Mobilisation Strategies in the Context of Protests: A Study of the 2016–2017 Rif Protests in Morocco

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Abstract

This paper explores mechanisms employed by activists during the protest movement in the Rif region of northern Morocco between late 2016 and 2017. It focuses on the youth's success in mobilising crowds and sustaining a protest dynamic over time. Using a descriptive analytical method and content analysis, the study examines activist discourse, the demographic and political characteristics of protesters, and the means of communication and mobilisation. The findings highlight the significant role of the rhetoric of victimhood, with its historical, psychological, and social dimensions. This rhetoric – and accompanying mindset - functioned as a key resource for the protests, reflecting demands for recognition of the region's historical and cultural identity as a fundamental human right. It acted as an entry point to achieving respect, appreciation, and psychological and social security for inhabitants of the region. The study also emphasises the central role of youth in leading the movement and rejecting traditional forms of political participation in favour of alternative forms such as demonstrations and digital activism.

Keywords: Mobilisation; Protests; Moroccan Rif; Authoritarianism; Right to Recognition

Introduction

Protest movements have become integral to political practice. People no longer express their preferences and choices solely through political parties and electoral processes. Instead, they increasingly resort to protests, demonstrations, petitions, and other civil mechanisms to voice their demands. These methods hold significant importance in asserting and defending interests in contemporary politics.[1] Protest, as a social phenomenon and collective action, often reflects the dynamism and vitality of human societies. This is particularly the case when traditional intermediaries such as unions, political parties, and civil organisations fail to fulfil their roles in conveying demands, advocating for them, and influencing the political system. When these

channels prove ineffective, people turn to protest as one of the most effective means of achieving political and social change in the absence of legitimate and functional pathways for such transformation.[2]

Protesting has become a familiar ritual in Morocco, manifesting as a series of uprisings and demonstrations since independence. Three generations of protest in Morocco have been identified through the literature:[3] the first is the generation of political protest, dominant during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and prominently led by unions, student movements, and school pupils. The second generation was rights-based protest, emerging in the 1990s and characterised by greater rationality. It was influenced by global political discourse centred on democracy and human rights, which broke the authority's tight grip on society and public spaces.[4] Finally, there was the generation of developmental policy protest, gaining momentum particularly in the years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The 20 February Movement arose in 2011 within a turbulent regional context. While its momentum later waned following the adoption of a new Moroccan constitution on 29 July 2011, the spirit of the movement persisted. This was reflected in the persistence of demands for freedom, dignity, and social justice in subsequent sectoral and regional protests, including the Rif protests, which are the focus of this study. The Rif protest movement belongs to a new generation of protests focused on economic and social rights. Nevertheless, its context, the nature of its demands, and the mobilisation strategies employed distinguish it from earlier generations. This raises the central question of this study: how did the mobilisation mechanisms used—such as invoking history and rhetoric of victimhood alongside the dynamism of youth and digital communication—create a protest strategy with unprecedented momentum sustained over several months? Sub-questions include: What deep-seated causes transformed the Rif movement from a reaction to Mohcine Fikri's death into a widespread, enduring protest? To what extent has the state addressed key issues of identity, memory, and history raised by the protests? Does the movement reflect limitations in the Equity and Reconciliation Commission's impact on the Rif? And what strengths enabled the protests to sustain their longevity? The hypothesis posits that invoking the Rif's wounded memory and the absence of recognition policies deepened mistrust in state institutions and its intermediaries, thereby fuelling the protests.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Addressing the topic of mobilisation strategies in the protests of the Rif region requires a consideration of the concepts framing the study, its context, as well as a declaration of the methodological approach adopted to analyse the phenomenon under investigation.

Conceptual framework
This paper utilises three key concepts to understand the mobilisation mechanisms employed during the Rif protest movement. The first is protest mobilisation as a general concept. Second is the concept of digital or network mobilisation, which has become an important resource for rallying

protests. Finally, the concept of recognition as a driver for mobilisation and protest is employed by this analysis. Together these concepts help us to understand the experience of the Moroccan Rif region.

Protest mobilisation: The concept of mobilisation in the context of protest refers to the strategies used to gather crowds, persuade them of a particular viewpoint, and gain their support in order to take actions such as calling for protests, demonstrations, or civil disobedience.[5] Mobilisation, in this sense, is a mechanism for social expression aimed at achieving shared interests and goals. It contributes to the emergence of protest action as a behaviour that expresses a specific position, intended to influence and exert pressure in two directions: firstly, to prompt the political system or political authority to respond to the protesters' demands or ignore them; and secondly, to raise awareness of the protest movement's demands and garner public support. This gives protest action a dynamic, interactive dimension according to Sidney Tarrow. Tarrow suggests that the nature of a protest movement is determined by the relationships it maintains with its surrounding political, social, or economic environment.[6]

Mobilisation, from the perspective of social sciences, is divided into structural mobilisation and cultural mobilisation.[7] The structural approach views collective protest action at a macro level, as influenced by external factors such as institutions, social practices, or political conditions. In contrast, the cultural mobilisation approach focuses more on the micro level, analysing an individual's perception of protest. It aims to examine the relationship between psychology and political behaviour.[8] In this context, the individual is considered an active, conscious, and free agent based on social action theories by Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and Max Weber. An individual's engagement in social action arises from their need for change, reflecting the values of the group in which they are a member. Thus, social action becomes an individual behaviour, shaped by the values and culture of the group to which they belong.[9]

Digital/Network Mobilisation: In his book *The Virtual Community*,[10] Howard Rheingold asserts that what he calls 'smart crowds,' connected to each other through messaging and communication using modern technologies enabled by the internet, will take over from traditional social movements.[11] The current information revolution has changed the structures and foundations of protest and civil movements, which no longer derive their references from Marxist, religious, or other ideologies. These movements no longer require clandestine organisations, coordination committees, or ideological or sectarian frameworks.[12] Instead, social networking platforms have made available independent spaces, free from the control of governments and corporations, which have historically monopolised communication channels. These platforms have provided a fertile ground for the emergence of opposing social movements, due to their ability to facilitate the rapid and wide dissemination of images and ideas.[13] The public sphere then comes under the control of ordinary citizens, led by virtual communities.[14]

