

Protest, Repression and the Intergenerational Origins of Activism:
Morocco's (Almost) Revolutionaries

Preliminary Draft: Please Do Not Circulate or Cite without Author Permission

April 5, 2013

Adria Lawrence
Department of Political Science
Yale University
adria.lawrence@yale.edu

Introduction

February 19, 2012. Several hundred protesters gather in front of Bab al-Had. Carrying signs and flags, they move up Rabat's wide central boulevard, taking up a position on the grassy square in front of the parliament. Families strolling up and down the boulevard glance over at the protest; at Café Balima across the street, customers on the terrace sipping tea or coffee look up briefly, before going back to their newspapers and conversations. It is the first anniversary of Morocco's February 20th movement (M20), and the number of participants is much smaller than it was one year ago – there might be a thousand people, but probably less. “There are almost as many mukhabarat here as there are demonstrators,” a Moroccan colleague tells me, nodding his head at several men in the crowd who are wearing dark suits and scribbling notes. They appear to be recording the slogans and signs: “Justice and dignity for Morocco!” “The people want an end to corruption!” The note-takers serve as a reminder of the consequences of slogans that go too far; members of the M20 have recently been arrested for statements made on Facebook and in public. Riot policemen, shields ready, line the street, ready to make arrests as needed. The protesters loudly affirm their commitment to return until change is achieved. After a few speeches, the protest breaks up. – Author's field notes.

What motivates those who initiate protests against authoritarian regimes? What distinguishes committed revolutionaries, the “first movers,” from those who follow their lead? A number of social movement scholars have described the dynamics that lead people to join demonstrations, creating protest cascades and waves. Yet the reasons why some people are willing to organize protests in the first place are poorly understood. In the example above, the core activists of the February 20th movement (M20) not only organized the mass demonstrations that erupted in Morocco in early 2011, they also continued to mobilize even after the protest wave had crested and participation had fallen. Despite increasing regime surveillance and retaliation, they are still carrying out protests. The behavior of first movers is puzzling; unlike most people, they engage in contentious action when the risks are high and the probability of success seems low.

To address this puzzle, this paper examines first movers and collective action during the Arab Spring in Morocco. The case of Morocco provides an opportunity to gain leverage over the question of first mover participation; first movers are identifiable because the movement did not

build an enduring mass following or alter the structure of the regime. In this context, it is possible to compare first movers to those whose participation is conditional on many others participating, and non-participants. In contrast, in places where collective action produced sustained mass mobilization, two difficulties arise: it can be challenging to identify non-participants or late-movers and it can be difficult to discern the initial motives of first movers, whose accounts may be affected by their later success. Indeed, it is difficult to know whether their participation is endogenous to their expectation of success. In Morocco, both participants and non-participants are willing to be identified as such and to analyze their decision-making process. Given declining participation, core activists are eager to identify the limits on participation and are open about how and why they began to engage in challenging the regime.

I argue that the regime's use of repression affects participation in collective action. Specifically, I make two arguments about the effects of repression on first movers in Morocco and their networks. First, I show that first movers often come from families that have suffered a human rights violation at the hands of the regime. A family history of regime repression increases a person's willingness to engage in risky collective action. Second, I find that contemporary repression is likewise counterproductive; information about the regime's efforts to repress protests produces increased support for protest among first movers and their networks. Repression thus has effects over the long- and short-term. Decades-old human rights violations can serve to motivate later generations to confront the regime, even when most are unwilling to do so. Repressing first movers can then generate sympathy and support for anti-regime protests among those networked to them.

These findings contribute to existing debates about the effects of repression on contentious politics. Prior studies have emphasized the role that fear plays in deterring ordinary

citizens from taking to the streets in authoritarian regimes; the threat of repression is typically considered to worsen the collective action problem.¹ Yet repression is also known to anger people and potentially make them more willing to incur the risks and costs associated with challenging the state. Disentangling its effects has proven empirically challenging. This study addresses the crippling endogeneity problem that often confronts studies of repression through the use of two strategies: focusing on repression that occurred in the distant past and thus has little to do with contemporary social movement activity, and using experimental evidence.

The paper represents a first cut at analyzing these arguments using data from the Moroccan case. I proceed as follows. Section 1 briefly reviews the collective action literature on first movers and repression. Section 2 considers why first movers organized the collective protests that erupted in Morocco in 2011. This section draws on both qualitative and quantitative data, including: participant observation with the Rabat M20; interviews with core activists, other participants, and non-activists, on-line engagement via Facebook; and an on-line Facebook survey of activists and their networks. Section 3 reports on an experiment embedded in the Facebook survey. The experimental evidence provides support for the claim that repression carried out during the Arab spring protests triggered further support for protest.

1. Leadership and Repression in Studies of Collective Action [section incomplete]

The literature on social movements and protest is extensive, yet there are few systematic investigations into the first movers who lead the movements.² Most accounts focus on how and whether first movers are able to mobilize a base of supporters; while leaders play an important role in these accounts, their own reasons for mobilizing are typically not examined (see Tarrow

¹ Formalized in Olson (1971).

² Barker, Johnson, and Lavalette (2001) note the dearth of analysis of social movement leaders. Leaders are discussed in biographies and examinations of what makes a good leader; see, for example, Nye (2008)

1994). McAdam (1999, 13; 47) states that the importance of leaders is a matter of common sense; against prior accounts that see the origins of movements in the personal pathologies of participants who are socially marginal, he argues that social movement leaders are typically well integrated into their communities and already involved in existing organizations prior to organizing collective action. Accounts of other social movements support the view that leaders are often already involved and experienced (see, for example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 52–63; Staggenborg 1994). In these accounts, the availability of leaders is a theoretical presupposition.

