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Content analysis of crisis communicative strategies: Tunisian protest vs. anti-Mubarak protest

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Abstract

The paper explores the crisis communicative strategies (CCs) that the former Tunisian president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and the former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, used in response to the protests, which are considered as one of the most critical crises in their reigns. A content analysis was conducted to examine the three speeches each president delivered during the crisis event in order not only to protect their image but also to restore peace and order. The study aimed to address the following questions: What are the crisis response strategies they used to restore their (distorted) image? did these strategies change over the demonstration period? and are they appropriate to the crises? In so doing, the analysis probes the length as well as the number of words and sentences; the framing patterns that have been applied (logical vs. emotional), and the crisis communicative strategies applying Coombs' (1999) communicative strategies model.

Keywords: Content analysis; crisis communicative strategies (CCs); Coombs' (1995) model; rhetorical features; Tunisian protest; and anti-Mubarak protest.

1. Introduction

Broadly speaking, a crisis has the potential to impact the image, credibility, and reputation of any organization (or anyone involved). According to Fink (1986), “[a] crisis is a fluid, unstable, dynamic situation” (qtd. in Howell & Miller, 2010b, p.47). It is, to some extent, ‘unpredictable’; however, it is ‘expected’ (Coombs, 1999, p.2). The nature of the crisis varies; it could be terrorism, strikes, fire, floods, or any other events. Coombs (1999) explains that all crises have different stages, namely pre-crisis, crisis event, and post-crisis (pp.14-16). The present study is concerned with the second stage, i.e., the crisis event, during which communication through words and actions becomes “a critical facet” (p.16). Here, crisis communication refers to the dialogue between the person or the organization involved and the public (Howell & Miller, 2010a, p.23). However, Lagadec (1993) explains, “communicating does not simply mean being able to send messages, it also means being able to receive them” (p.14). Levine (2002) indicates that “the best practice of crisis

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communications is designed to maintain public confidence and [to minimize] damage suffered” (qtd. in Howell & Miller, 2010b, p.48). Hence, it is important that crises are quickly responded to by the party involved as typically “the public will quickly begin to look for a trusted and consistent source of information” (Russell, 2005, p.95).

Benoit’s (1997, 2004) definition of crisis communication best describes the purpose of the study. He defines crisis communication as “discourse to protect and restore the image or reputation of organizations, and examines strategies including denial, evasion of responsibility, corrective actions, and apology that can be effective for image restoration after a crisis” (qtd. in White, 2009, p.177). Approaches used to protect the image and the reputation during a crisis is known as crisis communicative strategies (CCSs, Coombs, 1998). CCSs are the responses the organization or the person involved issues following a crisis (Coombs, 1999, p.114). Famous and powerful figures such as politicians are sometimes involved in, or bring on, a crisis. In mid-December 2010, the (former) Tunisian president confronted a protest, which was launched by many young Tunisian people. By the same token, on the 25th of January 2011, known as the ‘Day of Rage’, which was a result of the Tunisian protest, the (former) president Hosni Mubarak faced one of the most critical crises in his time, namely the anti-Mubarak protest. Protesters in both countries gathered to oppose the presidencies of these two presidents. During these two crises, which have resulted in a number of injuries and deaths, both presidents coincidentally delivered three speeches to manage and end the protests before they were unseated. This study aims at examining the crisis communication discourse of both presidents, through scrutinizing their public speeches as a strategic tool to overcome these crises and restore their image. Although “[c]risis communication research is thriving in today’s world” (Condit, 2006, p.17), “little of the existing CCSs research has been used outside of Western culture” (Huang, Lin, & Su, 2005, p.229). Thus, the current study also aims at extending and enriching current research on crisis communication discourse by probing these speeches as a sample of CCSs from the Middle East.

2. Crisis Communicative Strategies

As Huang, Lin, and Su (2005) put it, “[c]risis communicative strategies are the actual verbal and nonverbal responses an organization uses to address a crisis” (p.230). However, this present study focuses on the verbal responses only employing Coombs’ (1995) model, which examines five strategies and sub-strategies (p.450). The five main strategies are as follows:

1. Nonexistence Strategy: Denial, Clarification, Attack, and Intimidation.
2. Distance Strategy: Excuse (Denial of intention & Denial of volition) and Justification (Minimizing injury, Victim deserving, & Misrepresentation of the crisis event).

