

The Football Stadium in Morocco and the Dynamic of Struggle Over the Truth System, the Ultras Against the State

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ABSTRACT

The football stadium has increasingly transformed from being a site of sport and football-supporting teams into a site of expressing social frustration. This transformation has been noticeable in Morocco since 2010, where the stadiums have become a remarkable space to criticize the political performance and policies of certain political institutions. Consequently, several clashes occurred between the ultras and the state, which endlessly looking for strategies to stop the ultras from gaining social ground. On the other hand, the new actors (ultra) seem to create a new aesthetic sense with their depicted non-usual political signs. In this regard, we argue that the limited space for participation (stadiums) defines two conflicting dynamics over the system of truth. In the same vein, the aesthetic practices in the stadiums are combating the dominant systems of truth by generating a "new distribution of the sense" which the ultras strongly believe in. To make this epistemic claim, we based our analysis on the theoretical contributions of the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, which were deeply discussed and analyzed in his book "The politics of aesthetics: the distribution of the sensible.

Key words: Ultras, state, truth system, the distribution of the sensible.

INTRODUCTION

Stadiums have arguably been defined as open spaces for supporting various football teams for almost a decade. However, since the early third century, stadiums have remarkably evolved into political spaces where the public can express their political opinions on a variety of political issues. This case was observed in various stadiums in Italy, Turkey, Spain, and Egypt in the last decade, while in Morocco, this gradual transformation has been observed after the uprising of the 20th of February movement. Currently, the Moroccan stadiums are central spaces to attack the prevailing political values.

Starting from the above description, we try through this article to focus on the stadium space as a new field for practicing political expression. We argue in this respect that the stadium as a space contains two conflicting dynamics around the truth system. By dominating the stands, the public seeks to employ aesthetics in its various dimensions of visual images, banners, rhetorical images, and tight organization to compete with the political order that prevails, thus creating a new depicted political signs.

On the other hand, we note that the other party in the conflict equation¹, represented by the state, spares no effort in defending the pre-woven political values. Its interventions range from monitoring to direct intervention by banning the aesthetic visuals from being disseminated in stadiums, and mass-media due to their expressive strength. The conflict dynamic has also taken the form of direct intervention to disperse the public by force under the pretext of maintaining public order.

We also argue through this paper that politics has close links with aesthetics and is directly influenced by the power relations woven at the field level.

Through this Article we try to answer the problematic below:

How can we explore the function of limited spaces of participation (stadiums) and their role in mobilizing the public in generating the 'new' distribution of sense, and how this renewed form of collective sense struggles and interacts with the prevailing political formulation of the state? Through this article, we try to focus on the intellectual contributions of Rancière (2004), and we will look through this theoretical synthesis of how the aesthetic practices practised by the masses in the stadium can struggle with the dominant systems of truth by generating a 'new distribution of sense. Through the following paragraphs, we seek to define the main concepts of the article, Ultras, the state, and the truth system.

ULTRAS

Ultras are defined as groups made up of sports fans who profess their unconditional loyalty to their teams and their commitment to supporting their team's 90-minute drum under all circumstances. Since its appearance in Italy in 1968, ultras have become one of the archetypes in football promotion that is most widespread globally by producing intricate choreography, cheers, banners, and fireworks. Ultras represent a highly structured style of fandom that is enjoying increasing global reach and visibility. Over the past 50 years, ultras fandom has spread from southern Europe through northern Africa to northern and eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and North America. Their team performance, unity, and harmony distinguish them from other football fans and many other forms of team behaviour. By emphasizing the common form of expression in the performance of choreography, chants and constant support throughout the match, members build an emotional connection to their club that values the colours and