Leaders of social movements, particularly in authoritarian contexts, may have personal characteristics that set them apart from other people. Their emotions, sense of injustice, courage, or altruism may differentiate them from most people.³ They may particularly enjoy the “pleasure of agency” (Wood 2003). These explanations suggest that some people are exceptional; few reasons are given for why they possess these characteristics and what makes them exceptional. Alternatively, leaders may be “political entrepreneurs” who stand to gain from organizing collective action; their leadership may bring them power or resources (see Popkin 1989; Schneider and Teske 1992). Selective incentives may accrue solely to leaders, thereby providing them with a rational incentive to lead. Yet in authoritarian settings, it is difficult to see how such selective incentives could offset the significant risks that leaders of anti-regime groups face.

Indeed, contentious politics in authoritarian settings is particularly difficult to explain. Authoritarian regimes demand the appearance of loyalty and attempt to foreclose public expressions of opposition to the regime; people are forced to hide their true feelings about the

³ Lynch (2011, 304) notes the courage of the early movers in Egypt’s Revolution. Fehr and Gächter (2002) show that people are willing to pay a cost to punish those who behave badly; though in their experiments, ordinary people and not just leaders engage in altruistic punishment. On emotions and collective action, see the review by Jasper (2011); see also Petersen (2002).

regime (Kuran 1991; Wedeen 1999). In Kuran's (1991) model, two factors affect participation in anti-regime protest: the psychological cost to an individual of hiding his true feelings about the regime, and the number of others who are already participating. Kuran's model helps to account for cascade dynamics, whereby once some protestors have taken to the streets, others feel secure enough to join, generating large numbers of participants and potentially a revolution.⁴ Using this model as a guide, the first movers would appear to be those for whom preference falsification bears a high cost – they are willing to protest even when few others are doing so. A remaining question is why preference falsification is so onerous for first movers that they are willing to overlook their personal safety; this question is causally prior to Kuran's argument. First movers appear to be less sensitive than most people to the costs and risks of collective action, either due to prior experiences, as I will argue here, or because risk-takers simply constitute a small minority of any population.

These studies suggest that fear of repression deters individuals from challenging the regime. Regime repression is a cost that potential challengers have to bear. Most of the time, repression makes taking to the streets too risky for citizens of authoritarian regimes. Yet repression is not always associated with compliance. A number of studies have linked repression of peaceful protest to violence.⁵ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, 69) suggest that repression has diverse effects; it can stiffen resistance on the part of threatened communities and radicalize moderates, or it can or it can discourage mobilization and isolate social movement actors. Thus, although the prospect of repression is often said to reduce the likelihood of collective action, repression can be used to justify both action and inaction. Evaluating its effects empirically can be difficult, since repression is endogenous to revolt and it can be difficult to know whether

⁴ On cascades and waves of protest in authoritarian regimes, see also Beissinger (2002) and Lohmann (1994).

⁵ For examples, see Cunningham and Beaulieu (2010); Davenport (2007); Della Porta (1995); Hibbs (1973); Lawrence (2010), among others.

repression prompted revolt or vice versa. Prior studies have produced contradictory findings. In the next sections, I suggest that abusing citizens' rights is risky for the state and can encourage resistance.

2. Morocco's First Movers

On February 20, 2011, thousands of Moroccans took to the streets to demand democratic freedoms and dignity, though they did not seek to overthrow the monarchy. The 2011 protests grew for several months, before contracting after the king proposed limited reform. Starting from July 2011, participation shrank; most Moroccans waited for change to come from within existing institutions.

Nabil, a blogger and member of M20, helped organize the first protest.⁶ He describes the atmosphere on the eve of the march:

About twenty of us spent the night before the march downtown, at the headquarters of the l'Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (AMDH). We went over logistics. And we wondered what would happen the next day. The state had announced on television that the march was canceled, and had attempted to discredit those of us organizing the march. They said that we were atheists and supporters of the Polisario. I had no idea what the morning would bring. Would anyone show up? Would we arrive only to be immediately arrested? I tell you, we did not sleep. In the morning, it was raining, and we all said, there it goes, no one will show up now. But it cleared up at around 10am, and then little by little, the crowd grew. I was so surprised that we succeeded. I never thought that we'd get Moroccans out in 60 towns. 60 towns! The next day, we went back to the AMDH headquarters and convened our first General Assembly to plan our strategy.⁷

Nabil's account emphasizes the uncertainty facing first movers; they hoped for success, but they feared poor turnout. There was no way to estimate participation in advance. It took courage both to plan the event and to show up the next day. The protest could have been limited to the small network of activists, leaving them vulnerable to arrest. Even if the likelihood of a

⁶ All names are pseudonyms to protect subjects' anonymity.

⁷ Interview, Rabat, February 10, 2012. Interviews were conducted in Moroccan *derija* or French.

particularly violent reaction was low, surely Nabil and his companions had other ways to spend their time; they did not need to personally absorb the costs of collective action. What led them to act?

Like the Arab Spring protests in Egypt and elsewhere, the protests that erupted in Morocco on February 20th built on prior collective action.⁸ After King Hassan II died in 1999, his son, King Mohammed VI, declared that the “years of lead” were over and he created the “Equity and Reconciliation Commission” to look into the abuses of his father’s regime.⁹ He dismissed Driss Basri, Hassan II’s right hand man for several decades; as the Minister of the Interior, Basri was responsible for carrying out repression against dissidents and protestors. Mohamed VI proclaimed a new dawn with a more tolerant political environment. Political freedoms such as the right to protest or to free speech were not guaranteed, however, and the regime used a variety of tools to harass the emerging independent press and civil society associations. Still, an active civil society sector began to emerge. Street protests, which occurred rarely during the Hassan II era, were visible on a regular basis, though they did not target the monarchy. Unemployed university graduates, for example, have demonstrated in the capital every Friday since 2005; a few of them self-immolated in the mid 2000s.