Rapid developments in modern communication technology have empowered the youth as the group most capable of using and interacting with these new media and communication tools. Digital networking platforms have become a vast space for communication and participation, whether through texts, images, videos, or live broadcasting techniques. Moreover, digital

communication technology has played a vital role in the emergence of new forms of organisation, which no longer rely on the concept of structure as a fixed and predetermined. Instead, they focus on the concept of environment, seen as a virtual space in which all types of relationships, behaviours, interactions, and expressions take place, without the public authorities having significant power to suppress or obstruct them. This makes it difficult for authorities to apply laws, regulations, or legislation to limit their scope or curb any behaviours they may perceive as problematic.[15]

Recognition: Axel Honneth argues that the need for recognition is the cause of societal crises. Any solution to social problems must begin with the invocation of recognition values and the adoption of policies that instil these values in citizens.[16] Nancy Fraser, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of linking recognition with the requirements of social justice, advocating for a parallel approach between values-based recognition and justice in economic distribution, thereby negating any contradiction between the two.[17]

Nancy Fraser argues that the aspiration for recognition is a common thread among social, human rights and environmental movements and migrant minority struggles among other things. Fraser emphasises recognition as a gateway to justice and the elimination of oppression for identities that feel excluded and marginalised. She critiques the injustice caused by economic marginalisation resulting from the unequal distribution and monopoly of wealth. Thus, she calls for a distinction between two models: the model of redistribution to address social/economic injustice and the model of recognition to confront identity exclusion. By examining the demands and slogans of the Rif movement, it is evident that the protesters' demands reflect a sense of economic disparity founded on feelings of injustice. This is reflected in demands for: employment, universities, hospitals, and the use of remittances from the diaspora for regional development. They also express a lack of recognition of the Rif's history, memory, and symbols. This is further evident in the rhetoric of victimhood expressed through invoking the ancestors' glory in resisting colonialism, displaying images of Mohammed Ben Abdelkrim El Khattabi, and the prominent presence of the Amazigh flags and the flags of the Rif Tribal Union that governed the region between 1921 and 1926. Injustices of the post-independence period caused by state violence in dealing with uprisings, particularly during the events of 1958-1959 and 1984, are regularly recalled. Therefore, the delay in addressing the misunderstanding between the region's residents and the state, which caused wounds that the region's memory refuses to forget, requires more effort from both sides to overcome.

It is highly likely that these wounds will remain as scars in collective memory and a motivating factor for protests in the Rif region. Despite some efforts since King Mohammed VI's reign to develop the region and build trust through his repeated visits, the region still awaits recognition of its history and identity and their integration into a national history to achieve justice. From the perspective of the recognition paradigm, justice cannot be limited to distributive justice of material goods. Other aspects should be considered, such as the ethical and symbolic dimensions.[18] Since recognition is linked to individuals or groups with legitimate demands, it is a foundational element in various social and cultural conflicts.

The legitimacy achieved through recognition lies in its ability to express human experiences marked by injustice, oppression, and exclusion, on one hand. On the other hand, it reflects the attainment, by the individual social self, of a high level of awareness of the conditions necessary to achieve the desired level of respect, appreciation, and psychological and social security. Naturally, this aspiration for recognition generates intense debate about the social, public, and legal reality, with ongoing tensions regarding the state's role, in the present and the future. In summary, everyone seeks recognition as a free and active self that deserves respect and appreciation.[19] Axel Honneth was a pioneer in presenting a new paradigm of recognition, drawing on the German philosopher Hegel, who was the first Western philosopher to deeply study social relationships as relations between selves seeking mutual recognition. Honneth explained that social relations should be governed by a fundamental concept: mutual respect, which he later transformed into the concept of mutual recognition.[20]

In his book *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, Francis Fukuyama argues that identity first emerged from the distinction between the true inner self and the external world. The external world consists of rules and social customs that typically do not recognise the value and dignity of the inner self. Although this distinction has existed throughout human history, in the modern era it has evolved into a sense among individuals that the external world is wrong, and that the inner self has value and should not be required to submit to societal rules; rather, society itself should change. Consequently, the inner self began to seek public recognition of its existence and value. The modern concept of identity then developed into identity politics, which encompasses much of the political conflicts in the contemporary world, from democratic revolutions and new social movements to nationalist and Islamic movements, among others.[21] According to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, 'Our identity is partially shaped by recognition or its absence, as well as by the misrecognition or poor recognition that others have of our identity.'[22] Therefore, a lack of recognition or misrecognition can be considered an injustice and may constitute a form of oppression.

The General Context of the 2016-2017 Rif Protests

Some studies suggest that the wave of protest movements that began in 2011 has shed its ideological character, while at the same time, drawing upon history and past national and social struggles as a reference for its slogans. For example, the Algerian movement, whose supporters claim is a struggle for dignity, is linked to the period of national struggle to end colonialism. Similarly, the slogan 'No son 30 pesos, son 30 años' ('It's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years'), raised by protesters in Chile, refers to their suffering from the enduring legacy of military rule, even thirty years after its fall. The phrase '30 pesos' refers to the fare for a Santiago subway ticket that sparked the popular uprising. Meanwhile, '30 years' refers to the time since the end of the military regime, during which no substantial changes occurred. Instead, democratic political parties contributed to cementing the economic model imposed by the dictatorship.[23]

The protests in the Rif region appear to follow a similar pattern. Although primarily social in nature, they sharply criticised the political class and the political parties, describing them as 'political shops.' The content of the protest rhetoric hints at deep-rooted causes tied to memory and history, which have fuelled tensions in the region for decades. The relationship between the Rif and the central government has been marked by tension and conflict, at least since the late nineteenth century. This wave of protests also represents an extension of a series of uprisings in Morocco since independence. The country has witnessed a series of major uprisings, including the 1958–1959 Rif uprising, which was tied to the management of the post-independence period. David Hart mentioned a sense of dissatisfaction among the Rif population regarding the post-independence era due to marginalisation, exclusion, and disappointment with the political parties and the Moroccan government, which did not even grant the governor position to a local Rif resident.[24] This uprising had a clear impact on the 2016–2017 protests, followed by several urban uprisings in the years 1965, 1981, 1984, and 1990. The 1984 uprising, which took place in the context of the structural adjustment policies, was one of the major points of social tension in the Rif region. It began as a student protest in several Moroccan cities and regions, opposing a government decision to impose registration fees for the baccalaureate and university. The protests turned into clashes with security forces, and the cities of Nador and Al-Hoceima were among the hardest hit by repression.

