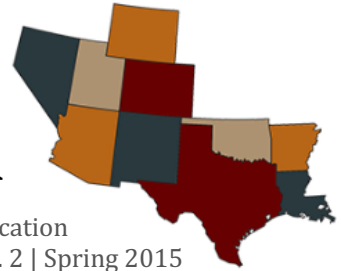


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Are You Talking To Me? The Social-Political Visual Rhetoric of the Syrian Presidency's Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT

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Are You Talking to Me?
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Introduction

In July 2013, amidst increasing escalated conflict within its borders and expanding mass media coverage internationally, the Syrian presidency began utilizing a relatively new platform of mass communication that allowed it to bypass the gatekeepers within the media and frame itself in a visually rhetorical way that it could mediate. The platform was a medium called Instagram, and by using it to present their own viewpoint, the Syrian presidency was engaging in a socio-political form of visual rhetoric that would chronologically parallel a series of watershed moments over the next two months, and would often visually contrast the coverage of those events by the world media.

The first 68 pictures posted to the account depicted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, and his wife, Asma, interacting with the Syrian people in patriotic and religious ways. Many of the images featured large gatherings of people, and the descriptions accompanying the initial images were brief, concise, and written exclusively in Arabic. Each of these indicators have been studied and supported as hallmarks of Arab culture (see al-Olayan & Karande, 2000; Eid, 2009; Kalliny, 2010; Nydell, 1987).

However, on 31 July, 2013, the Instagram account began displaying images that were accompanied by exclusively English descriptions that were more detailed in their content, a hallmark of Western culture (see al-Olayan & Karande, 2000; Hall, 1976). In fact, only 19% (N=16) of the next 86 images posted to the account, which included *all* of the images posted in August and September 2013, were accompanied by an Arabic description. None of the images during this period of time had multi-lingual captions.

While one could only speculate all the reasons for the substantial shift in language and audience of the Instagram account, the fact that it happened is intriguing, and guided our study, since two distinct rhetorical agendas had been set. To date, no studies have analyzed Instagram as a medium for visual rhetoric through the lens of socio-political communication. The objective of this study, then, was ultimately to identify what was being said to each audience.

Historical and Theoretical Background

Before continuing, it is necessary to ground the historical timeline of events in mass communication theory, so that our research questions and hypotheses can be understood.

Media Framing of Syria

At the time the Syrian presidency established the Instagram account, it was fully engaged in the battle for Homs, a Syrian city that was home to the opposition. On 30 and 31 July, 2013, just one week after the Instagram account had been established, and on the date the account began posting images with English descriptions, the Syrian capture of the city of Homs received major coverage by news media outlets that included BBC, *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Mail*, *The New York Times*, *Times of Israel*, *Reuters*, *Times of London*, Fox News, Syrian News and others. While some outlets reported the incident in English as "complete liberation of Homs" (Klostermayr, 2013), and included either no images of the city, or images of victorious troops, others featured images of destruction, and reported on the "destroyed Syrian city" (Mackey, 2013). This event was the capstone on ongoing media coverage of the siege of Homs, as well as other attacks throughout the month by the Syrian presidency on Syrian opposition. Since nine of the ten most read

newspapers in the world are in English, and 307.7 million people read them (Kunad, 2013), exposure to this incident was virtually unavoidable in a world where 375 million people speak English as their first language (Curtis & Romney, 2006). Needless to say, the English speaking world wanted to know what was going on in Syria, and the media was ready to answer the call.

Valenzuela and McCombs (2009) argued that the way the media influences the prominence of issues can affect individuals' opinions of governments and public figures. The effects of this influence of prominence in the media are well-studied, and the common consensus is that significant media coverage of an event can have a profound effect on the setting of public agenda and opinion (Iyengar, & Kinder, 1987; Valenzuela & McCombs, 2009).

Although the standard timeframe for agenda-setting effects has been found to range anywhere from four weeks to two months (Salwen, 1988; Wanta & Yu-wei, 1994; Winter & Eyal, 1981), in the case of online media relating to issues of high personal salience, this timeframe can be reduced to as little as one to seven days (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002).

In the case of a nation, studies have found that if media coverage is negative, individual viewers link the negative attributes of the news reports to the respective nation (Turan, Colakoglu, & Colakoglu, 2009), which puts the represented nation at a high risk of being permanently labeled the way the media has framed it, if it does not quickly and decisively engage in public relations. With so much news circulating about the Syrian government and its actions in Homs, it was imperative that the Syrian presidency frame

itself swiftly and effectively as a response to its representation in the media before the court of public opinion indicted them and sentenced them.