Protests in Tunisia prompted a number of different actors and organizations to come together and organize collectively. By the time President Ben Ali left Tunisia, many Moroccan first movers had already been participating on a Facebook page, “Young Moroccans debate with the King,” discussing the economy, inequality, and the exercise of power in Morocco.¹⁰ They decided to stage a sit-in in front of the parliament to express solidarity with the Tunisian people.

⁸ See El-Ghobashy (2011) on civil society and the history of street protest prior to the Egyptian revolution.

⁹ Note that members of the commission were not given access to any of the regime’s secret service files, but were only permitted to look into incidents already publicly known (personal communication, member of the commission).

¹⁰ Interview, 2/2/2012. The discussion was not, in fact, with the king.

“But we started to ask ourselves, if it happened in Tunisia, why not here?” one organizer stated.¹¹ They moved to organize a nation-wide protest.

Mobilization took place on-line and in person. A group of young people put together a recruitment video to announce the protest; in it, individual Moroccans from a variety of backgrounds looked into the camera and explained why they would take action on February 20th. The video went viral on YouTube.¹² The movement brought together groups who previously had distinct agendas: human rights organizations like the AMDH, leftists (including small political parties, like the Parti Socialiste Unifié and La Voie Démocratique), Islamists from the banned *Justice and Charity* group, committed secularists like the members of MALI (Mouvement Alternatif pour les Libertés Individuelles), the Amazigh (Berber) movement, and some cadres of the organization of unemployed graduates.¹³ Given that the causes these groups espoused were so diverse (even, at times, contradictory), the demands were kept simple: by February 14th, the organizers had agreed that the platform would call for a democratic constitution and a new parliament. The core demand was “democratic freedom now” (*hurriyya demokratiyya elaan*).

Many of the organizers of the February 20th movement were thus already seeking to challenge the authoritarian status quo when the Arab Spring began. They already belonged to civil society organizations and had mobilized before the examples of Tunisia and Egypt provided a propitious opportunity for mass collective action. How, then, did they get involved in

¹¹ Interview, 12/2012.

¹² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZm750joM0U>.

¹³ Interview, 12/12/2011. These core groups were joined by women’s organizations, artists, and established political parties such as the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) and the Party of Justice and Development (PJD) for the very first protest on February 20th; but these groups pulled back their participation after the king announced plans for constitutional reforms.

contentious politics? Why were they ready and willing to seize the moment when most Moroccans regarded politics with apathy?

I considered these questions during field research in Morocco from September 2011-March 2012. I carried out ethnographic research, participating in the activities of the M20 during that period and I conducted approximately 50 interviews, primarily in Rabat. I also engaged in on-line discussions with activists and their critics.

Prior studies of social movements have been criticized for selecting only movement participants, but it can be difficult to identify and recruit non-participants. Even the most wildly successful social movements typically only turn out a small fraction of the underlying population; it is thus difficult to know what the right counterfactual group is. A random sample of Moroccans, for instance, would likely include a large number of people who not only have not participated in a social movement, they have not considered doing so and have had few opportunities to join.¹⁴ This group differs from first movers along multiple dimensions and does not provide the right counterfactual from a theoretical standpoint. To understand participation in contentious politics, the most relevant group of non-participants are those with the potential to mobilize.

For my interviews, I sought to compare committed activists, those who acted first in the context of the Arab Spring, to “likely participants.” In other words, I sought to speak with non-participants who were as similar as possible to participants, apart from their decision not to join the movement. From prior scholarship, we know that networks are crucial for mobilization; most people join a political movement via their networks (Gould 1991; Petersen 1993; McAdam 1999, 44). Yet not everyone in a network participates. I interviewed members of the M20 along

¹⁴ Indeed, in working with a local academic on a national survey, I was told that I should expect that many Moroccans, particularly those in rural areas, would be unaware of the existence of the February 20th movement and would know little about protest in Morocco in 2011.

with people in their networks – their friends, classmates, and colleagues. These people were aware of the movement and its goals, they heard the appeals to mobilize, and they had personal connections to activists. They came from similar backgrounds, studied in the same programs, and worked together. Using activist networks, I ended up with three kinds of actors: core activists, participants who attended a few protests, and non-participants.

During interviews, I asked participants to describe how and why they became politically active. As the interviews proceeded, I noticed an apparent pattern: among core activists, many came from families who had previously suffered abuse at the hands of the regime. Imane, for instance, is the daughter of a political prisoner. Her father was arrested in the mid 2000s, ostensibly for terrorism. Imane became politically active to secure his release; she joined a human rights organization where she met others who would form the M20. She was, as she put it, “a direct victim of despotism.”¹⁵ For many others, the abuse came during the Hassan II regime. Nabil’s father, for example, was a political prisoner for five years during the 1970s.

Interviews pointed to two related mechanisms linking a family history of political repression to activism: socialization and reduced fear of the regime. First, activists with family members who had a history of opposing the regime grew up in an environment in which risky contentious political action was admirable. The suffering of their families at the hands of the regime was part of a family narrative about the nature of the regime and the value of opposing it. Their family experience served as an initiation into political opposition. Meriam’s father was a trade unionist who opposed Hassan II in the early 1970s. When her father died four years ago, “it was my turn to take up the fight,” she said. She joined a group seeking rights for women and homosexuals, and later became a core member of the M20.¹⁶ Younes similarly attributes his

¹⁵ Interview, 1/22/12.

