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Social Media in the Midst of Social Struggle

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ABSTRACT

The researcher, in this article, examines the 'Rif Hiraq' stakeholders' use of social media. Using an interpretative analysis, a key method within qualitative media/content analysis of the dispatches of the parties involved, the writer distinguishes three broad trends within the media involvement of the Hiraq actors, namely the protestors, the pro/government and the so-called 'Ayyacha'. Then, the researcher studies and exposes the features of these agents' social media use. Before giving an analytical account of each party's propositions, the writer explains the historical underpinnings which motivate the ever more ascending tension, and which he deems essential to gain sound understanding of the on-going controversy. The writer analyzes the content each party dispatches over social media in addition to its characteristic aspects. He also highlights the objectives the conflictual parties seek to attain, points out the related consequences, he believes, this social media attendance entails and, ultimately, draws relevant implications.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication networks including satellite TV channels and social media avenues have undertaken a significant part in bringing up and sustaining the 'Arab Spring'. Ever since the 'Arab Spring's' – associated commotions and agitations, different society's stakeholders have understood, though mostly through bloodshed, on-going dissidence and infighting, the powerful weight of social media. However, social media, especially Facebook, are undertaking contradictory roles in the present-day events taking place in the north of Morocco, mainly Al Hoceima city.

Al Hoceima is a small city that is mostly populated by the Rifi people. The Rifi constitute the ethnic majority of the region referred to as the Rif, which,

in the Arabic lexicon, refers to any uncultivated territory that is mostly outside the city. Throughout Moroccan history, the Rifi have played a major role in the Kingdom's independence. They have led, under the leadership of the warrior Abd Elkrim El Khattabi, a strong resistance against the Spanish colonizer who has suffered an evil defeat, mainly in the famous Anwal Battle in 1921. Ever since this unprecedented triumph, defiance and disobedience came to be interesting defining features of the Rifi individual. Such components were perhaps the fuel of the Rifi's challenge and rebelliousness against the reign of King Hassan II in 1957-1958 (Sara Rais, 2016). This insubordination record both motivated and explains the running tensional conflict and the conflictual output over social media nowadays.

Al Hoceima has witnessed steady uproars as a consequence of the dramatic death of the fish seller Mohsen Fikri who was crushed to death by a garbage truck in October 28th, 2016. This tragic incident has triggered several demonstrations all through the kingdom. The demonstrators sympathized with the victim, condemned the

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barbaric and arrogant act on the part of the related officials and called for a transparent judicial process. Nevertheless, the Rifi have taken this mishap further.

The Rifi have been angered by the utterance “طحن مو” (Slang Moroccan Arabic meaning: crush his mother), which many, including the Rifi people as well as national media analysts, considered as an inferioration and humiliation of the working class. The latter believes that it is ever more exploited assuming that it is essentially not benefitting from the city’s richness, fish, which is increasingly drained by the excessively rich. That is why, the Rifi’s sustained demonstrations, along the last eight months or so, claim equal distribution of wealth, besides much governmental involvement in the region by setting up developmental projects that are likely to create job opportunities and improve the Rifi’s daily-life conditions.

The Rifi demonstrators have been further enraged when some government officials accused them of entertaining separatist inclinations. These public servants might have based their accusation on the fact that the Rifi dissidents tended to hold the ethnic flag that celebrates the Amazigh ethnicity, but which reminds government office holders of the Rifi’s former balky contrariness. The Rifi responded by rallying a massive demonstration stressing social claims and affirming national adherence. And social media avenues and WhatsApp accounts abound with pages and dispatches reflecting such conflicting tendencies, allegations and distinct social media usage.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

In fact, a meticulous analysis of the Rif movement and the content of the related dispatches would spot three different categories of users. Each category utilizes social media differently and broadcasts a different content. On the one side, the Rif activists broadcast content that defends their predicament, explains their claims and criticizes the central government’s negligence and marginalization of the Rif region. The latter, on the other side, propagate dispatches that illustrate the government’s initiatives all the while trying to defame and discredit the Rif movement protagonists. The third category’s, i. e., the ‘Ayyacha’s communications tend to be rather volatile swinging between the former

propositions without lending full support to any of the two.

In this article, the researcher analyses the dispatches of these three conflicting parties using the media/content analysis approach and brings up the key features of the dispatched content over different social media platforms. To do so, the researcher raises the following questions:

- What content does each party dispatch?
- What characterizes each party’s dispatches?
- What objectives does each party seek to attain?, and
- What consequences does this media involvement entail?
- Before going any further, an overview of the methodology adopted in this article is due.