A report from the Equity and Reconciliation Commission documented the deaths of forty-six people due to the excessive and disproportionate use of force by the auxiliary forces, the army, and the gendarmerie during their attempt to quell the protests. This included sixteen in Nador, twelve in Al-Hoceima, and thirteen in Tetouan, in addition to dozens of injured and detained individuals.[25] Since the early 1990s, such protests have become increasingly frequent, to the point where they have turned into almost familiar socio-political phenomena, ranging from political and human rights demands, such as calls for democracy, human rights, and support for Arab nations and peoples (Palestine and Iraq), to material concerns such as unemployment, high living costs, transportation issues, and adequate housing.[26] Nevertheless, these protests never reached the frequency observed in some countries, such as France, which saw fifty uprisings between 1992 and 1994.[27]

During this period, Moroccan protests entered a phase of peaceful organisation, amid the accelerating internal political transformations that led to the 1996 constitutional revision. The opposition entered the political arena through participation in the consensual alternation government led by the federal leader Abd al-Rahman al-Yousfi. The protest movement benefited from global political discourse focused on democracy and human rights, which led to the breaking of the stranglehold that the state apparatus had long imposed on society and the public space.[28] The 'Arab Spring' that swept the Arab world since late 2010 reached Morocco, and massive demonstrations broke out on 20 February in several cities. Slogans demanded freedom, dignity, social justice, fighting corruption and despotism, ending the combination of power and wealth, and a new constitution that would establish a parliamentary monarchy. These demands were addressed by the royal speech on 9 March 2011, which led to the adoption of the 2011 constitution.

This response led to a decline in protests and paralysed the movement's ability to develop a political initiative to push it forward.[29] The organisational and political fragility of the 20 February Movement also contributed to this decline and the movement's inability to manage ideological differences among its components Nevertheless, this did not prevent the continuation of regional and sectoral protests. In 2012, the Rif region witnessed the Bni Bouayach Movement, which was one of the manifestations of the continuation of the 20 February Movement. Most of the Rif protest leaders, including Nasser Zefzafi, were activists of the 20 February Movement.

On the first day of the 2012 demonstrations, five young men burned to death inside a bank branch in the city of Al-Hoceima. This bloody event remained as embers waiting for an incident to reignite them. The tragic death of Mohcine Fikri on 28 October 2016, and the eruption of the Rif protests, enabled such revival. Justice for the victims of both incidents were among the demands of the Rif protest movement's demands.

Methodology

This paper analyses the factors that contributed to the readiness for protest action during the Rif protest movement from late 2016 – 2017. It applies the recognition paradigm of Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, through the analysis of the protest discourse, its slogans, and demands. The demands of this protest movement, although falling within the matrix of economic, social, and cultural rights, are also imbued with symbolic values, representing a cry for recognition, which is one of the factors generating crises according to Honneth's perspective. Honneth argues that managing social tensions requires the adoption of symbolic recognition policies that enhance trust within society.[30] Fraser stresses the need to link the recognition of symbolic values with the fair distribution of material values.[31]

The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to trace and analyse the developments of the protest movement in the Rif, using content analysis to examine its discourse, slogans, and demands. The study also relied on the technique of participant observation, as the researcher participated in most stages of the protests in the cities of Al-Hoceima, Nador, and Al-Aroui, either through field presence or by following them via social media platforms that broadcasted the demonstrations and associated events live on Facebook. Additionally, the researcher refers to the speeches of activist Nasser Zefzafi on YouTube, as a key figure in the leadership, mobilisation, and rallying efforts.

The Role of Leadership and Discourse in Mobilisation

Leadership and the charisma of the leader emerged as influential factors in the Rif protests, strengthened by the content of the discourse that contributed to mobilisation and rallying for the protests.

The role of leadership in mobilisation

Through the utilisation of digital communication channels to reach the public, Nasser Zefzafi emerged as a charismatic leader around whom people gathered. This was possible because of his ability to express their demands and speak on their behalf. The leadership of Nasser Zefzafi is grounded in three elements[32]:

Firstly, was the leadership's simple and straightforward language that also integrated boldness. The leadership of the movement demonstrated strong will, determination, and a readiness to sacrifice in defence of the set demands. By using both the Amazigh and Arabic languages, the message of the movement reached various regions of Morocco, garnering wide sympathy and dispelling the hesitation and fears initially felt by some social groups.

Secondly, was the absence of any specific ideology in the speech. This is evident in the spontaneous and instinctive evocation of religious references without any political endorsement, such as quoting Qur'anic verses and prophetic sayings, and invoking the example of the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab' courage and sense of justice. It then smoothly and spontaneously transitions from a religious discourse to leftist political discourse, without the use of grand terminology, theorisation, or ideology.

Thirdly, was the evocation of the historical legacy of the Rif region, with its heroic and symbolic connotations, and the sense of injustice and marginalisation by the state. This was done through the constant recalling of the historical leader Mohammed Abdelkrim El Khattabi in all the direct speeches, either through verbal references or the image of him that adorned the pages from which Zefzafi's most important speeches were broadcast live on Facebook.

The most significant feature that characterised the leadership element in the Rif Movement, through the lens of symbolic interactionist theory, is the ability to combine the personal traits of the leader with the fundamental components of the context. The leadership of the Rif Movement appears to be centred around the masses and influences them by relying on various forms of mobilisation and means of persuasion. This happened within a framework of positive interaction between the traits and qualities of the leader, the elements of the situation, and the characteristics of the protesting masses, which gave this leadership a great deal of effectiveness and distinction.[33]

Protest discourse

Protest is an expressive statement that does not merely consist of words but also expresses a position on a given issue. The act of protest is hardly ever detached from the position and the issue at hand, and thus it comes as a practice of articulating that position.[34] From this standpoint, the protest slogan, when skilfully crafted and articulated to reflect the feelings of the masses, become a comprehensive and focused means of mass expression.[35]

The slogans of the Rif Movement were produced and promoted by educated young activists, a significant proportion of whom had participated in the 20 February Movement protests of 2011 and had experienced the student movement at university. There were members of specific cultural currents, particularly the Amazigh cultural movement. Most were independent of any ideological affiliation. The activists of the Rif Movement took it upon themselves to compile and draft a

document of demands expressing the values to which the population of the region aspired. This document was grounded in a consultative-participatory approach through public discussions with the population in the city of Al-Hoceima and its surroundings, including areas that extend geographically into the Al-Driouh region.[36] As a result, the media and communication committee announced a list of twenty-one demands, categorised into legal, social, economic, and administrative. In addition to the written document, these demands were expressed through the slogans raised during demonstrations and hashtags on Facebook. This confirms Charles Tilly's assertion that popular movements demands are no longer being formulated in the traditional way, given the emergence of new forms of collective action based on digital media, which are an available, cost-effective, and efficient alternative.[37]