¹ The social conflict in the context of philosophy is what is known as dialectical materialism, meaning that everything is changing and transforming, and this point of view goes back a long way to Greek philosophy, which sees that the world consists of atoms that are always changing, and with different eras, the procedural concepts of conflict and the indicators and dimensions of conflict differ. Thus, we will try to define the concept of conflict in terms of contemporary dimensions based on the academic contributions of Alain Touraine, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Crozier. Alain Touraine believes that the main concern of sociology is the study of social behaviors that are related to history and the interactive relationships between the past, present, and future, and that these relationships are linked to class conflicts. The concept of struggle for Alain Touraine is determined by social movements, and the latter is considered the active engine of the class struggle. Alain Touraine explains a model of class struggle by saying: "***We must know three fields: the first field is the historical field, where society makes itself; the second field is the institutional and political field; and the third field is social action, which means the extent of pressure of social movements at the institutional and political level.***" Alain Touraine concluded that the world is in a transitional stage in which the level of conflict is declining. "***We live in a transitional phase from an industrial society to a programming society, and consequently a decrease in the level of class struggle and the emergence of a new generation of social movements, and these social movements link them to a specific time and place, and different indicators.***" see TOURAINE, Alain (2005), ***un nouveau paradigme, pour comprendre le Monde d'aujourd'hui***, Fayard, Paris, Introduction.

symbols of that team and rally against opponents. Instead, we face groups that pride themselves on having a common and coherent sense of identity-based on the act of consumption.²

Concerning Morocco, there are many stories and narratives about the history of the emergence of the first ultras. Yet, they all agree on the year 2005, and the debate continues between the Ultras of Raja (Green Boys) and the Ultras Askary of Rabat about the title of the first ultras in Morocco. After this date, the rest of the ultras were established, numbered more than fifty, and became representative of all sports teams.³

The state: We mean the state as a symbolic production rather than a legal entity. In general, citizens experience the existence of the state through a set of daily activities such as paying taxes, following orders from the police, obeying new laws that influence their social and legal status, or listening to the mass media, and sovereign discourses.⁴ These activities create a set of representations about the state, whether as an entity of pride, justice, right, freedom, or, contrary, as a device of repression, and inspection. Thus, the term "state," as well as the concept of the state and political institutions, have a kind of independent life in the minds of the governed.⁵ In this regard, we argue that the state, through symbolic production, sees itself as a sovereign entity that ought to be obeyed since it is always seeking the public interest. On the other hand, ultra groups see the state as a symbol of repression that ought to be criticized by dominating the limited spaces of participation (the stadiums).

The truth system: It must be mentioned that the concept of truth is the most controversial concept that philosophers constantly argue about. Nevertheless, in this article, we chose to discuss truth as a system of beliefs, and this goes directly to all the contributions of the coherence theory of truth. In this regard, F.H. Bardely argues the truth that a person can believe in must have a system.⁶ A system that has two essential aspects: coherence and comprehensiveness. In Bardely's view, any particular facts of sense perception will be given, not independently of others, but within an interrelated manifold of facts.⁷ Thus, Bardely strongly argues that the examination of truth must be done through studying the two unified components of truth; coherence and comprehensiveness.⁸ "If we separate coherence from comprehensiveness, then, I agree that neither of these aspects will work by itself"⁹. Based on Bardely's view, we argue that there is a system of truth that both actors believe in and are therefore constantly defending. For the Ultras, the system of truth has been collectively contracted and is constantly fed in the stadiums by chants and discourse that portray the state as an enemy or a tool of repression. On the other hand, the state defends its system of truth by

² Mark Doidge, Radoslaw Kossakowski, Svenja-Maria Mintert (2020). *Ultras: The passion and performance of contemporary football fandom*. Manchester University Press, P5.

³ Said Benis (2019) *Representations of the protest discourse of the ultras in Morocco and its political effects, media study*, IElbab journal, Issue 2 (Arabic), P 145.

⁴ Philippe Braud (1988) *Political sociology*, University foundation for studies, publishing and distribution, translated into Arabic by Mohamed Arab Sasila. (Arabic) p 122.

⁵ P. Berger, T. Luckmann (1986) *La construction sociale de la réalité*, Trad Klincksieck, p86.

⁶ F.H. Bradely (1994) *Writings on logic and metaphysics*, Edited by J. Allard and G. Stock, Oxford University Press, p296.

⁷ F.H. Bradely (1994) *Writings on logic and metaphysics*, ibid, P296.

⁸ F.H. Bradely (1994) *Writings on logic and metaphysics*, ibid, P296.