METHODOLOGY

Media content analysis

Media content analysis (MCA) is an age-old research methodology that gained popularity especially during the 1920-1930’s with eminent researchers as Harold Laswell. In his *Propaganda Techniques in The World War* (1927), Laswell introduced MCA to study mass media, specially its propagandist content. Ever since, MCA methodology was expansively used to investigate into various communications’ output. As the latter became more abundant with the onset of Television, MCA as a research approach got more prominent. In accordance, studies relying on MCA and portraying violence, racism, or women in TV and movies abounded.

In fact, Harold Laswell, as cited in Kunczik (1991), laid the foundations of MCA and epitomized its procedure in his resounding encapsulation “Who says What, Through Which Channel, To Whom, and with What Effect” (p. 41). That is, when undertaking MCA, the analyst is entitled to bring up not only the enunciator or the enunciation, but also the media through which the latter was enunciated together with its targeted audience as well as its overall impact. This is why, Max Weber, mentioned in Hansen, Cattle, Negrine & Newbold (1998), qualifies the media as the means for monitoring the “cultural temperature”

(p. 52) of society. In other words, by bringing up all of the message, the addressor, the medium, the addressee and the produced repercussions, the analyst would gain insight into their societies' temperament and conditions.

Laswell, Lerner and Pool (1952) reinforce this belief by asserting that CA builds on the assumption that verbal behavior is an essential constituent of human behavior and that the use of (language) symbols is part and parcel of related happenings. This is why, the processes of communication are both indicators and components of the historical process; hence, the authors' assertion that "content analysis is a technique which aims at describing, with the optimum objectivity, precision and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time" (p. 34).

Moreover, Macnamara (2005) mentions that MCA is "a non-intrusive research method that allows examination of a wide range of data over an extensive period to identify popular discourses and their likely meanings" (p. 6). He also explicates that MCA is a sub-set of content analysis (CA). Neuendorf (2002) accounts for CA as "the primary message – centered methodology" (p. 9). While Neuendorf insists on the message as the main focus of MCA, Berelson (1952), cited in Macnamara (2005), underlines the elements of objectivity, systematicity and quality of communications' content. Berelson asserts that CA is a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). However, insistence on the above-mentioned components has instigated much criticism on the part of other researchers.

In this regard, Berger and Luckman (1967) contend that media texts are subject to a variety of interpretations; and their analysis, accordingly, can by no means be objective. Likewise, the authors note that both implicit and explicit content can be studied following content analysis methodology. More recently, Arthur Berger (1991) underlines that CA is a "research technique that that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular form of art" (p. 25). That is, that content analyst studies the frequency of occurrence of given variables within a typical sample of some media content.

Furthermore, Neuman (1997) enhances Berger's account and mentions that CA is a research technique wherein the researcher both assembles and investigates into the content of related texts. By content, he understands words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes and any conveyed message. Likewise, Neuman explicates that text refers to "anything written, visual or spoken that serves as a medium of communication" (pp. 272-273). Indeed, the task of the content analyst is multifold reflecting the multiplicity of their subject matter of analysis.

M/CA: quantitative or qualitative?

As alluded to earlier, whether MCA is quantitative or qualitative is a question that raised much controversy among researchers. In this respect, Kimberley Neuendorf (2002) stresses that CA, relying on the scientific method, goes beyond measurable types of variables or the context of occurrence of messages. In accordance, CA both summarizes and analyses quantitatively related messages. To do so, Neuendorf recommends using scientific methods susceptible to guarantee "attention to objectivity, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability and hypothesis testing" (p. 10). Thus, for Neuendorf, qualitative text analysis, which she categorizes as rhetorical analysis, narrative, discourse, structuralist or semiotic, interpretative or critical analyses (pp. 5 – 7), falls outside the scope of CA.

Nevertheless, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) oppose Neuendorf's sole categorization of MCA as quantitative research and distinguish two traditions within MCA, namely the behaviorist and humanist traditions. While the behaviorist tradition is predictive wherein the researcher examines media content to find out its possible future effects, the humanist tradition is descriptive in which the researcher analyses media content to figure out how it reflects its related society and culture. In accordance, the behaviorist approach utilizes quantitative CA; but the humanist tradition, which is adopted in this work, uses qualitative CA.

