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The Arab Spring Abroad: Mobilization among Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni Diasporas in the U.S. and Great Britain

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The Arab Spring Abroad:
Mobilization among Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni Diasporas in the U.S. and Great Britain

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Dana M. Moss

Dissertation Committee:

Distinguished Professor David A. Snow, Chair
Chancellor's Professor Charles Ragin
Professor Judith Stepan-Norris
Professor David S. Meyer
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2016

DEDICATION

To my husband William Picard,

an exceptional partner and a true activist;

and to my wonderfully supportive and loving parents,

Nancy Watts and John Moss.

Thank you for everything, always.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

FSA	Free Syria Army
ISIS	The Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham, or *Daesh*
NFSL	National Front for the Salvation of Libya
PDRY	The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PYD	Democratic Union Party (a Syrian-Kurdish faction)
SAC	Syrian American Council
SNC	Syrian National Council
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YCA	Yemen Community Association
YRDF	Yemen Relief and Development Foundation

LIST OF FIGURES

v

LIST OF TABLES

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Last but not least, this work would not have been possible without the support of my family, including Will Picard, who cheered me on even as I abandoned him each summer to do fieldwork (*shukran habibi*), Nancy Watts, John Moss, Linda and Larry Broun, and Kate and Don Picard. I know that Linda Broun, who passed away in 2014, would have liked to have seen this work finished very much. She would have called me up to sing in her wonderfully dry-witted way, "now you can get a haircut, and get a real job!

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Moss, Dana M. and David A. Snow. "Distant Authority Structures and the Attribution of Blame: Activists vs. Superpowers."

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Arab Spring Abroad:
Mobilization among Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni Diasporas in the US and Great Britain

By

Dana M. Moss

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Chair: Professor David A. Snow

In 2011, the Arab Spring revolutionary movements that erupted across the Middle East galvanized supporters in the diaspora to work collectively for regime change and relief at home. Existing theories argue that diasporas residing in democratic states possess the requisite political opportunities and resources to mobilize on behalf of their home-countries and intervene in significant ways. However, this explanation cannot account for why diaspora movements only emerge and play a role in home-country crises under certain conditions. This dissertation therefore investigates 1) how members of the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas in the US and Great Britain mobilized to support the 2011 uprisings, and asks 2) why the pace of their public *emergence* as regime opponents, their degree of intra-movement *solidarity*, the strength of their *roles* in the revolutions, and the short-term *outcomes* of their efforts varied significantly by national group. In order to explain this variation, this study analyzes three sets of data using grounded and process-tracing methods: 240 original interviews; ethnographic participant observations of Syrian-American pro-revolution events; and secondary sources on the diasporas and the revolutions.

The findings demonstrate that diaspora mobilization dynamics are shaped by multi-level and relational factors that not only include political opportunities in the host-country, but also conditions in and diasporas' relations with relevant actors in the *home-country*—including sending-state regimes and opposition movements—and relevant *third-parties*, such as journalists and international institutions. I find that quotidian disruptions to any one of these conditions and relations produce corresponding changes in the strength and longevity of diasporas' collective actions. This study also demonstrates that activists overcome obstacles to transnational mobilization posed by hostile external conditions when they divert resources to establish full-time formal advocacy organizations. Though this strategic adaptation constrains their tactics, movements that do not make this adaptation are likely to die off. The establishment of a transnational organizational field also improves the capacity of diasporas to pursue rights and recognition in both the home- and host-countries over time. I conclude by discussing the theoretical implications of these findings for the study of social movements, diasporas, and conflict.

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, a tidal wave of protests known as the Arab Spring swept across the Middle East and

North Africa, producing a cascade of revolutions that shut down city streets, dethroned dictators,

and sparked civil wars. By spring's end, mass protests in Tunisia and Egypt had forced their

pharaoh presidents to resign, Bahrain's sit-in movement lay crushed under the weight of Saudi

tanks, and Jordanian and Moroccan demonstrators had struck a tacit détente with their kings. At

the same time, revolutionaries in Libya, Yemen, and Syria persisted, facing prolonged and

bloody standoffs against ruling regimes that had repressed dissent for decades through

isolationism and violence. Yet, the dynamics of contention that emerged during the Arab Spring

were not constrained by state borders or confined to the region alone. As the revolutions brought

new forms of hope and horror to the fore, these conflicts sent shockwaves across the world that

galvanized Middle Eastern diasporas into action. Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis living abroad

mobilized to an unprecedented degree for regime change and humanitarian relief at home during

this period, channeling important forms of attention and resources to their compatriots under

siege.

On its face, it is not especially surprising that members of these diasporas worked

collectively to support the revolutions from afar. Countries such as the US and Britain had come

to host a sufficient number of disgruntled exiles and émigrés before the Arab Spring who were

ideally poised to advocate against home-country dictatorships. Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis

had gained the requisite freedoms afforded by their settlement in democratic states to lobby the

governments of two major world powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security

Council on matters of the home-country. Many also possessed useful forms of social capital,

including English-language capabilities—the *lingua franca* of global communication and expertise—with which to express their anti-regime grievances and demands in the media. Many elites and professionals also had the means to channel or acquire resources needed by their co-nationals in crisis during the uprisings, from cash to bulletproof vests and medical supplies. In all, these conditions provided what theorists of extra-institutional politics call the requisite "political opportunities" for members of the diaspora to mobilize social movement organizations against their home-country regimes from abroad and have an impact on the ground, both before and during the 2011 uprisings.

Yet, in spite of these facilitative conditions, a closer examination of anti-regime mobilization among these three diasporas presents several puzzles, summarized in Table 0.1 below. First, in the decade preceding the revolutions, exceedingly few activists and social movement groups in the Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni diasporas had mobilized publicly against the regimes. Despite holding intermittent demonstrations here and there, *no member-based organizations or lobbies existed among these groups in the US and Britain when the uprisings broke out*. This begs the question *why* these diasporas were so significantly *under*-mobilized before the Arab Spring when members had the requisite anti-regime sentiments, resources, and opportunities to engage in collective actions against their home-country regimes.

At the onset of the uprisings in 2011, members of these diasporas worked collectively to oppose their sending-state regimes and to support the calls of opposition movements in the home-country for social, political, and economic change. However, significant differences in the character of their emergence and intra-group dynamics raise further questions. First, why did *the pace* of their public emergence as revolution supporters vary widely between the diasporas? For while the Libyan diaspora transformed from being largely un-mobilized to producing numerous

2

protest events and forming lobbying and aid organizations within days of the uprising, Syrian

activists only gradually came to voice their support for the revolution over the course of the

uprising's first year and beyond, and Yemenis did not come out en masse to profess their pro-

revolution demands until almost two months into the uprising at home. The question remains as

to why members of these diasporas varied in the timing of their "coming out" as anti-regime

collectivities when their home-country uprisings presented early and urgent impetuses to launch

public opposition movements.

TABLE 0.1: Variation in Diaspora Mobilization before and during the Arab Spring

Diaspora	Pre-2011 Mobilization	Emergence after the Revolution's Onset	Degree of Solidarity	Overall Role in the Home-Country Crisis over Time
Libyans		Rapid (within days)	Strong	Strong over time
Syrians	Weak	Gradual (over the 1st year)	Weak	Strong *but increasingly constrained* over time
Yemenis		Delayed (within weeks)	Weak	Weak over time

Furthermore, each of the anti-regime diaspora collectivities experienced *varied degrees

of solidarity* during this period. For instance, while pro-revolution Libyans attested to being

united by a newfound nationalistic solidarity, Syrian and Yemeni activists reported being

plagued by in-fighting and hemorrhaging supporters as their respective revolutions unfolded. So

why, then, did the Arab Spring produce a heightened degree of unity between the Libyans while

stoking factionalization between Syrians and Yemenis when *all* participants were united in their

opposition to home-country regimes?

Lastly, the *roles* played by collective actors in their home-country revolutions varied

significantly between the diasporas as well. The Libyans and the Syrians, for example, played a

number of vital roles as auxiliary forces in the revolutions, both as direct contributors to the

effort and as intermediaries between parties to the conflicts. However, unlike their Libyan counterparts, the scope of the Syrians' activities came to be increasingly limited as the revolution and ensuing conflict wore on over time. The Yemenis, on the other hand, played a weak role in the revolution for its duration, and many activists lamented that they had failed to live up to their potential to help their compatriots at home. In short: why did only some anti-regime diasporas make a difference on the ground?

In summary, this dissertation addresses the following questions:

- Why was the state of public, organized opposition to their home-country regimes so weak among the three diasporas in the US and Britain prior to the revolutions?

- Why was the Arab Spring a catalyst for the transnational mobilization of these national communities, and what factors caused significant variation in their emergence, unity, and roles in the home-country crises over time?

- What effects did the episodic emergence of diaspora movements to support the Arab Spring have on their political activism more generally?

Besides bringing attention to the cross-border effects and dynamics of one of the most notable protest waves in recent history, these questions also speak to broader theoretical debates about social movements, transnationalism, and diaspora politics, which I address in turn below.

Mobilization Beyond Borders

The study of transnational politics has expanded rapidly in the forty-five years since Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane (1971) argued that understanding the cross-border interactions of non-state actors is essential for understanding the character of contemporary politics. Though the rise of transnational social movements[1] is not a wholly new phenomenon (Maney 2000), the increasing ease with which populations can connect and communicate in real time across the

globe has made transnationalism an increasingly prevalent characteristic of collective action. Correspondingly, a growing field of inquiry has brought attention to the fact that social movements often transcend their proximate contexts and extend across national borders in substance and style (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998; McCarthy 1997; Smith 2008; Smith and Johnston 2002; Tarrow 2005). From minorities mobilizing for their rights, to laborers looking to secure their livelihoods, to multinational coalitions protesting neoliberal economic policies, movements often draw on foreign partners and transnational principles to lodge claims and pursue their goals (Bob 2005; Keck 1995; Smith 2001, 2004).

Social movements can act transnationally in different ways, such as when they join forces with international organizations and institutions in order to try to regulate behavior of states, corporations, or other authorities. As Keck and Sikkink's (1998) seminal work on transnational advocacy networks demonstrates, ties between local movements, international institutions like the U.N., and international non-governmental organizations grant activists leverage by bringing attention to their grievances and demands that are often suppressed by censorship, discrimination, and repression at the local or national levels. Because their opponents often wish to avoid exposure and censure, transnational advocacy networks are often effective in mitigating abuses by "naming and shaming" relevant authorities (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007; Moss 2014). As such, these transnational ties present movements with an *internationalized* set of political opportunities (Tarrow 2001, 2005)—i.e., a relatively stable set of political conditions that facilitate activism—that help them to overcome domestic political constraints. As a result, local movements that engage in "scale shift" (Tarrow 2005) by moving their claims from the local to the global can gain critical assistance, particularly when allies abroad channel aid to dissenters suffering from a lack of resources and rights (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Movements also become transnational when they form horizontal networks of like-minded coalitions aimed at addressing a common cause (Ayoub 2013). Social movement groups spanning the globe, such as religious, feminist, LGBTQ, labor, and environmental movements, that are united by common aims often work together as members of transnational networks. Social movements working on different issue areas also form transnational coalitions when previously disparate movements come to be unified in their grievances over issues ranging from the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to the neoliberal policies of the World Bank (Meyer 2005; Smith 2008). The transnationalization of mobilization is important, therefore, not only because collective actors separated by geographical distance forge solidarities over shared grievances and demands, but because their globalized efforts at social change (or preventing some change) can launch significant interventions against perceived injustices and fuel contentious politics taking place far from where activists themselves reside or claim citizenship.

Migration is another important mechanism prompting the formation of transnational social movements, albeit one that has been largely neglected in the study of mobilization.[2] When populations are dispersed across borders due to hardships experienced in their countries of origin, they resettle abroad and often become a diaspora. While the term diaspora is most commonly associated with expelled and exiled ethno-religious groups such as the Jews and Armenians, definitions of diasporas have increasingly come to include other populations deprived of their home-countries or territories for reasons ranging from violent repression to dysfunctional economies (Bauböck 2008; Tölölyan 1991). Generally, groups are considered diasporas if they maintain some degree of political, social, emotional, or economic ties to or identification with their country-of-origin (Brubaker 2005) and with one another. At the same time, the formation of a diaspora is not an automatic outcome of migration; it is also the product

6

of mobilization efforts by advocates and institutions that seek to amplify identity-based characteristics, bind members of a territorially-disjointed people together (Bauböck 2008), and produce "imagined" communities (Sökefeld 2006).