⁹ F.H. Bradely (1994) *Writings on logic and metaphysics*, ibid, P296.

always supporting symbols in stadiums such as flags, patriotic music between halves, and police as a symbol of force and power.

"THE DISTRIBUTION OF SENSIBLE" AS A PARADIGM TO UNDERSTAND AND INTERPRET THE CONFLICT OVER THE SYSTEM OF TRUTH

Rancière argues that aesthetics is a system of organized forms that define what is presented to sensory experience, and that artistic practices are at their core methods of action and making that intervene in the general distribution of action and execution as well as in the relationships that maintain patterns of being and forms of vision. Aesthetics in this sense is a determinant from which to understand collective expressions, especially those that attempt to contradict the prevailing system of values through the generation and distribution of a new system of sense. For Rancière, official politics is in nature dead, given the typicality of the democratic system in relying on elections and devolution of power, and may sometimes pass without significant changes. Politics in the view of Rancière generates the birth of a new sense that seeks to test the prevailing value system.¹⁰ In other words, the politics of aesthetics revolves around defending the idea of inequality in the system of truth that claims to represent the people and democratic deliberation.¹¹ On the other hand, politics is the space that is created when the prevailing status quo is challenged and struggled against, or rather it is a space reserved for those who have no space or voice.¹² He argues that: "Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by an institution or part by those who have no part".¹³

The birth of politics with this logic according to Rancière usually comes when employing art in the equation of attacking the system of truth. Art, or visual practices, can, through their activity, disturb the clear rules of representative logic, which are supposed to be legitimate and acceptable.¹⁴ Art in this sense is not limited to its function in abstract expression, but rather its function is manifested in simulating reality, and employing it to criticize the prevailing systems of reality.¹⁵

Contemporary societies are depicted as having abolished the true democratic process. Rancière describes Western democracies as societies that maintain a form of apolitical space through a "polis system" in which social order is reformed, reproduced, and maintained with seemingly universal consensus, but with an anti-democratic sensibility.¹⁶

This "polis system" is based on what Rancière calls the "distribution of sense." Rancière defines the social world as a system that is maintained by a fixed set of possible cognition patterns that delineate action. These dominant modes of perception define what Rancière calls well-

¹⁰ Jacques Rancière (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*, Translated with an Introduction by Gabriel Rockhill First published in France under the title *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* La Fabrique-Éditions, 2000 Gabriel Rockhill, 2004. P 69-70.

¹¹ Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2017) *Rancière and the re-distribution of the sensible: The artist Rosanna Raymond, dissensus and postcolonial sensibilities within the spaces of the museum* . Progress in Human Geography P 2.

¹² Jacques Rancière (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*. Ibid P 70.

¹³ Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2017) *Rancière and the re-distribution of the sensible: The artist Rosanna Raymond, dissensus and postcolonial sensibilities within the spaces of the museum* . ibid P3

¹⁴ Jacques Rancière (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*, ibid, P 13-14.

¹⁵ Jacques Rancière (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*, ibid, P 15-16.

¹⁶ Douglas Smith (2015) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*, book review, The senses and society, P223.

established "structures of feeling" that produce the space of the public sphere, which in turn is approved, reproduced, and maintained.¹⁷

Rancière distinguishes the senses in fixing the matrices of "truth" by which the politician is understood. This can be understood as paralleling the role of Marxist accounts of "struggle" between classes as the main locus of policing, law, and social governance challenges in opposition and political change. Participation of the sensible refers to a system of what is possible and recognized: feeling, audible, visible and perceived in this space and embedded in certain familiar patterns of inclusion or exclusion. The sensibilities of the social system define the constraints and limits of what is visible and unseen, what can be said and unsaid, what is audible and inaudible, and define the parameters of what can be thought, made, or done. Thus, the status quo, the social order in Rancière's view, is seen as an anti-democratic, anti-political one that attempts to preserve existing patterns of inclusions and exclusions (through the body, thoughts, feelings, or indeed the poetic).¹⁸

Based on this theoretical framework we will explore how aesthetics created by the new Actor (Ultras) eventually created a new depicted political sign that constantly combat the prevalence of the state's political values in stadiums. Initially, we will tackle ultra-images and discourse, and "the new distribution of sense". Secondly, we will discuss the state's interaction with the "new distribution of sense" and Aesthetic strategies followed to protect pre-woven political values.