¹⁶ Interview February 13, 2012.

activism to his family: “I was raised to be a militant,” he said. Numerous members of his family have fought for Amazigh [commonly known as Berber] cultural rights since the 1967 rural revolt, which Hassan II put down brutally, even, Younes claimed, using sexual violence against Berber women. Relatives of his were repressed at this time. Younes joined a group for Amazigh rights in middle school; now he says his primary identification is with the M20 and its pro-democracy platform.¹⁷ Brahim too said that activism, “runs in his family.” Their accounts portray a family environment in which contentious politics is viewed as dangerous, but in part in virtue of the danger, valuable and important. Apathy is not respected; risk-taking is.

In contrast, occasional participants and non-participants lacked this imperative to be politically active. Kamal, age 24 and a journalism student, participated in several of the large protests in 2011. He thinks protest is an effective tool that can produce change and he shares the M20’s views. In fact he favors a republic, though he acknowledges this goal as unrealistic. His political opinions differ little from the core activists, but his commitment does, “I go when I can. I have other things I need to do.” He describes himself as well-informed, a follower of the news and blogs and said he would definitely attend a “big demonstration.”¹⁸ Similarly, Mohammed is a self-described secular leftist. He attended three protest events, along with his friends from the university, but calls himself a non-participant. He agrees with the M20’s goals, but thinks they are too inexperienced and lack a coherent strategy. He doubts they can achieve real change. Hussein agreed, saying, “Probably nothing will come of these protests. Besides, I’m lazy.”¹⁹ These respondents did not have political prisoners in the family. Indeed, none of the non-participants I met recounted a family history of abuse at the hands of the regime.

¹⁷ Interview, February 7, 2012.

¹⁸ Interview, December 12, 2012.

¹⁹ Interview, November 2012.

Not all core activists had family histories of repression, but interestingly, those who did not reported a greater sense of fear at the outset of mobilization. To take one example, Mounia studies economics at the University in Rabat; in her hometown, she had been a member of a women's rights organization. Friends of hers from the university helped organize the February 20th protest. She was asked if she was willing to be filmed for the YouTube recruitment video. "I was afraid," she said. "I wanted to do it, but I just couldn't." Over time, however, she became accustomed to the risk, "The first time I realized that two men [secret police] were following me all the time, I went cold. They would watch me come out of my house – they tried to intimidate me. But you get used to it. Now I wave at them and ask them if they are getting bored." For others, the fear does not dissipate; Hicham was an early mover, but when I met him in February, 2012, he was visibly nervous. He thought the movement had been infiltrated, and he wanted to meet at the crowded train station, rather than the Carrion Café, a preferred spot for many M20ers. The clientele of the café, he told me, was now half movement activists, half *mukhabarat*.²⁰ He does not go there anymore, and has decided to cut back his participation.

First movers whose families had suffered repression dismissed the risks of mobilization. In their view, there was no avoiding risk and thus no reason to be particularly afraid. "Life is risky," Meriam said, "I could get arrested, sure. But I could get arrested for doing nothing, too."²¹ Over time, participation can generate the acceptance of risk. For first movers who had already mobilized before the Arab Spring began, they moved from a less risky to a riskier type of collective action, a shift that is likely easier than moving from inaction to action. This shift can

²⁰ My research assistant, intrigued by this claim, began hanging out at the Carrion Café, and later told me, "He was right – there are lots of secret police who go there. And everyone knows it; the M20 members even joke with them and ask them for cigarettes."

²¹ It is highly unlikely that in Morocco, nonparticipation is as dangerous as participation; the state has a long history of selectively targeting opponents and eschewing collective punishment. It is possible, however, that for a family member of a political dissident, there is a constant risk of police harassment, regardless of participation, but it seems more likely that Meriam is overstating the risks of repression for non-participants. See Kocher and Kalyvas (2007) on the need to evaluate the relative risks for participants and non-participations in collective action.

occur regardless of family history, as Mounia's case shows. But those whose families had experienced regime repression seemed to have learned to accept risk; insecurity was normalized for them. They brushed off questions about their fears, even though it was clear that their families were sometimes fearful for them. Nabil, whose father had been imprisoned in the 1970s, reported that he lied to his parents initially because he knew they would be afraid. Another activist whose father had been punished for political opposition said that his mother pleaded with him, stating that "politics leads only to prison." In spite of these warnings, the activists were inclined to minimize the risks as the necessary cost of a militancy that they were obligated to carry out. Thus, counter-intuitively, those who were most familiar with the consequences that political opponents can face were least fearful of them.

A family history of regime abuse also provided reputational benefits. When I met with the sons and daughters of political prisoners, other friends and activists showed them a marked deference. They had paid a direct cost, and they served as reminders of the worthiness of the cause. Activists whose families had been targeted for repression were offered respect, along with activists who themselves were arrested or targeted during the Arab Spring protests.²²

Interviews and participant observation served a theory-building role. Initially, I did not ask respondents whether their families had directly experienced repression as a consequence of political activity. When I began to hear the same story from core activists when asked about their initiation into contentious politics, I altered my interview protocol and asked about the family's history in politics. I was surprised to find that so many of the core activists I met had this background. The Moroccan regime, even under Hassan II, did not engage in widespread political repression and the general odds of meeting a Moroccan with a family member who had

²² Peteet (1994) similarly argues that repression, in her case in the form of beatings, can confer higher status and serve as an initiation into resistance activities.

personally been a victim cannot be very high. To test the hypothesis that a family history of repression is associated with leadership in the M20, I relied on survey data.