A close reading of the slogans of the Rif Movement protests suggests deep connotations. The slogan 'Peaceful, peaceful, no stones, no knives' emphasises the protesters' commitment to non-violence. This slogan was raised with great enthusiasm whenever a security vehicle moved or a discordant voice sought to destroy the movement.[38] This persistence on peaceful demonstration was also evident in the formation of human chains to protect public institutions and facilities. As for the slogans 'The people want to overthrow corruption' and 'The people want to overthrow despotism', were borrowed from the Tunisian revolution where they were first raised. They have since become a constant in every protest movement in Morocco, regardless of its type or size. These slogans carry a profound meaning as they take the form of nominal declarative sentences that imply renewal. The sentence begins with the word 'the people', which is the subject, the 'actor', the true holder of power, decision, and sovereignty. Then comes the verb 'wants' in the present tense, implying renewal and aspiration for change.[39] The aspirations are for the eradication of corruption and despotism, which are seen as the roots of the problem. These choices imply a renewed conviction that their lives will not improve without ending this situation and moving to a state of law and respect for the dignity of the people.

By recalling the historical dimension of the Rif Movement, we find the early seeds of protest present powerfully through two slogans. The first one is 'Are you a government or a gang?'. This phrase recalls the history of tension between the resistance and the post-independence government. This tension, according to the protesters, was the main reason for the marginalisation and exclusion of the Rif region for decades. The second slogan, 'Death over humiliation', does not mean a desire for death but a commitment to a dignified life. It is inspired by one of Mohammed Ben Abdelkrim El Khattabi's letters, which said: 'Let us seek death so that life may be granted to us.'[40]

It appears that the oppression and violence exercised by the state on the Rif region are strongly present in the movement's slogans. The slogan 'Long live the people, long live... the Rif is not (a place for) scoundrels' is a great testament to that. The first part of the slogan is a recalling of one of the central slogans of the 20 February Movement, 'Long live the people'. It aims to break the stereotypical link between the words 'Long live' and 'the King.' The slogan introduces a competing alternative, 'the people', as the true holder of power in democratic states. The second part of the slogan, 'The people are not scoundrels', recalls another critical moment of severe

tension between the Rif and the central government, which reached the point of insulting the population in an official speech, leaving scars on generations who did not witness the event.[41]

The invocation of these events, which represent painful points of tension for the people of the Rif, suggests that the outputs of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, particularly in terms of collective reparations and closing the painful past,[42] did not achieve their intended goals. New slogans emerged during the protests, such as 'What's up, my son', which expresses the stark contradiction and illogicality between the modernist discourse being promoted for development and human rights, and the actual practices that entrench authoritarianism, repression, and prohibition.[43] Convinced that no true historical reconciliation has been achieved with the Rif, the collective consciousness of the youth in the movement still likens the state apparatus—referred to in Morocco as *al-Makhzan*—to a snake whose intentions cannot be trusted. This is reflected in the slogan '*Armakhzan Ahkar, Aadiss Oufighar*', in the Amazigh language, meaning 'The oppressive Makhzan... like the belly of a snake'.

By examining the slogans raised during the Rif Movement protests, it is clear that their demands centred around the values of justice, freedom, and the recognition of the history and identity of the region. They sought to combat the manifestations of corruption obstructing any economic and social development towards lifting the region out of its lag. The content of these slogans energised the protesters and represented an effective tool for sustaining the momentum of mobilisation and rallying for more than seven months. The movement only stopped after the public authorities resorted to the use of force against the protesters and the arrest of the leaders.

Rif Protests: Between the Discourse of Victimhood and the Demand for Recognition

In the psychology of the people of the Rif, there are accumulations of moments of persecution that have repeatedly occurred in the region. While there is no defined beginning, these events are linked to some pivotal moments. Activists of the movement recall the 'disciplinary campaign' led by the Sultan's emissary, Boushati al-Baghdadi, against the Baqiwa tribe in 1898, during which horrific massacres were committed in areas such as Agadir and Rawadi. Women, children and elderly people were tortured, and the tribe's leaders were deceived and killed while they were performing their prayers. Even the tombs were not spared.[44] The painful tragedies continued through the crimes committed by the colonisers when the region was bombed with poisonous gases, the remnants of which continue to harm both the land and its people. Following independence, the Rif region suffered severe violations during the 1958–1959 uprising. The state confronted it with the army, which used all forms of physical and symbolic violence against the local population.[45] Tensions persisted with the January 1984 uprising, which led to arrests and mass graves revealed in the Equity and Reconciliation Commission's report. Tragic incidents also included the five young men killed in 2011 where the judiciary declared the assailant 'unknown'. There is also the killing of citizens Mohcine Fikri and Imad al-Atabi, and the arrest and unfair sentencing of dozens of youths. When all these events are framed within a context of marginalisation and exclusion, a profound feeling of injustice rises to the surface (first). Then emerges a desperate desire among

the protesters for liberation and the restoration of dignity, making the right to recognition a central demand (second).

Injustice as a driver and motivation for mobilisation and protest

Human life is a field of conflicts between the interests of individuals and groups, inevitably leading to victimisation and oppression. Groups on the receiving end of such oppression are then driven to revolt and protest through occupying public spaces such as streets and squares. They release their patience, discontent, and grievances from their private sphere to the public space. This represents, on the part of the masses, a departure from the familiar rules of the political game established by authoritarian regimes,[46] and a search for new rules that consider the fulfilment of their interests.