Moreover, Macnamara (2005) illustrates that the quantitative CA proceeds by collecting data about media content like topics or issues, number of mentions, messages marked by key words in context, besides the reach and frequency of the

media together with the latter's form. Similarly, regarding this quantitative–qualitative dichotomy, Neuman (1997) explains that CA unfolds by “objective and systematic counting and recording procedures to produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text” (p. 273), which is a pure quantitative-statistic account. Yet, Neuman enhances his account by underlining that “there are qualitative or interpretative versions of content analysis” (Ibid.)

Furthermore, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) criticize this quantitative orientation and stress the primacy of qualitative methods within CA by noting that “reducing large amounts of text to quantitative data does not provide a complete picture of meaning and contextual codes, since texts may contain many other forms of emphasis besides sheer repetition” (p. 32). That is, the qualitative content analyst goes deeper than a mere tally of the frequency of occurrence to produce a thorough interpretation.

Likewise, Newbold et al. (2002) insist on the limitations of quantitative CA and its related inferences. They stress that “there is no simple relationship between media texts and their impact, and it would be too simplistic to base decisions in this regard on mere figures obtained from a statistical content analysis” (p. 80). In other words, quantitative CA is both uninformative and unreliable. Size and frequency of media messages can by no means explain nor indicate media effects; hence, Newbold et al.'s (2002) informative conclusion that quantitative CA fails to “capture the context within which a media text becomes meaningful” (p. 84). Qualitative CA, on the other hand, conveys such context and meaning.

In addition, qualitative CA translates the rapport between media texts and their audiences. It unveils not only how audiences interpret media texts, but also what interpretations onlookers are most likely to make taking into consideration all of the viewership, the media and the contextual features, not just the textual ones. So, a heavy reliance on the researcher's reading and construal of media texts characterizes qualitative CA. This is why, Macnamara (2005) concludes that qualitative CA is indispensable to take hold of media texts' salient meanings and audiences' likely understanding, which is the ultimate objective behind analysis of media content. Therefore,

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Newbold et al. (1998) reinforce Macnamara's conclusion by asserting that researchers had better combine both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gain a full grasp of media texts' senses and their susceptible effects.

Regarding the purposes of M/CA, Berelson (1952), as cited in Macnamara (2005), mentions five main objectives, which Neuendorf (2000) reduces into four only. M/CA is descriptive as the analyst aims at describing both the texture, firstly, and the form features of the message content secondly. Thirdly, M/CA is inferential since the analyst seeks to produce inferences to both the producers of such output and its addressees, fourthly. Ultimately, M/CA caters for predictive goals because the researcher predicts the impact of media content on audiences. Likewise, Neuendorf (2002) advocates a comparable account but enhances it with psychometric aims that are achieved by analyzing and measuring various variables as intelligence, aptitude and personality so as to produce an interpretation and draw related conclusions about social members.

Sample and instruments

Throughout the end of October 2016 and the beginning of 2017, several pages such as *Rassdmaroc*, *Febrayer*, to mention but two, have proliferated and have become more prominent over Facebook in concomitance with the eruption of what is commonly referred to as the 'Rif Hirak'. These pages, in conjunction with a hodgepodge of others, claim to provide a thorough coverage of the 'Rif Hirak' and expose its multifarious unfoldings. To study their content, the researcher selected a systematic random sample and isolated a body of subversive FB pages, namely *Rassdmaroc*, *Febrayer*, *Rifnews24h*, *Alousboue*, *Raialyoum*, *RifOriginal*, *Jadidtv* and *Mashahidtv*, besides the pro-government or rather lenient FB pages as *Hespress* together with other anonymous messages that were concomitantly dispatched over WhatsApp.

The researcher, moreover, elected for analysis the dispatches, mainly text, picture, audio and video materials of these pages over a period of 8 months running from October 2016 to May 2017 using the media/content analysis approach. To provide a deeper account of the output of

these pages, make sound interpretations and draw related inferences, the writer opted for qualitative media/content analysis. In particular, the researcher invokes shoemaker and Reese's (1996) humanist tradition to find out how the chosen communications portray aspects of the Moroccan society.

To bring up both the salient and manifest features of this media output, the writer utilizes both the narratologic and semiotic strands. Part of the former strand, narratology, the researcher calls attention to the text's narrative or story-telling emphasizing the meanings the structure and choice of words produce. Regarding the semiotic element, attention is drawn to readers' interpretation of text's signs and sign systems.

