily a prerequisite for active users of Twitter. Many leaders heading governments labeled as "non-democratic" employ Twitter to good effect – to engage the people of their countries. The more critical factor seems to be the stability of the country as measured by the fragility index.

**Overall, 96% of all national leaders who have active Twitter profiles are from either stable and/or democratic nations.**



**A sombre day; His Majesty & I received the bodies of 3 courageous Jordanian peacekeepers killed in Haiti. God bless their souls**

5:02 AM Jan 19th



**Queen Rania**

<http://www.twitter.com/QueenRania>





**Enlightened leaders in stable countries employ Twitter to engage their citizenry.**

Examples? HH Rania of Jordan uses Twitter. HH Sheikh Mohammed of Dubai also uses Twitter to reach out to the people of the UAE. These government heads of state don't use Twitter to spread propaganda. In fact, just the opposite is true. Enlightened leaders in stable countries employ Twitter to engage their citizenry.

The Prime Minister of Malaysia denounced bombings of Christian churches in his country – an Islamic state by demographic breakdown.

In short, this government leader took steps through Twitter to pronounce the government's belief in freedom of religion.

In Chile, the president used Twitter to denounce the political radicalism that was being spread by Venezuela's autocrat, Hugo Chavez. Interestingly, these Tweets were sent out on election day when Chilean citizens were entering the polls to vote in democratic elections.

Australia's Prime Minister Rudd has repeatedly denounced the wrongs done to the indigenous population of his nation, broadcasting to the people that amends should be made. Any freedom-loving individual will view that as an act of courage on the part of the Prime Minister.

Jordan's Queen Rania acknowledged that several Jordanian first responders were killed in the wake of the tragic earthquake that recently devastated the poorest nation in the Americas – Haiti. Rather than hiding this disturbing news, Her Majesty broadcast the news via Twitter, secure in the stability of her own country and its governance.

HH Sheikh Mohammed the UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai called for national unity when Dubai was under media attack over debt problems. Again, this outreach is an indication that leaders of democracies, or countries with stable governments, will use social media to connect with the people in a way that was never available before.

---

**Abu Dhabi, Dubai and other emirates are strong and united in UAE...we're all one tribe, one family.**

4:27 AM Nov 9th, 2009



**HH Sheikh Mohammed,  
Ruler of Dubai**  
[http://www.twitter.com/  
HHShkMohd](http://www.twitter.com/HHShkMohd)

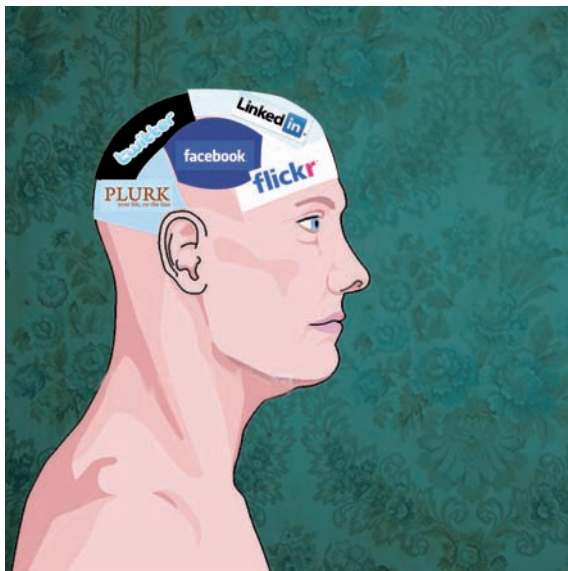
## The Take-Away

The W3 (World Wide Web) has significantly increased the velocity at which information spreads. More specifically, the deployment of social media outlets like Twitter, Plurk, Facebook and other social media have become outlets of both information dissemination and engagement with others on a global scale.

The role of government continues to evolve according to tracking data from 1800 to 2008. The countries of the world have become more democratic, which translates into increased transparency and openness between the governors and the governed.

More and more world leaders are using social media to engage their populations. For the most part, leaders use Twitter to provide information and to explain, defend and debate government policies.

Leaders of democracies, which now make up 63% of the 163 countries recognized by the United



More and more world leaders are using social media to engage their populations. For the most part, leaders use Twitter to provide information and to explain, defend and debate government policies.

