The Amazigh Question:
Amazigh Ethno-Nationalism since 201

Blake Henning Mitchell

SENIOR HONORS THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements of the
College Scholars Program
North Central College

13 May 2019

Approved: [Signature] Date: 13 May 2019
Thesis Director Signature

Dr. Sophie Hand

Approved: [Signature] Date: 5.13.19
Second Reader Signature

Dr. Mara Berkland
In 2011, Morocco experienced the “Arab Spring” like most other states in the Middle East and North Africa. Morocco presents a unique case because the democratic movement merged with the ethno-national movement already underway. The indigenous, Amazigh people have experienced conflict with state Arabization since the seventh century and have organized ethno-national movements since the 1980s. The Arab Spring resulted in major political change such as a new Constitution. With the 2011 Constitution’s officially recognition of Amazigh culture and languages, the ethno-national movement seemed to have realized all its goals for linguistic and cultural rights in the new Constitution. However, these new cultural and linguistic rights have not been implemented or produced concrete changes since 2011. Despite this stagnation, the Amazigh Movement remains largely placated due to unique maneuverings by the Moroccan monarchy and the complex relationship between identity and politics in the Amazigh community.
In April 2019, protestors flooded the streets of Morocco’s major cities. They were protesting a court decision to uphold the sentences of two activists from the Rif Hirak Movement who allegedly organized a separatist movement. Protestors rebuff the sentencing decisions, claiming that the Rif Hirak primarily protested against government corruption and unemployment. According to them, the government is punishing the Rif Hirak Movement because it is dominated by the country’s indigenous people (BBC 2019). These claims reveal that the movement and protests are only the most recent confrontations in a conflict that has fueled Moroccan ethnic tensions for centuries: the Amazigh question.

The Amazigh question represents a substantial national and international discourse on the place of the indigenous populations of North Africa. After centuries of cohabitation, the Amazigh have largely assimilated into the Arab communities, accepting their religion and language for the most part. Nonetheless, the Amazigh people make themselves known through the Tamazight dialects, distinctive dress, and unique cultural practices. Taboos and government interventions greatly restricted the growth and maintenance of the Amazigh culture and language. The Amazigh question explores the place of these indigenous people in a country dominated by Arab people, culture, and languages.

The Amazigh community in Morocco experienced a massive turning point in 2010 when the Democratic Spring1 swept across the Middle East and North Africa. Morocco presents a unique case because this political movement merged with the ethno-national, Amazigh Movements already underway, producing the February 20th Movement (Collado 2013, Moustaoui 2016). The indigenous, Amazigh people have experienced conflict with the Moroccan state since the seventh

---
1 The Democratic Spring is also known as the Arab Spring, but many Moroccans prefer the term Democratic Spring because of the involvement of more than just ethnic Arabs.
century, most recently resulting in organized ethno-national movements since the 1980s (Kazak 2002, Miller 2013, Shatzmiller 2000). Among the changes that the February 20th Movement triggered was the 2011 Constitution that officially recognized the Amazigh culture and languages, thereby suggesting that the ethno-national movements’ demands for linguistic and cultural rights had been met. However, there has been no implementation or concrete change on this front since 2011. Several demands of the Amazigh Movements remain to be satisfied.

The Amazigh Movements dispersed in 2011 because constitutional recognition suggested that wide reforms would move forward. Unfortunately, linguistic rights that were not specifically enumerated were not realized. Tamazight was not instituted in education, translators were not trained for public spaces, and documents were not fully translated. The achieved reforms seemed to be largely symbolic, but the government continues to claim victory in satisfying all Amazigh demands. The disconnect between officializing and implementing the Amazigh language sets the stage for a possible resurgence of the Amazigh Movements. Despite the lingering demands, the state remains firm that the February 20th Movement was satisfied in 2011.

Theories of ethno-nationalist movements would suggest a resurgence of the Amazigh Movement after 2011, in spite of government claims to the contrary. This discrepancy between ethno-national theories and the position of the Moroccan government reveals a gap in understanding of the Amazigh Movements. Ethno-national theories posit that the Amazigh Movement should have resurfaced while the state posits that the movements have dispersed and have no reasons to return. The applicability of theory and validity of the state position cannot be determined from a distance in the United States. Accordingly, I structured a case study around the chance of another major Amazigh Movement and conducted a series of interviews in Morocco in order to hear the perspectives of those most closely involved in the Amazigh Movement: university
professors, former government researchers, and university students. Interviews probed their knowledge of the Amazigh community and movements before and after the 2011 Constitution. The responses revealed compelling patterns in identity, remaining demands, factors leading to movement participation, and future movement actionability. These data reveal that the Moroccan situation is significantly more complex than the theories or official state line could encompass. The Rif Hirak are a prime of the reality that exists between theory and the state line.

To analyze the discrepancies that exist between theory and the state, I will first explain several theories of ethno-nationalism that serve to explain one perspective of the Amazigh situation in Morocco. Next, I will present the contradictory position held by the government and how it is constructed through media. Finally, I will analyze on the ground interview data that more closely depict the realities of the Amazigh question. I seek to advance the Amazigh question by comparing and intersecting these three perspectives to provide conclusions on the current and future situation of the Amazigh Movements and community in Morocco.

**Ethno-National Theory**

The environment in which any political movement mobilizes greatly determines its trajectory. Governments have long tried to respond to the demands of political and ethnic movements in a way to best defuse the tensions (Shcherbak and Sych 2017). Politicians and researchers have sought to develop methods that can be employed to prevent the escalation of conflicts that threaten government authority in a divided society. The theories for addressing ethno-national movements focus primarily on the environments that breed ethno-national conflicts and the kinds of laws and reforms that should be championed to best satisfy the demands of the movements. André Lecours (2000) and Elise Giuliano (2006) posit that the most important aspect for defining an ethno-national movement’s progression is its motives. Once a movement has
reached a substantial size, responses from the central government become equally impactful on the movements’ outcomes. Shcherbak and Sych (2017) and Lijphart (2004) focus on the ways that the central government can deescalate ethno-national conflicts that are already active and growing within their borders. Examining the Moroccan situation alongside these theories present a perspective on the state of the Amazigh Movements.

Theorizing ethno-national motivations

The first important aspect of any early movement is what motivates its call to action. A movement’s motivations determine who becomes involved, where the movement spreads, and how successful it is at bringing about changes (Lecours 2000). In the situation of an ethno-national movements, analyzing aspects of the movements’ motivations clarifies much about its growth and progression. Researchers like Lecours (2000) and Giuliano (2006) examine the motivations of ethno-national movements in Quebec, Uganda, and Russia as a means of deriving trends in ethno-nationalism. According to their studies, understanding a movement’s motivations is key to understanding and predicting its outcomes.

Based on his studies of ethno-national movements, Lecours (2000) organizes motives into two categories: ethnic and civic. Ethnically motivated movements focus on reforms related to linguistic and cultural rights. These reforms would only directly impact the lives of members of the involved ethnic-nation. The demands of ethnically motivated movements include integrating languages, recognizing religious practices, building cultural centers, and other related demands. Civically motivated movements focus more on general issues like the economy and governing structures but use ethnicity as a rallying point. The demands of civically motivated movements relate to the desires of all inhabitants of affected regions. Civically motivated reforms include infrastructure projects, unemployment programs, public health, and restructuring government
institutions. These reforms often have a strong impact on one ethnic-nation, so framing the issues as part of an ethno-national movement can effectively rally support. Ethno-national movements can include both ethnically and civically motivated demands but will usually draw more upon one set of motivations.

Lecours (2000) continues to explain that the main motivations of an ethno-national movement will also have a significant impact on its growth and success. Civically motivated movements tend to grow larger and achieve greater success in realizing reforms because they can appeal to broader swaths of the population. Because the demands are more general, those outside of the ethnic-nation are equally drawn to these issues. In contrast, ethnically motivated movements face difficulties in growing beyond the bounds of the ethnic-nation. Cultural and linguistic demands only directly affect members of the ethnic-nation and attract less outside support. The responses to ethnically motivated demands tend to be more symbolic, bringing about little substantial change.

Economic disparities are another significant issue that affects the motivations of ethno-national movements and the development of their demands. Giuliano (2006) describes how the comparative economic situation between regions populated by ethnic-nations and the rest of the country is what drives a movement’s success. If the ethnic-nation’s region is comparatively well-developed, then ethno-national movements are more likely to be successful and/or secessionist in nature. If the region is comparatively underdeveloped, then ethno-national movements tend to focus on attaining resources from the central government. This difference in success is due to varying dependence on the central government. Well-developed regions can function more autonomously and produce ethno-national movements calling for a wide variety of reforms. Underdeveloped regions depend on the central government for vital resources, so the central
government has greater leverage to hamper the growth of ethno-national movements. Giuliano also examines the various iterations of ethno-national movements, showing that many movements will go through several phases as the economy fluctuates until their demands are ultimately satisfied or secession occurs.