Facebook Survey of Activist Networks

I distributed an on-line survey to a nonprobability sample via Facebook. Facebook has not yet been widely used by political scientists for surveys or survey experiments. Two features restrict the utility of Facebook for research: Facebook protects its users' privacy by allowing users to restrict their personal information so that it can only be seen by friends, and Facebook limits users' ability to send mass messages, even to a user's own friends.²³ For this study, Facebook offered an advantage: the ability to target the friends of activists. As above, the purpose was to compare the core activists who led the movement to participants and non-participants who closely resemble them. The survey thus looked at how participation varies within a network; it does not reflect overall characteristics of the national population. Friends of activists, prior work suggests, have a higher potential for mobilization than an average member of the population. Facebook friends have a particularly high potential for mobilization in this context, since Facebook was used to publicize, discuss, and organize events. Facebook friends of activists were likely exposed to appeals from the M20.

Contacts established during fieldwork were used to distribute the survey. The first movers I interviewed frequently added me to their friend lists in the wake of the interview. Their friend lists were extensive; activists had, on average, 4,500 friends. I recruited respondents in three ways: I posted an appeal and a link to the survey on the "walls" of 12 core activists twice a month and I asked core activists to endorse the survey and repost it; I also created a group page,

²³ One potential way to distribute a survey is via Facebook advertising, which has the virtue of inviting large numbers of respondents to participate; see the working paper by Samuels and Zucco (2012).

“Activisme au Maroc” and invited the friends of activists to join the group; finally I sent a private Facebook message to several hundred friends of core activists. Recruitment was hampered by the absence of an incentive and subjects’ concerns about the promise of anonymity and the uses of the research.²⁴

Respondents were provided with a secure link to the survey, which they could complete in French or Arabic (the survey language defaulted to the language of the user’s browser). The survey link was available between June and September 2012 and yielded 160 completed surveys. Table 1 shows some of the characteristics of the sample. The sample differs from the larger Moroccan population in many ways; it is notably better educated and more male. In its characteristics, it resembles the first-mover demographic that has been described for Tunisia and Egypt.





²⁴ Offering an incentive would require a way to identify survey-takers; given the fears about answering controversial political questions on-line, an incentive could act instead as a deterrent to responding. To allay subjects concerns, a cover letter stressed that the survey would be anonymous and untraceable to any particular respondent. The cover letter also provided information about the project, the researcher, and promised to make the results available to anyone who wished to see them. These measures resulted in a number of email exchanges with potential subjects checking on my identity, commenting on the survey, and reacting to the project; Facebook thus facilitated useful interactions between subjects and the researcher and allowed subjects to offer input into the questions and project.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

		N
Male	69%	153
Mean age	27 Std.dev = 8	152
B.A. or higher	76%	161
Single	84%	138
Traveled overseas	42%	151
Class (self-reported)	72 working class 54 petite bourgeoisie 21 bourgeoisie 1 haute bourgeoisie 1 rich	150
Occupation	63 students 23 public sector workers 28 liberal professionals 13 unemployed 9 artists 12 other	148

A high reported rate of participation in protest is expected given the recruitment conditions. In the absence of an incentive, committed activists are much more likely to be motivated to click the survey link than non-participants are. Still, the majority of the sample did not participate in any of the 2011 protests (see table 2). Twenty-four of the respondents (15 percent) stated that they were members of the M20, while 102 respondents (65%) did not belong to any association; the rest belonged to other organizations, including student unions and the unemployed graduate organization.

Table 2: Participation in Protest

#	Answer		Response	%
Have you participated in a march, demonstration, sit-in, or other type of protest since 2011 and how many times	Never		86	55%
	Attended 1-3 protests		26	17%
	Attended 4-5 protests		15	10%
	More than 5 protests		30	19%
	Total		157	100%

As expected with a sample drawn from activist networks, respondents tended to be dissatisfied with the government; 84% reported that they were dissatisfied with the government's performance.²⁵ 42% thought Morocco had become more democratic in the prior two years, but 42% disagreed and 17% thought Morocco had become less democratic. Only 23% voted in the 2011 legislative elections.²⁶

The survey contained a number of open-ended questions that invited respondents to discuss their reasons for participating or not participating in the 2011 protests. Those who participated described their commitment to the movement's objectives. The written responses of the non-participants (n=41) were more diverse; a few examples include:

- "Lack of strong motivation."*
- "I would participate if there was a real cause."*
- "I believe in peaceful change."*
- "Violence against demonstrators and it won't serve any purpose anyway... there was no support from political parties and other movements as there was in Tunisia and Egypt."*
- "I don't like to march, I like to write!"*
- "I don't believe it has any utility."*
- "No security, fear of repression."*
- "I have my future to build."*
- "I don't live in the cities where protests take place."*
- "Change will come from organizations, not from the street."*
- "I saw that things were not well-organized."*
- "It doesn't really interest me."*
- "I'm an artist and I express myself in my own way."*
- "I settled for observing and noting what was happening."*

²⁵ Government typically refers to the parliament and ministries, not to the king.

²⁶ The February 20th movement boycotted the election, but it is not possible to assess whether low-turnout was due to the boycott or to apathy among young voters. The survey asked respondents to explain why they did or did not vote, many who did not vote reported that they had never voted and were not registered to vote.

“I didn’t have the opportunity to do so.”
“Because of obligations and restrictions imposed by my career.”
“I’m not an activist.”