3. Ingratiation Strategy: Bolstering, Transcendence, and Praising Others.
4. Mortification Strategy: Remediation, Repentance, and Rectification.
5. Suffering Strategy.

In more detail, the *nonexistence* strategies are to terminate the crisis (Coombs, 1995, p.450). These strategies work on preserving the positive image by arguing that the crisis does not exist and there is no link between this crisis and the person or the organization involved, *per se*. The four nonexistence strategies are *denial*, *clarification*, *attack*, and *intimidation*. Briefly, denial denies the existence of the crisis. In other words, it is to say “nothing happened” (p.450). As for clarification, it stretches out the denial strategy by explaining the reason why there is no crisis. On the other hand, the third strategy, namely ‘attack’, is a hostile strategy that “confronts those who wrongly report that the nonexistent crisis exists” (Coombs, 1995, p.451). Intimidation, which is considered highly violent, implies using power against those who are involved in the alleged crisis (Coombs, 1995, p.451). According to Coombs (1995), lawsuits or physical violence are both forms of intimidation (p.451).

The second strategy is the *distance* strategy through which the crisis is acknowledged while “weakening the linkage between the crisis and the organization [or the person involved]” (p.451). Under this strategy, there are two sub-strategies: *excuse* and *justification*. Excuse requires “minimizing the organization’s responsibility for the crisis” (p.451) through one of two tactics, i.e., denial of intention or denial of volition. Scapegoating is one form of denial of volition. By way of contrast, justification involves “minimizing the damage associated with the crisis” (p.451) through persuading the public that the crisis is not really bad by comparing it to another bad crisis. In addition, the negative consequences of the crisis might be diffused through several techniques, for instance, “denying the seriousness of an injury, claiming that the victims deserved what happened, and claiming that the crisis event has been misrepresented” (p.451).

The *ingratiation* strategy works on obtaining the public approval by linking the organization, or the person involved, to positive aspects that the public appreciate. There are three tactics to ingratiate, namely *bolstering*, *transcendence*, and *praising* others. Bolstering, which is the first sub-category, refers to reminding the public of past positive actions, whereas the transcendence strategy reconstructs the crisis in a positive or more desirable way by abstracting it to divert their attention away from the particulars. The last ingratiation strategy is praising of others in order to “win approval from the target of the praise” (p.452). The praised group will assist in linking the organization or the person to them which, in turn, causes the public to like the praised group to the organization as well.

The fourth strategy, *mortification*, and its sub-strategies seek “forgiveness of the public and to create acceptance for the crisis” (p.452). One of the three mortification strategies, i.e., *remediation*, attempts to offer reimbursement or help for the victims. By doing so, negative attitudes may be weakened. On the other hand, *repentance* is when one asks for forgiveness to lessen the negative feelings especially if the apology is accepted. Last but not least, the third sub-strategy of mortification is *rectification*, which requires action to prevent future recurrence of the crisis, as a way to ask for forgiveness. The unique strategy among the five is the *suffering* strategy, which aims at gaining the public’s sympathy to be linked positively (instead of negatively) to the crisis. According to Coombs (1995), “suffering portrays the organizations as an unfair victim of some malicious, outside entity” (p.453).

According to Coombs (1995), the public’s attitude and the choice of the crisis strategy rely heavily on four factors, namely crisis types, veracity of evidence, damage, and performance history (pp.454-457). He presents the crisis type matrix where there are two dimensions of crisis: external and/or internal, and unintentional and/or intentional. An external unintentional crisis (*faux pas*) is when an unintentional action occurs which an external agent transforms into a crisis whereas an external intentional crisis (terrorism) is an intentional action by an external agent to harm the reputation of an organization or a person. On the other hand, an internal unintentional crisis (accident) is unplanned and random while an internal intentional crisis (transgression) refers to “intentional actions taken by an organization that knowingly place publics at risk or harm” (p.457). The second factor, the veracity of evidence, refers to the proof that the crisis has happened. Such proofs might be true (the crisis happened), false (such as rumors), or ambiguous (“when questions of morality and ethics are involved” (p.458)). The third important and critical factor is damage, which may vary from one crisis to another. The severity and the minority of the damages impact the crisis situation broadly. In addition, performance history, whether it is positive or negative, has a great impact on the public during crisis. Based on these four factors, Coombs (1995) offers a crisis-response strategy selection guideline.