The development and outcomes of past Amazigh Movements are further explained through analysis of their motivations and demands. By considering Lecours (2000) and Giuliano (2006), a perspective on the contemporary Amazigh question starts to come together alongside the larger discussion on ethno-national movements. The Amazigh Movements have gone through several iterations with the development of the Amazigh question. The first clear movement produced the Agadir Charter in 1991 and the most recent movement was the February 20\textsuperscript{th} Movement in 2010. Each successive iteration of the Amazigh Movements shows a progression in the motivations and demands of the Amazigh question (Agadir Charter 1991, Amazigh World 2016, Collado 2013, Kazak 2002, Miller 2002, Moustaoui 2016, Shatzmiller 2000). Throughout their development, the Amazigh Movements have maintained their original demands and focuses from the Agadir Charter. This founding document calls for cultural and linguistic rights that should be implemented by the central government. Some examples include the integration of the Tamazight language into public life and education and demands official recognition of the Amazigh culture (Agadir Charter 1991). Based on their commitment to the Agadir Charter, most of the Amazigh Movements have maintained cultural and linguistic demands which can be defined as ethnically motivated. These ethnic motives are a part of explaining the lack of success by most of these movements in the past. The Amazigh Movements were largely ignored before the founding of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in 2001. However, the movements’ motives transformed leading up to the Democratic Spring that swept across the Middle East and North Africa. In Morocco, the
Amazigh Movements merged with Democratic Spring movements to form the February 20th Movement. This newly formed movement demanded democratization and transparency from the government and better economic development to combat high unemployment levels (Collado 2013, Moustaoui 2016). The February 20th Movement embraced civically motivated demands related to governmental and economic reforms. This shift in motives was influential in the successful ratification of a new Constitution in 2011. These events support that in the context of the Amazigh question, civically motivated movements are more successful than their ethnically motivated counterparts.

For future Amazigh Movements, an important factor for their success is whether they follow the Agadir Charter or the February 20th Movement. The shift to civic motivations during the February 20th Movement was largely due to the Amazigh Movements’ merger with other activist groups; therefore, future Amazigh Movements would likely return to their ethnically motivated roots. Amazigh Movements after 2011 would likely focus on cultural and linguistic issues derived from the Agadir Charter. These ethnic motives would push the government to develop the organic law proposed in the 2011 Constitution. Therefore, the predicted outcome would be small regionally focused movements that involve few beyond the Amazigh community.

The comparative economic development of Amazigh regions introduces another noteworthy lens for analyzing the Amazigh Movements. In Morocco, the centuries of cohabitation by the Arabs and the Amazigh have led the Amazigh people to be dispersed throughout the country. Nonetheless, higher concentrations of Amazigh people still populate the Atlas Mountains, the Sahara Desert, and other rural regions (Brett and Fentress 1996, 3). In these analyses, those regions dominated by the Amazigh will be compared to the rest of the country where Amazigh and Arab populations are mixed.
The general Moroccan economy is one of the largest and most stable in Africa which has benefitted the government and many Moroccans (World Bank 2018). Despite this level of economic prosperity and stability, interviews revealed that some young people remain uncertain about the economic and employment future of the country. Urbanization and industrialization have also served to divide urban and rural regions in this developing economy. When comparing regional development, disparities arise between the urban and rural regions. Urban regions are much better developed than rural ones. Because the strongest political parties focused on urban issues, rural regions have received less attention for economic development in transportation, education, and healthcare (Ministry of Culture and Communication 2013). Mountain and desert regions are even less developed because they are not suitable for agriculture. The rural economic situation is further exacerbated by emigration patterns. Many young people leave rural regions for education and employment opportunities in urban centers (De Bel-Air 2016, UNICEF 2014). Additionally, many Moroccans emigrate to Europe and America for better employment opportunities (De Bel-Air 2016, UNICEF 2014). This population loss continues to slow development in rural regions which disproportionately affect Amazigh populations. This relative underdevelopment is a considerable block to past and future Amazigh Movements. The February 20th Movement found success in 2010 when it moved into urban centers (Collado 2013) and the Agadir Charter was written in an urban center, the city of Agadir (Amazigh World 2016). Movements organizing after 2010 would likely return to rural regions where Amazigh populations are more concentrated. These underdeveloped regions would primarily focus on demanding resources to develop from the central government. These movements would also see little success because of the regional dependence on the central government.
Lecours (2000) and Giuliano (2006) provide important perspectives on ethno-national conflict that relate to the development of past and future of the Amazigh Movements. The movements’ motivations are critical to their ability to grow and successfully demand reforms from the central government. Lecours explains that ethnically motivated ethno-national movements are less successful than their civically motivated counterparts. Giuliano explains how underdeveloped regions produce less successful ethno-national movements that are focused on receiving resources from the central government. The movements that exist in line with ethno-national theory would be small and regionally focused. Because of their past iterations, future Amazigh Movements would likely form to fit these predictions.

Theorizing government responses

Ethno-national movements do not exist devoid of government interventions, so these interventions are equally as influential as the movements’ motivations. The interactions between ethno-national movements and the central government are equally as influential as the movements’ motivations. In general, ethno-national movements threaten the central government’s authority because they propose reforms independent of governmental functioning (Fearon and Laitin 1996, Giuliano 2006, Roeder 2007 Shcherbak and Sych 2017, Teo 2011, Tepfenhart 2013). These threatening demands can vary from internal reforms to grant autonomy to more dramatic demands for independence. As a result, central governments tend to restrict or manipulate the progression of ethno-national movements to protect their authority (Shcherbak and Sych 2017, Teo 2011). Shcherbak and Sych (2017) and Lijphart (2004) have developed theories by examining examples of ethno-national movements to describe how a central government should address these movements to reduce conflict and protect government authority.
From their research in the Russian Federation, Shcherbak and Sych (2017) developed a two-part theory for central government intervention in ethno-national movements. In instances of ethno-national conflict, the government can impede the movements’ progressions by indirectly legislating around the movement and coopting an official movement within government institutions. Typically, governments want to avoid directly addressing any opposition movements because direct engagement with a movement supports the movement’s legitimacy which in turn fuels its growth and ability to challenge the government’s authority. If the government responds to a movement directly, it suggests that the movement is legitimate enough to attract political attention and possibly receive responses to its demands. Therefore, the best approach to responding to ethno-national movements is through indirect legislation. This is a means of lawmaking in which the ethnic-nation is not mentioned but is directly impacted. Examples are laws that mandate the use of official languages in public affairs or restrict the creation of political parties along ethnic lines. By indirectly legislating, the government addresses movements without fueling their legitimacy or growth.

Shcherbak and Sych (2017) explain a second tactic for addressing ethno-national movements in which the government coopts a moderate branch of the movement into state institutions. The government can find or create an offshoot of the larger movement that closely adheres to government policies and proposes only minor reforms. The government more willingly works with such a moderate movement. This can easily be achieved by pandering to the ethnic elites. The conflict becomes more manageable by uplifting this moderate and pro-government version of the movement. The government can claim to be cooperating with the movements and responding to their demands while only the moderate movement is being satisfied. In tandem with the growth of this moderate movement, the government can arrest more radical activists and outlaw
the other movements without sacrificing their supposed support for the ethnic-nation’s rights. These actions would split the movement into what appears to be an illegal extremist group that receives no government attention and a moderate group that is successful at achieving reforms. This would weaken the movement overall by dividing its members and greatly detract from the movement that threatens the government’s authority. Through the combined efforts of indirect legislation and manipulating an official movement, the government can further its goals of weakening ethno-national movements and reinforcing government authority.

However, Shcherbak and Sych (2017) mostly describe how to handle new ethno-national movements that have not yet been legitimized or grown to a substantial size. For movements that cannot be significantly weakened by indirect legislation and coopting of moderates, the situation becomes more of a divided society. Lijphart (2004) outlines strategies for Constitutional power-sharing reforms in these cases. Power-sharing is another way of integrating ethno-national movements into government institutions to reduce conflict. The strategy invites the movements to directly participate in government reforms while providing the government with more power to regulate the movements’ actions. Three of Lijphart’s power-sharing suggestions fit with the Moroccan situation. They are granting regional autonomy, structuring institutional autonomy, and expressly including the country’s diversity in governing structures.

Granting regional autonomy is a common way of handling large and diverse countries. Lijphart (2004) explains that regional autonomy is a useful technique for restructuring the government to fit an ethnically divided country. If the borders of ethnic-nations are easily identified, then the central government can grant control of governing to a regional government. In this way, the ethnic-nation can pursue the desired reforms through the recognized government without causing conflict. The central government can also exert greater control over the ethnic-
nation by setting the guidelines for how the regional governments function and interact with the central government. Unfortunately, the threat of this approach is that giving the ethnic-nation an identifiable government and officially recognized borders may embolden the ethnic-nation to push for greater autonomy or even independence as has been the case in Spain (Olivieri 2015). To avoid this downside, a different kind of autonomy might be employed.