Members of diasporas become transnational activists and launch transnational social movements when they seek to mobilize for the "transformation of home" (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Adamson 2002), and they do so in a number of ways. Diaspora members form advocacy organizations and interest groups to lobby for foreign policy changes in the host-country (Ambrosio 2002; DeWind and Segura 2014; Haney and Vanderbush 1999; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Vanderbush 2014), and engage in extra-institutional forms of dissent ranging from launching protests and petitions to covertly funding insurgencies at home (Adamson 2013; Byman et al. 2001; Cederman et al. 2009; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fair 2005; Hockenos 2003; Orjuela 2008; Wayland 2004). When natural disasters or violent conflicts erupt in the home-country, diaspora movements often respond by publicizing, or "externalizing," these events (Tarrow 2005) to raise awareness and urge third-parties to intervene, as well as channeling remittances in the form of fungible aid and material goods to their family members, communities, and political factions at home.

For these reasons, scholars of international relations have raised concerns over the potential for transnational diaspora movements to become powerful players in home-country politics and intra-state conflict (Adamson 2002; Brinkerhoff 2011; Hockenos 2003, Fair 2005; Koinova 2011; Shain 2002, 2007; Sheffer 2003; Smith and Stares 2007; Wayland 2004). Diasporas, and particularly elites residing in democratic states, are often better-resourced and politically-empowered than their counterparts at home, and as a result, their interest groups and organizations have the ability to unduly influence home-country policy and to speak for the

broader national community in problematic ways. As Benedict Anderson (1998, p. 74) argues, the mobilization of these long-distance nationalists "creates a serious politics that is at the same time radically unaccountable" because they "need not fear prison, torture, or death, nor for his immediate family. But, well and safely positioned in the First World, he can send money and guns, circulate propaganda… all of which have incalculable consequences in the zones of their ultimate destinations" (see also Hockenos 2003). Diasporas can also play a disproportionate role in shaping host-country government policies on their home-country. The influence of Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi and the exiled Iraqi National Congress in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, for example, exemplifies the dangers of exiled elites' self-interested politics (Vanderbush 2014). The role of these outsiders in local conflicts, therefore, has become a subject of increasing interest to analysts of transnationalism and conflict.

The Limitations of Existing Accounts

Despite the contributions of the aforementioned literature, existing theories are ill-equipped to account for variation in the emergence and dynamics of transnational diaspora movements. Firstly, while researchers claim that diasporas residing in democratic states have the requisite freedoms and resources to mobilize transnationally and in significant ways, this cannot explain why they only do so at certain times and in specific places. The predominant analytical tendency to analyze cases of large transnational protest events and prominent diaspora interest groups while neglecting weak or missing cases of mobilization has led scholars to overstate the ease and frequency of transnational mobilization.[3] As a result, we lack adequate theorization as to why populations who are primed[4] to act transnationally and equipped with requisite grievances and resources to do so only launch collective campaigns under certain conditions. Furthermore, we know little about the different ways in which diasporas mobilize to intervene in

the home-country, or the conditions under which their efforts come to make any difference. As such, variation in when, why, and how diasporas mobilize transnationally and the relative significance of their efforts warrants comparative empirical and theoretical attention.

Secondly, while existing studies demonstrate that political opportunities in diasporas' countries-of-settlement shape and facilitate their mobilization, studies have neglected to fully account for how the diasporas' political contexts are also "multi-level" (McAdam 1998). All transnational movements, and especially those of immigrants and diasporas, are simultaneously embedded (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) in the political, social, and economic contexts of the place where their activism is "rooted" (Tarrow 2005) and the place where activists seek to instigate change. This necessitates systematic analysis of the political contexts in the diaspora's home-country or territory-of-origin (Guarnizo et al. 2003), as well as how the geopolitical relations between the host- and home-countries influence diaspora mobilization. Yet, despite overwhelming acknowledgement in the social movement literature that political contexts matter in shaping the emergence of collective action (e.g., Eisinger 1973; McAdam 1982; McAdam et al. 2001; Meyer 2004; Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1998), theories of mobilization have overwhelmingly neglected how the *layering* of diasporas' political contexts and changes to them over time impact their emergence and roles as transnational activists.

Thirdly, diaspora and immigrant groups are not homogenous actors with an inherent proclivity for collective action. Though diasporas are conceived as being united by common biographical or ancestral origins, their identities also vary according to their membership in other sub-national groups, such as ethnicity, religion, political group, city, hometown, and region-of-origin.[5] These varied identities are likely to impact transnational mobilization dynamics in important ways. For example, immigrants sometimes mobilize as co-nationals to hold collection

drives for disaster relief or to celebrate national holidays, but they may work collectively on the basis of other shared characteristics at other times in ways that eschew a national identity (Guarnizo and Díaz 1999). Violent conflicts in the home-country also impact co-national relations when they hamper the degree of trust and cohesion between diaspora members (Guarnizo et al. 1999; Guarnizo et al. 2003). As a result, we cannot take for granted instances when co-nationals come to mobilize *as* a national community and stand united behind a common call for change at home. Instead, the conditions under which they come together as "long-distance nationalists" (Anderson 1998) or fragment into competing sub-national groups warrants further theorization.

Lastly, though Keck and Sikkink (1998) demonstrate that movements' embeddedness in transnational advocacy networks shape their dynamics in important ways, existing studies largely ignore diasporas' relations with relevant third-parties. Like social movements in the home-country, diaspora movements are extra-institutional actors who are unlikely to act as powerful long-distance meddlers simply as a product of their resources and political opportunities. Instead, as political process theorists suggests, diasporas' relationships with a range of allied institutionalized actors and elites will shape their strategies and efficacy during heightened periods of contention (Bob 2001; McAdam 1982, 1996; Meyer 1990, 2004). As such, far more attention is needed to understand how other players in their given "field" of strategic action (Fligstein and McAdam 2012), including their home-country compatriots and third-party authorities with the capacities to intervene in the home-country, shape diasporas' roles during crisis periods. Understanding diaspora movements as *embedded* in a set of networked relations (Emirbayer 1997), rather than as atomized actors, is critical to understanding their dynamics as they unfold over time.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

In light of the existing shortcomings outlined above, this dissertation addresses the conditions

under which diasporas mobilize to address conflicts and produce change at home. Specifically, I

explain why the state of their public, organized opposition to home-country regimes was so weak

among Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis in the US and Britain prior to the revolutions; why the

Arab Spring was a catalyst for the transnational mobilization of these national communities;

what factors caused significant variation in their emergence, unity, and roles in the home-country

crises over time; and how this episode of transnational mobilization shaped the diasporas' fields

of collective action in revolutions' aftermath. In so doing, I extend and refine existing theories of

social movements, transnational contentious politics, and diaspora mobilization in several ways.

A Multi-level Relational Model of Diaspora Mobilization

In contrast to prior studies that have under-accounted for and oversimplified diaspora

movements, this study proposes a multi-level relational model to explain when, how, and why

diasporas work collectively to address political and humanitarian crises in their home-countries

(see Figure 0.1 below). This model serves as a corrective to existing approaches in several ways.

First, it demonstrates how diasporas are simultaneously embedded in multi-level political

contexts and sets of relations that work in concert to shape their mobilization dynamics in

meaningful ways (Koinova 2009, 2012). This includes political conditions and relations in the

home-country, the host-country, and with third parties active in home-country conflicts. Second,

this perspective accounts for the fact that these conditions and factors are dynamic, such that

significant changes to any one of these contexts or set of relations over time will influence the

character of diaspora mobilization abroad. Third, this model shows that though diaspora

11

mobilization is influenced by external conditions largely outside of activists' control, activists

can make specific tactical adaptations that enable them to persist and make a difference under

hostile conditions. Finally, this study contributes to theories of movement outcomes by attending

to the effects of episodic transnational mobilization of diasporas on their advocacy more

generally. I explain the utility of this approach and outline my theoretical expectations below.

FIGURE 0.1: A Multi-Level Relational Model of Diaspora Mobilization
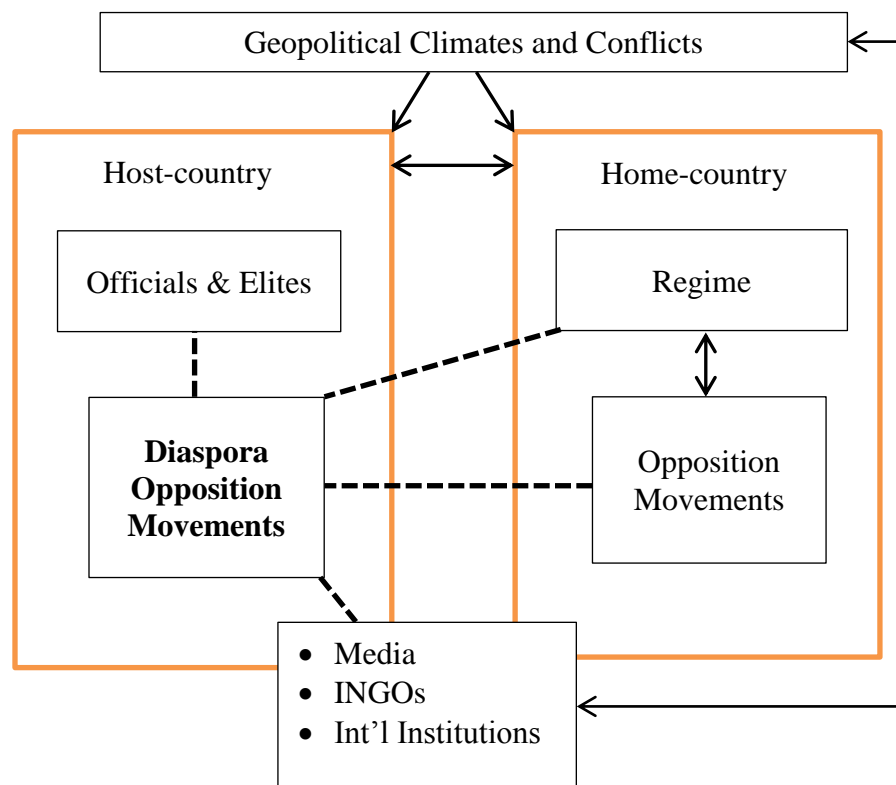
Host-Country Conditions and Relations

      The multi-level relational model first proposes that diasporas' countries-of-settlement and

"contexts of reception" matter greatly in shaping their propensities for activism and the

emergence of social movements (Guarnizo et al. 2003).[6] For diasporas from authoritarian states,

resettlement in democracies provides fundamental opportunities for mobilization by émigrés and

exiles to promote identities and lodge claims against repression and discrimination in the home-country. In so doing, these diasporas join the "social movement society" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) by forming community associations, ethnic lobbies, and social movement organizations, as well as by engaging in protest and lobbying activities. Furthermore, when governments implement policies favorable to immigrant incorporation, as in the case of British state support for Yemeni Community Associations, they facilitate the formation of what Doug McAdam (1982) calls "indigenous" organizations. These structures can serve as incubators for collective action during periods of abeyance (Taylor 1989) and be converted into structures for mobilization under certain conditions (McCarthy 1996; Noonan 1995).

The mobilization of diasporas is not only contingent upon broad contextual opportunities to form social movement groups, however, but also whether diasporas have allies among government officials and elites at the local or national levels (Amenta 2006; McAdam 1996; Meyer 1990). When diasporas and political elites in the home-country experience "frame alignment" (Snow et al. 1986) on matters of the home-country, activists are likely to be incorporated as advisors and supporters to officials on matters of the home-country. In other words, when government representatives consider a diaspora's home-country as a policy priority and agree with activists over relevant foreign policy approaches, diaspora movements are likely to become their advisors and partners. When state actors do not wish to intervene on matters of the home-country or disagree with diaspora movements on appropriate responses, activists may still be able to meet and discuss their demands with officials on a periodic basis, but will not be politically *incorporated* into policymaking structures or come play a role as intermediaries between their allies at home and host-country governments.