Reverse Causality

To do this, the Syrian presidency engaged in a mechanism of public relations known as reverse causality. Normally defined as communication that preempts news coverage (Wanta & Wu, 1992), when taken in the context of perpetuating conversation, reverse causality endeavors to alter perception, by enabling individuals, who are willing to engage in communication, to influence both the way they are represented and the public opinion that is forming around them (Salmon & Glynn, 2009). Furthermore, Salmon and Glynn (2009) argue that it gives minority factions the power to overcome majority sentiment. Salmon and Glynn (2009) argue that this mechanism of reverse causality explicitly pertains to interpersonal and small-group communication processes. While arguing that most social media is interpersonal communication on a global scale (Sheldon, 2008) would support the use of this theory in this study, it may also devalue the effectiveness of such actions in an increasingly viral social media world that is constantly being redefined by a mass audience. Employing the Internet and social media in crisis communication has been the focus of a number of studies (Liu, 2010, Taylor & Kent, 2007; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011; Taylor & Perry, 2005), though the effects of crisis communication through Instagram, with its unintrusive capability for framing and presenting images in a rhetorical style, has not yet been explored. This did not deter the Syrian government from using the resource to insert its perspective into the global conversation.

The images on the Syrian presidency's Instagram account contrasted so heavily with the media agenda favoring news reports of the ongoing atrocities within the country that Western media sources quickly became aware of the Instagram account and its images. Between July and September 2013, *The Daily Mail*, *New York Daily News*, *The Telegraph*, *The Huffington Post*, *Times of London*, and an assortment of other widely read news sources included coverage of Syria's account that mirrored the sentiments of *The Daily Mail* from 4 September, 2013, that called it a "sickening" showcase of a "fantasy world" (Daily Mail Reporter, 2013).

Framing Visual Rhetoric

Popular or not, the Syrian presidency had successfully framed itself by choosing a perspective on Syria that it wanted the public to perceive as reality and made it salient by communicating it to the world. Entman (1993) explained that that frames (also known as *schemata*) highlight certain facets of reality and conceal others, and that the manner in which information is presented influences the way audiences interpret events and may cause them to react differently. He further argued that politicians are compelled to compete with mass media over news frames, because "frame in a news text is really the imprint of power" (p. 55).

Within framing, visuals are an effective mechanism, because they are capable of overwhelming facts as well as obscuring issues (Wischmann, 1987). Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) argued that visuals can be framed similarly to text because they make use of the same rhetorical tools of metaphors, depictions, and symbols, which "purport to capture the essence of an issue or event graphically" (p. 51). However, because viewers read images as proof (Dauber, 2001) that they are witnessing truth, and may be less

aware that their news is being framed for them than when it is happening with words, visual framing has a distinct advantage over framing in text (Messaris & Abraham, 2003).

Scholars have researched the effectiveness of visual framing campaigns within the media topics of tobacco (Schneider et al., 2001) and pharmaceuticals (Landau, 2011) in advertisements, the portrayal of suburban neighborhoods in films (Dickinson, 2006), the images of natural disasters in newspapers (Borah, 2009), reporting on international cultures (Holiday, Lewis, Nielsen, & Anderson, 2014), and the fields of civil rights movements (Johnson, 2007), civil wars (Galander, 2012), environmental causes (Tarin, 2009, McHendry, 2012), and wartime reporting (Fahmy, 2005, 2007, 2010; Fahmy & Kim, 2008).

Such campaigns of imagery can create awareness of a different perspective that can breed empathy and understanding of the topic (Johnson, 2007), or at least dilute the strength of the negative opinion since "any message (informational or persuasive) will tap into an existing store of information, impressions, beliefs, [and] evaluations" (McQuail, 2010, p. 517) if it can be communicated to an audience. Lippmann (1922) stated the importance of "recognizing the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture" (p. 11).

Social Media and the Internet

The Syrian presidency's challenge was to create visual rhetoric and successfully bypass the gatekeepers of the media that had already framed the group negatively, so that it could communicate a perspective of itself that it viewed as representative. The answer was found in modern means of mass communication. In today's world of rapidly

developing advancements, technology minimizes the global reach of national governments' messages (Galander, 2012). The impact of limited control of messages has been studied in intercultural research (Artz & Kamalipour, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991; Theobald, 2004), and the Internet, and subsequently social media, has given the mass public previously unprecedented access to wartime imagery (see Smith & McDonald, 2011) and allowed special interest groups to set their own agendas and gain the attention of mass audiences (Tarin, 2009).