Institutional autonomy is a non-territorial autonomy where the ethnic-nation is granted control over relevant institutions (Lecours 2004). Rather than structuring a government to control all aspects of a region, the ethnic-nation can directly control institutions relevant to their demands. This could include institutions like education, public health, or infrastructure. Each of these institutions would be divided into multiple departments that independently oversee issues affecting their ethnic-nation. Institutional autonomy allows members of various ethnic-nations to become directly involved in passing reforms that have an immediate effect on their communities. The benefit of this kind of autonomy is that it reduces the chances of secessionism by integrating ethnic-nations into larger governing bodies while still providing direct control over relevant institutions. The main critique of this approach though is that the creation of multiple complex institutions to handle a single issue might slow government bureaucracy and cause confusion.

A third Constitutional reform for power sharing explained by Lijphart (2004) is structuring governing bodies to expressly include diversity. The most direct way of accomplishing this is through quotas that mandate a minimum number of members of a certain group that must be present in the legislature or other institutions. This would guarantee the presence of a more representative diversity in government institutions. In the executive, diversity could be further included through cabinet positions that advocate for the interests of the ethnic-nation. The exact structure of the government would need to reflect the unique situation of the country, so instituting
new government structures can be difficult and does not always produce effective governance. The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a tripartite presidency with a chief executive from each ethnic-nation, but this has produced a weak and conflict-ridden executive (*Center for Strategic and International Studies* 2018). Constitutional power-sharing is an impactful approach to addressing conflict in a divided society. Regional autonomy, institutional autonomy, and/or instituting checks on diversity are a major step towards reducing conflict in many situations.

In the Moroccan context, examining the place of the government in the history of the Amazigh Movements provides significant insights. Beyond understanding the motives of the movements, Shcherbak and Sych (2017) and Lijphart (2004) provide theories that can reveal more about the Amazigh question. The 1960s through 1980s were known as the Years of Lead in Morocco. The monarchy was involved in quieting many dissident movements including the earliest stirrings of Amazigh ethno-nationalism (Menin 2014). In 1991, King Hassan II first acknowledged the Amazigh Movements after the Agadir Charter was written (*Amazigh World* 2016). This first response to the Amazigh Movements started the policy of directly addressing the movements and their demands that has continued to this day.

The most important aspects described by Shcherbak and Sych (2017) are direct recognition of the movements by the government and the existence of a government-approved movement. Following the Agadir Charter, King Hassan II responded directly to the Agadir Charter and proposed reforms to address the issues that it presented (*Agadir Charter* 1991). Even though this was not legislation, the King recognized the existing Amazigh Movements and brought them into politics by proposing reforms. Despite this early acknowledgement, no reforms were completed in response to the Agadir Charter before the death of King Hassan II in 1999 (*Amazigh World* 2016). The Amazigh Movements were absent from legislation until 2011 with the ratification of the new
Constitution (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). In this document, the government presented major reforms in direct response to the February 20th Movement. Cultural and linguistic rights were central in the 2011 Constitution and the Amazigh community was the main focus of these reforms. The Moroccan government does not fit with the ethno-national theory explained by Shcherbak and Sych because of this direct engagement. An increase in conflict is more likely because of the disconnect between the actions taken by the Moroccan government and the importance of indirect legislation to weaken ethno-national movements.

However, the Moroccan government was more successful at bringing a moderate iteration of the Amazigh Movements under their control. After the death of King Hassan II, his son, King Mohammed VI, ascended to the throne. Decades of political stagnation gave way to initiatives to restore political openness under the new King (Miller 2013). In one Royal Dahir (decree), King Mohammed VI dealt directly with the demands of the Amazigh Movements by founding the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) (Dahir Royal 2001). The new institution was tasked with standardizing the Tamazight language and identifying Amazigh culture. IRCAM served an additional purpose because it enticed Amazigh scholars and activists to become government employees. By founding the IRCAM, King Mohammed VI brought part of the Amazigh Movements under the government’s control. These efforts by the Moroccan monarchy seem to fit well with the theorized approach outlined by Shcherbak and Sych (2017), so IRCAM would likely serve to decrease ethno-national conflict.

The ratification of the 2011 Constitution constitutes another significant turning point that should be examined here. The most recent iteration of the Amazigh Movements occurred in 2010 with the February 20th Movement and resulted in major Constitutional reforms that largely dealt with the demands of the Amazigh Movements (Collado 2013, Moustaoui 2016). Lijphart (2004)
discusses several types of Constitutional reforms that best serve to decrease tensions in a divided society. Examining whether the 2011 Constitutional reforms instituted power-sharing tactics suggested by Lijphart may provide insights on the development of the Amazigh Movements since 2011.

Regional autonomy was the first type of reform discussed by Lijphart (2004). In Morocco, the Amazigh community is dispersed throughout the country, but has larger concentrations in the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert (Brett and Fentress 1996, 3). The Moroccan government is also structured federally with 16 regions and 62 prefectures that each have their own local governments (Ministry of the Interior 2015). It would be possible for the central government to grant greater regional autonomy to these existing governments, but the central government retained much of its control in the 2011 Constitution (Biagi 2014, Kingdom of Morocco 2011). This continued control was most likely done in response to another ethno-national conflict in the Western Sahara. The Moroccan government claims control of this regions, but the Polisario who inhabit the region have declared independence from Morocco (Middle East Institute 2018). Naturally, the central government maintains a firm grip on regional governments to protect its sovereignty. The 2011 Constitution by no means provides any increase in regional autonomy for the Amazigh or the Polisario.

Since regional autonomy is not a feasible option, institutional autonomy could be a viable alternative. The Amazigh Movements have focused primarily on linguistic issues involving education (Agadir Charter 1991, Amazigh World 2016, Collado 2013, Kazak 2002, Miller 2002, Moustaoui 2016, Shatzmiller 2000). Institutional autonomy might serve as a feasible way to respond to these demands by reforming the Ministry of Education and IRCAM. Nonetheless, the 2011 Constitution does not propose reforms to the Ministry of Education. The Amazigh
community did not receive a platform to address their concerns in this institution (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). The main institution that does allow the Amazigh community to pursue its interests is IRCAM. This institute focuses exclusively on Amazigh cultural and linguistic issues. The 2011 Constitution proposes major reforms to IRCAM with a transition to the National Council of Moroccan Languages and Culture (CNLC) (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). The creation of the CNLC would allow the government to continue to unify the diverse Moroccan population into one institution that handles all cultural and linguistic issues. A major reform project like this could provide more opportunities for the Amazigh community to further its agenda through an institution that was built to best fit the current governmental system. However, plans to build and organize this new institution have barely progressed since 2011. IRCAM has been left to stagnate while it waits to be integrated into the CNLC which does not yet exist (Telquel 2018, UNESCO 2017). The 2011 Constitution only marginally and ineffectively provides institutional autonomy, so this approach will not likely resolve any tensions.

The third approach to power-sharing discussed by Lijphart (2004) is structuring governing bodies to expressly include diversity. This approach to inclusivity is prevalent in the 2011 Constitution. Parliament currently holds two quotas for the number of women and young people in response to the February 20th Movement where both women and young people were highly involved (Vairel 2018). Twenty-five cabinet ministers also represent the interests of various groups in Morocco including a Minister of Youth & Sports and a Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family & Social Development who handle youth and women’s issues respectively (Ministry of Culture and Communication 2013). However, these guarantees of inclusiveness have not been extended to the Amazigh people. No quotas or ministers exist to ensure the inclusion of Amazigh issues. According to the government, quotas for Amazigh representation are not completely necessary.
Leaders in Parliament often bolster a high number of Amazigh representatives because of the mixed ethnic identities of so many Moroccans. But many of the members who tout their Amazigh heritage in the media do not actually champion the demands of the Amazigh Movements or push for the continued integration of the Tamazight language. Furthermore, this political exclusion is exacerbated by Article 7 of the 2011 Constitution which blocks political parties from being formed along ethnic lines (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). This article effectively prevents the Amazigh Movements from ever starting their own political party. Despite the structures for ensuring diversity, the Amazigh community has not been expressly included in governance since 2011.