At the same time, how accommodating host-country governments and their officials are to diaspora movements is also shaped by the broader geopolitical conflicts in which diasporas and their host-country's foreign policies are embedded. Hostile relations between states can prompt receiving countries to proactively foster the "voice" (Hirschman 1978) of dissidents from antipathetic states, as in the case of anti-communist Russian and Cuban exiles in the United States. On the other hand, when immigrants and diasporas become affiliated with inimical political movements or actors, their social movements may face domestic repression, as in the case of migrant communist movements in France during the Cold War (Miller 1981). In the post-September 11th War-On-Terror environs, the geopolitical climate is largely shaped by the ongoing war against Islamist extremism, and this affects Muslim and Arab transnational advocacy in important ways. As Chaudhary (2015) demonstrates, stigma against the transfer of resources by Pakistani aid organizations to their home-country has significantly limited organizers' abilities to fulfill their humanitarian missions. This study proposes that when diasporas' transnational activism becomes affiliated with threatening ideologies or movements, such as Islamic extremism, and suspect populations abroad, collective actors that are relatively free to mobilize in their country of settlement will face an increasingly hostile domestic environment and be subjected to oversight, blockages, and repression.

Home-Country Conditions and Relations

Just as political conditions and relations in the host-country impact diaspora activism in important ways, so too do the political conditions in and their relations with the country-of-origin. Accordingly, this study proposes that authoritarianism in the home-country does not merely *produce* diasporas, but that illiberal regimes *interact* with their nationals abroad in ways that are neither passive nor benign. Regimes that are uniformly intolerant of dissent at home are

also likely to view dissent in the diaspora, whether real or imagined, as threatening for both ideological and tactical reasons (Brand 2006; Miller 1981; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001). As a result, regimes with the propensity and capacity to engage in what I call "transnational repression" (Moss forthcoming) can undermine the oppositional mobilization of diaspora communities in direct and indirect ways, such as by holding diasporas' significant others hostage at home. As such, this study brings needed to attention to how authoritarian forms of social control and repression at home undermine the expression of political "voice" after "exit" (Hirschman 1978).

Political conditions in the home-country can also have mobilizing effects on diasporas, however, during "quotidian disruptions," which Snow et al. (1998) define as ruptures in the taken-for-granted routines and attitudes of everyday life. Such disruptions may result from natural or man-made crises, such as when states engage in heightened campaigns of violent repression against their opponents in ways that violate normative expectations of state behavior (Hess and Martin 2006; Loveman 1998; Moore 1978). Quotidian disruptions in the home-country can therefore produce a heightened impetus for members of diasporas to intervene. At the same time, such crises at home will be insufficient to stoke rapid and public collective actions when diasporas are subject to other obstacles to mobilization. For example, a spike in state repression at home will not automatically induce widespread anti-regime mobilization when members of the diaspora perceive that doing so could incur significant costs to themselves or their family members in the home-country. In order to produce public opposition movements by the previously un-mobilized, quotidian disruptions must either lower the *expected* costs of mobilization from abroad or change diaspora members' *willingness* to incur anticipated costs. By examining the ways in which diaspora mobilization is mediated by their relational ties to persons in the home-country, therefore, I propose that the pace at which these transformations occur will

correspondingly impact the pace at which members of diasporas "come out" to address emergent political crises at home.

The character of political conflicts as they unfold over time is also likely to shape intra-movement dynamics among the anti-regime diasporas as well. For though quotidian disruptions such as revolutions can stoke nationalistic solidarities and increase shared grievances, they can also produce and heighten social "fault lines" between the aggrieved (Kretschmer 2013: 443). This is because even when collective actors come to share the "diagnostic frames" that identify problems warranting remediation, they may not agree over "prognostic frames" proposing *solutions* to these shared problems (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988). In this way, shared *diagnostic* frames do not always produce shared *prognostic* frames for *what* is to be done and *who* should lead the charge. In revolutionary situations, a lack of consensus over the solution to the problem of the regime is likely to produce corresponding conflicts among both home-country movements and their supporters in the diaspora. Additionally, those who observe their compatriots at home being marginalized or victimized by their fellow oppositionists are also likely to splinter or withdraw their support from opposition movements abroad as well. In all, though episodes of contention can stoke widespread anti-regime sentiments, these same conflicts can also stoke mistrust and increase the salience of sub-national political, religious, ethnic, and regional identities, fomenting factionalism and the splintering of diaspora activist groups.

The relative strength of the roles that diaspora movements play during acute crises in the home-country will also be significantly shaped by conditions in the home-country and their relations therein. First and foremost, diasporas' roles are likely to vary in accordance with their ties to activists working on the ground. When they are able to gain and maintain these ties, both

16

sides enter into a working relationship; activists at home will come to rely on members of the diaspora to perform tasks that are difficult or impossible to do from the inside, and diasporas will depend on their insider contacts to provide information and to act as recipients for the resources channeled in from the outside. I also propose that diasporas' roles in the home-country will be elevated when quotidian forms of regime control at home are significantly threatened, thereby disrupting normative conditions that have blocked their transnational mobilization in the past.[7] Under these conditions, diasporas are more likely to be able to channel resources to their compatriots and to serve as volunteer support force on the ground when they have access to contested or liberated space. However, when these two conditions—ties to activists at home and access to freed space—are not present, diaspora activists will be unlikely to have a directed impact, and their sense of disconnection from home-country crises may lead to demoralization and demobilization over time.

Third-Parties in Activists' Strategic Action Fields

Extending previous research on transnational advocacy networks (Bob 2001, 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Tarrow 2001), the multi-level relational perspective also accounts for the effects of diasporas' networked relations with other actors in their "strategic action field" (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). In addition to the importance of host-country government officials and activists on the ground, I propose that diaspora movements will be unlikely to play a significant role in contesting perceived injustices and humanitarian crises in the home-country unless other third parties, such as journalists, non-governmental organizations, and officials in international institutions, are willing to launch their own direct interventions into conflicts. These actors are likely to incorporate members of the diaspora into their interventions, relying on them to provide interpretation, information, and contacts on the ground. Without such interventions,

17

diasporas can still launch protests from the outside, but will not come to play a role as intermediaries between third parties and revolutionaries. By accounting for the fuller range of third parties on the scene, my perspective demonstrates how diasporas' relations with other actors in these fields of contention shape their roles over time.

Activists' Organizational Adaptations

Finally, though the multi-level relational model asserts that diaspora movements are shaped in large part by external conditions and relations, their collective actions are also impacted by how activists read their environments (Khadivar 2013; Kurzman 2004) and the degree to which they adapt their strategies and tactics to confront obstacles to mobilization (Amenta 2006; Clemens 1993; McCammon et al. 2008; McAdam 1983). Accordingly, I theorize that when political conditions become hostile and activists' relations become frayed, their movements are more likely to be "viable"—that is, to persist over time and mount regular collective action campaigns (Cress and Snow 2000)—if their leaders take on the role of a full-time professionalized core (Edwards and Marullo 1995; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Meyer 1990; Minkoff 1999; Zald and Ash 1966). Beyond enabling movement survival (Sawyers and Meyer 1999), this organizational adaptation also expands movements' capacities to work consistently over time and to respond to events occurring in real time. It also establishes accredited channels for populations to accrue and transfer resources to conflict zones abroad, which is particularly important when such transfers across borders become suspect in the eyes of host-country authorities. Without the formation of formalized and professional mobilizing structures, collective actors facing significant environmental hurdles and prolonged crises are unlikely to be able to overcome resource exhaustion and combat repressive oversight by domestic authorities.

This is not to say that the formalization of social movements is a seamless process that promotes uninhibited mobilization. Scholars of professionalized social movement organizations have long held that formalization often places significant restrictions on activists by imposing bureaucratic regulations and rules that limit the tactics they can use and inhibit their efficacy to assist their constituents (Jenkins and Eckert 1986; Michels [1911] 1962; Piven and Cloward 1979). We should therefore expect corresponding effects on diaspora movements. Even so, it is unlikely that diasporas facing hostile external conditions and resource shortages over time will be able to persist without making this adaptation. I therefore propose that diasporas who divert precious resources into building an organizational field led by full-time advocates and professionals will be more successful in pursuing their political and charitable goals over time than those who do not.

The Short-term Effects of Episodic Transnational Mobilization on Diaspora Politics

Scholars of mobilization have increasingly called for analytical attention to movement outcomes, arguing that collective action can have a variety of intended and unintended effects that matter for activists and the broader field in which they operate (Amenta et al. 2010; McVeigh et al. 2004). By examining the emergence and dynamics of diaspora movements, this study not only addresses the conditions under which diaspora movements matter for the home-country during periods of crisis, but also how the episodic transnational mobilization of diasporas during heightened periods of contention broadly impacts diaspora politics and their visibility as constituencies.

This study first proposes that the transnational mobilization of diasporas during conflict periods can prompt activists to broaden their demands to other related issues, such as demanding a post-conflict political voice in the home-country. Because changes in political conditions at

home continuously impact their collective actions over time, transitional periods in the wake of conflict can present windows of opportunity for diasporas to assert their political membership and citizenship in the home-country. Additionally, activists may continue organizing as interest groups in their receiving states in order to demand that their home-country remain a policy priority. However, in keeping with my argument above on organizational adaptation, I propose that the diaspora will need to invest in the formation of formal advocacy organizations in order to pursue these goals over time.

Second, the transnational mobilization of diasporas can also facilitate their mobilization as *domestic* constituents worthy of rights and protection. When home-country conflicts stigmatize diasporas and immigrants, for instance stereotyping Latinos as gang members and drug traffickers or Muslims as religious fanatics and terrorists (Chaudhary 2015; Guarnizo et al. 1999), the formation of transnational advocacy organizations can help diasporas develop the requisite capacity to combat domestic discrimination. This is because organizations with a full-time cadre of advocates working on behalf of home-country crises are also likely to defend the diaspora from stigmas that hinder their mobilization. As a result, they are likely to proactively push for changes to host-country policies that discriminate against diasporas and their compatriots in the host-state, such as policies opposed to refugee resettlement. As a result, diasporas that develop the capacities to address the challenges of transnational mobilization are also likely to develop the capacity to become vocal and visible advocates for their rights in the host-country.

Third, I propose that diaspora movements demanding changes in the country-of-origin can also motivate activists to organize for corresponding changes within the diaspora itself. Movements for liberal social change, for example, may compel activists in the diaspora to import

the principles and lessons of these movements into the diaspora community abroad, such as by contesting community norms that marginalize the political participation of women and youth. While some theories of globalization suggest that Western-based culture and institutions diffuse abroad to produce social change in less developed and non-democratic countries (e.g., Meyer and Jepperson 2000), I propose that this process is iterative, and that calls for democratization and rights by populations in so-called Third World contexts can spur calls for change among populations in the developed West as well (McAdam 1998).

Lastly, even when mobilized diasporas are unable to make much difference on the ground in their home-countries, they can continue to raise the profile of home-country causes when the cause comes abroad to *them* (Tarrow 2005). Specifically, when home-country elites travel abroad to meet with host-country officials and make claims to the international community, diasporas can correspondingly mobilize to support or condemn these elites in ways that internationalize their grievances and shape their contexts of reception abroad. Furthermore, diaspora groups who are limited in their abilities to assist the home-country may work episodically to galvanize attention when their allies or opponents from the home-country come to the US or Britain. In this way, even a diaspora that is relatively isolated from the home-country can still mobilize in ways that bolster the visibility of home-country elites in both positive and negative ways and raise the profile of home-country causes.

Research Design, Data, and Analytical Procedures

In order to understand the emergence, dynamics, and outcomes of anti-authoritarian diaspora movements, this project employs a comparative case analysis (Ragin et al. 2004) to investigate the mobilization of Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diaspora groups across the US and Britain before and during the Arab Spring revolutions.

21

The primary data used consist of 234 in-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted with activists in the diaspora who led or participated in pro-revolution groups and organizations, including those who were identified by their peers as having contributed in a significant way to the revolutionary and/or humanitarian effort. I also contacted six other respondents who lent valuable insights into diaspora community and mobilization dynamics but who did not fit precisely into my targeted sample population, such as a Lebanese-British head of a Syrian humanitarian organization, an Anglo-British member of the Yemen desk at Chatham House in London, and two Libyan-Canadian activists who worked closely with activists in the American and British diasporas, among others. Overall, I conducted 240 interviews; 92 interviews for the Yemeni case in 2012, 69 interviews for the Libyan case in 2013, and 79 interviews for the Syrian case in 2014. I used selective sampling in order to maximize variation (see Lofland et al. 2006, p. 93) by targeting individuals of different immigrant generations and varying ethnic and religious identities, exiles and non-exiles, and women. See Table 0.2 for a breakdown of the sample's descriptive characteristics. This produced approximately 300 hours of digital "tape" (only a handful of interviewees declined to be recorded) and well over 2,000 pages of single-spaced transcribed pages for analysis.