Visual images as a collective aesthetic sense and the right "to be"

Visual images in current times are powerful expressive tools that can influence the recipient, particularly if they convey a specific message or express a fact or a value that a particular group believes in. These images in the world of the stadium have taken multiple dimensions in political expression in the last decade, and they have become a tool for attacking the values of political power through messages that are sometimes clear in their protest nature and sometimes carry hidden aesthetic suggestions. On the other hand, these images represent the supporters as a conscious and organized entity that is well knowledgeable and equipped to attack the prevalent political values.

Among the images that the Moroccan Ultras have been defending is the "El-Bash", a large banner to support the team.¹⁹ It is worth noting that between 2016 and 2018, when the state decided to ban all forms of images in the stadiums, the ultras faced this decision by publishing the "El-Bach" image in the stadium with resistance to the state's decision. According to these groups, this image expresses the organization's entity, and it is unacceptable under any circumstances, however, to lose this slogan. This explains the occurrence of multiple clashes with the police, who constantly tried to ban "El-Bash" between 2016 and 2018.²⁰

¹⁷ Douglas Smith (2015) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*, book review, Ibid, P 223.

¹⁸ Divya P. Tolia-Kelly (2017) *Rancière and the re-distribution of the sensible: The artist Rosanna Raymond, dissensus and postcolonial sensibilities within the spaces of the museum*. Progress in Human Geography P5.

¹⁹ Usually, this image contains a supportive slogan to team and sometimes it contains a direct critic to the state.

²⁰ Abdelmjid supporter of Raja interview date 03 March 2022, Agadir.

This image is not just like any ordinary image. Yet, it is an expression of the collective entity of the Ultras organization, representing a system of truth defended with absolute defiance in the face of the enemies, "the men of power, the security forces, and police, and above all, the state".²¹ The power of the image is also translated into what is termed "Tifo," which is a slogan that has connotations and depicted signs.²² In this case, the group of ultras known as the Raja el-Badawi,²³ used many of these visual images, most of them bearing a deep meaning. The most prominent example of this aspect is the "Tifo" raised by the Al-Rajaa terrace consisting of Green boys²⁴ and Eagles²⁵ in the sound of the Arab league. This image highlighted a direct suggestion of George Orwell's 1984 novel, which surrounded the mysteries related to cell 101.²⁶

What picture 101 suggests is a collective awareness that the ultras want to convey, implying that there is a crisis relationship with the living space, which is like a prison in their thought. In addition to this aspect, 101 is a field for reproducing a human being who is obedient to the prevailing system of truth, which the ultras constantly reject. In the same vein, the option of resistance is always open to the ultras with rhetorical images that do not find embarrassment in attacking the system of truth through a barrage of chants critical of the state and its policies. Thinking about this part indicates that the ultras choose the visual images very carefully. This means that ultras are not just like any random entity. Still, relatively organized groups with specific sense and aesthetic expression choices through the images they raise on the stadiums. These visual images express that the group enters into a typical sensory experience, which in its depth is an artistic practice that relies on collective methods of work, manufacture and intervenes in making the collective aesthetic spirit that sees a system of truth in its action. On the other hand, the creativity and dedication in producing these images exemplify the group's belief in the value system produced throughout the interaction with other contradictory value systems in the stadium.

²¹ Abdelmjid supporter of Rajaa, Ibid.

²² According to Rancière depicted signs is a way of distributing the sensible that structure the manner in which the arts can be perceived and thought as forms of art and as forms that inscribe a sense of community. See Jaques Rancière (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics The Distribution of the Sensible*. Ibid, P 14.

²³ Founded on 20 March 1949 in the district of Derb Sultan, the club has traditionally worn a green home kit since its foundation. Raja El-Bidawi is a well-known club for the success of its football section, very popular in Morocco and Casablanca in particular.