The Constitutional reforms do not grant powers to the Amazigh people that would likely work to defuse the tensions between the movements and the central government. Without reforms granting regional autonomy, institutional autonomy, or express inclusion, the Amazigh Movements would likely grow. Few constitutional changes have been made that would adequately respond to the demands of the previous Amazigh Movements or afford the Amazigh community with the powers to bring about any reforms. Without appropriate constitutional reforms, conflict will continue, especially considering the power-sharing reforms provided to other disenfranchised groups. The Amazigh Movements remain unable to organize within the government to further their agenda. Consequently, Parliament has stalled on developing an organic law to institute reforms. Therefore, it is expected that the Amazigh Movements would reorganize to continue demanding the reforms that were not fully addressed in the 2011 Constitution.

The Moroccan government has made many efforts to satisfy the people but have fallen short in many ways. When the theories of Shcherbak and Sych (2017) and Lijphart (2004) are weighed against government claims, it appears that the Amazigh Movements should have continued after 2011. Reforming a state to satisfy the needs of all citizens is a massive undertaking,
but neither the past government approaches nor the 2011 Constitution provide the necessary frameworks for responding to the Amazigh Movements. The government’s actions in addressing the Amazigh Movements have fallen short in reforms to defuse the ethno-national tensions. Other than the inclusion of a moderate version of the Amazigh Movements by founding IRCAM, the government has done little that lines up with theories on reducing ethno-national conflict.

Comparing past Amazigh Movements with theories of ethno-national conflict provides an initial perspective on the state of the Amazigh question in Morocco. First, the motivations of past Amazigh Movements were considered. Lecours (2000) examines how ethnically motivated movements are smaller and less successful. Most of the Amazigh Movements in Morocco have been ethnically motivated and small. Giuliano (2006) examines how movements in economically underdeveloped regions are less successful and demand resources from the central government. The Amazigh Movements have occurred in regions that are comparatively underdeveloped and called on the government for necessary resources and reforms (Collado 2013, Kazak 2002, Brett and Fentress 1996, 3). Through examining these theories on motivations, small and unsuccessful movements seem likely. But when the government’s responses were considered, larger movements seemed more likely. Shcherbak and Sych (2017) examine how indirect legislation and coopting a movement reduce ethno-national conflict. The Moroccan government has legislated directly (Amazigh World 2016, Kingdom of Morocco 2011) but was still able to coopt part of the movements in IRCAM. Lijphart (2004) examines how Constitutional reforms for power-sharing can reduce conflict in a divided society. Morocco did not extend power-sharing to the Amazigh people in any of the 2011 Constitutional reforms (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). The government reactions to the Amazigh Movements suggests greater growth into the future. Lecours (2000), Giuliano (2006), Shcherbak and Sych (2017), and Lijphart (2004) alongside examinations of past
Amazigh Movements provide a valuable perspective on the continued presence, growth, and development of ethno-national movements in Morocco.

**Official Position**

Another major perspective in the development of the Amazigh question in Morocco is the government. In Morocco, the government has expressed an interest in understanding the progression of the Amazigh Movements since 2011. Since the 1980s, the Moroccan government has taken a more direct approach in handling the situation of their Amazigh populations. Starting with the Agadir Charter of 1991, the Amazigh Movements have garnered attention from the monarchy (*Amazigh World* 2016). The reactions have mostly been in the form of speeches and political initiatives, but in 2010 the situation changed. With the progression of the Democratic Spring, the February 20th Movement was born in Morocco (Collado 2013, Moustaoui 2016). A dramatic shift occurred when King Mohammed VI directed his government to draft a new Constitution that was ratified in 2011. The 2011 Constitution guaranteed democratic reforms and the greater inclusion of the Amazigh culture and languages (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). Therefore, following the February 20th Movement and the 2011 Constitution, the federal government in Rabat could assert that tensions have been eased and the Amazigh Movements had ended.

Through its general silence on the issue, the government suggests that the Amazigh Movements have dispersed without any resurgence because no issues remain. The 2011 Constitution provides the Amazigh Movements with what they have been demanding for decades. The Amazigh Movement first formed when educational institutions came together to write the Agadir Charter (Agadir Charter 1991). The charter was followed by years of hollow promises and false initiatives (*Amazigh World* 2016), but this pattern was eventually broken by King...
Mohammed VI when IRCAM was formed. The Tamazight languages were standardized, and the Amazigh culture was clearly defined (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh 2019). A decade later, the monarchy spearheaded the constitutional reforms following the February 20th Movement. Since Independence in 1956, Morocco has had five Constitutions (Kingdom of Morocco 1962, 1970, 1992, 1996, 2011), but the 2011 Constitution was an unprecedented shift in the official handling of the Amazigh Movements. The Amazigh people of Morocco had never before been officially recognized by such an important document. The 2011 Constitution provides the political initiative and cultural protections that the Amazigh Movements have been demanding for decades.

Under King Mohammed VI, the government took direct action in responding to the demands of the Amazigh Movements, thus projecting an end to the decades of conflict. The calls for official recognition by the federal government and for the integration of the Tamazight languages and protection of Amazigh cultural rights had finally been satisfied. The highest law in the land declared that the Amazigh Movements’ demands had been heard and satisfied accordingly (Kingdom of Morocco 2011). The inequality and unkept promises that had fueled conflict were finished. The government did its part in responding to demands, so the Amazigh Movement dispersed after 2011 along with the rest of the February 20th Movement. The reforms moved into the processes of official institutions with the help of the 2011 Constitution’s reforms. In the same year that the new Constitution was ratified, a new political coalition came to power in Parliament that was led by the Islamists. This coalition has led Parliament since 2011 and has been delegated the power to move forward on creating the organic laws. Any successes and failures in this process are the simple result of a healthy democratic system and can be rectified through elections. The government’s silence on this issue suggests that the Amazigh Movements do not need to return
because it is a political issue that functions within government institutions and can be solved therein.

State media coverage serves as another window into the government’s perspectives. In the absence of official attention, the media has covered some small groups that claim to be remnants of the Amazigh Movements. The government may want to avoid acknowledging these small movements to avoid legitimizing another iteration of ethno-national conflict in line with what Shcherbak and Sych (2017) have viewed in other governments. Morocco does not provide free press (Freedom House 2018), so media coverage can be seen as an indirect expression of government opinions. Media manipulation gives the government an outlet to address a wide variety of issues without impacting the official state position. From interview responses, I learned that media coverage portrays the groups that claim to be Amazigh Movements as extremists who are not part of any larger movement. By labelling these groups as extremists, the media can profess the stance that the reasonable parts of the Amazigh Movements have dispersed, and only unrealistic and unrepresentative groups remain. The government does not seem to recognize the existing conflicts as part of any legitimate Amazigh Movements. Additionally, interviewees explained that whenever the Amazigh community is involved in conflict, IRCAM and Parliament are quick to respond, thus keeping the issues within politics and preventing another Amazigh Movement. The media shows that any conflicts that might be considered part of the Amazigh Movements are only a minor political issue or the result of unrealistic extremists.

The government has also worked to produce a strongly unifying rhetoric to unite all Moroccans since the 2011 Constitution. This rhetoric essentially states that an Amazigh Movement cannot exist because the country is too unified for ethnic tensions to arise. Alongside promising cultural and linguistic reforms, the 2011 Constitution professed a strongly unified state (Kingdom
of Morocco 2011). The 2011 Constitution states that “[Morocco’s] unity is forged by the convergence of its Arabo-Islamic, Amazigh, and Saharan Hassanie components; it is nourished and enriched by its affluent Africans, Andalusians, Hebrews, and Mediterranean peoples” (Kingdom of Morocco 2011, 2). By including these diverse populations in the Constitution, the Moroccan government can show that it is committed to unity and not divisiveness. The Arab and Amazigh peoples are not the only populations present in Morocco but are portrayed as the most important populations. Both the Amazigh peoples and the Saharan Hassanie (also known as the Polisario), have organized ethno-national movements calling for their rights. The government recognizes the continued fight from the Polisario and is staunchly opposed to its secessionist demands for the Western Sahara (Middle East Institute 2018). Because of the place of the Amazigh in Moroccan society, the government may use them as a tool to manipulate the Polisario. The government portrays the Amazigh as a community that seeks to strengthen Morocco, while portraying the Polisario as a community that seeks to destroy Morocco. The Amazigh are a part of the Moroccan unity according to the government and the 2011 Constitution. In this line of thought, an ethno-national movement cannot exist because the Amazigh are not a unique ethnic-nation but rather a unified part of the Moroccan identity.

Logically, the government’s position on the Amazigh Movements is that the issue was resolved after ratifying the 2011 Constitution. The monarchy pivoted substantially from the willful ignorance that blocked the issue for decades (Amazigh World 2016). Institutions and political initiatives were developed under King Mohammed VI that satisfy the cultural and linguistic demands of the Amazigh Movements (Dahir Royal 2001, Kingdom of Morocco 2011). The Constitutional reform represents a major change in the official approach to the Amazigh Movements through direct recognition of their place in Morocco’s diverse population. The media
provides coverage of the remaining conflicts to show political issues and extremists rather than any Amazigh Movements. The government has also been committed to unifying the country to show how the Amazigh Movements were peacefully dispersed in 2011. Therefore, the government position is that no Amazigh Movements exist in Morocco because all issues were fully satisfied by the 2011 Constitution.