Employing Coombs’ (1995) model to examine the data is bidirectional. That is, it helps to determine the communicative strategies to repair and restore the image in political crisis situations, and at the same time, as noted earlier, it examines the applicability of this model, as a Western frame, to the Middle East crises, more specifically, political crises similar to that in Tunisia and Egypt. It is worth to note that Coombs’ model and other models that examine crisis management discourse do not touch on the reactions of the audience or the effects of the employed strategies;

yet, empirical findings offer a more effective typology of communicative strategies to be utilized during crises (Sheldon, 1999, p.2).

3. Rhetorical Features

With reference to rhetorical and stylistic features, the present study focuses on three features, namely (1) the length of sentences and the number of words per sentence, and (2) framing patterns. The length and the number of sentences refer to the number of words per sentence and per speech (the length of the speech). With reference to structural features, Gylling and Korzen (2001) explain that differences in discourse structure might be manifested in different manners; sentence length is one of these ways (p.2). On the other hand, in terms of framing pattern, Lakoff (1990: 216) explains that persuasion relies on two types of framing patterns or appeals, i.e., emotional and logical/or intellectual (p.216). Emotional (pathos) and logical (logos) patterns as rhetorical appeals that help in investigating the types of argument presented in the data under investigation. "Rhetoric is obviously not only important for argumentation theorists, but for the production, analysis and evaluation of any kind of persuasive discourse" (Larrazabal & Korta, 2006, p.7). Emotional framing pattern attempts to manipulate people with reference to their concerns, empathy, sympathy, and sensibilities (Gottweis 2006: 243). On the contrary, logical framing pattern is dominated by reason, facts, and empirical evidence (p.243). Larrazabal and Korta (2006) further explain that a speaker may put different emphasis on each appeal (p.243). Such persuasive tools are significant in this study because political speech is not informative but rather manipulative and persuasive by nature. In more detail, political speech in general and the data under investigation in particular is considered persuasive because, according to Adegoju (2008), a persuasive message refers to the one which exists between/among two or more opposing viewpoints (p.5). It is worth to note that the success of persuasive messages, according to Rapp (2002), relies heavily on "the emotional dispositions of the audience"; hence, emotions should be aroused in order to change the audience's opinions (n.p.).

4. Contextualization of the Data

As noted earlier, this study conducts a comparative content analysis of the speeches that were delivered by the former presidents during the protests. The following sections present the contextualization of the data under investigation by providing some background information about both protests in both countries, Tunisia and Egypt respectively, which ended by the unseating of both presidents.

4.1 2010-2011 Tunisian Protest

The Tunisian protest, which is considered as the crucial spark in the Middle East that inspired and has been inspiring many people not only in the Middle East but all around the world, began on 17 December 2010. The protests were a result of typical Middle Eastern problems, namely high unemployment, food inflation, corruption, lack of freedom of speech, and poor living conditions. However, this protest was a result of the Mohamed Bouazizi who committed suicide by burning himself in front of the provincial headquarters on December 17, 2010; Mohamed Bouazizi died on January 4, 2011. These protests were a series of rallies, marches, and strikes that began immediately after Bouazizi's suicide. Besides removing the president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, protesters demanded social justice, freedom of speech, end of tyranny and corruption, and other political reformations. During the uprising, the former president delivered three speeches in order to manage this crisis. Yet, in 28 days, on January 14, 2011 the Tunisian protests unseated the president forcing him to flee to Saudi Arabia.

4.2 2011 Anti-Mubarak Protest

The 2011 Egypt anti-Mubarak protest was a series of demonstrations, rallies, and marches that began in Egypt on the 25th of January 2011, the day that correspondences with the National Police Day holiday, and lasted for 18 days. This protest began “with an internet call for freedom, dignity, and democracy” (Savidge, 2011, n.p.). The anti-government protesters' top demand was an immediate end to Mubarak's 30 year presidency and other legislative changes including freedom of speech, democracy, generation of more job opportunities, etc. In addition, these protesters opposed the potentiality of transferring political power directly to Mubarak's son, Jamal. It is noteworthy to mention that Egypt is not a monarchy. Hosni Mubarak, who was the head of the country's ruling National Democratic Party, tried to manage this national crisis. One of the techniques he used was to speak to the public. During the period of the protest, Hosni Mubarak delivered three speeches in an attempt to quell massive protest rallies and protect his image. The anti-Mubarak protest ended by removing Hosni Mubarak from power, which was the main purpose of launching the protest.