TABLE 0.2: Interviewees' Characteristics

| | Case: | | |
Descriptors	Libya	Syria	Yemen
TOTAL INTERVIEWEES	**69 (100.0%)**	**79 (100.0%)**	**92 (100.0%)**
Non-members of the diaspora	*2 (2.9%)*	*3 (3.8%)*	*1 (1.2%)*
Sex (all respondents)			
Male	45 (65.2%)	61 (77.2%)	65 (70.7%)
Female	24 (34.8%)	18 (22.8%)	27 (29.3%)
Age at revolution's onset (all respondents)			
15-24[b]	15 (21.7%)	20 (25.3%)	22 (23.9%)
25-34	26 (37.7%)	21 (26.6%)	38 (41.3%)
35-44	14 (20.3%)	23 (29.1%)	18 (19.6%)
45-54	13 (18.8%)	14 (17.7%)	10 (10.9%)
55+	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.3%)	4 (4.3%)
Host-country (all respondents)			
US	38 (55.1%)	51 (64.6%)	34 (37.0%)
UK	28 (40.6%)	26 (32.9%)	58 (63.0%)
Both	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Other (e.g., Canada)	3[c] (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
MEMBERS OF THE DIASPORA	**67 (100.0%)**	**76 (100.0%)**	**91 (100.0%)**
Immigrant generation			
First[a]	48 (71.6%)	58 (76.3%)	68 (74.7%)
Second	19 (28.4%)	17 (22.4%)	22 (24.2%)
Third+	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.1%)
Minority status within national diaspora			
Ethnic minority	4 (6.0%)	7 (9.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Religious minority	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Southern Yemeni heritage	--	--	25 (27.2%)
Total	4 (6.0%)	10 (13.1%)	25 (27.2%)
Active in collective efforts against regime before 2011	17 (25.4%)	16 (21.1%)	14 (15.2%)
Self and/or family forced to emigrate due to repression before 2011	34 (49.3%)	24 (31.6%)	7 (7.6%)

[a] Not all first-generation participants emigrated from the home-country directly.

All participants were legal adults when interviewed in accordance with Internal Review Board protocols (HS# 2012-8918 and HS #2012-8887, University of California, Irvine).
c Three Libyan respondents had host-countries other than the US and the UK; two were from Canada and one from Jordan. These interviews were conducted due to respondents' extensive experiences mobilizing with other diaspora activists during the revolution in the US and Britain.

I also conducted ethnographic participant observations during a total of thirty pro-revolution events in and around the greater Los Angeles area (two hosted by Libyans, and 28 by Syrian groups) that began in October 2011 and continued through November 2014. These events included protests, community gatherings such as picnics, fundraisers and awareness-raising events, and Iftar dinners during Ramadan. Participant observations provided notable insights into community dynamics and changes over time, and helped me to establish contacts across the broader community. I wrote detailed fieldnotes immediately following each of these events, which informed my guiding questions and propositions about diaspora mobilization. I then compared these propositions across communities and refined them in light of the interview and secondary-source data.

This study began with an investigation of Yemeni transnational activism in 2012 due to the sequence of this project's funding, and I chose Great Britain as a comparative country because key respondents across the diaspora attested that British activists were more active than the Yemeni-American community during the revolution. This led me to form exploratory questions as to why this variation had occurred and to investigate how the character of diaspora mobilization varied by host-country through interview-based fieldwork. As I detail in subsequent chapters, however, the findings revealed far less variation in diaspora mobilization dynamics by host-country than originally predicted. Nevertheless, the empirical comparison of diaspora mobilization across these host-countries facilitated the refinement of theoretical explanations for

transnational activism and pointed to other causal mechanisms producing similarities between diaspora movements and variations across them.

I initially located respondents through fieldwork in southern California and by contacting prominent organizations and figures who were publicly active during the revolution. These respondents often also referred me to other activists working anonymously or behind the scenes. However, though most respondents were identified through snowball sampling techniques, I was not limited to obtaining interviews through chain referrals. In order to avoid limiting my sample to particular networks or like-minded friends who might inadvertently skew the sample by religious affiliation or organizational type, I also asked respondents to refer me to other activists, movements, and organizations working on matters of the home-country even if they do not have working relations with these individuals or groups. Second, I used public online sources, including activist websites, Facebook, and media reports, to scan the scene for other visible organizations and prominent activists. In this way, the types of networks respondents were embedded in and the quality of the data were continuously monitored as I gained increasing sensitivity and in-depth knowledge of the cases over the course of the research process.[8] The interviews provide rich accounts of respondents' backgrounds, how their collective efforts began, their strategies, their challenges and perceived successes, their intra-movement dynamics, their interactions with their targets, and how their efforts changed over time.

I conducted intensive fieldwork in cities with reputations for having vibrant activist scenes, which were chosen based on my respondents' recommendations, third-party sources, and in accordance with available resources needed for travel. This required what McAdam and Boudet (2012) dub "advanced preparation fieldwork," which means that the investigator gathers as much descriptive information about the "scene" in a particular locale as possible before

entering the field. After doing so, I visited locales with concentrated communities of Libyans,

Syrians, and Yemenis across the US and Britain including the greater Los Angeles and

Washington, D.C. regions, New York City, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham,

Sheffield, and Bristol (see Table 0.3). During these trips, I was sometimes invited to attend

activists' meetings and community events and I did so whenever possible. I also interviewed

respondents by phone and Skype who were located in Bradford (UK), Michigan (Dearborn,

Flint, and Ann Arbor), Boston, New York, Chicago, Austin, Houston, Miami, and San Francisco,

as well as several respondents who happened to be living or working abroad in Turkey or Qatar

at the time of our interview.

TABLE 0.3: Cities/Regions Visited during Fieldwork for Observations and Interviews

Libyan Case	Syrian Case	Yemeni Case
Leeds, UK	Bristol, UK	Birmingham, UK
London, UK	London, UK	Liverpool, UK
Manchester, UK	Manchester, UK	London, UK
Southern CA region, US	Southern CA region, US	Sheffield, UK
Washington, D.C. region, US	Washington, D.C., US	New York City, US
Tripoli, Libya		Washington, D.C. region, US

Furthermore, because many Libyan diaspora activists had repatriated to Libya after the

fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, I also conducted fieldwork inside of Tripoli for several weeks

in September 2013 in order to locate, interview, and include these key activists in my study.[9]

And though I have studied Arabic and my respondents and I used certain key words and phrases

in our conversations, the interviews were conducted in English.[10] The interviews were

triangulated with one another and with external sources whenever possible, and I worked to

minimize recall bias and account fabrication by gauging the consistency of activists' accounts

within and across the interviews, triangulating their accounts with external sources whenever

possible, and by using an approach of outsider skepticism to prompt interviewees to explain their claims and recollections in detail.

I used several other sources to complement the original interview data, including the ethnographic fieldnotes mentioned above; public statements made by diaspora organizations; documentary films; and scholarly, think-tank, and media accounts of diaspora mobilizations and the revolutions themselves. In order to compare and triangulate diaspora mobilization with events unfolding in their home-countries, I created case summaries of each of the revolutionary conflicts in order to place the diasporas' mobilizations in context, to verify the accuracy of diasporas' claims (such as their recollections as to the timing of particular events in the home-country), and to compare how activists across different movements and geographical locations reacted to and mobilized in response to major turning points in the revolutions.

I coded and sorted the transcribed interview data according to the tenets of process tracing (George and Bennett 2004) and grounded methods (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1990). A sample of interviews across the three diaspora groups was used to derive open codes, which were then grouped and refined into focused categories using NVivo software and used to code all of the transcribed data.[11] These codes were continuously compared to the data to ensure their validity and reliability (Glaser 1965). This approach revealed how activists' actions and inactions were shaped by factors occurring at different levels of analysis over time, including social-psychological factors, their networked relations, and shifts in the conflict at home. Activists' accounts were then compared to factors beyond the micro- and community-levels in order to identify common patterns or variation within and across the cases and at the meso-level. As a result, this study systematically examines how movements are embedded in different political contexts and sets of relations with other collective actors in a given strategic action

field. By addressing cross-border dynamics of contention, this study also brings attention to previously neglected minority and immigrant groups that have remained largely invisible to outside researchers until the recent and extraordinary Arab Spring revolutions.

V. The Summary of this Dissertation

Part I of this study addresses diaspora mobilizations before the Arab Spring and their resurgence during the onset of the revolutionary uprisings in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. In Chapter 1, I describe the state of diaspora mobilization in each of the cases, demonstrating that though a facilitative political environment enabled some émigrés and exiles to mobilize against their home-country regimes on a small scale, transnational repression and factionalism weakened community solidarity and constrained the mobilization of the broader anti-regime diaspora before 2011. Chapter 2 then illustrates and explains the mechanisms that prompted an unprecedented surge in collective action among the three diasporas during the 2011 protest wave. I show how the varied pace of the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni revolutions produced variations in the emergence of the public anti-regime opposition movements abroad, as well as how the character of the ensuing conflicts produced varying degrees of unity among anti-regime diaspora activists.

Part II of this dissertation addresses how the diasporas then worked to support the uprisings that erupted in early 2011, and compares their respective roles in the revolutions themselves. It begins with an introduction that summarizes the findings in the following three chapters and the variations to be explained. Chapter 3 analyzes the Libyan case, demonstrating how and why diaspora activists were able to play a significant and sustained role in the home-country uprising over time. Chapter 4 discusses the Syrian case, showing that these diasporas worked to launch a similar set of campaigns and initiatives to their Libyan counterparts, but also

how changes to their multi-level political contexts and relational ties constrained their activism over time. However, this chapter also demonstrates that specific organizational adaptations enabled some activists in the Syrian diaspora to persist and continue playing a role in the home-country crisis despite significant obstacles. Chapter 5 then analyzes the Yemeni case, demonstrating how their multi-level political contexts and weak relations constrained the diaspora's ability to have a strong or sustained role in the revolutions in comparison to the Libyan and Syrian cases. Furthermore, I show how a lack of corresponding adaptations rendered their efforts largely symbolic and external to the uprisings at home.

In Part III, Chapter 6 investigates the short-term outcomes of transnational mobilization for these diasporas, showing how their episodic efforts during heightened conflict periods can prompt activists to broaden their demands for rights and recognition in both home- and host-countries, stoke calls for change in the diaspora itself, and shape the "contexts of reception" for host-country elites abroad. In all, this study addresses the multifaceted outcomes of the Arab Spring abroad by addressing how these conflicts transformed the diasporas' organizational fields and internal political dynamics. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, summarizes the arguments laid out in the preceding chapters and addresses the theoretical implications of these findings for the study of transnational movements, diasporas, and conflict.

CHAPTER 1

Diaspora Activism before the Arab Spring

While the Arab Spring prompted an unprecedented degree of public anti-regime mobilization among the Yemeni, Libyan, and Syrian diasporas, the revolutions did not produce activism anew. This chapter analyzes the state of diaspora movements and organizations before 2011, providing the grounds for comparison to their mobilizations during the uprisings in the next chapter. As predicted by theories of political opportunity and long-distance nationalism, I demonstrate here that some emigrants capitalized on the freedoms and resources gained by their resettlement in the West to continue their political activism after exile, while others formed associations and organizations dedicated to promoting professionalization, assimilation, and their home-country heritage.

At the same time, these diasporas were not as free to mobilize as existing theories suggest because their civic initiatives were simultaneously constrained by political conditions in and their relations to the *home*-country as well. First, this chapter shows how the Libyan and Syrian diasporas were subjected to what I call *transnational repression* by sending-state regimes, which rendered anti-regime activism a high-risk endeavor and deterred public oppositional mobilization among the broader diaspora. Second, the analysis illustrates how Yemeni and Syrian diaspora mobilization was hindered by *factionalism* related to political conflict at home, which split anti-regime diaspora members along regional, ethnic, generational, and religious lines. Both of these conditions impeded the mobilization of opposition movements abroad by fostering mistrust and fear between co-nationals, constraining the use of "indigenous organizations" (McAdam 1982) for political activism, and reproducing social fault lines abroad that divided the national

community. The first part of this chapter provides a recent historical overview of activism in each diaspora before the 2011 uprisings before turning to how home-country politics shaped and depressed oppositional politics abroad.