Method

A disconnect seems to separate the theoretical and official perspectives of the Amazigh Movements in Morocco. Combined analyses of ethno-national theories provided by Lecours (2000), Giuliano (2006), Shcherbak and Sych (2017), and Lijphart (2004) suggest small movements that exist on their own and are pushed towards further growth by government involvement. The official stance seems to suggest that the Amazigh Movements ended in 2011 with the new Constitution and only illegitimate extremists remain but do not constitute a movement. This divergence of positions on whether a movement still exists suggests some confounding variable that explains away one or all the above perspectives. Both analyses come with some substantial flaws that could detract from their reliability. The theoretical explanations are flawed because the original studies were conducted in various countries that differ greatly from Morocco (Giuliano 2006, Lecours 2000, Lijphart 2004, Shcherbak and Sych 2017). It is possible that Morocco specific variables prevent other theories on ethno-national conflict from applying. The government position would therefore seem more reliable because it is specific to the Moroccan context. However, the government has a lot to gain from misconstruing the situation of the Amazigh Movements. Considering the government control of the press and historic maneuverings by the monarchy (Freedom House 2018, Amazigh World 2016, Menin 2014), it is difficult to trust the full validity of the depictions of the complete stability of the Amazigh question. This may serve
primarily to maintain Morocco’s reputation as the most stable and progressive country (World Bank 2018). The ruling Party of Justice and Development (PJD) in the Parliament and the monarchy have little to gain from acknowledging internal conflict, so they would not emphasize any perceived conflict. The theoretical and official perspectives both have some weaknesses, so neither is significantly more credible. To ascertain a clearer perspective on the Amazigh question in Morocco, I travelled to Morocco to conduct interviews with university professors, former IRCAM researchers, and university students. These interviews dealt with Amazigh Movements of the past and their demands, the impact of the 2011 Constitution, and the likelihood of future Amazigh Movements.

This research employs an observational, qualitative case-study that is structured as a single-case holistic study that employs interview data. Observational studies are based on collecting data on the observable world through various data collection when experiments are not possible because of the presence of uncontrollable variables (Esterberg 2002, Weiss 1994). Qualitative research is more geared towards determining underlying causes and assessing patterns as opposed to quantitative data that is more investigative than statistical (Esterberg 2002, Weiss 1994). The scope of this research extends to the situation of the Amazigh Movements in Morocco and can in some ways be extrapolated to ethno-national research more broadly.

The core method used to fulfill this study was semi-structured interviews (also known as in-depth interviews) (Esterberg 2002, Weiss 1994). Eleven interviews were conducted as conversation style communications between the researcher (myself) and university professors, former IRCAM researchers, and university students. The desired flexibility was achieved by conducting interviews with an interview guide that provided questions and probes that were geared
towards answering and understanding several research questions. Each interviewee had different knowledge and experiences, so semi-structured interviewing allowed for greater information gathering on the most relevant discussion points. Professors, students, and researchers were selected for this study because they are most accessible to outside research and because they likely possess a more robust understanding of the political situation in Morocco.

Participants for these interviews were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Instead of trying to achieve a representative sample, I focused on deriving the most information possible from a smaller sample group that is more knowledgeable about the research topics. Snowball sampling was used to connect to interview participants through contacts that have already been established. This technique started in Fez and led me to Rabat and connected me to professors and students in both cities.

I interviewed five university students, three university professors, and three former IRCAM researchers who are now university professors. Each of these groups provided distinct perspectives on the Amazigh Movements of the past, the impact of the 2011 constitutional reforms, and the current and future situation of the Amazigh Movements. Youth participation in politics in high in Morocco, so the perspectives of university students is important for exploring the development of politics. University professors provide perspectives on the academic discourses surrounding the Amazigh question in Morocco. Somewhat more divorced from politics, university professors focused on linguistics, culture, and history as the means for understanding the Amazigh community. IRCAM researchers work very closely with the Amazigh question too but have direct access to discourses from the government and Amazigh activists that pass through IRCAM.

---

2 Interview guide can be found in the Appendix on page 47.
Combining these three sets of perspectives grants access to more diverse interpretations of the Moroccan situation.

Conducting interviews in Morocco did pose certain difficulties, but I was nonetheless able to collect a rich pool of data. The most evident block was the language barrier. Most Moroccans start off speaking either Moroccan Arabic or Tamazight until attending school where they are taught Modern Standard Arabic and later French. English is a much more elective language. This issue was avoided through purposive sampling because academics are much more likely to speak French or English fluently. Beyond language, I faced some difficulties with the Moroccan culture. When discussing controversial or taboo subjects, Moroccan culture dictates a more closed off approach when in public or around strangers. During interviews, I realized that the political nature of the Amazigh Movements is one of those taboo subjects (discussed further in the following section), so I had to work harder to gain the trust of interviewees and work up to these topics. I addressed this by ensuring their anonymity and structuring questions so that they could be answered as an observer while still revealing personal beliefs. One way that this is done is through removing gender in the discussion of interview responses and using they/them/their pronouns for all interviewees. Overall, I was successful in forming a connection with each interviewee. As a result, I collected a rich pool of data that robustly answers my research questions.

Once interviews were completed, recordings of each interview were transcribed and used for content analysis. Ten of the eleven interviews were recorded, so the eleventh was not included beyond this point. I used purposive coding to identify common themes in the transcripts. For this research, I selected four topic questions to focus on for the coding process. 1) How do Moroccans/Amazigh people self-identify? 2) What demands remain from past Amazigh Movements? 3) What factors determine a person participation in the Amazigh Movements? 4)
Could a large, organized Amazigh Movements return? I identified quotations from each of the interviews that referenced these topics and created four separate documents in which I found patterns to answer these questions. The robust nature of the interview data within a qualitative study allows me to identify patterns and their underlying causes that will be further explored in the next section.

**Interview Analysis**

In this section I will explore the patterns that arose from coding. These patterns reveal both the situation in Morocco as well as some underlying influences. During coding, I focused on four central questions: 1) How do Moroccans/Amazigh people self-identify? 2) What demands remain from past Amazigh Movements? 3) What factors determine a person participation in the Amazigh Movements? 4) Could a large, organized Amazigh Movements return? After delving into each of these questions and their answers, ethno-national theories and the state line can be discussed in greater depth and compared to on the ground perspectives. The interview responses provide compelling perspectives on each of these questions and the Amazigh question in Morocco.

*Moroccan identities*

Initially, I intended to use responses about identity as a lead in that would color the interview, but the responses themselves formed a pattern about Amazigh and Arab people in Morocco. When asked about their experiences with the Amazigh people in Morocco, several interviewees provided noteworthy responses. Five interviewees defined their Amazigh identity using language and every interviewee discussed language to some degree. They each expressed their linguistic identities in different ways, but language was always central. “I am a native speaker of one of the varieties of Amazigh…” “I was born in a region called Rif…I started speaking the Berber language from the very beginning and that’s it…” “I’m Amazigh myself so, I was born
one. So, growing up I was speaking the language. It was actually the only language that I spoke until the age of 15.” “I am Moroccan, I am Arab, I am Amazigh, I am anything you want to, but still, I go to school, and I study in a language that is not only locally or nationally known, but that is universally known.” “I’m born to a bilingual family and in a bilingual environment…” These responses show that language is very important to the Moroccan identity and Amazigh community. If one speaks a dialect of Arabic, they are considered Arab. If one speaks a dialect of Tamazight, they are considered Amazigh. Identity becomes much more complex when those languages start to overlap too. Language was the most referenced tool of self-identification above ancestry, culture, and region of origin.

Alone, this finding means little, but in the context of the Amazigh question, it is substantial. The main demands of past Amazigh Movements were cultural and linguistic and the main successes of the 2011 Constitution were linguistic reforms. Language is at the heart of the Amazigh question in Morocco just as it is at the heart of Amazigh identity. The Amazigh ethnicity presents unique customs, traditional dress, ceremonies, holidays, cuisine, historical figures, and much more; however, language is what most defines the Amazigh.

This poses the question of which came first, the language-based identity or the language-based movements. Each feed into the other but could potentially prevent each other from advancing. If the Amazigh linguistic identity is solid, can an ethno-national movement successfully advocate for non-linguistic issues? This would be a good question for future research, but for now, the connection between language and identity is quite impactful on the advancement of the Amazigh question.
Another significant issue for the progression of the Amazigh Movements is what demands remain after 2011. The crux of any movement is the igniting issue, but does that issue remain for the Amazigh Movements? The last major Amazigh Movement was the February 20th Movement in 2010. As stated above, the government claims to have completely satisfied this movement’s demands in the 2011 Constitution. I investigated whether any demands remain by asking how things have changed since 2011 and what demands are being raised by small movements. Despite claims from the government, interview responses were near unanimous in claiming that not enough has been done and that several demands have not yet been addressed.