The written rationales for non-participation reflect the insights from the social movement literature on the factors that limit collective action – the costs of participating relative to other activities that one could engage in, the belief that protest was futile, lack of opportunity. Overall, they reflect low motivation to participate, despite global events that made others view 2011 as a propitious moment for collective action.

In contrast, survey respondents who participated in the 2011 protests were highly motivated, and most had participated in prior collective action. Eighty-three percent of those with the highest level of participation (>5 times) in the Arab Spring protests of 2011 had participated in protests in the past.²⁷

Survey respondents were asked whether a family member had experienced a past violation of his/her rights. Forty-five (29%) out of 155 responded affirmatively. This fairly high percentage likely reflects a difference between the sample and the general population. The incidence of repression in the broader population is unknown, but the Moroccan state, even in the 1970s, did not abuse its citizens’ human rights on a mass scale. If we were to randomly sample the population, we would probably find that the number of respondents with a family member who either had been a political prisoner or had been mistreated for political activities, is quite low.²⁸ The high number of affirmative answers is also due in part to an idiosyncratic interpretation of the question. Respondents who answered yes were invited to explain; a few (9) had interpreted the question to include an experience of petty corruption. I discounted those answers and kept only those that indicated a past experience of police brutality or imprisonment

²⁷ Table not shown; past participation has a statistically significant association with participation in 2011 at $p < .01$.

²⁸ This question was included in a national survey; I am awaiting the data.

for political activity.²⁹ Of those, the modal answer was that a relative had been arrested and imprisoned during the Hassan II era.

The survey data supports the hypothesis that core activists came from families with a history of repression. Table 3 presents a cross-tab of participation in protest and family experiences of human rights abuse. Among those who participated the most in the 2011 protests, many came from families who had experienced repression. Forty percent of the core activists, those who participated more than five times, came from families with a history of repression, as opposed to only 14 percent of nonparticipants.³⁰

Table 3: Violation of Family Member’s Human Rights, by Participation

Did a member of your family experience a violation of his rights?	Never participated	Attended 1-3 protests	Attended 4-5 protests	More than 5 protests	Total
No	85.7% (72)	73.1% (19)	73.3% (11)	60% (18)	77.4% (120)
Yes	14.3% (12)	26.9% (7)	26.7% (4)	40% (12)	16.8% (26)
Total	100.0% (84)	100.0% (26)	100.0% (15)	100.0% (30)	100.0% (155)

Fisher's exact P = 0.026

The data provide initial support for the claim that the regime’s prior actions matter for collective action. A family history of repression is not the only reason why a person becomes an activist, but those with this history formed a large subset of the first movers of the February 20th movement. This evidence suggests that prior experiences of repression can help to generate a

²⁹ Out of the 45 respondents who indicated that a family history of human rights violation, 28 provided a written explanation. Thus the analysis likely continues to include some respondents who answered affirmatively because they had an instance of minor corruption in mind. This reporting issue should produce a bias against finding an association between human rights violations and protest participation; my theory does include expectation that victims of everyday corruption would participate in protest at high rates.

³⁰ The cross-tab represents an initial cut at analyzing the survey data; I welcome further suggestions. A full model of first-mover participation is a possibility, though the N is somewhat small. It is important to keep in mind the limitations brought on by the use of a nonprobability sample.

cadre of already-mobilized activists who are ready to organize protests when an opportunity presents itself.

3. **Repression and Protest: Evidence from a Survey Experiment**

The survey also provided an opportunity to investigate the effects of repression carried out during the 2011 Arab Spring on activists and their friends. As some of the non-participants suggest above, fear of repression can deter protest participation by raising the costs of participating. A repressive response from the regime can also make success seem unlikely, further dampening the desirability of taking to the streets.

An experiment was designed to see whether repression encouraged or dampened the demand for protest. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups, or a control group. The three treatment groups included questions designed to cue respondents to think about particular aspects of the Moroccan regime’s behavior.³¹ A control group received a version of the survey without any of the three cues. The treatment questions were as follows:

Table 4 Experimental Questions

Repression Treatment 1	During the demonstrations of the Arab Spring in Morocco in 2011, a number of peaceful protestors were wounded or arrested by the police in several towns. For example, a young girl was struck with a policeman’s baton when she had just arrived at a demonstration in Rabat, and in Safi, a young demonstrator died after a policeman accidentally pushed him off a roof. Did you know that the police sometimes use force against protestors?
Tolerance Treatment 2	The international press praised the Moroccan state for its tolerant response to the 2011 demonstrations, unlike other countries (like Syria and Libya) where there have been violent confrontations. Did you know that the regime was more tolerant toward demonstrators?
Concession (Treatment 3)	After the February 20 th movement’s demonstrations, the regime gave jobs to some unemployed graduates and promised more jobs for the youth. Did you know that the demonstrations contributed toward producing work for some of the unemployed graduates?

The questions emphasized specific aspects of the Moroccan state’s response to protest during the Arab Spring. Treatment 1 prompted subjects to think about police repression;

³¹ The set-up was influenced by Bullock (2011) who tests whether party cues affect Americans’ policy views.

