

Content Analysis of Images Shared on Twitter during 2017 Iranian Protests

Authors : Maryam Esfandiari, Bohdan Fridrich

Abstract : On December 28, 2017, a wave of protests erupted in several Iranian cities. Protesters demonstrated against the president, Hasan Rohani, and theocratic nature of the regime. Iran has a recent history with protest movements, such as Green Movement responsible for demonstrations after 2009 Iranian presidential election. However, the 2017/2018 protests differ from the previous ones in terms of organization and agenda. The events show little to no central organization and seem as being sparked by grass root movements and by citizens' fatigue of government corruption, authoritarianism, and economic problems of the country. Social media has played important role in communicating the protests to the outside world and also in general coordination. By using content analyses, this paper analyzes the visual content of Twitter posts published during the protests. It aims to find the correlation between their decentralized nature and nature of the tweets – either emotionally arousing or efficiency-elicited. Pictures are searched by hashtags and coded by their content, such as 'crowds,' 'protest activities,' 'symbols of unity,' 'violence,' 'iconic figures,' etc. The study determines what type of content prevails and what type is the most impactful in terms of reach. This study contributes to understanding the role of social media both as a tool and a space in protest organization and portrayal in countries with limited Internet access.

Keywords : twitter, Iran, collective action, protest

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