Eight years ago, the government drafted a new Constitution that held the initiatives to address all of the February 20th Movement’s demands; however, these initiatives have resulted in little concrete change since then. Nine interviewees stated that either nothing has changed since 2011 or that much more needs to be done. Many of them felt that “…the only change that [we] see is in the banners. They’re adding the Amazigh language beside Arab and French, but in fact…nothing has changed…” In terms of the Tamazight language which is central to Amazigh identity, one interviewee stated that “The Amazigh cultural and language are still unrepresented, very unrepresented in the [media].” What this seems to speak to is the number of symbolic gestures made by the state that have not resulted in concrete reforms. The government has installed signage in Arabic, French, and now Tamazight on all public buildings. Parliament has been working on establishing the CNLC, but this have produced little concrete reform. While many Moroccans believe that these are great strides for the Amazigh community, their impacts are significantly weakened when no translators are available in those public buildings and no plans have been
finalized for the CNLC after eight years of debates. Of course, no reforms can be brought forward if the people cannot decide what concrete reforms actually are.

Interviewee 2 highlighted precisely this division among demands within the Amazigh Movements. They believed that no central demands exist, so an overarching movement could not be achieved. They articulated that:

…historically, the Amazigh Movement was somehow cohesive and unified, but right now there are so many factions and groups. It’s very hard for me to conceive of the Amazigh movement in the singular form… [It’s] to the extent that sometimes you can find movements based locally. They’re not known nation-wide.

This is a possible argument for why a unified movement has not yet returned even if issues remain. While only one interviewee expressed this opinion, it’s worth noting and other interviews would struggle to identify a single set of demands.

However, this proved not to be the case. Each of the other interviews uncovered that linguistic reforms are still at the heart of the Amazigh question and that a few other issues have risen to join them. Since the beginning of the Amazigh Movement, linguistic reforms have included standardization and implementation. IRCAM has worked diligently to largely accomplish the first goal, but implementation has only been moved forward by the officialization of the Tamazight language. Beyond officialization, no organic laws have done anything to expand the place of the Tamazight language. Unfortunately, officialization has resulted in little impact on linguistic issues. “So, even if there was an official language in 2011, the decline of the teaching of Amazigh in different schools… did not change which means that officialization did not really mean much for issues like these.” For several crucial issues, officialization produced no concrete changes. Seven interviewees explained that the largest block to the spread of Tamazight is the lack of interpreters. “…the rules are there but… it will take a long time for implementation… but
implementation takes a longer time because… there are lots of people who suffer because of the lack of interpreters like in the hospitals for example or in the courts there are people who speak only Amazigh and they are tried.” The absence of state interpreters has a direct negative impact on the Amazigh community. Until the government follows through on implementing the Tamazight language, the Amazigh people will suffer. One interviewee shared an anecdote about their mother who lives in the United States. They described how when their mother went to the hospital she was quickly provided an Arabic interpreter. This was somewhat surprising for a Moroccan because “… Arabic is not an official language in America, but she had this right [to an interpreter]. Her doctor understands what she needs… in Morocco, Amazigh is an official language and we still don’t have the right to [an interpreter]. This just shows how there’s a long way to go…” Because people are blocked from having interpreters, it is incredibly difficult for them to have access to public goods and services or fully participate in society. “They aren’t given fair trials because the judge didn’t understand them or misunderstood them. Also, operations in hospitals.” Public buildings may be labeled using the tifinagh script, but once inside, Tamazight is nowhere to be found.

Another main focus for the next phases of implementation is in education. Every single interviewee mentioned education and nine of them suggested that it needed to be improved. IRCAM and the Ministry of Education have been working together for over a decade on producing curricula for the teaching of Tamazight in primary schools. While these programs exist, they are not being implemented by any extent. One interviewee had worked with IRCAM on producing textbooks for primary school curricula. He expressed some frustration because “…it’s not just enough to write these textbooks and to put them on shelves and to take them to schools.” Neither Parliament nor the Ministry of Education have made Tamazight curricula mandatory, so many
schools opt out. “[Tamazight] is not taught at all primary schools. Private schools do not have to teach it and so on. It’s not a compulsory subject.” Because of a general lack of qualified instructors and Tamazight speaking teachers, the Ministry of Education does not require the teaching of Tamazight in primary schools. Curricula beyond primary school have yet to be developed by IRCAM and the Ministry of Education which continues to prohibit the spread of the language. This stagnation in the teaching of Tamazight has become a central focus of Amazigh activists since 2011. Eight years later, education is an issue that was referenced constantly in interviews. “…the very basic is education. And it has to change the educational system in order to give the professors or the educators their rights in order to be an activist in this sense.” “…the state has to do something… We should start teaching both histories. The history of the Amazigh people should be seriously part of the syllabus textbooks.” “The introduction of Amazigh in education is still very very slow and I don’t think much money is invested in this. I don’t think there’s a real political will to do something about this.” “Education which has the tendency to preserve or to even force Arabic and French at the expense of the Amazigh language. So, if you are Amazigh, you go to school, you study in Arabic and French.” Education remains an incredibly relevant issue for the Amazigh question. Each interviewee referenced how important education is developing the language and that the government needs to be more committed to furthering reforms in this area. Implementation in education would essentially foster a fully bilingual country which would hugely satisfy all linguistic demands that could ever arise from the Amazigh question.

Without adequate education programs at any level, Tamazight continues to stagnate among regular citizens and among professionals. Another result of the lack of interpreters has been the inclusion of new demands from the Amazigh Movements. Interpreter shortages are felt hardest in everyday institutions like schools, hospitals, and courthouses. Without Tamazight interpreters,
Amazigh people have greatly reduced access to education, healthcare, and criminal justice. Even though the issue at hand is the lack of interpreters, Amazigh activists have used this as a bridge to discussions on the lack of universities and hospitals and the unequal execution of the law. Peppered throughout the interview responses were references to these kinds of demands. Five interviewees discussed healthcare, eight indicated a need for more universities, and two mentioned courthouses. “… [the Amazigh regions] are sad because they don’t have infrastructure. They lack hospitals [and] universities because that region has seen a war between the Spanish…” “…they are calling for hospitals, universities. They are calling for the attention of the state in order to give them their rights.” “They don’t have a university, they don’t have hospitals, they don’t have anything, and I think they are discriminated, really discriminated.” The same refrains were heard in separate interviews for universities and hospitals that have seemingly gone unheard by the government. For other institutions, the Amazigh are not simply neglected but restricted from justice. “…in the courts there are people who speak only Amazigh and they are tried. They aren’t given fair trials because the judge didn’t understand them or misunderstood them.” These new demands merit consideration because they mark a shift in the linguistic and cultural nature of demands in the past. A new set of demands that relate to Moroccans more generally could serve to grow the Amazigh Movements in the future.

The appearance of these demands has a major baring on the official state line and the theoretical approach to the Amazigh Movements. The government claims that the demands of the February 20th Movement were adequately addressed in 2011, but some issues at the heart of all Amazigh Movements remain. The 2011 Constitution provided the initiative for broad integration of the Tamazight language, but the organic law has not been developed. The actions of the government are best described as stagnant. The appearance of issues related to healthcare and
criminal justice that affect all Moroccans is also noteworthy because of how it relates to Lecours’ (2000) theory. Lecours posits that ethno-national movements are more successful when they are civically motivated and use ethnicity as a rallying point for issues that affect all people regardless of their ethnicity. Healthcare, justice, and education are precisely those kinds of issues. It is possible that future iterations of the Amazigh Movements will become civically motivated instead of ethnically motivated.

The possible shift in motivations along with the uniformity of the remaining demands also reveals that the small movements and dispersed activists could merge into a larger movement because they have a central rallying point. Even if the movements are fractured, like Interviewee 2 suggests, education reforms and interpreter programs could serve to unify them. The small, regional movements have a common heart. Education, interpreters, healthcare, and equal application of justice all fall back on the demand for the government to develop comprehensive Tamazight language programs. Linguistic rights continue to hold together the Amazigh Movements even now.

**Movement participation**

The remaining demands present the potential for continued development of the Amazigh Movements, but an equally important topic is how people decide whether to participate in the movements. In considering responses, I did not find a common reason that Moroccans choose to participate in these movements, but I did find surprising reasons not to participate. In general, interviewees did not directly participate in past or current Amazigh Movements, and the two who did were motivated by personal experiences. The reasoning that seems to put off many Moroccans is quite curious: politics. Moroccans seem to have distinct rhetoric for distinguishing movements. Several times during interviews, I was asked to clarify whether a question was in reference to
social, cultural, or political movements. Upon analysis, I noticed that the interviewees described political movements quite differently from the other two.