The youth of the Rif took to the streets with the aim of confronting what they considered to be the injustice they have had endured, and to demand freedom, dignity, and social justice. The network of social relations connecting the protesters formed an important resource for encouraging participation in the protest movement, which found it to be a conducive environment to ensure its cohesion and coordination. The social network further contributed to the spread of the protests, albeit with less intensity, towards the two regions that represent the geographical extension of the same social identity, Driouch and Nador. The protests even resonated with the Moroccan diaspora from the Rif region residing in various European countries. This supports the argument that protests can be the result of social mobilisation based on ethnic or geographical solidarity.[47]

The social network among the protesters has solidified the conviction that their suffering is the result of ongoing injustice, rather than a natural state or mere social fact. This is evident in the frequent utilisation of a rhetoric of victimhood by activists, particularly within a historical context.[48] Observers note the frequent references to the past by the movement's activists, with all the glory associated with it, which they believe has not received the necessary recognition and appreciation from the state during the post-independence period. This glory is mainly reflected in the victories achieved by the people of the Rif during their resistance to Spanish colonisation. This includes the victory in the Battle of 'Ighzar Nwachen', and the Battle of 'Oued Al-Dhiab' near Melilla, led by Sharif Muhammad Amzyan in 1909, and the victory in the Battle of Anwal in 1921, led by Mohammed Ben Abd El-Karim El-Khattabi. Finally, the unification of the Rif tribes and the establishment of an organisational framework to govern the region is recalled. The past is also evoked in relation to the calamities and wounds they refuse to forget, especially the excessive violence the state used against the region in 1958-1959, and during the events of 1984. This past is linked to the present reality of exclusion, marginalisation, and repression in the region, leading to the formation of a cohesive mobilising identity, weaving a relationship of interconnection and interaction between the past and the present. A sense of continuity is reinforced along with a kind of historical determinism of recurring catastrophes and defeats. A victim psychology emerges[49] and fuels the drive towards protest action.

The protests of the Rif movement are also linked to a reality marked by a cultural specificity, which derives its legitimacy from a social organisation characterised by mechanical solidarity.

This informs the methods of mobilisation and their dynamic operation as reflected by the movement's slogans and the behaviour of the protesters. We find that the economic and social demands, coupled with a discourse of historical victimhood, have become primary mobilising factors. Marginalisation, humiliation, and militarisation are consistent themes in the protest slogans and are then fused within a conceptual framework that has contributed to the social rooting of the protest. The framing of victimhood within the Rif movement takes at least three dimensions:

Historical victimhood*:* The Rif region is characterised by a collective readiness to engage in social rage. This readiness draws some of its dynamics from the continuous cognitive and emotional recollection of the severe violations the region has endured throughout history, particularly during the colonial period when the Spanish and French colonial powers collaborated to crush the Rif resistance in 1926. The destructive effects of the deadly weapons used at that time continue to impact both the land and the people. Furthermore, the violence exercised by the Moroccan authorities during the post-independence period against the people of the Rif left deep scars in their memory, instilling a profound sense of injustice. This leads to the veneration of history for psychological purposes, quickly generating a collective memory that refuses to forget, and is more inclined toward covert or overt protest. The Rif region is distinct in that sense from other areas whose memories have been subjected to exclusion and marginalisation in the same way.[50]

Victimhood related to dignity: This form of victimhood is evident in the frequent use by young people of the term 'hkara,' which is the opposite of dignity. It expresses the sense that society does not value them or grant them the status they deserve. 'Hkara' is both a rallying cry and the first step toward rebellion.[51] The policies implemented in the Rif region have contributed to reinforcing the sense of injustice and 'hkara,' as demonstrated by the approach the authorities adopted to curb the Rif protest movement. Political parties within the government are mobilised to accuse activists of separatism and serving foreign agendas.[52] Religious figures were recruited to attack the movement and its activists,[53] alongside mediators and calls for counterdemonstrations.

Victimhood related to social demands: The perception of structural injustice in the management of wealth is one of the key factors directly contributing to the intensification of feelings of deprivation and developmental frustration among the youth in the Rif region. The sense of social injustice becomes even stronger when it is linked to the negative role played by the state in entrenching a marginal economy as a form of 'punitive' policy. The region was intentionally ignored, abandoned, and neglected.[54] This has resulted in the belief that the Rif region was a victim of the lack of political will for change and development, leaving the local population vulnerable to various forms of poverty and deprivation. It is important to note here that the rise in feelings of deprivation among the inhabitants of the Rif is not only driven by the magnitude of the social and economic deficiencies suffered by the region, but is also shaped by the political dimensions of wealth distribution at the national level. This is due to the awareness that the deterioration of social conditions is linked to discriminatory policies related to the distribution of economic and political

resources. Hence, the sense of economic coercion, based on feelings of political injustice, fuels the motivation for the population to protest.

Intergenerational political socialisation within families forms an important pillar in the political culture of the Rif. What has resulted from it is the growing awareness among generations of the absence of justice in all its spatial and political dimensions. There is a deep-rooted sense of the injustice inflicted upon the people, the land, and history, and its manifestations in economic and social exclusion, as well as the marginalisation of the local language and history. All of this is an undeniable reality for observers of the Rif's political culture, alongside the collective memory, which is more inclined towards either covert or overt political resistance, depending on the circumstances.[55]

Search for recognition as a motive for protest

From this theoretical standpoint, it can be understood that the protests in the Rif, while containing economic and social demands, were fundamentally a cry for recognition.[56] The demand for recognition through the restoration of the Rif's memory and its inclusion in a national collective memory became a mobilising force in the protests against injustice, which involves humiliation and the violation of dignity. Full citizenship can only be achieved through the recognition of the individual's authenticity and their public belonging to the community.[57] In general, raising the need for recognition of the Rif's historical memory and its unique identity served as a source of energy for the protest actions. The symbolic element, or what could be legally referred to as the restoration of dignity, was also evident in the Rif protests through the prominent presence of symbols linked to local identity and memory in various marches, demonstrations, slogans, and forms of communication. These included images of the leader of the Rif resistance, Muhammad Ben Abdelkrim El Khattabi, the flag of the 'Republic of Rif' during the resistance to Spanish colonialism, and the Amazigh flag. These symbols became resources for mobilising the protesters in their quest for recognition as a necessary symbolic value that would restore their dignity and identity. Identity is partially shaped by recognition or its absence, as well as by the mistaken or negative perceptions others may have about that identity.[58] Lack of recognition, or distorted recognition, can be considered a form of injustice and persecution.