TYPES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION AMONG THE DIASPORAS

Before the Arab Spring, members of the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas were engaged in different types of collective actions from the US and Britain that ranged from anti-regime movements to apolitical groups dedicated primarily to the empowerment and socialization of the diaspora. In the Yemeni case only, several organizations also worked for development and charitable purposes in the home-country to a lesser extent. Several social movement groups and organizations were engaged in more than one type of activity; the groups reported in primary and secondary data sources are categorized in Table 1.1.[12] The discussion below provides an overview of these different types of collective action and the major organizations in operation before 2011.

TABLE 1.1: Social Movement Groups Reported by Interviewees

Diaspora	Politicized Groups	Diaspora Empowerment and Socialization Groups	Transnational Development and Humanitarian Groups
LIBYANS US	• **National Front for the Salvation of Libya** (f. 1981, transnational network) • **National Democratic Party** (f. unknown) • **The Islamic Group** (f. ~1978; transnational network) • **Libyan Human Rights Commission** (f. 1985, operative until 1995, D.C.) • **National Conference for the Libyan Opposition** (f. 2005; transnational coalition including NFSL and LHRC) • **Enough Gaddafi** (f. 2008, founders across different cities)	• **Libyan Association of Southern California** (f. ~ 1986, Orange County, CA)	• *None reported*
Great Britain	• **National Front for the Salvation of Libya** (f. 1981, transnational network) • **Libya Watch** (f. 1999, Manchester) • **National Conference for the Libyan Opposition** (f. 2005; transnational coalition including NFSL)	• **Libyan Women's Union** (f. 2003, Manchester) • **Libyan Youth Association** (founding date unknown, Manchester)	• *None reported*
SYRIANS US	• **Syrian American Council** (f. 2005, HQ in Burr Ridge, IL)		
	• **Tharwa Project/Foundation** (f. ~ 2001 in Syria, cont. in D.C. in 2005 due to founders' exile) • **All 4 Syria** (f. 2003 in Syria; cont. in southern CA in 2007 due to founders' exile) • **Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies** (f. 2007 or after, D.C.)	• **Syrian American Club of Houston** (f. 1991, Houston) • **Syrian American Association** (f. tbd, southern California) • **Syrian American Medical Association** (f. 2007)	• *None reported*

Diaspora	Politicized Groups	Diaspora Empowerment and Socialization Groups	Transnational Development and Humanitarian Groups
SYRIANS Great Britain	• **Syrian Justice and Development Party** (f. ~2004, London-based) • **Western Kurdistan Association** (f. 2004, London) • **Syrian Human Rights Committee** (founding date unknown, London-based)	• **British Syrian Society** (f. 2003) • **Syrian British Medical Society** (f. 2007)	• *None reported*
YEMENIS US Great Britain	• **South Yemeni American Association** (NY-based) (f. ~2006) • **TAJ - Southern Democratic Assembly** (f. 2004, HQ in London) • **National Board of South Yemen** (f. 2007, Sheffield)	• **American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals (f. ~2004 in RI)** • **Yemeni-American Association of Bayridge** (f. tbd, New York) • **Yemen Forum Foundation** (f. 2010, London) • **Yemeni Youth Association** (f. 2010, London) • **Yemen Community Associations**: - Birmingham (f. unknown) - Sandwell (f. 1997) - Liverpool (f. tbd) - Sheffield (f. 1980s) • **Yemeni Migrant Workers Organization** (f. date unknown; Liverpool) • **Yemen Refugee Organization** (f. 1999, Sheffield) • **Yemeni Education and Relief Organisation (f. ~1999, Sheffield**)	

Oppositional Mobilization and Exile Movements

Unsurprisingly, regime repression in Libya, Syria, and Yemen had forced regime opponents into exile or motivated their emigration abroad before the Arab Spring. Given a safe haven within which to live, work, and mobilize, activists-in-exile capitalized on the political opportunities bestowed by their settlement in the US and Britain to pursue anti-regime collective action and to recruit fellow nationals to their cause (see the left-hand column of Table 1.1). However, none of these exile movements had formed lobbies, formal interest groups, or public member-driven opposition associations. Instead, their initiatives remained relatively small, informal, or underground, and their organizations resembled disparate constellations, rather than concentrated clusters, of mobilized individuals residing across these two host-countries. Two anti-regime groups—one Libyan and one Syrian—were comprised of second-generation exiles who sought to distance themselves from first-generation dissident elders because they perceived that the "classic" opposition had lost its efficacy and momentum for change by the 2000s. I discuss these movements in turn below.

Libyan Political Movements

Since coming to power in 1969, Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi's brutal repression of his opponents, including student movements, communists, and Islamists, had radicalized many activists into revolutionaries and produced a variety of opposition groups by the 1980s. While almost no research has been conducted on the range of opposition movements in operation during the Gaddafi era inside or outside of Libya, the data analyzed for this study demonstrate that activist networks were operative across the US and Britain after dissidents escaped from Libya or joined to the opposition after emigration. What is arguably Libya's most well-recognized anti-regime movement, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, was founded in

1981. After many of its members were captured or killed following a failed coup in 1984, survivors were forced to flee into neighboring states, and many gained asylum in the US and Britain, scattering across places such as Missouri, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, London, and Manchester. Other anti-regime networks also worked transnationally from the US and Europe; members of the National Democratic Party, for example, circulated their grievances through the publication *Sawt Libya* (the *Voice of Libya*) from Britain and had similar aspirations as the National Front, according to a former participant interviewed for this study.

Others organized to oppose Gaddafi's brutal suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood and on behalf of an Islamist-oriented vision of social and political change in Libya. A lesser well-known opposition group, *al-Jumaa' al-Islamiyya*, The Islamic Group, published an anti-regime pro-Islam magazine called *The Muslim* from the United States. In addition, a Libyan dissident named Dr. Mohammed Abdelmalik who joined the European Muslim Brotherhood after his emigration to Manchester also founded an initiative titled Libya Watch dedicated to raising awareness of the plight of imprisoned Brotherhood members in his home-country. A small group called the Libyan Human Rights Commission was also founded in 1995 in the US by several émigrés (at least one being formerly affiliated with the National Front for the Salvation of Libya) to criticize the regime over its abysmal human rights record. Later, in 2005, members of the American and British National Front, the Libyan Human Rights Commission, and several other groups met in London to declare themselves members of a coalition called the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. Exiled activists also held commemorative public demonstrations over the Abu Salim Massacre of 1996[13] in D.C. and London in the 2000s.

According to the historical and interview-based data, anti-Gaddafi activism abroad was tempered by the Gaddafi's improved relations with the West after the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

During this period, Gaddafi agreed to give up Libya's weapons of mass destruction, and his son and heir-apparent Saif al-Islam sought to repair Libya's isolation in the international community by promising liberalizing reforms. The diaspora became a key component of the regime's plan to reestablish ties with the international community and to improve Libya's legitimacy, as many exiles received assurances by regime officials that they could return safely home. Saif al-Islam worked specifically to coax the younger generation to reestablish ties with Libya by sponsoring luxurious group trips to the home-country, and several respondents likened these trips to Israel's birthright trips for Jewish-American youth.

Some regime opponents decided to take this opportunity to pressure the regime to enact meaningful political reforms. However, this divided the opposition abroad between those who viewed reform as the appropriate prognostic solution to illiberalism at home and those who still maintained revolutionary aspirations. As former dissident-in-exile and then-reformist Fadel Lamen explained, "that was a big debate—because is my problem the regime's policies, or the regime itself? Can I work to change the regime's behavior, or I just have to work until I get rid of the head?" The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, according to member Dr. Abdelmalik, was in the reformist camp. He attested that he did not join the 2005 opposition conference as a representative of Libya Watch or the Brotherhood because:

> They said that to be a part of the conference you have to accept… that Gaddafi must go… [but] we were pragmatic. Gaddafi is a fact of life at present and if we can get something for the people and at the same time Gaddafi is still there, then we will work on that. That is why we had dialogues with Saif and others in the government hoping that we could carry out some serious reforms in Libya... But the opposition did not see that.

Saif al-Islam's efforts to woo younger Libyans further divided the second-generation youth. As Hamid Schwehdi, a young activist who had grown up in exile in various cities across the US and whose relatives had been brutalized and executed by the regime, explained, "We

always try to educate the other Libyans [about] what was really happening… We were like no,

you *can't* side with the devil. Our parents and our great grandparents are expecting us to carry

this torch." He and fellow exile Abdullah Darrat later established a social movement group

called *Khalas*, or Enough Gaddafi, in 2008 to protest the Colonel's visit to the United Nations

headquarters in New York. Their colleague and fellow exile Hend (not her real name) explained

that members of the Enough Gaddafi network were able to use their English-language skills and

tech savvy to launch a website and a "new form of opposition, the next wave of opposition." She

explained,

> We staged protests, and [published] different reports on violations going on, in particular
> focused on Abu Salim victims and the massacre and the families of those individuals. It
> was mostly important on social media, just bringing up the violations of the past 42 years,
> and documenting those and communicating those… We tried to bring that to light… to
> look back at a lot of the violations that happened in the 1980s against college students
> and those killings…. and put it into the foreground the international community should
> not be dealing with Gaddafi because he's a criminal.

These youth also perceived that while their parents' generation had given up hope or had spent a

lot of time talking and "discussing… but not enough time doing, or reaching out," as Hend

recalled, members of Enough Gaddafi sought to fill that gap and mobilize against Libya's

rapprochement with the West. This youth group was the only one of its kind in the US or in

Britain before the Arab Spring.

In sum, a number of anti-Gaddafi groups were established in the US and Britain

beginning in the 1980s, but Saif al-Islam's purported reform initiatives and outreach to the

diaspora split political groups along pro-revolution and pro-reform lines. The only known social

movement group in operation immediately before the Arab Spring, Enough Gaddafi, worked to

carry the torch of the older generation active in the National Front. However, in the years

immediately preceding 2011, the active anti-regime movement abroad was exceedingly small and lacked a formal organizational structure.

Syrian Political Movements

Like their Libyan counterparts, Syrian anti-regime political movements abroad were small in number and membership. Members of the opposition abroad included those affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which had engaged in armed resistance against the regime of Hafez al-Assad until their decisive quashing in the 1982 Hama Massacre. During this infamous event, regime forces killed approximately 20,000 residents of Hama in response to an insurrection of about several hundred fighters. As a result, many Syrian dissidents and civilians who had managed to escape were forced into exile, but no official Syrian Muslim Brotherhood branches operated abroad in either the US or in Britain. One such individual named Walid Saffour formed the oldest known anti-regime group in either country called the Syrian Human Rights Committee in London in the late 1980s. This organization was dedicated to publicizing regime atrocities committed by the regime during and since the Hama massacre by publishing reports. Dr. Saffour and other exiles also held periodic protests outside of the London embassy to commemorate the Hama event and other massacres as well.

A second explicitly anti-regime movement established by a former revolutionary was the Western Kurdistan Association, officially declared a government-in-exile by its founder Dr. Jawad Mella. Dr. Mella, a former Peshmerga fighter in Syria, established this organization to support Kurdish independence after his exile to London in 1984. Specifically, he lobbied the British government for the secession of a Kurdish-dominated region of Syria dubbed Western Kurdistan. Dr. Mella also attested to assisting Syrian-Kurdish refugees in Britain through charitable works, bringing members of the community together to form a Kurdish football team,

and housing a small Kurdish library, museum, and archive in the London neighborhood of Hammersmith that had recently closed at the time of our interview in 2014. He also maintained ties to the broader transnational Kurdish movement by representing Kurdish-Syrians in the Kurdish National Congress and displaying the Kurdish national flag at the Western Kurdistan Association's headquarters. Dr. Mella and his activist colleagues also held periodic protests outside of the London embassy and took every opportunity to speak to the media about the need for Kurdish independence from the Syrian Arab Republic.