5. Data and Methodology

As noted above, the data of the study is comprised the six speeches former presidents, Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, delivered during their anti-residency protests. Ben Ali's first speech was delivered on the 28th of January, 2010, ten days after the crisis. The second and the third speeches were delivered on the first and the tenth of February, 2011 respectively. Similarly, Mubarak delivered his first speech on the 28th of January, 2011, the fourth day of the protest. The second speech was on

the 1st of February, 2011 and the third speech was on the 10th of February. The six speeches appear in the appendices (A, B, C, D, E, and F respectively).

A quantitative content analysis is conducted to cover the various crisis communicative strategies of all the speeches. Content analysis helps “determine trends or patterns in the media (Weber, 1985), which added a dimension to the qualitative data by allowing the researcher to quantify and identify issues through an objective and unbiased process” (White, 2009, p.182). In addition, the content analysis covers structural and rhetorical features, namely the length and the number of the sentences of the speeches, as well as the different framing patterns that were employed by both presidents respectively. In so doing, the current study aims to address the following questions: What are the crisis response strategies both presidents used during the demonstration to restore their (distorted) image? Did the crisis response strategies change over the demonstration period? Are the selected strategies appropriate to the crisis and its aspects?

6. Quantitative Content Analysis

6.1 Rhetorical Features

As noted earlier, the three speeches of each former president, which were delivered during the crisis event, are examined in the current study as being a strategic tool to manage the crisis. Table 1 below presents a rough quantitative overview of the selected features of the six speeches under investigation. Hatim and Munday (2004) point out that sentence length plays a stylistic and functional role (p.24). The table shows that the total words of the first speech of Ben Ali are 613, including 23 sentences. The average of sentence mean length is 24.52. By way of contrast, the total words of Mubarak speech are 711, including 35 sentences, with an average length of 20.31. The second speech of Ben Ali, on the other hand, consists of 1073 words, including 34 sentences, with an average length of 31.55.

Table 1: Average of Number of words and Sentence length

Speech	President	Date	No. of Words	No. of Sentences	Words Per Sentence
1 st speech	Ben Ali	28 th of Dec.	613	23	24.52
	Mubarak	28 th of Jan.	711	35	20.31
2 nd speech	Ben Ali	10 th of Jan.	1073	34	31.55
	Mubarak	1 st of Feb.	728	32	22.75
3 rd speech	Ben Ali	13 th of Jan.	748	29	25.79
	Mubarak	10 th of Feb.	1175	35	33.57

As for Mubarak's second speech, the total number of words is 728, including 32 sentences, with an average of 22.75. The total number of words in Ben Ali's third speech is 748, including 29

sentences, with an average length of 25.79. On the other hand, Mubarak's third speech consists of 1175 words, including 35 sentences, with an average length of 33.57. Barnes (1974) points out that there is "a tendency at the peak of a narrative discourse for the sentence or sentences to be long" (p.4). Hence, the sentences in the first and the third speeches by Ben Ali and the first and the second speeches by Mubarak were considerably shorter than the second speech by Ben Ali and the third speech by Mubarak. Their complex sentences may imply that the sentences are grammatically complex as well. The lengthy sentences encode complex thoughts and demonstrate that the speakers have not presented their ideas succinctly. In other words, it is apparent that both presidents presented their ideas focusing on more details which could be of interest to the audience.