Protesters believe that the key to genuine reconciliation with the Rif lies in restoring the dignity of its inhabitants, as well as acknowledging its history, identity, and collective memory, and establishing true policies of recognition that instil a sense of dignity in the region's youth. There have been indicators in this direction since King Mohammed VI assumed the throne. The reconciliation dynamic with the Rif region began with the king's visit in 2000, followed by several other visits that brought with them many development projects that broke the region's isolation (the Mediterranean Ring Road, the Freedom Station in Al-Hoceima, the railway link between Nador and the Oujda–Fez line, some higher education institutions, and urban development projects). Additionally, the king's visit to Al-Hoceima after the 2004 earthquake, where he set up his tent among the residents and delivered the speech of 25 March 2004, in which he said: 'From the perspective of our strategic view of the major issues of the nation, we have instructed the

government to immediately prepare an integrated and structural development plan, both in the medium and long term, to rehabilitate the Al-Hoceima region and populate the Rif area.'[59]

This behaviour left a positive impression among the region's residents, as national and international media reports referred to the atmosphere of historical reconciliation between the Rif and the state.[60] The establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission is seen as an expression of the state's will to close the painful chapter of the past. However, it seems that this effort has failed to achieve justice in its broad sense, which also encompasses symbolic capital, as understood by Pierre Bourdieu. This includes appreciation, respect, recognition, belief in the other, and gaining the trust of others.[61] From this standpoint, an approach based solely on economic development, without establishing recognition, will not be sufficient to normalise the relationship between the Rif and the Moroccan state. It remains a reductionist approach that lacks the ability to accommodate for issues of symbolic nature and their importance in people's lives.

Focusing on the demand for recognition in building trust between the state and the Rif movement is not an intellectual luxury, but rather a legal value that must be respected. According to Axel Honneth, the right that corresponds to legal recognition, which grants a person the status of an equal partner who enjoys all the rights of other partners, is one of the normative models of recognition.[62] While the concept of justice as a human right, especially distributive justice, finds its legal foundation in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the concept of recognition is used to describe and diagnose different forms of injustice, oppression, humiliation, and exclusion that violate human dignity, and therefore must be halted and prevented from recurring. The prominent presence of demands for identity and memory is an indication of the need for a policy of recognition from the state to address the failure revealed by the findings of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, when it excluded the 'hot files' of the Rif's relationship with the state, such as the 1958–1959 uprising, from its final report, limiting its treatment to events between 1965 and 1999.[63]

This is a failure to provide symbolic reparation for the region's history. The recommendations for collective compensation, which aim to repair the Rif's collective memory—such as conducting an academic study on the events of 1958–1959, establishing a research centre for Mohamed Ben Abd El-Krim El-Khattabi, creating a historical museum in the Rif, and rewriting the region's history—have all not been implemented, as if historical truth refuses to reconcile with the present.[64] The National Council for Human Rights may have become aware of its failure to follow up on the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission related to the Rif region It stated in its report on the Rif protests: 'The presence of demands for memory and identity, which significantly characterised the protests, strongly challenged the Council, given its mission related to monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission, but also due to the unprecedented dimensions of what occurred in Al-Hoceima and its surrounding areas.'[65]

Data indicated that young people had lost trust in institutions and mediation bodies to represent their demands. This includes political parties, trade unions, and civil society associations. Therefore, their resort to the public space carries two meanings: the first is the failure of these

institutions, now seen as bloated and incapable of addressing the concerns of young people and advocating for their demands; the second is the youth's awareness that their participation in public life, with the aim of democratising it, can only be achieved by overcoming the previous generations.[66] This drove the youth in the Rif region, as a mobilising force in the movement (first), to return to the streets. They relied on digital media, as a public space, for mobilisation (second) to highlight their demands for the right to a dignified life, freedom of expression, the right to choose, citizenship, identity, fighting corruption and bribery, and achieving social justice.

Youth as a Mobilising Force in the Protests

Political practice over the past five decades has shown that voting in elections is no longer the only form of political participation. Participation is now exercised more directly, through activities, demonstrations, and petitions. Movements adopting these new forms of participation are distinguished by being more open than traditional political forces, as they unite their supporters around shared concerns and do not focus on political ideology.[67]

Until the late 1960s, the prevailing belief in Europe was that young people lacked the skills or maturity necessary to engage in political life. However, this belief quickly faded, and young people were granted opportunities to participate in politics, even in decision-making processes. Some researchers believe this change was the result of the major protest movements led by European youth in the late 1960s, which revealed that official policies often did not reflect the interests of young people. Since then, political powers have begun to listen to young people's opinions and respond to their needs by creating mechanisms for participation. These mechanisms included youth forums, national youth councils, youth parliaments, and other forms of political engagement for young people.[68]

In Morocco, the early 1990s were marked by severe political and social crises linked to the consequences of structural adjustment policies, which affected the economic and social situation of the middle class and workers. This led to political and union reactions, the most notable of which was the general strike of 14 December 1990 which saw violent clashes, called by the two main trade union confederations: the Democratic Confederation of Labour and the General Union of Workers of Morocco. This prompted the state to recognise the danger and seek a mediation mechanism between it and the critical mass of society. The National Council for Youth and the Future was established by the Royal Decree of 20 February 1991. It was headed by Habib El Malki, a member of the Socialist Union of Popular Forces, the largest opposition party in Morocco at the time. He was entrusted with drafting a national charter for youth employment and human resource development, which emphasised dialogue, consultation, negotiation, agreement, and solidarity to achieve its objectives.

Political studies have confirmed the impact of youth on political life. The American sociologist and political scientist, Jack A. Goldstone, ascribed great importance to the age group 15-29 in driving political transformations, evidenced by their profound influence on the relationship between social groups and political and economic elites in a given country.[69] In Morocco, research

and surveys conducted on the political tendencies of Moroccan youth have shown that the vast majority of them feel no empathy towards political parties, with eighty-six per cent holding a negative view of political actors.[70] The protest dynamics witnessed in Morocco, from the February 20 Movement to the Rif protests, have demonstrated that young people possess immense initiative and the ability to act, motivating change. These movements have shown their awareness of the serious developmental challenges posed by the existing general situation. Therefore, they declared their revolt against these conditions and demanded change, relying on street strategies to draw attention to their demands and leading a counter-authority that transcended traditional mediation mechanisms.

The response to uprisings in Europe was to absorb the demands of young people and interact with their protest movements. On the other hand, Morocco as a country in the process of democratic transition, still views traditional political participation, represented by voting, as the only way to involve young people in public life. In many cases, simply showing an interest in politics is seen as a good indicator of political participation.[71] The state still views youth protests as a security threat, which leads to the dominance of a security-based approach in managing these demonstrations.[72] Despite appearing to respond to the demands of these movements, the authorities limit their communication channels to local government representatives, even if these bodies have limited or no influence. The authorities are unable to facilitate mediation between the protesters and official institutions. One of the main indicators of this failure was the initiative led by Mr. Elias El Omari, when he was president of the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Regional Council during the Rif protests. Although he organised a dialogue meeting to discuss ways of addressing the crisis, he failed in convincing the protest leaders of his initiative, despite being one of the prominent figures in the Rif region and an elected member from the town of Bni Bouayach, one of the areas directly affected by the protests in the Al Hoceima region.