²⁴ Green boys is faction inside Raja El-Bidawi club created in 2005. But everything starts badly since the new group has its official tarpaulin stolen by the ultra group of Wydad, the Winners (opposers of Raja-Elbidawi). A theft experienced as a humiliation and which means, in the code of the ultras, that the group has been dislocated. See Mohamed Hachlaf, *Green boys Vs Eagles: Histoire d'une rivalité*, Telquel news paper <https://bit.ly/3H4g6CZ> (visited and checked in 14/06/2022)

²⁵ Eagles is another faction in Raja El-Bidawi club created after the humiliation incident occurred to green boys. Several supporters joined the new faction while many other supporters staid faithful to Green boys which bring several clashes between the two rivals regarding the question of legitimacy. See Mohamed Hamza hachlaf *Green boys Vs Eagles: Histoire d'une rivalité*, Telquel news paper: <https://bit.ly/3H4g6CZ> (visited and checked in 14/06/2022)

²⁶ Returning to Cell 101 tells us about a journalist who is suddenly under the supervision of the Thought Police from that point forward. After a while, he falls in love with a girl named Julia, and because he is being watched and exposed because of bugging devices and surveillance screens due to his opposition and doubts about the party's ideology and his affiliation with hostile groups, he is arrested by the Thought Police and taken to the Ministry of Love, where he is interrogated, tortured, and treated out of hatred for the party. The idea of the number 101 is based on the fact that the individual enters as a number one, then they make him zero, then he is re-created again to become a new one, but he is one who is useful and harmless to the party and even a supporter of it, and in the case of Winston, the hero of the story, they put mice on him, which he fears. The hero shouts, "Don't do this to me, do it to Julia." The police thought realized that he had finished. They stop torturing him and he gets out of prison. He is now a new and faithful person to the party's ideology.

The image then turns from encouraging the team to a tool full of political expression. Instead, sports encouragement has become a pretext and a means to pass on the aesthetic sense that believes in values that reject the prevailing political values.²⁷

The aesthetic distribution of the senses is reflected in the slogans and visuals carried by the supporters in football stadiums. Even the names of the ultra-groups express a great aesthetic sense and a deep awareness of the geographical space in which these groups belong to.

Ultras Name	Sports club	City
Green Boys	El Raja	Casablanca
Eagles	El Raja	Casablanca
Winners	ELwidad	Casablanca
Ultras Askary	Royal Army	Rabat
Helalla boys	Kenitra club	Kenitra
Ultrass Imazighen	Hassania Agadir	Agadir
Ultras shark	Olympic Safi	Asafi
Ultrass pirates	Slawi club	Sale

Source: Said Benis, Ibid, P 148. The most important ultras groups and clubs in Moroccan cities

The above table shows that most of the names have depicted signs of a defending sense of the team, Pride, and courage (Fighters, Winners, Hercules). On the other hand, some names indicate a close connection to the living space where the ultra-members live. For instance, the term "ultra Imazighen" refers to the identity link with the Souss Massa region in which the majority of the residents speak Berber. Besides, "ultra-pirates" refer to the historical activity that the sale-city residents engaged in, known as piracy. On the other hand, some names were associated with economic activity, as was the case with the ultra-shark for the city of Safi, which is known for fishing.²⁸

These Names show that the ultra-groups share an aesthetic sense that expresses rhetorical connotations that contribute to drawing an image of pride and courage. Although the visual images and titles are essential in understanding the Ultra dynamic with the predominant system of truth, the Ultra-discourse is more critical in comprehending the voice of the voiceless and how this discourse enters into a remarkable dynamic against the state-designed system of truth.

Discourse as an individual-collective feeling contrary to the ordinary

Rancière believes that the new distribution of sense is based on constructing a discourse that is aware and bears the feeling of belonging to the group.²⁹ The discourse built by the ultras groups in Morocco is, in its essence, an aesthetic discourse that carries a rebellious view against the political status quo. Being rebellious is manifested by adopting a protest discourse that

²⁷ Said Benis (2019) *Representations of the protest discourse of the ultras in Morocco and its political effects, media study*, Ibid P 146.

²⁸ Said Benis, Ibid, P 148.

²⁹ Kin kuiken, Rancière (2016) *Romanticism and the partage of the sensible*, Board of regents, university of Wisconsin system, vol 45, no 1, P 12.

rejects the political order and expresses the many hopes of the ultra-youth for dignity and decent life³⁰.