MCA of the 'Rif Hirak' stakeholders

First Party: the Protestors' exposing their claims

In accordance, the Rif activists have ensured an active communication campaign that accompanies the movement. The activists set a hodgepodge of pages on diverse social media sites, such as Rassdmaroc, Rifnews24h, RifOriginal on Facebook, which ascertained an open and an interactive communication policy with distinct components of the Moroccan society. The Rif militants broadcast various content, notably pictures, videos and live broadcasts, which aim at explaining the Rifi's economic, social and cultural claims. Through such content, the dissidents seek to mobilize sympathetic proponents elsewhere in the Kingdom.

The movement enthusiasts would, for instance, upload recordings of public forces' violent intervention against pacific protestors. Pictures of these forces besieging Al Hoceima were also released. The movement fanatics equally insist on interaction with netizens as well as responsiveness by responding to critics' complaints and commenting on commentators' remarks. When accused of receiving foreign financial assistance, a video showing an interview with Zefzafi's mother plainly refuting such accusation also came out. Pictures and videos deriding the arrival of some national music stars and actors were also dispatched. Nasser Zefzafi (*Alousboue, May 18th, 2017*), the movement's leader, replied as well to

the government's indictment of serving separatist intentions by affirming that "The Mekhzen is the true Lucifer" that threatens to thrust the region into unsafe aftermaths if the Rif movement's claims are erroneously interpreted and not duly satisfied.

As a matter of fact, many pundits, such as Khalid El Jamäi or Said Rayhani, built on the Rif protests and relayed the protestors' economic, social and cultural demands. These analysts sympathize with the demonstrators once and criticize the central government's deceleration and sluggishness at another.

On April 4th, 2017, Khalid El Jamäi, a former iconoclast and former *L' Opinion* editor, addressed an outrageous letter to the king Mohamed VI. El Jamäi (*jadidtv, April 4th, 2017*) reminds the king of the legitimacy of the Rif protestors' claims and of the necessity of an immediate response on his part, being the nation's effective governor. El Jamäi, drawing an analogy between the former Rif strife and the Rif on-going dissidence, also reminded the king that his father's authoritarian and military approach was not and would be ineffective in solving the region's incessant insurgency, but is more likely to further agitate and stir the region, if not the whole kingdom. The analyst equally drew his Majesty's attention to the rampancy of corruption, henceforth, the necessity of introducing due reforms and establishing the rule of law.

Likewise, Said Rayhani (*Alousboue, April 14th, 2017*) drew a comparison between El Bouaziz's self immolation, as the incident that sparked the 2011 jasmine revolution in Tunisia, and the immolation of the mariner Khalid Kader in Dakhla City in March 30th, 2017 as well as the mutilation of the fish seller Mohsen Fikri, as the occurrence that triggered the Rif movement. Rayhani further ironized the nation's political parties for engaging in a race over worldly governmental positions instead of contributing to the resolution of the citizen's burning issues and daily concerns. This laxness on the part of the state's officials, in conjunction with the above-mentioned incidents is most likely to further roil the region unless handled with much wisdom and carefulness.

Seemingly, the Rif activists' fierce electronic communication policy has had a wider reach as it

has engaged prominent Arab pundits, such as Abd El Bari Atwan and Fayçal Al Qassim. *Raialyoum* editor (May 28th, 2017) considers that Morocco is on the verge of social turmoil and wishes that the state officeholders and the Rif activists would draw unassailable lessons from the infighting situation going on in countries that had witnessed the 'Arab Spring' tumult. The writer further advised Moroccan officials to hurriedly initiate developmental projects in the Rif region and adequately meet the populations' social expectations and economic claims before they heap up and develop into unwanted and uncontrollable scenarios. To avoid such undesirable scene, Abd El Bari Atwan indirectly reminded the Gulf wealthy nations of the necessity of supporting an Arab ally, Morocco, much better than injecting huge funds into Donald Trump's budget as a reminder of the latter's visit to KSA after which he regained America with valuable gifts and lavish financial returns.

Indeed, Abd El Bari Atwan recommended that the Gulf affluent countries should support the Moroccan government by initiating investment projects that are liable to create job opportunities that would appease the Rif people's outrage. Similarly, Aljazeera Arabic's controversial TV presenter, Fayçal Al Qassim (*febrayer*, May 30th, 2017) warns Arab regimes not to consider the Syrian crisis as a scarecrow and that high poverty and repression levels only beget more social dissension. As a consequence, the Arabian regimes had better initiate profound social, economic and political reforms which are susceptible to gain the trust of their people otherwise the latter might overthrow the former.