Social and cultural movements are closely related and are generally accepted by the Moroccan people. The two interviewees who had participated in past or current movements defined these movements as primarily cultural. For the Amazigh Movements, being cultural or social means focusing on cultural and linguistic rights which tend to be the focus of all Amazigh Movements. During one interviewee’s high school and university years, “[The Amazigh association] had cultural weeks, we organized protests and lectures, and we defended of course, cultural linguistic rights.” According to them, these were the actions of a cultural movement. Cultural movements are generally accepted by the state but still face some opposition from other activist groups.

Conversely, political movements seem to be largely rejected by the Moroccan people and the state. “One category is extremists. They are mainly in Europe… they are having political demands, but the people that are living in Morocco, they are not having political demands. They are just talking about cultural demands…” During interviews, I assumed that all movements were inherently political because they called on the government for reforms and rights, so I often referred to politics. When I would reference politics, the discussion always led to condemnations of extremist groups. “…I’ve been interested in the Amazigh cultures and languages, which means what concerns me is the cultural and linguistic rights in the first place. What relates to politics might not be my concern. I don’t agree with a number of people within the movement itself.” “…from the social point of view, I’m a Moroccan, but from the political, that’s really something that I think about from the academic side.” “…I haven’t participated in any political movement, but in order to mention a point here is that there are some Amazigh people who are very fanatic,
and they are not patriotic in this sense.” Political movements seem to be considered to be extremists and terrorists in Morocco. Simple rhetoric can easily damage the reputation of a movement as illustrated by one response. When discussing the Rif Hirak, they said that “Unfortunately, they had fair demands, but they have resorted to call it an Amazigh Movement above anything. Personally, I do not think they can be called that way.” They continued to explain that an Amazigh Movement is too sectarian and inherently political, so regular Moroccans cannot support it. They supported the Rif Hirak until it was called an Amazigh Movement and become political.

The line between cultural and political movements is quite thin. The media can easily push a movement over the line into politics which can make them too extreme. For many Amazigh activists, this has been an issue when they call for a political party. This move is explicitly political and expressly prohibited by Article 7 of the 2011 Constitution; therefore, these activists are extremists. “…there have been no Amazigh ethnic parties at all. It’s a party for the people and everybody in Morocco, whether they can speak Tamazight or not can join the party.” This narrow rhetoric allows for the state to block down movements from direct involvement in the political process. The movements cannot become engaged unless they lose their defining characteristic. The Rif Hirak Movement is right on this line. Organizing protests and defending cultural rights line up with what one interviewee described as the actions of a cultural movement. However, the Rif Hirak has been branded a political movement even though its leaders did not start making political demands. The actions of the movement did not change when it became known as a political movement, but the government used the new extremist rhetoric to arrest the movement’s leaders for being sectarian (BBC 2019). The distinction between cultural and political seems to only exist in rhetoric, but it can mean the difference between state recognition and state roundups.
To avoid crossing this line, some Moroccans avoid the movements all together. As explored in the previous section, nine of the interviewees believed that not enough has changed since 2011 and all of them could identify where change was needed. Despite this, only two of them had ever participated in the Amazigh Movements. Being labeled an extremist in Morocco is very dangerous. Many Moroccans can remember the Years of Lead when the regime’s political adversaries were disappeared, and the current democratic regime is still largely under the control of the monarchy.

Among those who do choose to engage with the Amazigh question, there is a further divide. Academics and activists are both very involved in the development of the Amazigh question from different perspectives. University professors and IRCAM researchers described how they felt that they were part of the movements even without protesting or joining Amazigh associations. One researcher said in his interview:

…I am involved in the movement indirectly. One of the criticisms that I’ve received from one person who is really involved in the movement is that everybody doing any Amazigh studies, linguistics, or whatever should be in the movement. And then what I said is that I am in the movement but from a scientific perspective in the sense that I am very committed to my work and that my job does not require me to work on Amazigh law…

Being indirectly involved from the movements is an easy way to avoid becoming political, but as this person’s friend criticized, “everybody doing any Amazigh studies… should be in the movement.” By relying on scientific involvement, more people can be involved in the Amazigh Movements, but they are much less visible and do not call for things like reforms to law. “…I’ve been interested in the Amazigh cultures and languages, which means what concerns me is the cultural and linguistic rights in the first place. What relates to politics might not be my concern.” Even if all researchers are involved in the movement, they remain distinctly separate from other
factions of the movements. Additionally, the bulk of Amazigh research is conducted at IRCAM, which is a government institution. Indirectly involved people are coopted by the government which gives the government greater control over the Amazigh Movements. This too is a fine line between serving and detracting from the Amazigh Movements.

Involvement in the Amazigh Movements is quite complex because the movement can be cultural or political and people can be involved directly or indirectly. Only two interviewees were directly involved in Amazigh Movements and only one claimed to be indirectly involved. The rhetoric surrounding these movements seems to be succeeding in pushing extremism onto the Amazigh Movements and scaring off potential members. But, as suggested by the protests in Rabat after the Rif Hirak sentencing, Moroccan activists are not accepting the extremist rhetoric and the Amazigh Movements continue in spite of it.

Future of the movements

The final set of coding was done to identify patterns in the likelihood of another major Amazigh Movement. Towards the end of each interview, I inquired as to whether another Amazigh Movement could occur like those of the past that impacted the entire country. Each interviewee had a different response and reasoning. Only one interviewee said that a movement could not occur based on his understanding of the current situation. This was interviewee 2 who was discussed earlier as not believing that any demands remained either. On the other end of the spectrum, two interviewees said unequivocally that there would be another movement. All of the other interviewees fell somewhere between them each believing that another movement could happen for one reason or another.
Two main reasonings explain why another Amazigh Movement could happen in the future. The first reasoning is stagnation. Six interviewees referenced this general idea as a reasoning for future movements to arise. Because several issues remain unresolved after 2011 and the government has begun to stagnate on those issues, another movement could arise to address them. “There will be another movement because many people in Morocco nowadays are not accepting this idea of life conditions.” “…Amazigh people have rights… So, these [movements], they don’t come out of the blue. It’s because the Amazigh movement could mobilize people and it is still mobilizing people.” Until the Amazigh Movements’ demands are fully satisfied, the potential for a resurgence remains. This reasoning would suggest that movements are a tool that can be used when politics is not functioning satisfactorily. Of course, that movement cannot be expressly political without facing other issues.

The second reasoning is generalization of the movement. Three interviewees expressed a belief that an Amazigh Movement could only become sizable if it became general enough to include all Moroccans. “We need to speak as Moroccans, we need to speak for the benefit of all Moroccans. We suffer from the same thing and we will face the same destiny so, it should be a nationalist discourse and not an ethnic discourse…” “And only if the movement is general and not Amazigh because really Amazigh are located in specific places, so, it’s easy to contain them… But if we have an uprising that includes all people, I feel that we will have different comportments.” They believe that because the issues that are affecting the Amazigh affect all Moroccans, the focus is best represented by a unified Moroccan public. Working as a single people gives the movements greater strength and keeps them from fracturing. This rhetoric somewhat relates to the origins of the February 20th Movement which formed when the Amazigh Movements merged with Democratic Spring movements.
Another commonly referenced theme was the structure that a future movement would take. Five interviewees singled out youths as the future of the movements. One student stated that “The movements are young people. Youths are the ones who are suffering from these conditions…” In 2011, Morocco’s youth populations rose up to demand democracy and triggered major change in the country through the February 20th Movement. One of the lasting impacts of youth movement in 2011 is the youth quota in Parliament (Vairel 2018). Since then, young people have remained highly involved in politics and according to interviewees, young people are integral to the future of the Amazigh Movements.

Another aspect of future movements is their digital sides. The influence of the internet is felt all around the world, but in North Africa, the internet is especially known for its part in the Democratic Spring. Five interviewees discussed the importance of the internet and social media for current and future movements. Social media is an effective way to spread information in a country with state-controlled media. One interviewee explained that Amazigh activism cannot be seen in the state media because “Most of the Amazigh activism is taking place on these platforms. Facebook, Instagram.” Social media offers an unrestricted space for activists to share and develop their ideas with Amazigh people in Morocco and elsewhere around the world. The internet is an easy place for political dissent that can reach a large audience. “…Facebook in morocco is the party of those who don’t have a party.” Even in the absence of a platform, social media facilitates the spread of ideas. The internet played a significant role in organizing the Democratic Spring in countries across the Middle East and North Africa, so many believe that it will continue to be a part of future movements.