Instagram

Within this world, Instagram is a uniquely situated social media outlet that specializes in efficiently distributing visual rhetoric on a personal or global scale to its 150 million monthly active users (instagram.com/press), Facebook's more than 1 billion monthly active users, as well as other social media sites. Since its launch in 2010, brands have already recognized the viral potential in advertising their products on Instagram through sponsored posts of endorsed celebrities (Bercovici, 2012), and political campaigns have harnessed its potential in raising awareness of candidates during the campaign process (Lewandowski, 2013).

Even though the nature of Instagram appears to encourage rampant sharing of photos, and the platform was designed as a “quick and enjoyable way to share experiences through a series of pictures” (Collard, 2012, p. 47), Moore (2011) argues that more than 35% of users, many of whom never upload a single picture, use the app to follow other users. With such a strong culture of observing what other users are posting, Bardzell's (2009) sentiments that an application or artifact must be thought of as rhetoric, and not simply as a tool becomes even more prescient of Instagram today, and speaks to

why a group would want to use the platform to depict a world view for an audience that is eager to learn more about the group.

In fact, production is often conceived with an audience in mind. McCune (2011) states that “users consciously produce images with ideas of reception and exchange within the Instagram social media network” (p. 39). His extensive research of Instagram found six common motivations for sharing personal media with a global network of strangers: sharing, documentation, seeing, community, creativity, and therapy. Of these, *seeing* was defined as, “the urge to...present one’s own viewpoint” (McCune, 2011, p. 59). McCune (2011) found that one-fourth of Instagram users identify themselves with this motivating factor, feel they have “the power to ‘be seen by as large an audience as possible’,” and believe that they possess “a personal worldview that can be mediated by photography and thus by Instagram” (p. 65).

In application then, by using Instagram to visually frame its activities and values, the Syrian presidency circumvented the major news media and presented a mediated, personal worldview to two audiences—Arab nationals that the Syrian presidency wanted to rally to its cause, and the Western world previously limited by the agenda of Western media. When it comes to the world of Instagram, both audiences are eager to view images and share them virally across social media platforms (McCune, 2011).

While theoretical speculation is intriguing, it is a far cry from intent. Without asking the Syrian presidency whether it was attempting to engage in reverse causality through visual rhetoric, we can only make observations about coincidences. However, al-Assad went a long way toward bridging this divide during three key public addresses that occurred while his administration was posting images to Instagram.

The first address was a speech at Damascus University on 4 August, 2013, in which al-Assad spoke candidly in Arabic to an assembly of the Syrian society, including parties, politicians, clerics, and unions, about the foreign media and Syria's obligation to its citizens. It was given a week earlier than planned because of the "fast pace of developments" (Speech, 2013, para. 1) that forced the regime to move into crisis communication mode. This placed it within one week of the major mass media news coverage of the events in Homs, and furthered the argument that the Syrian presidency willfully attempted to engage in the practice of reverse causality. In the speech, al-Assad referred to the "violent campaigns in the media" (Speech, 2013, para. 10), that had an ultimate goal to "cause panic and fear" (Speech, 2013, para. 66). Al-Assad referred to this as "an orchestrated media campaign which has met a partial success thanks to the high technology it possesses, the money it spends, and because of the dubious trumpets it hires in order to promote this campaign of deceit with unparalleled shallowness" (Speech, 2013, para. 5). He went on to substantiate the claim that his administration was engaging in reverse causality through Instagram and other social media that could not be controlled by governments or opposition in the media:

We started some modest mechanisms for passing information, not necessarily through the media. But these mechanisms are still not sufficient to face this huge media campaign. The more we move ahead in terms of transparency and pass correct information quickly to our citizens the more they will be immune. Then, these media campaigns will not be of any use. The ultimate purpose of this media attack is to cause panic and fear, or to inflict defeat without a battle. (Speech, 2013, para. 66)

Clearly, there was a distinct message that the Syrian presidency wanted to communicate to its own people, without having to go through the media. But what was that message? Discovering this was one of the fundamental research questions of the present study:

RQ1: What themes was the Syrian Presidency attempting to communicate to an exclusively Arabic language audience in the visual rhetoric of its Instagram account?