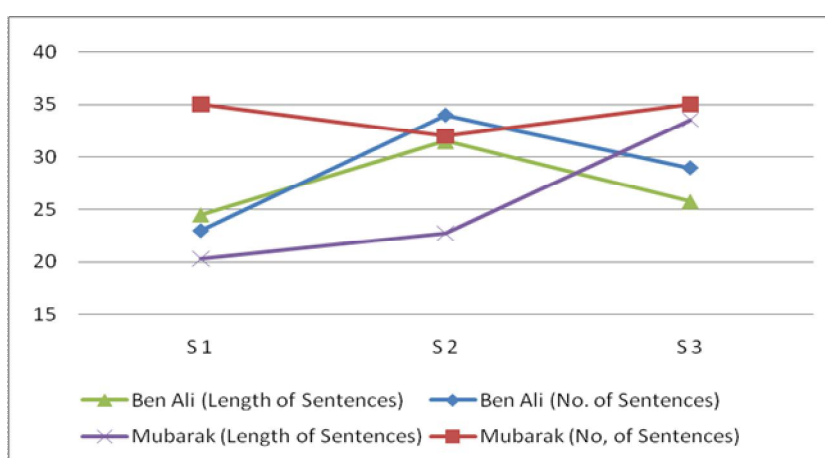


Fig. 1 Comparison of the Distribution Curves for the No. and the Length of Sentences

Setting a comparison between the distribution curves of the length of sentences of the three speeches of Ben Ali and those of Mubarak shows significant differences. In respect to the curve of Ben Ali's speeches, it is apparent that the length and the number of sentences rises to a peak of 31.55 and 34 respectively in the second speech; then both curves declines sharply to reach a point where they nearly began (25.79 and 29 respectively). In other words, both curves show similar trends of rising and declining. By way of contrast, Mubarak's three speeches show different trends concerning the length and the number of sentences. Unlike the curve of the number of sentences of the three speeches which continues to increase (sharply) through the period of the crisis event, the curve of the length of the sentences of Mubarak's speeches fluctuates. It declines relatively in the second speech, but then in the third speech it rises again to reach the same point where it starts from in the first speech. Although the number of sentences of Mubarak's second speech decreases, the length of sentences increases. This may show that the speech and its ideas become more complicated and the speaker attempts to explain his ideas in more detail. From these different trends, we may conclude that Ben Ali ceases to convince the public by speaking briefly with fewer

details. On the other hand, Mubarak continues to explain in more detail during the crisis to convince the public of his plans and strategies to solve their problems until he was unseated.

Regarding the frames employed in these speeches, two frames have been identified: the logical frame vs. the emotional frame. Table 2 below shows the frequency of each frame in the selected speeches. From the table and the figure above, it is notable that the emotional framing pattern is most frequently applied by both speakers in their three speeches. However, there are a number of significant differences between the two speakers.

Table 2: Frequency of Logical and Emotional Frames

Speeches	Ben Ali				Mubarak			
	Logical		Emotional		Logical		Emotional	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
First Speech	6	26	12	34	1	3	32	94
Second Speech	13	38	17	53	9	28	24	83
Third Speech	10	34	19	54	9	26	25	71

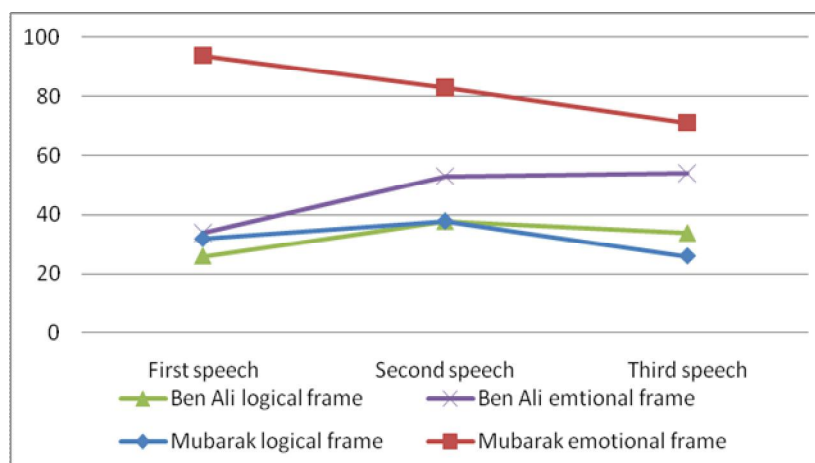


Fig. 2 Percentages of Logical vs. Emotional Framing Patterns

Mubarak's three speeches were highly emotional compared to Ben Ali's. Yet, the percentage of the emotional framing pattern decreases sharply after the first speech; meanwhile, the logical framing pattern increases considerably after the first speech and then decreases slightly in the third speech. By way of contrast, in Ben Ali's speeches, different trends are identified. By and large, Ben Ali's speeches are considerably less emotional than Mubarak's, especially the first one. Unlike Mubarak's speeches, the emotional framing pattern increases significantly in Ben Ali's speeches through the crisis event period. Yet, the increase in the third speech is not as substantial as the second speech. In addition, the increase of the logical framing pattern is fairly significant in the second speech; nevertheless, it decreases slightly in the third speech. In short, the emotional framing pattern prevails in the data, which may explain how the two former presidents dealt with the crises. That is,

they attempted to manipulate people emotionally to persuade people and change the public's opinion.