This strategy is subject to the context of moving from stadiums being used as sports sites to protest sites in a positive interaction with the psychology of the masses, which led to significant transformations in the incubators of the upbringing of a traditional nature (political parties, associations, unions) to an upbringing in modern structures (ultras).³¹

It is noticeable in the protest discourse of the Ultras that it carries with it a new distribution of sense; the discourse itself is being worked on internal cores to ensure complete consistency in the melody and the repetition of these slogans in a balanced collective pattern. This discourse is replete with criticism and rejection of the prevailing political order.

In the same vein, through reading the ultra-slogans, there is a mixture between the individual and the collective self. For instance, the collective slogans show a sharable collective concern about the political status quo, such as: **"You don't want us to read; freedom is what we want, oh my Lord"** and **"You killed Passion," "In this country we live in a dark cloud," "They spent on us drugs and hashish in secret, they left us as orphans," and "Talents you've lost with drugs have destroyed, how do you want to see it?" "You took all the state's money, to the strangers you gave it and the generation that you have oppressed," "you started provocation."** On the other hand, the individual slogans that are chanted collectively show the image of a united ultra-body that is upset about the political and living conditions. For instance, Raja Ultras (Eagles & green boys) constantly repeated the following individual slogans:

"I'm sorry my family, Many talks accusing me, Doesn't matter what they say about me", "Just understand me" "I don't forget, I don't and I won't," "Every day the same talk at home or in street, what Raja gave you? Whole your life is lost for her, how much you spend for her, and you never left her, just understand me why you wanted me to stay away from Raja? She is the one in my side" "oh in my country, they injustice me, to whom could I complain about my situation? Complain to the higher Allah, only he who knows".

This mixture between the individual and the collective self remarkably expresses the extent of absolute belief in the Ultras and the socio-emotional relationship with the collective self and the believe in "the part that has no part".³²

The ultras' protest discourse directly attacks the values of the dominant political discourse by blaming "you."³³, a discourse that sings aesthetically for freedom, dignity and justice and does

³⁰ The narrowness of the protest spaces in the last 5 years prompted the ultra-groups to use the stadiums against the predominant political discourse.

³¹ Said Benis, Ibid, P 150.

³² "Rancière's conception of the "part that has no part" in the body politic re-asserts, at the level of speech, a "fact" that does not belong to this part's identity, but whose facticity is reflected in the sheer emergence of an utterance that transforms what it means to speak. This utterance, according to Rancière, reveals the fact that the only "common" is the community of a dispute, a fundamental disagreement that shatters any illusion of consensus, and re-organizes the droit de parole of all the other parts of the polis in their turn". See Kin kuiken (2016), **Rancière, Romanticism and the partage of the sensible**, ibid, P12.

³³ "You" here refers in the Ultra slogans "the state".

not hesitate to highlight the manifestations of “hogra”³⁴ that affect the ultras' youth in their confrontation with the authorities in the stadiums. For example, after the continuous confrontations with the police, the military ultras sang the song of freedom in 2011.

On the other hand, Halala Boys Ultras sang an aesthetic discourse with unparalleled strength and daring in criticizing the authorities; this song was entitled "the rotten system."

What is striking about this protest text is its juxtaposition with tight and well-ordered musical rhythms. The mixing of rhythm with protest rhetoric nourishes the collective sense of belonging to a collective identity and being. In other words, it is a new distribution of sense that is constantly built through identifying the individual self with the collective self.

Besides the new distribution of sense, another actor—the state—in the conflict dynamic is trying endlessly to preserve the political order and values by using aesthetic strategies to surround the voice of "the part who have no part".

DEFENDING THE TRUTH SYSTEM BETWEEN THE USE OF PHYSICAL AND SOFT POWER

The stadium does not only include a single actor (Ultras), but rather another actor (the state) trying to defend power values in a limited space that knows the heat and conflict for 90 minutes and may extend to deepen extra conflict online in the digital world. This actor represents the state who appears embodied in the police forces under the guise of maintaining security in the stadium.