Additionally, two English language interviews followed this address. Charlie Rose conducted the first on 8 September, 2013, for the CBS news program “Face the Nation,” and Greg Palkot and Dennis Kucinich conducted the second for Fox News on 17 September, 2013. In both interviews al-Assad made it clear that he was the one with the authority and perspective to show the world what life was really like in Syria. In his interview with Charlie Rose, al-Assad straightforwardly explained:

This is the reality. I'm telling you the reality from our country. We live here. We know what's happening. And they have to listen to the people who live here. They cannot listen only to their media or to their research centers. They don't live here. No one lives here but us. (Steers, 2013, para. 26)

Clearly, al-Assad felt that the world would more accurately learn about what was going on in Syria by avoiding the media and going directly to rhetoric from the Syrian government. Instagram served as a source for precisely this type of information, but what was it that the Syrian presidency wanted the world to understand about it? This question propelled the other fundamental research question of the present study:

RQ2: What themes was the Syrian Presidency attempting to communicate to an exclusively English language audience in the visual rhetoric of its Instagram account?

To reiterate, our initial analysis of the Syrian presidency's Instagram account revealed that the first 68 images posted to the Syrian presidency's Instagram account were accompanied by exclusively Arabic descriptions. Of the following 86 images, 70 images were accompanied by exclusively English descriptions, and 16 images were accompanied by exclusively Arabic descriptions. None of the images posted to the Syrian presidency's Instagram account from its launch in July 2013 through September 2013 had multi-lingual descriptions. Clearly, the Syrian presidency had something it wanted to say to each of these audiences that would be clearly understood by each audience. And so, we formulated the following research question:

RQ3: Is the visual rhetoric different when the descriptions accompanying the images are predominantly in Arabic, as opposed to when they are predominantly in English?

Method

To begin this research, we conducted a constant comparative analysis (Eaves, 2001) of all 155 images posted to the Syrian presidency's Instagram account ([instagram.com/syrianpresidency](https://www.instagram.com/syrianpresidency)) from 24 July, 2013, through 30 September, 2013. We selected this sample because it coincided with the initiation of the account, major media news coverage of the events in Homs, the speech given by president al-Assad at Damascus University, the U.N. inspection of Syria for chemical weapons, the use of chemical weapons within Syria, major news media coverage of the Instagram account

and the use of the chemical weapons, and al-Assad's interviews with CBS and with Fox News. Using Grounded Theory, a theory in which themes emerge organically during a process of analysis and comparison of information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we were able to identify visually prevalent themes within the Instagram images.

After performing a constant comparative analysis using open coding and dimensionalization (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), we used the identified themes and performed a quantitative content analysis of all 155 images posted to the Syrian presidency's Instagram account, to establish whether there was a difference in the depiction of those themes between the Arabic audience (AA) images and the English audience (EA) images.

Coding Procedure

One Arab national U.S. doctoral student and two U.S. national graduate students conducted the constant comparative analysis using Grounded Theory. Through this process, the themes of nationalism and patriotism, depictions of youth, religion, societal support, and empathy were identified as prevalent themes within the visual rhetoric of the Syrian presidency's Instagram images. After this process was completed, two coders, one of whom was blind to the study, coded the Instagram images for the established themes. Both coders were trained, and detailed instruction on coding categories was given prior to coding. To establish intercoder reliability, 25 images from outside of the sample were selected. This sample was equivalent to 16% of the study sample. Using Krippendorff's Alpha, intercoder reliability was measured on the themes of nationalism & patriotism ($\alpha=.90$), depictions of youth ($\alpha=1.00$), religion ($\alpha=1.00$), societal support ($\alpha=1.00$), and empathy ($\alpha=.84$). Given an appropriate rate of intercoder reliability using Krippendorff's

Alpha, coding commenced on the sample. After coding was completed, the data was entered into SPSS, where chi-square tests were utilized to quantitatively analyze the thematic differences between the EA images and the AA images.

Results

The sample of this study consisted of 155 images (84 with Arabic descriptions, 63 with English descriptions, and 8 without descriptions). The 8 images without descriptions were excluded from the study.