Treatment 2 emphasized the relative tolerance of the state response; and Treatment 3 pointed to the potential for protest to lead to concrete benefits for those engaged in it.³²

After exposure to the treatment, subjects were asked whether they would favor new demonstrations for democratic reform, dignity, and freedom in Morocco in the future. They indicated their level of support by dragging a slider between “oppose” (value = 1) to “support” (value =7) with “indifferent” (value = 3.5) marked in the center. Table 5 presents the results. Those who were prompted to think about the regime’s use of repression were more likely to support future protests than those in the control group; the difference is significant at $p < .01$, with a two-tailed test. Those prompted to think about repression were also more likely to support future protests than those prompted to think about the potential to gain concessions through protest ($p. < .1$). Although subjects in all three treatment conditions indicated greater support for future protest than those assigned to the control group, for Treatment 2 and Treatment 3, the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 5 Effects of Prompts on Support for Protest

Support for New Demonstrations	Repression (Treatment 1)	Tolerance (Treatment 2)	Concession (Treatment 3)	Control
Mean	6.24	5.74	5.46	4.92
Standard Deviation	1.3	1.97	2.28	2.42
N	37	38	37	36

³² At the end of the survey, subjects were asked three questions designed to check the success of the experimental manipulation. They were asked, “What is the probability that protestors in Morocco will have problems with the police?” and “What is the probability that demonstrators’ activism will be successful?” and finally, “Do you agree with the following statement: the Moroccan regime tolerates peaceful protest.” Unfortunately, the N was slightly lower at the end of the survey, likely due to attrition, and the differences among the assignment groups was not statistically significant. However, the means were largely what might be expected. For instance, those in treatment 1 assigned a higher probability to the first question. Interestingly, those in Treatment 1 also assigned a high probability of success to the outcome; thus they thought both that there could be police retaliation and that the protests might succeed.

By chance, men were slightly over-represented in Treatment 1. To check whether this affected the results, I compared the mean responses for each assignment group by gender. The results did not change; the means for both men and women in each group were nearly identical.

The finding that reminders of the regime's use of repression triggers greater support for pro-democracy protests is surprising for several reasons. First, the N is very low. When I first noted the number of surveys, I did not expect to see any significant effects of the experiment. For the effect to be significant, it has to be substantively large. Here, subjects in treatment 1 indicated very high levels of support for future protest.

Second, a nonrandom sample of activists and their friends are likely to already have strong opinions about popular protest. The sample came from a group of internet savvy, well-informed, educated youth. We might expect this to be a very difficult group to manipulate. Core activists and frequent participants make up 29 percent of the sample; they are likely to already strongly support participating in future protests, making it difficult to push their support upward. Further, core participants are likely to have already undergone the treatment, meaning that they are already fully aware of incidents of repression that accompanied the protests. Thus, we might expect that this study underestimates the effects of the repression manipulation; a sample that included a greater number of nonparticipants might show a larger change in support. In this study, a change can only be observed among those who were not already strongly committed to future activism prior to taking the survey.³³

Finally, the literature lacks a consensus on the effects of repression on protest, but it is typically theorized as a cost of, not an incentive for, participating in protest. It may be that the

³³ Albertson and Lawrence (2009) analyze a field experiment in which some of those treated were likely to already possess the opinions that the experimental manipulation sought to stimulate. The leverage in that study, and in the one presented here, come from the effects of the experimental treatment on those who are susceptible to new information.

effects of repression are not uniform over a broad population; perhaps for the majority of Moroccans, hearing about repression would act to deter their interest in collective action. Testing this claim would require a representative sample as well as consideration of how repression might interact with other population characteristics. Yet the finding is substantively important even if it is limited to the friends and colleagues of activists because this is a group with a high potential for mobilization. Prior studies tell us that those who are networked to participants are particularly susceptible to mobilization. If repression makes this kind of nonparticipant more sympathetic to activists and their goals, their probability of mobilizing may increase. Once those networked to core activists join, the movement is one step closer to triggering the kinds of cascades we observe in cases of mass mobilization.

Support for future pro-democracy protests is clearly not the same as participating in future protests. The experiment affected attitudes, not behavior.³⁴ This is a limitation of the research, but it is one that is difficult to remedy without putting subjects in danger. Prompting respondents to act, if it worked, might well put them at risk.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that repressing political activists may encourage collective action via two mechanisms: a personal history of regime abuse serves to motivate first movers; then simply hearing about repression can encourage members of their networks to support further contentious acts. Repression thus has a positive effect on collective action, whether it is experienced first- or second-hand. These effects may not hold for other sub-groups of the population – repression may interact with other population characteristics and deter some from

³⁴ The survey included a question about whether the subject would participate in the future. 68% of the sample reported that they would. The experimental questions did not have a statistically significant effect on that answer, likely due to the small N along with a dearth of variation in the responses to the question (which was dichotomous).

engaging in collective action. The external validity is unknown and further theorizing and testing is required to know whether these effects differ depending on the population.

Regardless of its effects on other sub-groups, the impact of repression on first mover networks is still important. This discussion has not addressed the broader causes of revolution or protest, focusing instead on the micro-logic of participation. Yet studying the factors that affect first movers can contribute to our understanding of how and why protest erupts since these actors play an important role in the initiation and early spread of collective action. Protest in authoritarian regimes often appears to come out of nowhere; the regime's hold on power seems unshakeable at one point in time, then suddenly masses are in the streets (Kuran 1991). The surprising nature of mass protest often leads the media to describe it as a spontaneous phenomenon. Only later do we learn that the protests were well-planned and that an organizational structure helped to make them successful. The presence of a cadre of motivated, experienced first movers who are already organized and ready to engage in contentious politics when opportunities arrive is crucial for successful mobilization. Once first movers and their networks mobilize, there is a greater likelihood that we will observe a cascade of participation. In Morocco, mass protest was not sustained over the long-term, but for the first three months of 2011, first movers succeeded in organizing protests with large numbers of participants in dozens of cities and towns.

Despite the importance of first movers, we know little about what affects their decision-making. Their disregard for personal risk and willingness to bear costs that few others will bear is puzzling. It is difficult to understand how they overcome fear. Their behavior is more difficult to explain than the behavior of followers who join when they are protected by the presence of many. There are few studies that systematically investigate first movers; most

studies look at how leaders seek to mobilize, not why leaders choose to lead in the first place. This paper has pointed to one factor that leads people to political activism, showing that a large subset of first movers in Morocco was motivated by a family history of repression.