In 2006, a transnational network of second-generation British-Syrian exiles that had previously organized informally as the Syrian Exiles League established the Syrian Justice and Development Party. Based in London, this group sought to forge an alternative to what its co-founder Malik al-Abdeh described as the two "classic" options: either the Muslim Brotherhood or communism. Its founders included a young journalist named Malik al-Abdeh, who had been in exile since his birth in Jordan because of his father's oppositional activities. This group lobbied on behalf of other exiled and stateless Syrians in the international community and founded a satellite channel called Barada TV. From London, they broadcasted prerecorded anti-regime programs with the intention of reaching audiences in Syria, which provided their fellow exiles with a unique platform to discuss the need for political change in Syria. Abdeh and his counterparts also worked to expose regime atrocities against minorities, including the violent quashing of a Kurdish uprising in the northern Syrian city of al-Qamishli in 2004.

Political activism increased among the Syrian diaspora in the 2000s during a brief and tenuous opening in autocratic rule at home. Bashar al-Assad's promises of political reform after the death of his father in 2000 brought about a new wave of reform-oriented civic activism inside of Syria. Movements-in-exile, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian Justice and

Development Party, joined activists inside of Syria to sign the Damascus Declaration in 2005. This document called for constitutional reforms, the recognition of Kurdish rights, and gradual political liberalization. The surge in hope for change and the newfound audacity of civil society leaders in Syria corresponded with the formation of new groups abroad as well. This prompted the founding of the Syrian American Council (SAC) in 2005 by several first-generation immigrants in Burr Ridge, Illinois, in order to support the burgeoning civil society movement in Syria and to promote a general dialogue about civil liberties in Syria. However, SAC members did so without explicitly criticizing the regime by name. Its founding members also attempted to set up chapters in other US cities and invited civil society activists from Syria to attend their opening event in Chicago.

However, after the regime cracked down on this emergent civil sector and the window of purported liberalization had definitively closed, many of the civil society activists who were at the forefront of liberalization efforts in Syria were forced into exile and settled in the United States, prompting another wave of political emigration. For example, Ammar Abdulhamid and his colleague and spouse Khawla Yusuf who moved to the suburbs of Washington, D.C. in 2005 due to threats by the regime. They continued their activities by establishing the Tharwa Foundation in 2007, which was dedicated to advocating for democratic change, nonviolent resistance, and minority rights in Syria. Ammar also produced a six-part series titled "FirstStep," broadcasted through the Syrian Justice and Development Party's Barada TV channel out of London, which advocated for a nonviolent revolution in Syria. Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, another prominent civil society activist from Damascus, was also forced into exile in 2007 and thereafter established the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies in D.C. Another participant in this study, Ayman AbdelNour was a former member of the Syrian Ba'ath Party who had been

forced to flee Syria after raising criticisms and calling for political change. After joining his extended family in California, Ayman established a website called All 4 Syria in Arabic dedicated to discussing political change in Syria.

Overall, the US and Britain came to host several named anti-regime organizations in the 2000s primarily headed by individual exiles, though the Syrian American Council was the only attempt to establish a membership-based advocacy organization among the diaspora during this period.

Yemeni Political Movements

In 1990, the northern Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), led by Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), a socialist republic and Soviet satellite state led by Ali Salim Al-Baydh, united into what is now recognized as the Republic of Yemen. However, the two sides then fought a civil war in 1994, and Saleh leveraged his alliances with powerful tribal confederations, the al-Islah party (Yemen's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), and jihadi groups recently returned from Afghanistan to crush southern forces. Since Saleh's victory in 1994, the south has been subjected to a disproportionate degree of repression, corruption, and neglect. When a peaceful protest movement by unpaid pensioners arose in 2007, regime forces cracked down on the demonstrators with lethal force. This escalated their longstanding grievances over northern domination, and the south has since witnessed the mobilization of various factions for the re-secession of the south under the banner of the old socialist flag.

Correspondingly, public anti-regime mobilization in the diaspora has been dominated by calls for southern secession. This includes the only known anti-regime organization operative in the US before the Arab Spring called the South Yemeni American Association, founded in 2006

or 2007. One of the group's former organizers named Hanna Omar attested that members of this group had formed in New York City to lobby the United Nations on behalf of the southern pro-secessionist movement and to hold public demonstrations.[14] Various factions within the broader pro-secession Yemeni movement have also been represented by activists-in-exile in Britain, which is host to large populations of southern Yemenis due to the UK's former colonial ties with the south. One respondent and former southern politburo member Abdo Naqeeb, for example, fled the sacking of Aden in 1994 by boat with other members of defeated government, and after settling in Sheffield, he continued advocating for the southern cause. According to Abdo, he and his colleagues engaged in lobbying efforts around 2004 and 2005 with officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Britain, as well as with members of Congress in the US. He is also a member of the pro-secessionist "TAJ", or the Southern Democratic Assembly, which established a headquarters-in-exile in London in 2004. A week before our interview in 2012, Abdo and fellow TAJ member Dr. Mohammed AlNomani had been in Cairo attending a conference of Yemeni southern secessionists led by Ali Naser Mohammed, a former member of the southern politburo who had lost to his rivals in a powergrab in 1986.[15] They explained that they were a part of a specific "current" within the former Yemeni Socialist Party, roughly translated as the "Party to Reform the Path of the Unity." So while these activists were a part of a transnational coalition of southern separatists, they were also tied to specific factions within the former leadership.

Closer in substance and style to their American counterparts in the South Yemeni Association than to TAJ or the Yemeni Socialist Party, the National Board of South Yemen, also located in Sheffield, was formed by secessionist sympathizers in 2007 to lobby and protest on behalf of south Yemen. After being invited to attend one of their meetings in the fall of 2012, I observed that their members—all men of various ages and political backgrounds, some being

communists and others unaffiliated with any of the older factions of the former Republic—

debated amicably about how to conduct a letter-writing campaign and plan a protest during then-

president Hadi's upcoming visit to London. This group also participated in larger pro-south

rallies in London on several occasions, including in 2009 and 2010, in response to visits by Saleh

regime officials. In all, the only known anti-regime Yemeni groups or organizations operating in

the US and British diasporas before the Arab Spring were dedicated to advocating for the cause

of South Yemen.

Diaspora Empowerment and Socialization Organizations

In addition to forming some initiatives for political advocacy, Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis in

the US and Britain also established groups dedicated to the empowerment and socialization of

the diaspora community (see the middle column of Table 1.1). According to respondents who

had been involved directly in the founding or operations of these associations, these groups were

intended to be strictly apolitical and were focused on meeting the social and economic needs of

the community. Some worked to promote social mobility through professional associations, and

others organized social gatherings that often corresponded with national or religious holidays. I

elaborate on these collective efforts below.

Libyan Empowerment and Socialization Organizations

Among both the Libyan-American and British diasporas, respondents named two social groups

that operated prior to the Arab Spring. The first group, the Libyan Association of Southern

California, was founded in 1986 in Orange County to host community gatherings for Libyan

families residing across the region. Founding member and regime opponent Dr. Gaddor al-Saidi

reported that the Association was apolitical even though many of those who founded it were in exile and involved in some kind of opposition activity. He recalled,

> Myself and others who organized it, we always made sure that it's open, that we don't get into the politics so that we give at least give the young people some kind of platform to have some connection their country. Hoping that one day they will go back. We were thinking that it's not going to happen in our lifetime, especially when Gaddafi's children started taking hold of the country.

In addition, Zakia ElTaib, a former NFSL activist from Benghazi who was forced to escape Libya with her husband and seek refuge in Britain in 1998, formed a Libya Women's Association after moving to Manchester in 2003. This association was dedicated to promoting women's gatherings and social activities, and also avoided any discussion of home-country politics.

While no other named community associations were located through either primary or secondary data sources analyzed for this study, Libyans across various concentrated communities reported regularly hosting informal social events, such as religious *Eid* celebrations and annual community picnics. In the US, members of the diaspora also established a camp for Libyan youth called Amal. Adam Sbita of Virginia, a former participant and second-generation exile, recalled fondly that because the Libyan community was scattered across the US, the camp provided "an opportunity for everybody to come together, for families to meet up again... This is like our Libyan family… Of course, our immediate cousins are overseas in Libya. [But] these [people] are our surrogate cousins, mothers, fathers."

Syrian Diaspora Empowerment and Socialization Organizations

Like their Libyan counterparts, Syrian respondents reported that periodic community gatherings took place across their communities in the US and Britain. But unlike the Libyan diaspora, the Syrian community also operated professional associations and institutionalized social clubs in

both countries. This included the Syrian American Club of Houston, founded in 1991. According to board member Omar Shishakly, the Club is dedicated to the promotion of Syrian culture and education and offers Arabic classes and student scholarships. Former member Belal Delati of southern California also described that the Syrian American Association was dedicated to celebrating Syrian national holidays and to helping Syrians "remember their heritage." The Syrian American Medical Association was also founded in 2007 for medical professionals. Parallel organizations operated in Britain; the British Syrian Society was founded in 2003 as a social club, and the Syrian British Medical Society was founded in 2007. Overall, these organizations were dedicated to the professionalism, education, and socialization of the greater Syrian diaspora.

Yemeni Diaspora Empowerment and Socialization Organizations

The only known organization for Yemeni diaspora empowerment in the US is the American Association for Yemeni Scientists and Professionals, founded in 2004 in Rhode Island. This association is dedicated to promoting education and the professional class, and chapters were later established among concentrated communities in Michigan and California. This was the most cited organization among the Yemeni-Americans interviewed, and according to its website, its leaders have worked to deliver education-related aid to Yemen as well. The Yemeni-American Association of Bayridge was also founded in New York in 2010, though little is known about this group and its activities; it appears to have become defunct relatively shortly thereafter.

The Yemeni community in Britain, on the other hand, hosts a greater number of community organizations due to a pro-immigrant incorporation policies and government subsidies targeting populous minority communities, including the Yemeni community. This

facilitated the establishment of Yemeni Community Associations (YCAs) by community leaders

in Birmingham, Sandwell, Liverpool, and Sheffield, which were founded to promote education

and social services for local Yemenis. Saleh Alnood, the former elected head of the Sheffield

Yemeni Community Association who had emigrated from the south in 1989 at the age of

thirteen, attested that the unification of Yemen led to the merger of north and south Yemeni

Community Associations in the diaspora:

> Up till 1990, we had two Yemeni community associations in Sheffield.[16] Unity took place and we… assumed that we had to get unified as well. So we did. It was almost like we were [part of] the establishment in Yemen, when in fact we were independent bodies. We had no connection in terms of an organization of structure or anything to do with [the government in Yemen]. But we assumed: unity in Yemen, we have to unite here.

Community organizers established several groups to assist migrants and refugees specifically.

Several community leaders in Liverpool formed the Yemeni Migrant Workers Organization,

which negotiated with the Yemeni government on issues of Yemeni emigration to the UK, and

the Yemen Refugee Organization, which was founded by a pro-southern secessionist Abdo

Naqeeb to assist with emigrant and refugee resettlement in Sheffield.

In 2010, a handful of Yemeni youth based in London also formed two groups aimed at

community-building in the diaspora. The first was the Yemen Forum Foundation; officially

established in 2010, the Foundation's three founders traveled to various Yemeni communities

across the UK with the intention of forming a UK-wide network dedicated to community

development. Awssan Kamal, one of the founding members, explained that the initial purpose

was to first connect and mobilize the Yemeni diaspora, and in so doing, to develop the capacity

to help Yemen eventually as well. The second group, led by a university-age youth named Maha

Salim, was called the Yemeni Youth Association. This informal group was founded in 2010 as

an apolitical social club for London-based Yemenis. Maha was motivated to found this group in

order to help her younger sister remain close to Yemen and get to know other Yemenis because London did not have, in her estimation, a "proper" Yemeni community.

Overall, while these organizations varied in size and scope, the British-Yemen diaspora nevertheless had a relatively robust domestic empowerment sector, while the American diaspora was mobilized primarily by one professional association.

Transnational Development and Humanitarian Mobilization—and the Lack Thereof

Immigrant and diasporas often work to transfer their newfound social capital and resources to the home-country. These projects often provide badly-needed relief to poor communities, help to fulfill diasporas' social obligations to their communities after "making it" abroad, and bolster émigrés status and roles in the home-community or country (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). Guarnizo et al. (2003), for example, find that immigrants' transnational political actions are often channeled into development and humanitarian projects for those with ties to underdeveloped home-countries with weakly-developed democratic institutions. As a result, we would expect that Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas would be engaged in collective efforts at transnational development and humanitarian aid.