The trend toward increased use of social media will continue. We've gone from 0% use to 15% use by world leaders in a matter of several years.

Nations, are slowly recognizing the political value of social media as a tool of engagement with their populations.

Leaders of countries with a high level of stability, whether democracies, hereditary monarchies or countries in transition, use Twitter to reach out to their populations.

Encouragingly, the governments and/or government leaders who Tweet today do use the messaging platform to disseminate unbiased news and to define government policies.

The trend toward increased use of social media will continue. We've gone from 0% use to 15% use by world leaders in a matter of several years. U.S. President Obama made use of the W3 and social media to raise millions of dollars for his election campaign, demonstrating that social media delivers tangible results.

**I condemn the church bombings. An investigation has been launched and those responsible will be brought to justice.** 2:40 AM Jan 8th



**Najib Razak**

<http://www.twitter.com/NajibRazak>



Leaders of highly stable countries will expand their use of Twitter. Good leaders Twitter. We've seen the benefits of this practice from Chile to Dubai to Malaysia to Australia.

Finally, confident, stable governments will employ Twitter to educate, inform and inspire the governed. This outreach will have a positive effect, giving citizens forums in which to debate their governments and differing views within population segments.

Leaders of unstable countries and/or autocratic countries will continue to view Twitter, Plurk and other social media as a threat to their authority, and justifiably so. The activities undertaken by discontent citizens of Iran after recent "elections" is being "covered" through social media rather than traditional media. The Iranian government still holds sway over the output of traditional media like newspapers and TV news. Conversely, reports of unrest continue to make their way out of Iran via SMSs.

We can expect to see more governments use social media in the years and decades ahead. It provides an outreach platform that delivers information and policy at greatly increased velocity. Citizens get the news faster.

On the other hand, repressive governments will continue to control social media access out of fear of losing control of their populations. We see evidence of this throughout the world as blogging and social media engagement is discouraged from China to Venezuela.

Web-based media will enhance the desire among those living in autocratic societies for democratic change. And while leaders may resist the use of social media, the population will embrace it.

Thus, social media must be viewed as a significant means of change and NOT a means of control. Autocratic societies will gradually accept the use of social media and adapt principles of inclusive governance to stay in power and to compete in a global society.

The leaders active on Twitter today recognize the power of social media, and do not hesitate to remain in touch with their citizens and the world. Embracing the ideal of inclusive governance and confident of their political legitimacy.

What does that tell you about the power of Twitter? The facts speak for itself.

### Real leaders tweet.

---

**Today we got up very early with our children to vote and ask God for wisdom and strength**

8:40 Jan 17th



**Sebastian Piñera**  
<http://www.twitter.com/sebastianpinera>

NAME	COUNTRY	POLITY SCORE	REGIME TYPE
<b>1. Heads of State</b>			
1. President Barack Obama	United States	10	DEM
2. Prime Minister Gordon Brown	United Kingdom	10	DEM
3. Queen of Jordan Rania Al Abdullah	Jordan	-3	ANO
4. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd	Australia	10	DEM
5. UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	United Arab Emirates	-8	AUT
6. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama	Japan	10	DEM
7. Prime Minister Stephen Harper	Canada	10	DEM
8. President Elect Sebastián Piñera	Chile	10	DEM
9. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg	Norway	10	DEM
10. Prime Minister Mohd. Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak	Malaysia	6	DEM
11. Prime Minister John Key	New Zealand	10	DEM
12. Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen	Denmark	10	DEM
13. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu	Israel	10	DEM
14. President Gloria Arroyo	Philippines	8	DEM
15. Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis	Latvia	8	DEM
16. President Lech Kaczyński	Poland	10	DEM
17. President Paul Kagame	Rwanda	-3	ANO
18. Prime Minister Donald Tusk	Poland (*2nd Ref)	10	DEM
19. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Turkey	7	DEM
<b>2. National Government Offices</b>			
1. Mexico's Federal Government	México	8	DEM
2. Prime Minister Barham Salih	Kurdistan Region of Iraq	n/a	n/a
3. Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	Spain	10	DEM
4. Republic of Korea Government	South Korea	8	DEM