In contrast, the Media and Communication Committee formed by the protest leaders, in a statement issued on 7 February 2017, called for dialogue with the authorities, but the authorities did not respond to this request.[73] The protesters saw this as a disregard for them, despite their ability to mobilise nearly 150,000 protesters and organise them during demonstrations.[74] In the same context, a government delegation visited the city of Al Hoceima and held a broad communication meeting with elected officials, civil society representatives, and the local population as part of monitoring the progress of developmental projects in the region. However, protest leaders, who were directly involved in the dialogue, were absent from this meeting, which had no impact on the course of the protest movement. The authorities justified their failure to engage in dialogue with the activists by claiming that it is difficult to open dialogue with any activist and find an official interlocutor who can sustain the dialogue and commit to its results, due to a reluctance to take responsibility. However, this justification seems weak, given that dialogue requires an official announcement, setting a reasonable timeframe to allow protesters to form a dialogue team, refine their demands, and establish a response framework, which did not happen. In contrast to the marginalisation of the youth leading the protest movements and the failure to

recognise these protests as a form of political participation, the state resorts to repression as a means of forcing the protesters into silence.

The youth form the largest population group in Morocco, and it is also the critical mass. It is the group most capable of communication and movement, and the most deprived. The unemployment rate among young people in Morocco remains high, reaching 38.1 per cent for the 15-24 age group and 20.9 per cent for the 25-34 age group.[75] Most employed youth work in the informal sector, in precarious conditions with low wages, and they do not benefit from social privileges. Having qualifications or a higher degree is not enough to secure a decent job, as patronage, personal, and family connections still hold significant influence. Therefore, young people feel that they have only limited control over their economic future.[76] The Rif region is not an exception to this rule, which is why the majority of participants in the Rif protests are young people aged between eighteen and forty. Most of them are unemployed or work in marginal or seasonal activities. In general, the relationship of young people in the Rif with work is intermittent and unstable.[77] Socio-demographic indicators show that more than sixty-four per cent of the population in the Al Hoceima region is between the ages of fifteen and fifty-nine, and they aspire to secure decent work opportunities and a dignified life. The age group 0-14 constitutes 27.4 per cent. This group requires essential social services such as healthcare, education, and other basic social services.[78] Despite achieving a positive growth rate in the average annual GDP over the last decade, its impact on meeting the economic and social rights of these groups has remained limited.

Socio-demographic data explains the pivotal role of the youth group in mobilising for protest, as young people are the driving force behind what happens within and around society.[79] The youth base of the Rif protest movement formed its source of strength. The movement drew its energy and mobilising spirit from its ability to integrate and include various youth groups, regardless of their social, professional, or ideological backgrounds. It also provided space for various factions, identities, and ideologies to participate, without any rigid organisational structure, which enabled them to create a collective organisational culture as an alternative to that of traditional political channels.[80] The movement youth's focus on demands of a rights-based nature, rather than politically loaded slogans, played a significant role in achieving a strong sense of unity among broad segments of the community in the Rif region. This opened the way for broad participation from various age groups in the protest forms that were called for over a period of seven months. It seems that there was near-universal agreement across generations on the legitimacy of the protest.[81]

Resorting to protest for economic, social, and symbolic demands, and expressing protesters' stances on politics and politicians, is a declaration that participation in public life cannot be reduced to voting in elections or joining a political party or association. Rather, wearing a t-shirt with a message or simply displaying a poster can be a form of active political participation. New technologies and media have provided alternative forms of political participation, which compel the political authority not only to propose types of participation based on rules it considers acceptable but also to recognise and accept these new forms of participation.[82]

Role of digital media in political mobilising

Social media networks are an important resource for mobilising and rallying for protests. They offer the potential to contribute to bringing about change in four ways. The first is stimulating collective action. Digital media allows the creation of new social relationships between individuals who share the same values and demands, even without prior acquaintance.[83] The second way is reducing state repression mechanisms; the third is influencing external support for the regime; and finally, impacting and controlling the public space. Therefore, it can be said that digital media is important for raising awareness about collective actions, such as organising protests and mass demonstrations. It becomes a political resource for cooperation between groups, coordination among them, and combating social isolation.[84]

The importance of these networks emerged in all protest movements since the 'Arab Spring' uprisings of 2011. They provided an immense ability for communication, completely independent of traditional media channels. They also enabled the establishment of connections between participants from different social strata through new social media tools that allow for real-time sharing of events, and mobilisation of individuals. This communicative capacity is particularly prominent among the age group of sixteen to thirty-four years, who are skilled in using digital technologies and are more inclined to rebel against what they consider an intolerable social system.[85]

Studies conducted after the Arab uprisings highlight the effective role played by digital networks in mobilisation and rallying for protests. Social media provided the infrastructure that formed deep communication ties and immense organisational capacity, enabling activists to mobilise crowds to take to the streets. The widespread use of digital media, coupled with significant advances in information and communication infrastructure, especially in urban areas, played a significant role in enabling political mobilisation in various countries that witnessed uprisings.[86] This mobilisation was a direct result of years of repression and co-optation of political and civil institutions, including parties and associations, that became weakened and lost the trust of the youth and activists who led the protest movements.[87]

The Rif protests took place within the context of this digital revolution, and their activists relied on this networked space for mobilisation, organisation, and communication. They benefited from the noticeable development in the telecommunications network in the Rif region in general, and in the Al-Hoceima province in particular. According to statistics from the High Commission for Planning, the percentage of households owning at least one mobile phone in the Al-Hoceima province rose from 60.8 per cent in 2004 to 96.6 per cent in urban areas and 92.3 per cent in rural areas by 2014. Furthermore, 33.1 per cent of urban households own a computer, while only 4.1 per cent of rural households do. Additionally, twenty-seven per cent of urban households have stable internet access, compared to just 2.2 per cent in rural areas. Regarding satellite dish ownership for receiving satellite channels, coverage includes 90.6 per cent of urban households versus 80.3 per cent in rural areas of the province.[88]