However, the primary and secondary data demonstrate that *no* Libyan or Syrian groups were dedicated to development or aid in the home-country, and only a few Yemeni organizations did so intermittently. The American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals, for example, reported having donated supplies and funds to educational institutions in Yemen, and the Yemeni Education and Relief Organisation had also worked to channel aid to those at home (likely in the southern region, given the southern affiliation and ties of its founder). That said, individuals across the diaspora likely channeled remittances to their families and sponsored projects in the home-communities on an ad hoc basis (for example, donating funds to their local

hometown mosque). However, the operation of organizations dedicated to home-country development or charity were noticeably lacking in all three diasporas.

REPRESSED, SPLIT, AND BLOCKED: CONSTRAINTS ON MOBILIZATION AMONG THE DIASPORAS

Despite the mobilization of anti-regime groups, episodic protests, and community empowerment groups in the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas, this study finds that political conditions in the home-country significantly suppressed the emergence of transnational social movements in each of these diasporas before the Arab Spring through two mechanisms. The first factor was the *transnational repression* of the diaspora by the Libyan and Syrian regimes. The second was significant degrees of *factionalism* among the Yemeni and Syrian diasporas produced by political conflict at home. As I elaborate below, these factors counteracted the diasporas' domestic political opportunities for collective action and impeded activists' abilities to galvanize sympathizers in the broader diaspora to mobilize on behalf of home-country causes.

Transnational Repression among the Libyan and Syrian Diasporas

In the era of the nation-state, borders delimit political power in important ways. Official boundaries circumscribe authorities' monopoly over the legitimate means of violence and distinguish liberal jurisdictions from despotic ones (Weber 1978; see also Mann 1984). But despite the indisputable importance of geography in shaping opportunities for dissent, authorities routinely permeate borders in order to pursue threats and exercise some degree of "governmentality" over their citizens abroad (Bauböck 2003; Délano and Gamlen 2014; Gamlen 2014). Correspondingly, the analysis finds that the Libyan and Syrian regimes used a variety of mechanisms to undermine, silence, and punish disloyalty among their diasporas—what I dub as "transnational repression"—and as a result, members' ties to the home-country simultaneously

embedded them in authoritarian systems of control that mitigated opportunities to organize, protest, and lobby from their democratic host-countries. Because a similar repertoire of transnational repression from the Gaddafi and Assad regimes produced the same deterrent effects in the Libyan and Syrian diasporas, I discuss these two cases together below.

The analysis demonstrates that the Gaddafi and Assad regimes deterred dissent in the diaspora in direct and indirect ways through regime institutions, agents, and informant networks before the 2011 revolutions (see Table 1.2). By imposing direct costs on activists in the diaspora and collective costs on their family members or colleagues in the home-country, the threats posed by transnational repression 1) propagated fear, mistrust, and division between co-nationals in the wider diaspora community; 2) significantly limited or foreclosed individuals' abilities to speak openly about home-country politics; and 3) relegated public anti-regime mobilization to "fringe" exile groups. Individuals seeking to protect their loved ones in, or their access to, the home-country were thereby obligated to abstain from criticizing the regime in word and deed. These effects significantly constrained the diasporas' civic sector and shaped the character of their organizations and associations, as I demonstrate below.

TABLE 1.2: Typology of Transnational Repression

Lethal Retribution	The actual or attempted assassinations of dissidents abroad by regime agents or proxies.
Threats	Verbal or written warnings directed to members of the diaspora, including the summoning of individuals by regime officials to their embassies for this purpose.
Surveillance	The gathering and sending of information about co-nationals to the state security apparatus by informant networks comprised of regime agents, loyalists, and coerced individuals.
Exile	The direct and indirect banishment of dissidents from the home-country, including when the threat of physical confinement and harm prevents activists from returning.
Withdrawing Scholarships	The rescinding of students' state benefits for refusing to participate in regime-mandated actions or organizations abroad.
Proxy Punishment	The harassment, physical confinement, and/or bodily harm of relatives in the home-country as a means of information-gathering and retribution against dissidents abroad.

Regime institutions played an active role in the repression of the diaspora. Libyan embassies, and particularly the London embassy, coordinated an assassination program in Europe and the US in the 1980s and 1990s in order to eliminate the National Front for the Salvation of Libya's revolutionary network (Bassiouni 2013; Pargeter 2012). Characteristic of his braggadocio, Muammar al-Gaddafi had publicly announced his policy of hunting these so-called "stray dogs" abroad. Intelligence chief and ambassador to the UK, Moussa Koussa, was expelled from London in 1980 after telling *The Times of London* that two dissidents had been murdered and more killings were planned. Furthermore, on April 17, 1984, officials from within the London embassy shot at peaceful NFSL demonstrators on the street who were wearing masks

to protect their identities, killing a policewoman named Yvonne Fletcher and injuring almost a dozen protesters.[17] At least at one murder was attempted in the US and other assassinations occurred in Britain in the 1990s of regime opponents and National Front affiliates (Hilsum 2012). And though the regime's warming relations with the West in the 2000s corresponded with a decline in known murders and eased ever-so-slightly slightly the sense of threat abroad, these incidents left an indelible impression. As Monem, a Libyan-American who opposed the regime clandestinely in the 1990s from Canada and the US, attested, "*everything* is possible. You can't trust a regime like that." And though Syrian activists in exile did not report being subjected to lethal threats in the US or Britain,[18] several attested that embassy officials had summoned them and verbally threatened them and their families.

Syrian and Libyan respondents also attested that informants were embedded in their communities for the purposes of surveillance; some were known regime loyalists, while others were perceived as coerced to inform in exchange for scholarships to study abroad. Dr. al-Saidi, co-founder of the Libyan Association of Southern California, remarked that:

> We have individuals here who were shunned from the community because people think that they report to Gaddafi... Some of them who were very much publicly known to be Gaddafi's people, and they did not come to the gatherings [of the Association]. They sent others to collect information and write up reports... But there were those who [weren't] completely come out for Gaddafi but you hear stories about them, so there were a few people who always made others uncomfortable. Some people actually used to come to the Association and then decided not to because of these [suspicious] individuals.

Tamim Baiou, a Libyan-American who was not active before the revolution, also attested that "we knew that we were being watched and reports were sent on us." When Gaddafi's security apparatus was raided during the fall of Tripoli in 2011, this was confirmed; Tamim obtained his Intelligence file from a friend and recalled that it included "a report about… all the details about my wedding" that had taken place years before in California. Many respondents

stressed that fear of surveillance was "not paranoia," as Hussam Ayloush, a Syrian-American activist, emphasized. When his parents were told by officials in Syria that Hussam should stop going to his local mosque in Texas because anti-regime persons were in attendance there, he knew that "one of their informants was either at the mosque or at the college." In addition, Syrians who had been summoned to the London embassy recalled that they had been questioned over matters that could have only become known to officials through local informants in their communities.

The regimes also repressed their diasporas through their gatekeeping functions, as when respondents were forced into exile *after* emigrating to the US and Britain. Many respondents found themselves blacklisted after protesting or participating in covert anti-regime meetings, meaning that returning home would likely result in their being seized at the airport and detained, imprisoned, and tortured. As Hend attested, after her father and his friend attended an NFSL meeting in the US, her father's friend "returned to Libya and was jailed immediately" as a result of having been informed upon, and her father was forced into exile thereafter. The regimes also held sway over students on state-sponsored scholarships, as when Libyan officials coerced students to demonstrate in support of Gaddafi during his appearance at the U.N. in 2009 by threatening to withdraw their scholarships (Hill 2011).

Interviewees further attested that the regimes deterred dissent by punishing or threatening family members at home, which I term "proxy punishment." Several Libyans and Syrians active before the Arab Spring explained that their relatives were imprisoned and tortured specifically because of their opposition. Others were punished through imposed separations, as when the Assad regime "issued a travel ban on all my family members," according to Dr. Ziadeh. Many

also reported that Intelligence agents visited or summoned their relatives for questioning. As Monem (mentioned above) attested, "my father was harassed consistently while I was abroad."

The effects of transnational repression among both diasporas were significant. First, respondents reported experiencing widespread fear, mistrust, and division because consorting with the wrong co-national could be dangerous. As Syrian Justice and Development Party founder Malik al-Abdeh remarked, "Those who used to visit Syria regularly didn't want to associate themselves too closely with those who didn't in case the authorities found out and…they get arrested in the airport or they get hassled." Nebal, a Syrian studying in London, further explained that "the regime made us fear each other because you don't know *who* works for the regime. Just saying hi to the old opposition is a crime." Firas, a Kuwaiti national of Syrian descent studying in California, echoed this claim: "you stay away from the classic opposition because you know somebody is observing them!" The presence of temporary migrants likewise heightened the sense of threat for permanent residents. A Libyan-American youth in exile named Ahmed Hnesh attested that "if a Libyan just showed up out of the blue without an introduction from some trusted person, it was always viewed with suspicion." Sarah, a British-Libyan who was not active before the revolution, remarked that:

> If you saw a Libyan on the street, you would cross over. You would never just talk to somebody you didn't know [or] make independent Libyan friends… It was always keep your head down, because you want to protect your family in Libya and you want to go back to Libya. You don't want to be on a watchlist, you don't want to be… on their radar.

For these reasons, Sarah's family had also purposefully resettled outside of London in order to avoid the surveillance by regime agents that plagued the local community.

The sense of threat was particularly pervasive for Libyan dissidents before 2011 because they had been targeted directly in the past. NFSL activists and their descendants attested that the possibility of lethal retribution affected where they settled, with whom they consorted, and

forced their (or their parents') activism underground. Activists were always on the lookout for

Libyan strangers, often identified as co-nationals by their Libyan-Arabic colloquial accents. As

Khaled, son of an NFSL activist who had gained asylum in the US, explained, the opposition

movement and corresponding threats by the regime were "really at the forefront of our lives":

> Sometimes I meet other Libyans who were really active [in the opposition] but they did
> not pass it down to the kids. Maybe a lot of them said that "I wanted to shelter them from
> that," but *there was no way around it for us*. A lot of people used fake names were
> always worried about who is a spy and who is not. The reason they went to Kentucky was
> because they wanted a place that was in the middle of nowhere, just white people… And
> any time a new Libyan came into town, if we did not know who they were, we were very
> standoffish and suspicious for a long time. Looking back some of those people ended up
> being great, amazing people but we were conditioned to think a certain way—and there
> are people who we found out now turned out to be spies.

Hend, daughter of another NFSL activist, also recalled that her family moved out of their

apartment in Michigan because Libyans believed to be Gaddafi "antennas," or spies, moved in

next door.[19] Likewise, other exiles attested that they would stay away from migrants in their

community not out of fear for themselves, but out of concern that fraternization might get these

newcomers or their families in trouble with the regime. As Mohammad (not his real name) of

Sheffield, a Libyan who had been blacklisted and forced into exile, explained,

> I tried to keep away from the Libyan officials and the students—unless [he or she was]
> somebody you really know from back home already. Otherwise, we don't mix… Because
> if you have somebody coming to study in the UK and mixes with any of us, who are the
> people who are really against Gaddafi, when they go back, they will be in trouble, you
> know?

The threats posed by transnational repression also constrained activists' abilities to talk about

home-country politics with other co-nationals in-person or online. As a Syrian-American

speaking at a fundraising event that I attended in late 2011 explained to the audience, "you

would think that America's this free society, with freedom of speech, and we're comfortable

speaking on things, but it has real ramifications back home." For this reason, Hamid, founder of

Enough Gaddafi, reported that broaching the subject of Gaddafi with many second-generation non-opposition Libyans would be quickly shut down: "When we met Libyans, a lot of them were scared. If I say hey, 'Gaddafi-this,' everybody was like, 'shut the hell up… I can't even hang around with you!' They're [in the US] and they didn't even have free speech."

Respondents further recalled that diaspora-specific social events, such as picnics and holiday celebrations, were rendered strictly apolitical because attendees were assumed to be under surveillance. Rafif, a Syrian living in the D.C. area, affirmed that the presence of informants in the area rendered gatherings into "shallow social events." Ayman, a doctor who had settled in Manchester, also explained that pro-regime Syrians:

> would take part in our community affairs and gala dinners and events… but we would never have the confidence or relaxation to speak in front of them openly about anything to do with the regime. For fear for ourselves, because we were going regularly back home, or for our family back home.