Nationalism & Patriotism

The theme of nationalism & patriotism appeared in 20 (13.6%) AA images and 29 (19.7%) EA images. Assumptions were checked and were met, and a chi-square analysis showed that there was a significant difference ($X^2=8.00$, $df=1$, $p=.005$) between expected depictions of nationalism and patriotism in AA images and EA images and their actual depiction. Phi, which indicates the strength of the association between these two variables, was -.233, thus the effects size is considered moderate, or acceptable.

Depictions of Youth

Youth were depicted in 32 (38.1%) AA images and 28 (19%) EA images. There was no significant difference in the depictions of youth between AA images and EA images.

Religion

Religion, as a theme, was depicted in 25 (17%) AA images and 14 (9.5%) EA images. A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the amount of depictions of religiosity between the two groups of images.

Societal Support

The theme of societal support appeared in 28 (19%) AA images and 15 (10.2%) EA images, thus there was no significance in the depiction of societal support between the two groups.

Empathy

22 (15%) of the AA images and 5 (3.4%) of the EA images contained depictions of empathy. A chi-square analysis showed that there was a significance in the differences between the expected and the actual AL and EL depictions of empathy ($X^2=8.00$, $df= 1$, $p=.005$), and Phi indicated a moderate, or acceptable, relationship (.233) between the variables.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare the content of the Syrian presidency's visual rhetoric toward two distinct audiences, one English and one Arabic, and to establish whether there was a significant difference in the visual rhetoric toward each audience.

We analyzed each image from the Syrian presidency's Instagram account from 24 July, 2013, through 30 September, 2013, using a qualitative analytic approach, known as constant comparative analysis, and identified the specific themes of nationalism and patriotism, depictions of youth, religion, empathy, and societal support as themes framed for the audience of this social media platform.

After extrapolating the themes, we performed a content analysis with a goal to see whether the identified visual themes were equally prevalent between audiences, or whether certain themes were framed for specific audiences. Our content analysis revealed

that certain themes, such as depictions of youth, societal support, and religion were equally distributed between both English and Arabic audiences. This finding would seem to suggest that there was not a substantial difference in the depictions of themes between audiences. However, there were significant differences between audiences when it came to the depiction of the themes of nationalism and patriotism, and empathy. Within this statistically significant difference, the theme of nationalism and patriotism was framed for an English audience in the Instagram images, while the theme of empathy was highlighted in the Arabic audience Instagram images.

As a result of this analysis, we can definitively say that the Syrian presidency advanced the themes of nationalism and patriotism significantly more when the audience of the visual rhetoric was English language than when the audience was Arabic language. Could this imply that the Syrian presidency wanted an English language audience to see Syria as a strong, unified nation? Furthermore, the Syrian presidency advanced the theme of empathy significantly more when the audience was Arabic language than when the audience was English language. Could *this* imply that the Syrian presidency wanted an Arabic language audience to see the Syrian presidency as a compassionate administration?

During the window of time that this study analyzed, the public was told that 2.1 million Syrian refugees had fled the country and were being housed primarily throughout Lebanon and Jordan (UNHCR, 2013), and that many of the members of the Syrian opposition were disaffected Syrian nationals. There was also an active political and media campaign to rally world opinion in support of a military strike on Syria. Furthermore, Syrian opposition was actively using popular mass communication

strategies, which had worked successfully across various social media platforms and other mediums during the Arab Spring for opposition forces in countries like Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, to advance their agenda and gain support for their rebellion (Lesch & Haas, 2012).

But even Barack Obama understood that he needed to rally support for a military campaign in Syria from an American people and a world that were weary of war and skeptical of joining in on a campaign that did not directly affect them, their freedom, or their safety. At a press conference in St. Petersburg, Russia on September 6, following the G-20 meeting, President Obama said, “I knew this was going to be a heavy lift...I understand the skepticism. I think it is very important, therefore, for us to work through, systematically, making the case to every senator and every member of Congress” (Lermen & Wingfield, 2013).

Although past scholarship has traditionally supported the hegemonic perspective of government-press relations which states that governments have an overwhelming ability and power to create frames and set agendas on news coverage of war to manage public opinion (Bennett & Paletz, 1994; Carruthers, 2000; Herman & Chomsky, 1986; Mermin, 1999; Zaller & Chiu, 1996), recent international campaigns have found limited public support, further suggesting that the public around the world have become more informed by a broad base of media outlets and more judicious about what they choose to support (Patrick & Thrall, 2007), as well as generally more skeptical and propaganda-weary (White, 1952) of the media.