Regarding the language of the speeches, it is worth to mention that Ben Ali's first two speeches are in classical Arabic; on the contrary, the third speech is in the Tunisian Arabic local dialect. It is apparent that Ben Ali attempted to get closer to the Tunisian people in his third speech by speaking their dialect. On the other hand, Mubarak's three speeches are in classical Arabic. The following sections are devoted to the analysis of the crisis communicative strategies which were employed by both speakers in their speeches.

6.2 CCSs of Ben Ali vs. Mubarak

"The most challenging part of crisis communication management is reacting - with the right response - quickly" (Lukaszewski, 1998, n.p.). According to Coombs (1999), the first public response to a crisis should be "quick, consistent, open, sympathetic, and informative" (p.114) because "[the] first impressions are everlasting and must be handled with care" (Maresh, 2006, p.61). Coombs (1999) explains, a quick and prompt response helps in representing the party involved as being in control, which, in turn, entails credibility (p.114). Hence, an immediate quick response shows to the public that a crisis is controlled by a credible organization or party (Coombs, 1999, p.114). Ben Ali's initial response to the public occurred on the 28th of December, i.e., 10 days after the crisis, in a form of a public speech. As for Mubarak, his initial response to the public occurred on the 28th of January, i.e., 3 days after the crisis, in a form of a public speech as well. As Lukaszewski (1999) put it, "[n]on-behavior or inappropriate behavior leads to spin, not communication. In emergencies, it's the non-action and the resulting spin that cause embarrassment, humiliation, prolonged visibility, and unnecessary litigation" (n.p.). Apparently, Ben Ali failed to respond to the crisis swiftly; on the other hand, Mubarak responded within three days. Although his speech was delayed by three days, his initial response was quicker than Ben Ali's. Needless to say, there are other factors, such as crisis communicative strategies, that are more crucial than a quick response to guarantee a successful and effective crisis communication.

As Coombs (1995) explains, the choice of the suitable crisis communicative strategies depends on some factors, i.e., crisis types, veracity of evidence, damage, and performance history (for more detail, see section 2). In terms of type, both of them are internal and, many believe, they are intentional regarding corruption and the lack of democracy and freedom of speech. Hence, both crises are considered to be as a form of transgression. The second factor, namely the veracity of evidence, varies. Regarding the lack of democracy, freedom of speech, and unemployment

problems, the proofs are true; hence, there is a crisis. On the other hand, concerning corruption of these two former presidents, i.e., the questions of their morality and ethics, the proofs might be ambiguous. Yet, in these two countries a crisis definitely took place, and the two presidents did not deny corruption. On the contrary, they offered solutions and plans to solve such problems. As for the third factor, the damages in these two countries are considered severe by the people of these two nations who had been suffering from a number of social and financial problems. Last but not least, concerning the last factor, namely performance history, it seems that the people had not been satisfied or happy with it; hence, they demanded and asked for change. In short, the performance history of both former presidents is (to some extent) negative, from the perspective of both nations.

Based on the previous analysis, both presidents, according to Coombs (1995), are supposed to employ mortification (p. 467) as the best strategy. However, facing public oppositions and protesters who demanded ending their presidency, Ben Ali and Mubarak appear to pursue a number of strategies besides mortification to restore their image. The use of these different strategies varied from one speech to another. The following table shows the frequency of these various strategies that have been employed by both presidents in each speech.