Second Party: the Government's Social Media Response

Aware that critical situations are most congenial for the proliferation of rumor, the government as well as pro-governmental individuals and groups, on the other side, ensured an unrelenting and aggressive communication policy not only to come to terms with the Rif crisis, but also to outstand the Rif activists' communications. First, the government issued a statement discrediting messages emerging from unofficial sources indirectly urging public members not to trust any information they are exposed to.

Other unidentified dispatches over the instant messaging application WhatsApp insist on the disloyalty of the leaders of the Rif movement by dispatching pictures of Zefzafi in company with some alleged Algerian information agency members abroad. Diffused pictures also showed Zefzafi in some yacht together with some intimate male and female companions obviously indulging in pleasure. Dispatched pictures equally displayed Zefzafi's female successor, Nawal Saâdaoui, cherishing a cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other, in an attempt to alienate and stress her aloofness from the ordinary Rifi women renowned for immaculacy and chasteness. A picture popularized over WhatsApp also displayed one of Zefzafi's escorts to be in possession of a luxurious Range Rover, a symbol of wealth and fortune.

These released dispatches seek to undermine the Rif chieftainship by portraying instances of perfidy, indulgence, immorality and affluence while these claim to stand for honesty, defend the Rif people's rights and denounce the government's poor and inadequate policies. In other words, such communications aim at stressing that the Rif movement's so-called leaders are quite indecent and traitorous; therefore, they are neither eligible to represent decent people, nor worthy of Moroccans' support. These dispatches, in addition, seek to thwart other citizens in other cities from sympathizing or joining Al Hoceima's insurgency.

These messages, I believe, are about forging a schism among the activists, the social mediaticens and WhatsAppers so as to engage these different factions in a healthy debate amongst themselves then deviously pit one faction against the other and obliquely put the crisis down ultimately. In fact, the government as well as its partisans' constant and uncompromising communication policy draws on the Arab's famous adage 'divide and conquer'. This inflexible policy has been reinforced by the governors' recurring presence in and repetitive visits to Al Hoceima's different sites, mingling with Rifi laymen and unprecedentedly listening to their worries.

Furthermore, this governmental enterprising and assertive media policy has partly managed to attenuate the protests' rage and break up the protestors' consensus. Two of whom, namely Abd Elkrim Khattabi's female scion (*almaghreb*24, July

16th, 2017) and laamracha (*machahid*24, July 25th, 2017), an activist whom the authorities imprisoned then released, are calling for a suspension of hostilities and protests. The latter want to give government officials the opportunity to carry on their developmental projects, realize what has been missed and has not been accomplished by the Al Hoceima-Lighthouse of the Mediterranean program. A 79-pages pdf document explaining the components of this ambitious plan was also popularized via WhatsApp.

Indeed, the 'Al Hoceima Mediterranean Lighthouse' program is an aspiring and resourceful proposal that shall most likely make a qualitative leap in the city's and its suburbs' infrastructures. This deal involves massive social, economic, environmental, religious and spatial-rehabilitation together with risk management developmental projects. The pdf document meticulously illustrates both the time frame and the financial expenses required to complete such projects. These diverse arrangements not only respond to but also exceed the Rifi citizens' claims and are expected to create a constructive difference in their daily lives.

Third Party: the 'Ayyacha' Pulling the Alarm

In fact, both of the Rif activists and the government's forward media policy have given birth to a third entity whom the Rif protestors label 'Ayyacha'. The 'Ayyacha' is an ironical attack coined by the Rif militants referring to a social category that screamingly invokes God to extend the king's lifespan, applauds the leadership's initiatives and is more supportive of the firm royal outrage at his government officials. Likewise, both of the journalists Abou Maâiliq Yassir (*Dw*, June 1st, 2017) and Zakia Hadouch (*Orient*, June 27th, 2017) offer an analogous account though the latter is more precise.

In this respect, Zakia thinks that the term 'Ayyacha' first emerged among the Hirak's virtual activists to characterize the gangsters whom local authorities recruit to cause confusion among the protestors. Similarly, Kalid Ben Cherif (*Ultrasawt*) compares this term to the Egyptian word 'baltajiya' (gangsters) and the Syrian (shebbiha) (ghostly) whom the officials utilized to agitate the activists and curb their activism. The journalist also mentions that the scope of this lexical item is extended to include all individuals that oppose the

Hirak including politicians, ministers, analysts, religious or other laymen. However, 'Ayyacha' most commonly refers to a particular group of people whose mission is to blow up public protest movements.