The significant depiction of nationalism and patriotism visually framed within the Syrian presidency's Instagram account to an English language audience, compounded

with the significant depiction of empathy visually framed to an Arabic language audience, while these external forces were playing out on an international stage, strongly correlates with the notion that the Syrian presidency was aware of all of this. It strongly suggests that it was indeed endeavoring to engage in reverse causality, and, as Salmon and Glynn (2009) argued, alter perception and influence both the way they were represented and the public opinion that was forming around them, perhaps in the hope of convincing Americans and the world against going to war with a healthy, unified nation, and persuading Syrians that their presidency was a compassionate administration, fighting for their best interests against terrorists who had forced them to seek refuge outside of Syria. The finding that religiosity was prevalent in 70% of the Instagram images directed toward an Arabic language audience, though perhaps not of any statistical relevance to the study, does help to further the argument that the Syrian presidency wanted to appeal to one of the Syrian people's most fundamental cultural beliefs as it inserted itself into the conversation with this audience.

One could argue here that the Syrian presidency itself is part of this society that is “fully grounded in the Islamic religion” (al-Olayan & Karande, 2000, p. 71), so it makes perfect sense that it would frame the theme of religion in its visual rhetoric, and that it is so ingrained in them as a part of this society, that it couldn't even be considered remarkable. Curiously, though, when al-Assad spoke to representatives of this society, in the Arabic language, at Damascus University in August 2013, he mentioned religion only once, and his only reference to Islam was as an adjective describing terrorists (see CGGL, 2013). This trend was repeated in al-Assad's English language interviews as well, when once again al-Assad only briefly touched on the topic of religion, and rhetorically framed

it as a characteristic of the fundamentalist and extremist fringe of Syrian society (see Global Research, 2013; Steers, 2013), despite the fact that religion influences every aspect of a Muslim's life (Kalliny, 2010), and 87% of Syrians are followers of Islam (Bureau of Democracy, 2012). Al-Assad clearly championed secularism and obscured the theme of religiosity in his verbal rhetoric during this time by associating it with fundamentalism and terrorism. The fact that the theme of religion was so prevalent within the visual rhetoric of the Syrian presidency's Instagram account strongly suggests that its presence contributed toward the presidency's attempt to engage in reverse causality and appeal to the emotional side of disaffected Syrian nationals.

The fact that the Syrian presidency used Instagram to engage in this socio-political communication has revolutionary implications for the app itself and for the future of social media. Further studies would greatly contribute to the conversation about whether the use of socio-political communication within a medium like Instagram could affect public perception or contribute to the formation of public opinion, but this study contributes to the finding that politicians and even nations are using social media platforms like Instagram to engage in such conversations because of the limited amount of control that the media has over social media outlets, and their content.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies could conduct a content analysis of the images of the Syrian presidency's Instagram account using Hall's (1976) studies of high-context and low-context cultures, and Hofstede's (1980) studies of levels of individualism to determine whether the visual rhetoric of the Instagram images supports the established levels of context and collectivism identified for Syria and the Arab world. To determine whether

the Syrian presidency's socio-political rhetoric and visual framing was an effective persuasive tool, a study could be designed to measure awareness and opinions of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, or Asma al-Assad both before and after reviewing the images. This experiment could be designed to test subjects who may or may not know what the al-Assads look like before viewing the images. Still, other studies could compare the Syrian presidency's Instagram account to that of President Obama's Instagram account and/or Instagram accounts for the Syrian opposition from the same window of time, to analyze how the rhetoric from these accounts were interacting with and responding to each other. These types of studies would have implications within the conversation of public relations, crisis communication, and image management.

Additionally, in October 2013, the images on the Syrian presidency's Instagram account began incorporating the combined use of both Arabic and English language descriptions. A further study could be conducted to determine how and whether the content of these images changed as well.

While an entire body of scholarship could develop around the Syrian presidency's Instagram account, future studies should look more broadly, and examine the use of Instagram by corporations, politicians, or nations, to determine how users who are not individuals are utilizing the app. These types of studies would have implications within the conversation of public relations, crisis communication, and image management.

Because Instagram is a new platform for communication that is being constantly redefined in an ever-evolving world that is becoming more and more orchestrated by social media, any additional scholarship on the app will become a valuable addition to the scant amount of studies that do exist (see Collard, 2012; McCune, 2011; Moore, 2011;

Nielsen, Weston, Holiday, & Lewis, 2014), which will help us all to understand our brave new world of mass communications.

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