This actor strives hard to defend the system of truth woven throughout a historical process that has resolved the conflict over legitimacy. This defence is manifested sometimes by the direct intervention approach in stadiums by using force and at other times by initiating legal actions against members of ultras considered by the authorities to be suspected instigators of riots.

Resist the unfamiliar “Ultras” with the language of strength

On February 27, 2009, the authorities intervened to confiscate the Ultra Eagles Tifo, which supports the Raja Casablanca team, because it contains political messages and because sport is supposed to remain far from being involved in politics.³⁵

³⁴ This is a well known word in Moroccan *darija* which might be translated as “Oppression”. *Vaner* groups usually use this word to express anger about a situation. The notion of “hogra” expresses the social deprivation of certain social groups, who are not necessarily poor. This idea, which is increasingly being used by young adults, expresses a social group's feeling of lack of social consideration. Fear of social devaluation of the value of a community group is what fuels the youth revolution. Young people feel devalued and socially useless. And the regular repetition of “Hogra”, which is associated with dignity, has a mobilizing role in being rebellious. Some young people no longer move within the cultural register associated with giving in, complacency, or simply accepting their societal status. Feelings of individual deprivation and hopelessness for the future can express themselves in violent or peaceful collective forms when political conditions permit. See Abderrahmane Rachik (2014) *“Protest movements in Morocco from rebellion to demonstrations”* Forum for Alternatives Morocco Project: “Freedoms of Assemblies and Demonstrations in Morocco” Supported by the European Union Translated by Al Hussein Sahban January.

³⁵ The tifo raised at that time supporters calls to strengthen ties with Algerians neighbors according to the Ultra Eagles, while the authorities see that sport suppose to remain neutral and far from being involved into politics. For more information see the following press article : Omar chraïbi (2019) *The terraces of the Mohammed V stadium, the breathing space of the people*. Rabat today press. Link <https://bit.ly/3MCsew3>, (French)- (visited and checked on 10/06/2022).

In addition to this justification, the authorities consider that Tifos often results in riots that are not confined to the stadium but affect the surrounding areas. The authorities constantly adopt this justification in various similar riots. For instance, in 2015, the fans of the Winners, supporters of Alwidad Bidawi, raised a Tifo called "the Garden."³⁶ Raja ultra- on the other hand interpreted this tifo negatively as an insult to their club.³⁷ As a result, there has been a direct clash between the two ultras, which pushed the authorities to decide to ban Tifos in stadiums.³⁸ This situation, characterized by the crisis between the state and the ultras, continued until March 19, 2016, the date of a football match between Raja Casablanca and the youth team of Rif Al-Hoceima. The authorities intervened from this moment to ban all forms and associations of ultras in Morocco, a decision that has been justified by exacerbating the phenomenon of stadium riots.³⁹

This ban continued for a whole year, enabling the state to rearrange its approach in the face of an actor who appeared to be completely different from the rest of the other organized actors. Despite the ban, the ultras continued to confront the authorities in digital spaces, which showed that the ban decision at its core is unrealistic and difficult to implement because the ultras are not organized or framed by law to be dissolved or prevented.⁴⁰

Confronting the unfamiliar by using soft power

The ban lasted for a year, enabling the authorities to regain their breath in the face of a fast-moving rival, rearrange their cards, and think carefully about dealing with the unfamiliar. The direction from which the authority started is to return to a space that enables it to create means in the face of similar entities that lack the characteristics of institutionalization.

The space into which the state withdrew is the space of legislation. The state, in this regard, re-invokes the legislative text represented in Law 09.09 relating to the Criminal Code "in violence committed on the occasion of sports matches or events", in which sentences range from imprisonment for events leading to death to five years and fines of up to 50 thousand dirhams.⁴¹ Using tricks has been a remarkable tool to control ultras. The state, for instance, has been exploiting the gap created by the sharp division between the Green Boys and the Eagles faction in Raja football fans. According to the testimonies of fans who attended the tragic events between the two internal factions of Raja ultras, they were surprised at not being subjected to

³⁶For more information about this tifo see :Amal El-kaida (2015) *Is Alwidad threatened to lose the derby because of "Tifo the Garden"?*, Hespress, link: <https://bit.ly/3Oiiokq>, (Arabic) (visited and checked in 14/06/2022)

³⁷ The supporters of Raja understood the zoo tifo as a devaluation of their entity and a depicted sign of being animals in the zoo.