Table 3: Frequency of CCSs in the data

Strategy	Sub-strategy	Ben Ali			Mubarak		
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Nonexistence	Intimidation	4%	3%	-	-	-	-
Distance	Excuse (denial of volition)	-	-	3%	3%	-	-
	Justification (minimizing injury)	-	-	-	3%	-	-
Ingratiation	Bolstering	-	3%	3%	-	13%	14%
	Transcendence	26%	3%	-	9%	6%	-
	Praising	-	-	-	6%	-	11%
Mortification	Remediation	-	-	-	-	-	6%
	Repentance	-	-	-	-	-	6%
	Rectification	4%	32%	24%	11%	31%	26%
Suffering		9%	15%	-	6%	6%	6%

From Table 3, it is notable that Ben Ali, in his three speeches, employed the following strategies: a nonexistence sub-strategy, namely intimidation; a distance sub-strategy: excuse (denial of volition); ingratiation strategies (bolstering and transcendence); a mortification sub-strategy (rectification); and the suffering strategy. The first and most employed strategy is rectification. In the three speeches, Ben Ali focused primarily on corrective actions (rectification), which was fluctuating during the crisis event (4%, 32%, and 24% respectively). On the other hand, the following strategies appear in two speeches only (the first and the second): intimidation (7%), transcendence

(29%), and suffering (24%). The other strategy that was utilized in the second and the third speeches is bolstering (6%). It is noteworthy that denial of violation (3%) was applied only once, more specifically in the last speech.

On the other hand, Mubarak's speeches show different trends employing the following strategies: two distance sub-strategies: excuse (denial volition) and justification (minimizing injury); ingratiation strategies (bolstering, transcendence, and praising); the three mortification sub-strategies (remediation, repentance, and rectification); and the suffering strategy. As Ben Ali did, Mubarak continued employing rectification strategies in the three speeches with various wavering frequencies (11%, 31%, and 26%). However, unlike Ben Ali, Mubarak did not employ any nonexistence strategies. Furthermore, he used praising in two of his speeches (6% and 11%), a strategy that Ben Ali did not employ at all in any of his speeches. Mubarak praised the individuals who started the protests in an attempt to win their approval and the public's as well. In addition, he employed the suffering strategy in all of his three speeches to represent himself as the victim and to misrepresent the purposes of the protest simultaneously. Moreover, in order to restore his distorted image, Mubarak employed two distance sub-strategies, namely denial of volition and minimizing injury (6%) in the first speech. Remediation (6%) and repentance (6%) were employed once; more specifically, they were employed in the third speech. The other three strategies were employed in two speeches: bolstering in the second (13%) and the third (14%) speeches; and transcendence in the first (9%) and the second (6%) speeches.

In terms of frequency, Ben Ali employed fewer strategies than Mubarak. That is, Ben Ali utilized six strategies in his three speeches, with an average of three strategies at least in each speech. By way of contrast, Mubarak employed nine strategies, with an average of four strategies at least in each speech.

7. Discussion

First and foremost, the initial response of Ben Ali does not follow the guidelines given by Coombs. That is, it was not quick, sympathetic, or informative based on the above-detailed summary. In his first speech, Ben Ali employed intimidation (4%), which Coombs (1995) considers as being highly violent. By the same token, the emotional framing pattern was kept to the minimum. Hence, it seems that Ben Ali failed to show his people that he is a credible president who sympathizes with them and can control this crisis at the same time. Furthermore, Ben Ali might embarrass himself and his government as well with his silence that lasted for ten days. By way of contrast, Mubarak

may, to some extent, illustrate more credibility than Ben Ali by responding in three days with a speech in which the emotional framing pattern, amongst the three, was the most prevailing.

As noted earlier, each president utilized a number of strategies during the crisis event, and these strategies varied from one speech to another. As Table 3 shows, some differences in the choice of the strategies are notable among the three speeches of each president and between the two presidents as well. Based on the analysis above, it is clear that Ben Ali's second speech seems to be the most crucial one. That is, he used five strategies including bolstering, increased the use of rectification and suffering, and on the other hand, decreased the use of intimidation and transcendence. In this speech, the logical framing pattern was most frequently employed in which he suggested corrective actions showing himself as being a victim. In addition, this is evident in the other factors analyzed in section 6.1. That is, the sentences were the longest and the most complicated among the three speeches. After this speech, i.e., the third speech, it is noticeable that the length and the number of sentences and the frequency of the logical framing pattern decreased. This is also clear in the decrease of the number and the frequency of the strategies as well as his discontinued use of some strategies such as intimidation, transcendence, and suffering; and the substantial increase of the emotional framing pattern in the last speech.