If Morocco is not unique, and past experiences of regime repression similarly motivate people to become politically active in other cases, several implications follow. First, the argument suggests that while repression may help regimes shut down protest in the short-term, it can destabilize them later on. Authoritarian regimes abuse human rights in the interest of maintaining their power. Yet where these experiences are passed down to future generations as justifications for engaging in political opposition, they do not produce compliance as effectively as leaders may think. Most studies look at the immediate effects or consequences of repression; repression is sometimes effective in shutting down threats to the regime. My respondents suggested that unintended effects of repression could occur over the long-term. Yet if a regime eschews or minimizes its use of repression, it could find itself facing a situation in which its demise appears inevitable. To put it bluntly, when it comes to repression, regimes may be damned if they do and damned if they don't.

In Morocco, many of those who answered that their family had experienced repression were the children or nieces or nephews of victims of the Hassan II regime during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This experience retained its salience over the decades, and they participated in the Arab Spring protests even when their parents feared for their safety. King Mohammed VI's response to the 2011 protests may likewise encourage a future generation to take to the streets. Though repression has been mild in contrast to places like Syria and Libya, in the wake of the mass protests, the Moroccan police have arrested a number of M20ers and brought them up on various bogus charges. One day the children of the Moroccan rapper and M20er known as Al-

Haqed, who was sentenced to serve a prison term for insulting the police in his lyrics, may well identify themselves as part of a family of militants. Both Hassan II and Mohammed VI are said to have *baraka* (blessings) on their side, but bad karma may also follow their use of repression. In other authoritarian regimes, where there has been more extensive repression, the second generation may constitute a much larger group than it does in Morocco.

This argument helps to link past and current episodes of contentious politics. Protest comes in waves; it may be dormant for years or decades and then reappear. How and whether protest cycles are connected to one another is an intriguing question; this argument suggests that participants may be linked over time via their families.

The experimental evidence in Part 3 suggested that current repression can also affect collective action by making observers more sympathetic to protest. Both this argument and the argument about past repression undermine rationalist accounts of collective action that portray people weighing the costs of protest against the benefits and avoiding action when the costs are high. The experimental evidence suggested that people were more in favor of collective action when they were reminded of the costs than when they were reminded either of the potential benefits or the absence of costs. Discussions with first movers suggested that the costs their families had paid made them more likely to dismiss potential costs and more willing to act. The idea that costs may actually encourage collective action is not one that has received much attention in the scholarly literature. An approach that uses a justice framework may better capture the logic of first movers than an approach that depicts utility-maximizing individuals.

Sources

- Albertson, Bethany, and Adria Lawrence. 2009. "After the Credits Roll." *American Politics Research* 37 (2) (March 1): 275–300.
- Barker, Colin, Alan Johnson, and Michael Lavalette. 2001. *Leadership and Social Movements*. Manchester University Press.
- Beissinger, Mark R. 2002. *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bullock, John G. 2011. "Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate." *American Political Science Review* 105 (3) (August): 496–515.
- Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher, and Emily Beaulieu. 2010. "Dissent, Repression, and Inconsistency." In *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict*, edited by Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (1): 1–23.
- Della Porta, D. 1995. *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- El-Ghobashy, Mona. 2011. "The Praxis of the Egyptian Revolution." *Middle East Research and Information Project* 41 (258).
- Fehr, E., and S. Gächter. 2002. "Altruistic Punishment in Humans." *Nature* 415 (January 10): 137–140.
- Gould, Roger V. 1991. "Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871." *American Sociological Review* 56 (December): 716–729.
- Hibbs, Douglas A. (1944-). 1973. *Mass Political Violence: a Cross-National Causal Analysis*. 1st Edition. New York, Wiley.
- Jasper, James M. 2011. "Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (1): 285–303. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150015.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Matthew Adam Kocher. 2007. "How Free Is 'Free Riding' in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem." *World Politics* 59 (2) (January): 177–216.
- Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics* 44 (October): 7–48.
- Lawrence, Adria. 2010. "Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings Against Colonial Rule." *International Security* 35 (2) (October 1): 88–122.
- Lohmann, Susanne. 1994. "The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91." *World Politics* 47 (01): 42–101.
- Lynch, Marc. 2011. "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State." *Perspectives on Politics* 9 (02): 301–310.
- McAdam, Doug. 1999. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. University Of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney G. Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nye, Joseph S. 2008. *The Powers to Lead*. Oxford University Press.
- Olson, Mancur. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Peteet, Julie. 1994. "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: a Cultural Politics of Violence." *American Ethnologist* 21 (1): 31–49.
- Petersen, Roger D. 1993. "A Community-Based Theory of Rebellion." *European Journal of Sociology* 34: 41–78.
- . 2002. *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Popkin, S.L. 1989. "Political Entrepreneurs and Peasant Movements in Vietnam." In *Rationality and Revolution*, 9–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Samuels, David J., and Cesar Jr. Zucco. 2012. "Using Facebook as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Survey-Experimental Research." *SSRN eLibrary* (June).
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2101458.
- Schneider, Mark, and Paul Teske. 1992. "Toward A Theory of the Political Entrepreneur: Evidence from Local Government." *The American Political Science Review* 86 (3) (September): 737.
- Staggenborg, Suzanne. 1994. *The Pro-Choice Movement: Organization and Activism in the Abortion Conflict*. 1st Paper. Oxford University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wood, E.J. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.