Beyond the reasonings and structures of a future movement, the most compelling patterns that arose were related to a spectrum that I created to categorize stances. The spectrum starts with
the most conservative stance which is that another Amazigh Movement could not happen in Morocco. Then next few were interviewees who seemed the most critical of past and present movements and narrowly believed that another Amazigh Movement could happen if it lost the ethnic rhetoric. Around the center of the spectrum were the three interviewees who speculated that a movement could happen if it became general enough for all Moroccans. Finally, on the most liberal side of the spectrum were the two interviewees who unequivocally believed that another movement would happen. This spectrum was constructed primarily on each interviewee’s belief that another Amazigh Movement could occur. No pattern lined up with the reasoning that they employed in this spectrum; however, when I considered other demographics and responses, additional patterns arose. The three most conservative responses came from the only three interviewees who identified as Arab and the next most conservative emphasized his mixed heritage. The two most liberal interviewees were the two who had participated in Amazigh Movements before. The university students were clustered towards the ends but were neither of the most extreme.

This spectrum was quite surprising but can be used to reveal some possibilities for the Moroccan situation. It seems to suggest that those who identify as Arab are more critical and less supportive of the Amazigh Movements. This makes sense considering that ethnic rhetoric might exclude many Arab people. This separation between Arab and Amazigh people in North Africa was the birthplace of the Amazigh question and continues to be relevant even in contemporary discourses. The stronger support of those who have been involved in past movements makes sense too. The Amazigh question likely feels more personal to these people and they can understand exactly what issues trigger participation in a movement, so they would want to believe that another is possible. The extreme ends of the spectrum have more intuitive explanations, but the placement
of university students was unexpected. Students were generally more extreme than their professors, but on both the liberal and conservative ends. As stated above, young people represent an important demographic in Moroccan politics, yet this analysis would suggest that they are not unified in their stances on the Amazigh Movement. This division is very important for the future of the Amazigh question if young Arab and young Amazighs are on opposite sides of this spectrum. The Amazigh question cannot advance if young people remain highly divided on the issue. A resolution cannot be achieved until general consensus is reached on the Amazigh question in Morocco.

**Conclusion**

This study considers three distinct perspectives on the Amazigh question and the situation of the Amazigh Movements in Morocco. Comparing the position of ethno-national theories (Giuliano 2006, Lecours 2000, Lijphart 2004, Shcherbak and Sych 2017) and the state’s official position provided numerous contradictions to the Moroccan situation. Ethno-national theories predict small, regional movements that will grow because of the government’s handling of them (Giuliano 2006, Lecours 2000, Lijphart 2004, Shcherbak and Sych 2017). The government seems to believe that the Amazigh Movements ended when their demands were satisfied in the 2011 Constitution. When compounded with the rich pool of interview data, the situation started to become clearer. University professors, university students, and former IRCAM researchers provided a more robust perspective on the complexities of the Amazigh question. It is clear that the Amazigh Movements are far from over with a variety of remaining demands. Although, future movements may be tempered by the threat of being labeled as extremist. Opinions on the future of the Amazigh Movements run the gambit of reasoning and support, so the people remain divided on the merits of another movement.
In general, interview responses discredit the official state line. The government claims that the movements ended with the new Constitution because all of their demands were satisfied. The existence of small movements, like the Rif Hirak, that identify as Amazigh Movements shows that some demands remain to be satisfied. The central demand that was identified also does not bode well for the government position. The general agreement is that the government is responsible for the stagnation of the Tamazight language. Clear linguistic demands remain that have been at the heart of the Amazigh Movements for decades and have not yet been satisfied. However, the government position fits with the division of cultural and political movements. The Moroccan state media plays a major role in delegitimizing rising Amazigh Movements that could threaten the government. These movements are labelled as political extremist to prevent them from growing. The common rhetoric used here is to categorize them as political movements which leads to less public support. Because all political and many Amazigh Movements are political, they are also labelled as extreme; therefore, the government does not recognize these groups and actively prosecutes them to scare off potential new members. The government only sees extremists, so no movements legitimate movements exist. The government cannot eliminate the remaining demands, so the Amazigh Movements cannot be fully removed. Mixing the government position with interview data greatly delegitimizes the government position, but also explains some of the divides presented in the responses.

The theoretical explanation combines with interview data to show how the Amazigh Movements could be growing in the near future. At the moment, small regional movements are organizing in rural Amazigh regions which is in line with perspectives derived from Lecours (2000) and Giuliano (2006). Interview trends reveal that this could be changing as the movements continue to develop. The inclusion of education, healthcare, and criminal justice suggest that the
Amazigh Movements are becoming civically motivated. If all Moroccans can be attracted to these movements, then the movement would be better able to grow. The main focuses of the Rif Hirak were unemployment and education which all Moroccans are interested in (BBC 2019). Of course, the division of interested parties between activist and academics could reveal the validity of Shcherbak and Sych (2017). They explain how the state can weaken ethno-national movements by bringing parts of the movement into the government. Many of those involved in exploring the Amazigh question pursue their work on IRCAM payroll while under the supervision of the state. Perspectives derived from Giuliano (2006) would likely detract from the possibility of a large movement mobilizing again because the Amazigh communities continue to inhabit relatively underdeveloped regions in Morocco. Urban Moroccans, especially the Arabs, are not fully behind the small rural Amazigh Movements. However, interview responses still line up with Giuliano’s theory because the current movements are focused on gaining resources from the central government for universities and hospitals. Ethno-national theories are highly present within the Moroccan situation but cannot fully predict its future because of the complicated nature of Moroccan identity and the interwoven government involvement that impact the Amazigh question.

The government has not been able to accurately assess the situation of the Amazigh question but has nonetheless stalled its development. For the Amazigh Movements to advance substantially, they would have to unify on their demands which seems to already be happening. The newer iterations of the movements are also focusing on civic issues which would serve to attract broad support. Next, the movement would have to avoid the media rhetoric that portrays it as political and extreme. If politics and extremist rhetoric can be overcome, the Amazigh Movement would likely return to demand concrete and comprehensive reforms from the
government. The Rif Hirak and the protest in Rabat show that the Amazigh question is far from answered.

**Further research**

This research is significant because it considers two perspectives that are available to researchers around the world and continues to explore their validity considering contemporary Moroccan perspectives. This allows for a more robust understanding of the Amazigh question in Morocco because it comes directly from the people who have been around these movements. An in-depth understanding of the Moroccan situation makes predictions on the country’s future more possible too. The Amazigh Movements will likely return in coming years if the government does not act. This project also contributes to the field of ethno-national studies by examining existing research and providing information about ethno-national conflict in Morocco.

The unique situation that is posed by Morocco is one that should be studied further. The relationship between the government and the Amazigh Movements has a strong impact on the state of the country that has not been adequately studied. This study was limited by access funding and location that could all be improved for a more comprehensive study. Every year, IRCAM conducts further research into the state of the Amazigh people that could be of use to further research in the field of ethno-nationalism. Going forward, studies could examine how the Parliament functions in this relationship to build a body of organic law, how the monarchy balances personal and national identity, the relationship between the Amazigh linguistic identity and the linguistic movements, and how IRCAM acts as an intermediary between the Amazigh Movements and the government. Hopefully these studies can help to produce a more robust and complete understanding of the situation of the Amazigh people and Amazigh question in contemporary Morocco.
Appendix

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview # _______ Interview Date _______

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I am very interested in learning about your experience. As a participant in this study, you retain the right to refuse any question and end the interview at any time.

1. What has been your experience with Amazigh people in Morocco?
   Do you often interact with Amazigh people?
   What do you think the general perception of them is?

2. Have you had any interactions with movements in the past?
   What made you (not) want to participate?
   How did the movement start?
   Can you describe what happened throughout the movement?

3. What were the demands from these movements by the Amazigh people?
   What do you think led to these demands?
   Do you agree with those demands?

4. How have things changed since then (2011)?
   Have there been big changes in your community specifically?
   How do you view these changes?
   Do you think these changes came about because of the movements?

5. What do you think of the new constitution and the listing of Tamazight as an official language?
   Do you know many people who speak Tamazight?
   What do you think of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture?
   How important were these changes?

6. Do you think the demands have been adequately met? If not, do you think another movement is possible?
   What demands haven’t been met?
   What do you see as preventing them from being met?
   What makes you believe that another movement is (not) possible?

7. Do you think that the Amazigh movement could mobilize again? Why or why not?
   How do you think this movement would be structured?
   Who do you think will be most involved?
   What goals do you think it could achieve?

8. Is there anything else you would like to add or think we did not cover about your experience with the Amazigh movements in Morocco?
Citations


De Bel-Air, Françoise. 2016. “Migration Profile: Morocco.” European University Institute and Migration Policy Centre


Hume, David. 1748. Of the Original Contract.