By way of contrast, based on the analysis of Mubarak's speeches, it seems that the most pivotal speeches are the first and the third speeches in which Mubarak employed six strategies variously. The most frequent strategies in these two speeches are rectification, praising, and suffering respectively in which he tried to suggest corrective actions, link himself to the favored group, namely the protesters, and connect himself positively to the crisis by reconstructing himself as a victim of a conspiracy. In these two speeches, the logical framing pattern dominated, and his sentences were the longest and the most complicated, let alone the large number of the sentences. However, it is noteworthy that the last speech was simultaneously significant and critical. That is, Mubarak significantly used remediation and repentance equally to lessen the negative attitude of his protesters while increasing the frequency of bolstering and parsing instances.

According to Coombs (1995), the most successful strategy in such cases is rectification, which was utilized most frequently and continuously by both presidents through the crisis event, specifically in the second speeches. The rectification strategy has compromised 60% of all the strategies employed by Ben Ali and 68% of Mubarak's speeches. This mortification strategy of rectification, i.e., corrective actions, correlated with the aim of their speeches. To be more precise, it served as a multi-strategic to provide solutions, admit indirectly the existence of the crisis, and the involvement

of both former presidents, and to ask for forgiveness in an implicit manner. Through this strategy, the former presidents showed their people their insistence to solve the problems and informed them about the necessary and substantial solutions they intended to take to avoid such a crisis in the future, in an attempt to protect their image.

Crisis communicative strategies of ingratiation were also present in the three speeches of each president. However, they were more frequently used by Mubarak as opposed to Ben Ali. It is noteworthy to mention that the bolstering strategy is ineffective in the cases presented in this analysis, due to the demands of the public to unseat the presidents as well as the negative previous performances of both presidents, which were not good enough to change the public's opinion. Similarly, Be Ali's use of intimidation was not effective either. On the contrary, it apparently caused more damage to his image rather than restoring it. Furthermore, both presidents expressed their sympathy for those who lost members of their families in the protests as a result of the brutality of the army indicating they would take legal action necessary to make up for their loss through the use of the remediation strategy.

In short, nonexistence, distance, and suffering strategies attempt to influence the public's opinion regarding the crisis. By way of contrast, the mortification and ingratiation strategies attempt to replace the negative impression with a positive one (Coombs, 1995, p.453). Hence, another salient finding is that both former presidents attempted to replace the negative feelings with a more positive one rather than changing public opinion. That is, both former presidents employed mortification and ingratiation in the three speeches (Ben Ali- 30%, 38%, and 27%, Mubarak- 26%, 50%, and 63% respectively) more frequently than the other three strategies, i.e., nonexistence, distance, and suffering (Ben Ali- 13%, 18%, and 3%, whereas Mubarak- 2%, 6%, and 6% respectively). Yet, it seems that both of them failed to control the crises and protect their image. Hypothetically speaking, if they had tried to change the public opinion, it would have been more successful.

8. Conclusion

By and large, crisis communicative strategies assist in protecting reputations and restoring image, but they do not guarantee the success of the communication itself. Heath (2011) explains, "[c]ommunication effectiveness is judged on its ability to satisfy the needs of the public" (Howell & Miller, 2010b, p.53). Thus, it seems that Ben Ali and Mubarak's communications are not effective enough to persuade the public and satisfy their needs. Both presidents were unseated after their third speech.

By analyzing the effectiveness of the crisis communicative strategies used in the cases under investigation, this study sought to enrich our understanding of crisis communication in general and political crisis communication in particular, specifically in the Middle East. Special consideration should be given to political crises and the need for additional research to define and specify appropriate strategies in dealing with the public successfully and effectively.

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Appendices

1. Ben Ali's Speeches

- A. The First Speech delivered on the 28th of December, 2010
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYUN1IIabo8&feature=related>
- B. The Second Speech delivered on the 10th of January, 2011
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITEPZNVAYtI&feature=related>
- C. The Third Speech delivered on the 13th of January, 2011
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybMfTIdPXbk&feature=related>

2. Mubarak's Speeches

- D. The First Speech delivered on the 28th of January
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WR_KbiIeqT8&feature=related
- E. The Second Speech delivered on the 1st of February
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_T8GJ0s5o&feature=related
- F. The Third Speech delivered on the 10th of February
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqIt9kCmqUM>