³⁸ Mohamed Hachlaf (2016), *officiel : le ministre de l'intérieure bannit les ultras*. Telquel press. Link <https://bit.ly/3HeVGHI>, (French) (visited and checked on 10/06/2022)

³⁹ This clash took place between the Eagles and Crane Boys factions in what was known as "black Saturday", for more information see Ali Jawat (2016) *These are the details of what happened on the night of "Black Saturday" between the "Green Boys" and "Eagles"*. Alaoual link: <https://bit.ly/3ttY2MN> (Arabic) visited and checked on: (10/06/2022)

⁴⁰ Ilaria Piti (2018). *Youth and unconventional political engagement*. Palgrave macmilan, chapter 6, p 100, 2018.

⁴¹ Royal Decree No. 1.11.38 issued on Jumada Al-Akhirah 29, 1432 (2 June 2011) implementing Law No. 09.09 relating to Complementing the criminal law.

a routine police security check before any football game. As a result, several individuals succeeded in smuggling sharp weapons into the stadium.⁴²

This method of defending the truth system calls into question the probability of benefiting from divisions to deal with entities that oppose the state project.⁴³ At first glance, it appears that the state is far from this conflict or that it takes the position of ruling outside the scene of the conflict. However, the state is at the heart of the conflict, as it seeks to ensure division between Ultra factions to ensure the truth system's survival and stability.⁴⁴ This plan or strategy, which also takes on a cunning aesthetic character, greatly contributes to the striking of the ultras' collective-aesthetic-protest discourse and highlights a different image of them as groups inciting riots and chaos, threatening the stability of society.

Highlighting the image of riots instead of aesthetic organization has remarkably predominated in media spaces, as some digital press platforms will turn into a tool for creating public opinion calling for the need to confront riots by dissolving the ultras completely and banning all forms of ultras organizations. Consequently, the authority that confronts the ultras has moved from the playing field to other parallel spaces that largely know how to use it in the face of the unfamiliar, spaces in which soft power is used between the use of legislation, the exploitation of division, and the creation of an anti-ultras public opinion.

CONCLUSION

Stadiums in Morocco have become unique sites for expressing collective anger against the predominant political values of the state. The ultras, through their interactions in stadiums, have distributed a new collective aesthetic sense that carries different political views through their banners, tifos, and discourse. This discourse and visual aesthetic images tried to gain ground inside the stadium by freeing the limited space (stadium) and transferring it into a space for the "part who do not have no part". The state, on the other hand, has tirelessly sought to protect its system of truth by directly intervening and therefore using force, or using soft power by accusing ultras of being riot groups who do not respect law and order. This conflict dynamic is still predominating and continuing to escalate between the two actors, especially with the remarkable absence of several mediatory political actors like parties and civil society.

⁴² This clash took place between the Eagles and Crane Boys factions in what was known as "black Saturday", for more information see Ali Jawat (2016) *These are the details of what happened on the night of "Black Saturday" between the "Green Boys" and "Eagles"*. Alaoual link: <https://bit.ly/3ttY2MN> (Arabic) visited and checked on: (10/06/2022).

⁴³ This strategy is an old-new strategy followed by the Moroccan political system that argues that the sacred political body should be obeyed to overcome the chronic divisions within Moroccan society. "Alawist monarchists forcefully claim that in the absence of a leader whose religious standing places him above civil society and its power struggles, divisions between townsfolk and country people, Arabs and Berbers, the bourgeoisie and the populace could break up the nation-state. Supporters of a monarchy of divine right use this argument, based on a particular interpretation of Islamic law and a particular form of allegiance, to underscore the eminent qualities of the ruling family as well as its accomplishments." See Abdellah Hamoudi (1997) *Master and disciple, The cultural foundations of Moroccan authoritarianism*, Chicago Press, P13.

⁴⁴ Abdellah Hamoudi (1997) *Master and disciple, The cultural foundations of Moroccan authoritarianism*, Ibid P13.