**Note for tables:**

**Fragility Score** > 0="Highly Stable" to 25="Extreme Fragility" is a State Fragility Index measuring the country's Political, Economic, Social, and Security stability (0-11 Little to Moderate Fragility, 12-25 Serious to Extreme Fragility)

**Polity Score** > -10 to -6 "Autocracy", -5 to +5 "Anocracy", +6 to +10 "Democracy" measures degree of democracy on 21 point scale (-10 to +10) ranging from monarchy to fully institutionalized democracy

FRAGILITY	TWEETING SINCE	FOLLOWERS	HANDLE	LINK
2	3/5/2007	3,173,986	BarackObama	<a href="https://twitter.com/BarackObama">https://twitter.com/BarackObama</a>
0	3/26/2008	1,743,365	downingstreet	<a href="http://twitter.com/downingstreet">http://twitter.com/downingstreet</a>
6	4/29/2009	1,234,923	QueenRania	<a href="http://twitter.com/QueenRani">http://twitter.com/QueenRani</a>
2	10/17/2008	918,760	KevinRuddPM	<a href="http://twitter.com/KevinRuddPM">http://twitter.com/KevinRuddPM</a>
3	6/3/2009	325,909	HHShkMohd	<a href="http://twitter.com/HHShkMohd">http://twitter.com/HHShkMohd</a>
0	12/16/2009	195,644	hatoyamayukio	<a href="http://twitter.com/hatoyamayukio">http://twitter.com/hatoyamayukio</a>
0	7/11/2007	45,371	pmharper	<a href="http://twitter.com/pmharper">http://twitter.com/pmharper</a>
2	2/18/2008	43,977	sebastianpinera	<a href="http://twitter.com/sebastianpinera">http://twitter.com/sebastianpinera</a>
2	2/13/2009	24,100	JensStoltenberg	<a href="http://twitter.com/jensstoltenberg">http://twitter.com/jensstoltenberg</a>
6	9/21/2008	9,098	NajibRazak	<a href="http://twitter.com/NajibRazak">http://twitter.com/NajibRazak</a>
1	11/14/2008	7,778	johnkeypm	<a href="https://twitter.com/johnkeypm">https://twitter.com/johnkeypm</a>
0	3/24/2009	4,775	larsloekke	<a href="https://twitter.com/larsloekke">https://twitter.com/larsloekke</a>
8	10/30/2008	2,686	netanyahu	<a href="http://twitter.com/netanyahu">http://twitter.com/netanyahu</a>
12	N/A	2,279	PresidentGMA	<a href="https://twitter.com/PresidentGMA">https://twitter.com/PresidentGMA</a>
0	6/24/2009	1,401	VDombrovskis	<a href="http://twitter.com/vdombrovskis">http://twitter.com/vdombrovskis</a>
0	N/A	613	PrezydentRP	<a href="http://twitter.com/PrezydentRP">http://twitter.com/PrezydentRP</a>
20	5/4/2009	338	PaulKagame	<a href="http://twitter.com/PaulKagame">http://twitter.com/PaulKagame</a>
0	7/24/2009	321	tuskdonald	<a href="http://twitter.com/tuskdonald">http://twitter.com/tuskdonald</a>
10	8/22/2009	216	RT_Erdogan	<a href="http://twitter.com/RT_Erdogan">http://twitter.com/RT_Erdogan</a>
3	5/12/2009	3,368	gobfed	<a href="https://twitter.com/gobfed">https://twitter.com/gobfed</a>
n/a	4/22/2009	3,057	barhamsalih	<a href="http://twitter.com/barhamsalih">http://twitter.com/barhamsalih</a>
1	6/26/2009	1,729	PSOE	<a href="http://twitter.com/PSOE">http://twitter.com/PSOE</a>
0	6/18/2009	1,139	koreanet	<a href="http://twitter.com/koreanet">http://twitter.com/koreanet</a>

**Sad chapter in our history. Time for healing to begin.** 7:03 PM Nov 17th, 2009



**Kevin Rudd PM**

<http://www.twitter.com/KevinRuddPM>



digitaldaya

© The Digital Policy Council LLC  
[www.digitaldaya.com](http://www.digitaldaya.com)