Moreover, Kalid Ben Cherif (*Ultrasawt*) brings up that the 'Ayyacha' faction most often includes individuals with a criminal record, drug users and marginalized cohorts, which Professor El Maâti Monjib on *Al Hoceimacity* (June 22nd, 2017) believes to be an ancient governmental practice. The 'Ayyacha', according to Ben Cherif, commonly lack the capacity for political debate and come from fragile and uneducated social classes. He also adds up that these 'Ayyacha' members both criticize and issue verbal as well as physical offenses against protestors so as not only to terrify them but also to bring down their dissidence altogether by disrupting the rallies and intimidating the participants. However, Professor Bennis on *Hespress* (October 29th, 2017) considers this controversy as quite positive and part of what he qualifies as "confrontational democracy" (§, 2), which he deems to be quite healthy as each group stands for its beliefs.

Furthermore, *Alhoceimacity* online paper believes that the 'Ayyacha' remind the 'Royal Youth' movement that was formed by government officials and which used to come out in gatherings against the 'February 20th' movement marches in 2011 and glorify both the homeland and the king. Nonetheless, Hammouda Daly is proud of the 'Ayyachi' characterization and considers it to be a honorable description since its goal is to defend the nation's sanctified beliefs against the homeland enemies.

In accordance, Facebook and other instant messaging applications, chiefly WhatsApp, abound with dispatches of, what I would label, anti-Zefzafi but not the Rif movement's claims. Campaigners in this category sympathize with the Rifi's economic and social demands, which they consider licit and reasonable. However, these activists condemn Zefzafi's bandwagon hanging the Amazigh flag, not the nation's unifying emblem. That is why, these enthusiasts urge WhatsAppers to set the national ensign in their profiles in order to revile the demonstrators' separatism and refusal of any separatist leanings. These also rallied massive demonstrations both in Rabat and Tangier

wherein they celebrated the national colors, sang the national anthem and hung the king's pictures on June 4th according to *Hespress* (June 4th, 2017) and June 21st, 2017 according to *Noonpress* (June 21st, 2017).

Proponents within the third faction, such as the activist Mohamed Taghra (July 23rd, 2017) upload and broadcast pictures so well as videos denouncing the continuity and incessancy of the Rif demonstrations despite the instantaneous responsiveness on the part of public officials. These advocates remind the Rif dissidents of the 'Arab Spring' agitations' sound lessons, specially the Syrian crisis and the presence of many Syrian refugees all over the world including Morocco's borders, road junctions and mosques. This is why, these exponents warn the Rif militants about any unsafe turbulence the unremitting protests might toss the nation into and draw their attention to both the social and economic outcomes of instability.

CONCLUSION

In brief, the Al Hoceima crisis and the battle it has generated over social media and instant messaging applications have shown that social media, ever since the 'Arab Spring' uproars, continue to undertake leading roles in social struggles by exposing concerned parties' claims, diffusing them among public members, reaching out and mobilizing supporters. Nonetheless, this encounter has unveiled that social media can agitate public opinion but no longer overthrow political regimes the same way they did during the late 'Arab Spring' disturbances the Arab world witnessed in 2011-2012.

The Al Hoceima strife has also revealed that social media have veered on their axis from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. Social media had been craftily well-manipulated only by the protestors who knew how to gain due advantage of them. Back then, state officials in different parts of the Arab world were quite social media illiterate and were taken by surprise by the Arab Spring activists. The latter's social media performance far outstripped government members' social media response. Nevertheless, social media are now being used to bolster officialdom as state members have also become information technology-savvy. Public officials are

nowadays more watchful and can no longer be taken by surprise as they are increasingly showing significant shrewdness in handling social media battles.

The Al Hoceima fray has equally instantiated that public members have grown to be less impulsive and more unwilling to take to the street their anger. Public members have also turned out readier to prioritize the nation's stability no matter how corrupt and unbearable the governor(s) or the situation(s) might ever be. The Al Hoceima havoc has finally evinced that self-immolation, regardless of its popularity, has become a mundane act that no longer invites or triggers bulky and outrageous social members' support.

Relentless social media coverage and repetitive self-immolation instances apparently no longer ignite audiences' enthusiasm or instigate public's anger. Heavy social media coverage allotted to self-immolation acts appears to have rendered these acts, no matter how harsh or symbolic they might ever be, normal and part of daily-life mishaps. Corroborated and persistent social media coverage alleviated self-immolation emblematic weighty potential and bereaved it of any provocative or compellingly involving weight.

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