We have relied on the 2014 statistics because they represent the period just before the outbreak of the Rif protests, which took place in October 2016. These statistics clearly reflect the role of

digital tools and equipment utilised in mobilisation, considering the rapid development of these technologies across various environments and among different social groups. We also take into account irregular internet users, whether by acquiring temporary personal connections or by using publicly available internet, especially in cafés. The data reflects a very important idea related to equal opportunities, as digital communication tools now provide users in various fields with the ability to access information in record times. These tools and devices have enabled documentation of events with audio and video, and sharing them widely in a short time. These communication technologies have been employed as platforms that moved individuals from the virtual world to the real world. They carry real and urgent demands, and exert pressure on political actors. The youth then are able to gather without prior permission and protest as a spontaneous response to a call on social media, to the extent that they have placed the public authorities in a difficult position due to the rapid flow of information and their inability to control the situation.[89]

Facebook is one of the most important social media platforms used by Rif protest activists from the very first moment of their protest movement. Since the evening of 28 October 2016, news of the 'Mohcin Fikri grinding incident' spread through electronic media, along with a widely circulated video documenting the incident. Activists' statements and impressions were shared via local and national electronic media. The hashtag '#Tahn_Mou' was circulated by many Facebook pages and accounts.[90] Over seven months of continuous protests and demonstrations—in Al-Hoceima and its neighbouring towns, as well as in Nador and Aroui—activists continued to use Facebook as a platform for mobilisation and rallying for their protests. They employed the 'live broadcast' feature of the platform to widely share live coverage of the protests through audio and video. Nasser Zefzafi also used the same technique for daily communication with the protesters and their supporters, employing his important oratory skills in both Amazigh and Arabic to attract thousands of viewers and followers. In a live broadcast on 23 May 2017, he garnered 350,000 followers, 13,000 shares, and 33,000 comments in less than twenty minutes, huge numbers that no political leader, or even the most famous artist in Morocco, could gather in such a short time[91].

The use of digital networks was not exclusive to the activists of the Rif Movement. Some opponents of the movement utilised private radio stations, YouTube channels, and social media pages to attack the activists. This included civil actors, media professionals, academics, and religious figures. Their discourse was inflammatory against the protesters. One cleric described them as traitors, separatists, conspirators against Islam, territorial integrity, and the Commander of the Faithful. He also referred to them as disobedient bastards.[92] Commenting on the Rif Movement protests, a commentator on one private radio station went so far as to threaten the leaders of the movement with 'murder' and 'dismemberment' in a live broadcast.[93]

Some newspapers engaged in a campaign to cast doubt on the intentions of the protesters. This was reflected in headlines that attempted to link the movement to the separatist 'Polisario Front.' A prominent headline in *Al-Sabah* read: 'Al-Hoceima detainees received money from Polisario.' Another headline linked the protests to drug traffickers, stating: 'Hashish is stirring Al-Hoceima from abroad.' In another instance, the newspaper linked the movement to ISIS: 'Searching for ISIS funds in Al-Hoceima.' Similarly, *Al-Ahdath Al-Maghribia* adopted the same approach, describing

the Rif Movement protests as an external conspiracy with separatist ambitions.[94] Some 'analysts' also engaged in an incitement campaign against the Rif Movement on YouTube, during which the movement was linked to the Shia Popular Mobilisation Forces in Iraq. This connection drew considerable criticism and ridicule from supporters of the Rif Movement.[95]

This type of discourse, laden with violence, hatred, and incitement, regardless of its source or target, fundamentally threatens the foundations of coexistence and entrenches a crisis of trust among the components of society. The danger of such rhetoric becomes even greater when it originates from media institutions or figures who are supposed to represent societal elite. These individuals are expected to safeguard rights and freedoms and serve as the first line of defence against violence, hatred, and human rights violations. They should contribute to raising societal awareness to better understand the identity dynamics underlying various social transformations in Moroccan society, moving beyond the centralist Jacobin logic that continues to dominate the state and heavily influences it.[96] There is also a need to abandon reliance on conspiracy theories that view any voice seeking recognition of its memory, history, and identity as a threat to society.

Conclusion

An analysis of the mobilisation mechanisms employed during the Rif protests reveals that these demonstrations, which spanned several months, were not merely the result of an isolated incident. Neither were they simply the result of the tension and anxiety experienced by the region's inhabitants due to decades of marginalisation, exclusion, and failed public policies. Rather, they carried a deeper message that went beyond economic and social demands to raise issues tied to the region's memory, history, and cultural specificities. The protests underscored that the state's interventions following the Equity and Reconciliation Commission's report failed to provide reassuring answers regarding complex issues of history and identity on one hand, and dignity and justice on the other. This protest movement highlighted the protesters' perception of the dialectical relationship between recognising the region's history and identity and its inhabitants' right to dignity and social justice. It also demonstrated that the Equity and Reconciliation project remains stagnant in the absence of recognition policies that offer the region's residents, especially its youth, a sense of self-worth and social value, thereby imbuing their social existence with meaning.

Issues of injustice stemming from developmental delays in both economic and social dimensions—such as weak investment, fragile infrastructure, high youth unemployment rates, poor healthcare services, and the lack of a university system catering to local needs—alongside the demand for recognition, acted as driving forces for mobilisation and protest. This underlines the urgent need to rewrite Moroccan history and preserve the collective memory of Moroccans in a way that fosters a sense of belonging to a nation state and an inclusive collective identity that embraces the diverse strands of Morocco's pluralistic history. Ultimately, this would help develop a positive and comprehensive view of the various phases of national history and contribute to commemorating the roles of different generations and regions in shaping details and overarching features of the nation. Such an approach would prevent the proliferation of memory gaps and

mitigate their negative impacts on the fabric of social cohesion, solidarity, and the broader social contract.

The Rif protests revealed latent energy among young people, who chose to channel it as a mobilising force, viewing protest as a form of expressing their opinions and presenting their perspectives on politics and politicians. They highlighted the weakness of organised political tools that are meant to ensure the sustainability and peacefulness of change. The protests demonstrated that limiting the response to demands for change to security measures without addressing their underlying causes may achieve temporary stability, postponing cycles of protest without reducing the likelihood of their recurrence; in fact, it could lead to an accumulation of grievances, resulting in their re-emergence later in a more violent form. Young people's ability to adapt to technological advancements and the new media and communication patterns they have generated enabled them to make intensive use of digital social media platforms for mobilisation and organisation, bypassing traditional mobilisation mechanisms such as political parties, unions, and civil associations.

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