Zakia ElTaib, founder of the Libyan Women's Association in Manchester, further attested that becoming a public face of this non-political social organization (which she refers to as a "society" below) put her family at risk back home in Benghazi. She said,

> I thought, because it's a society, you know, it's not about politics, I wrote my name, [and] gave a [public] talk. So everyone knows me in Manchester. [But at] that time, my brother-in-law phoned me [from Libya] and said Zakeia, what you did do? He said the *Mukhabarat* [Intelligence] come to me and said "your sister-in-law made a group which appears like a society group, but inside [we believe] it's a political against Gaddafi."

Likewise, Syrian organizations dedicated to community empowerment and socialization were perceived by exiles and non-exiles alike as part of the regime's infrastructure of control, operating as "an extension and in the service of the authoritarian state at home" (Brand 2006: 111). Regime-affiliated elites led and populated the membership of many of these clubs; Bashar al-Assad's father-in-law, for example, was a prominent member of the British Syrian Society in London. As Sarah al-Jijakli, a Syrian-American based in New York, explained, "most of the

Syrian-associated organizations or entities had some sort of close connection with the embassy."

Even purportedly apolitical humanitarian associations, such as the Syrian American and British

Medical Societies, were not perceived as neutral or independent. Hasan Saffour, a second-

generation exile in London, attested that these organizations "were based around what the *regime*

wanted... You couldn't have an independent community of the regime." Kenan of Chicago

reported that no organization "could operate *independently* of the Syrian government," and that

"we had no civil society" as a result.

These conditions undermined efforts to establish viable community empowerment

organizations before the revolution, as in the case of the Syrian American Council mentioned

above (SAC). Though SAC was founded in 2005 to support the development of civil society in

Syria and not as a revolutionary anti-regime group, Hussam recalled that recruitment into the

organization was extremely difficult, explaining:

> I remember in 2005, I was approached by a few people, a few Syrian Americans who I
> knew, mentioning to me that there's a new organization that was started called Syrian
> American Council… and I can tell you it [was] a secretive process—not something they
> announced in the media or on Facebook, because there's so much fear that [as a result] no
> one wanted to be associated with that publicly. So through trusted sources, word of
> mouth, they will tell you about this meeting… On the day when [the first SAC meeting
> was held] somewhere in Orange County, that day I was traveling, but I told them you
> have my support. And I tried contacting a few people to encourage them to be part of it.
> *Not a single person that I know* who I contacted agreed to. The gathering was so small,
> maybe ten to twenty. And it didn't go anywhere, because everyone was afraid to even be
> part of something… But that's the irony of things. It was almost impossible to get a
> group of people to form a chapter in 2005 and '06 and '07 and '08. Every time they
> talked to people, people didn't want to do it because they understood… the consequence
> would've been very severe if you were visiting Syria or they might visit your family
> members in Syria.

The regime also punished Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, who had traveled from Syria to Chicago to give a

speech at the Syrian American Council's opening conference. Radwan reported that after

returning to Syria, "I was interrogated by the security forces and been banned from traveling

because my traveling into Chicago to participate." (As mentioned above, Radwan was later forced to escape Syria in 2007.) So though SAC was the only organization in either the US or Britain dedicated to galvanizing the Syrian diaspora for both diaspora empowerment and political purposes, it remained largely member-less and dormant until the revolution.

For all of the reasons discussed above, transnational activism was perceived as a high-risk activity, and being "publicly anti-regime was fringe," as Sarab recalled. Referring to exiled Libyan NFSL activists, Mohamed S. of London lamented that because "everyone was [so] scared, they got no support." Abdullah, a Syrian who became active after moving to Boston in 2008, explained that only a "few people, using aliases [online], were comfortable talking about things that no one dared to otherwise." Accordingly, the few who were publicly active expected retribution. Mohamed Abdelmalik, founder of Libya Watch in Manchester, reported that every morning he would ask his children to wait inside while he checked the underside of his car for bombs. He said, "I think that was being overcautious, but it is something that anyone, *any* Libyan would *expect* from Gaddafi." Hamid also reported that some of the members of the US-based Libyan Human Rights Commission, including his father, often used aliases in the media "because they were scared for their family back home," who remained vulnerable.

Though small networks of exiled youths worked to reinvigorate anti-regime opposition in the mid- to late-2000s, their efforts also remained relatively isolated. For example, when the members of Enough Gaddafi launched their first protest against Gaddafi's 2009 visit to the U.N., turnout was reported as relatively small and many participants covered their faces for fear of being identified, just as those who had protested in London and been shot at by Gaddafi agents in 1984 had done. As Sondes Abdelmalik, daughter of Dr. Abdelmalik, recalled,

> We'd done demonstrations for Libya in the past. But they've always had limited numbers
> because of fear of what the regime would do. So a lot of the time people who went to

57

these demos would wear masks for fear of what would happen to their family members if they were recognized.

In addition, while small groups of Syrian-Kurdish and Syrian-Arab exiles periodically held commemorative protests of regime massacres in London, these events were high-risk because officials filmed the demonstrators and blacklisted those who were not already exiled. These fears were realized in some cases, as when one first-generation Kurdish-Syrian youth interviewed for this study named Tha'er found out through his contacts that he was blacklisted by the Syrian regime for participating in a protest outside of the embassy with his face uncovered. Tha'er was forced to remain in Britain in exile thereafter. So while exiles in both the Libyan and Syrian diasporas were active against the regime before the Arab Spring, their networks were small and no member-driven organizations or anti-regime lobbies existed in the US or Britain before the revolutions due to the threats posed by transnational repression.

Weak Transnational Repression in the Yemeni Diaspora

For the Yemenis, a weak authoritarian regime at home meant that the diaspora felt a reduced, though not completely absent, sense of threat among co-nationals. When asked whether they were nervous about taking a public anti-regime stance for any reason before the Arab Spring, several pro-secessionist southerners mentioned fears of being exiled. However, most of those interviewed dismissed this, stating that their family in Yemen lives in rural or tribal areas largely outside of the regime's jurisdiction, or that they could easily bribe their way back into Yemen were there to be a problem at the airport. Others felt or knew that they had been surveilled abroad, but felt that this was more of a nuisance than an actual threat. For example, Hanna Omar of the US-based South Yemeni American Association recalled that,

Constantly, *constantly* in our rallies, we would have one, three, four pro-Ali Abdullah Saleh [guys] coming in and seeing what we're doing, coming to our meetings… It was just something we just had to live with… The only thing I didn't like about that is that it would take away the focus on what we were doing… Our own activists [would] concentrate on, well, this guy is pro- Saleh and what are we going to do about him?... And then finally we were just like, it doesn't matter… *There's nothing to hide.* Everybody's out here, everybody's face is out in the open, everybody's names are out in the open. It's not like we're going to hide this from the government there. So it doesn't matter who's pro, who's not. Let's just focus on our main goal and that's it. That, of course, was easier said than done… [Some participants would] put so much effort into trying to figure out who's a spy… It was distracting.

None of the southern anti-regime Yemeni activists in Britain reported hiding their faces or their identities during protests or in petitions either. This suggests that a weak authoritarian regime can still attempt to surveil and intimidate the diaspora, but that it lacks the necessary capacity to enforce compliance and create a widespread environment of threat and fear of retribution.

That said, many of those interviewed felt that embassy officials meddled in the affairs of the diaspora and attempted to undermine or coopt organizing efforts. For example, Ragih, a community leader in Sandwell, mentioned that the Yemeni government had paid people to demonstration on behalf of then-president Ali Abdullah Saleh in London, giving them sandwiches and qat (a tobacco-like leaf for chewing, legal in Britain at the time) and paying for their travel. Additionally, another respondent in northern California accused their local consulate of trying to undermine the work of the American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals. While these accusations could not be independently verified, it was a common belief that the Saleh regime meddled in the affairs of the diaspora from behind the scenes. And yet, regime meddling in the community was not perceived as a significant threat, and neither was it the most significant hindrance to their mobilization, as the following section explains.

Factionalism in the Yemeni and Syrian Diasporas

The analysis finds that a significant factor depressing the mobilization potential of the Yemeni and Syrian communities prior to the Arab Spring was *factionalism* stemming from home-country conflicts. I use this term to refer to divisions created within a national diaspora by region, ethnicity, religion, generation, and political affiliation.[20] These divisions were the product of political conflicts at home, rather than inherent identity-based differences, that were exacerbated by the home-country regime's policies and practices. The analysis demonstrates that factionalism was a primary hindrance to mobilization in the Yemeni diaspora, and a secondary but nevertheless significant obstacle to solidarity among the Syrian opposition.

Yemeni Divides

Conflicts between political factions in Yemen hindered the transnational mobilization of the diaspora before the Arab Spring in several ways. First, because anti-regime activism was dominated by and associated with calls for southern autonomy, this rendered opposition to the Saleh regime as a partisan issue that divided Yemenis along pro- and anti-unity lines. A second form of the factionalism was produced by a general state of mistrust of community elites with ties (or suspected ties) to any Yemeni political faction due to cronyism, corruption, and a general state of political dysfunction in the home-country. As a result, many of the youth interested in mobilizing their communities before the Arab Spring perceived community elites as a part of this system who were highly suspect in their motivations and generally incapable of promoting genuine social change. It was not only community members with real or perceived ties to the regime who were suspicious, but *any* person associated with "politics" writ-large. Because of the problems associated with politics in the Yemeni diaspora, the mobilization efforts of non-secessionists were focused on domestic assimilation issues and kept strictly apolitical.

The Yemeni Community Associations (YCAs) in Britain, for example, had been impacted by authoritarianism and corruption in Yemen since their founding. In both the Liverpool and Birmingham YCAs, pro-Saleh individuals were cited by respondents as having corrupted the organizations and rendered them impotent. Respondents viewed the YCA of Liverpool as a closed crony organization that provided no benefits to the community because of its corrupted leadership. Omar Mashjari, a Liverpudlian youth who later became active during the Arab Spring, explained that:

> They'd been a corrupt and incompetent body for a long time… They never actually *did* anything. They never hosted any organizations, any dialogues, any parties whatsoever… They host elections once every ten years. *A ten year term*!… They were hostile anyways, and most of them supported Ali [Abdullah Saleh].[21]

For these reasons, the Liverpool YCA did not act as an independent civil society organization before the Arab Spring and blocked its members from using the organization to mobilize on issues of social change in the home-country.

Respondents had similar complaints about the YCA in Birmingham. Several involved in the new leadership confirmed that there were no elections before 2007, and that the former president had run the organization like an autocrat. Nageeb Ali, the subsequent leader of the YCA, recalled, "they'd pretend to have elections and cancel them at the last minute." He argued that the former heads had had personal relationships with Saleh in Yemen and that the Yemeni government helped to fund a court case to keep the property after it was run into the ground, which they eventually lost.

Nageeb assumed leadership of the Birmingham YCA in 2007 and thereafter instituted elections every two years, but at this time the YCA also suffered from further disputes with southern members over use of its building. He explained,

> A lot of the friction, a lot of the problems have happened between the Yemeni Community Association and the separatists were around that building, around that resource… No Yemeni woman in the last ten, fifteen years [had seen the inside of that building]. We were trying to change all of that but we came across so much opposition from those people.

The "people" he referred to were southerners who had become vehement supporters of separation in 2007. Ali Elbuka, one of the outspoken leaders of southern secessionist in Birmingham during this period, argued that northern corrupt Islah Party-affiliated elites (referred to by him and others as "Islahis") controlled the YCA and the local Amaneh Center, a community institution serving the wider Muslim community. Ali described a crisis in 2010 when "they"—referring to the "northern" YCA leadership, "caged up" the South Yemeni building. As a result, the southern Yemenis had to break down the bars with the help of the police. "That's the only thing that we had left… They stole it," he lamented, adding, "the same ideology they use in Yemen, they implement it here, in the UK." So while Nageeb felt that the YCA should be used for everyone and that he had been wrongly slandered as a northern "Islahi," Ali felt that the pro-unity Yemenis were attempting to steal what little resources the southerners had in the community.

Haashim, Nageeb's successor and head of the YCA at the time of our interview, attested that these community-wide divisions had made it difficult to provide services for the community. He felt that southerners were "blaming the unity of Yemen for all of the problems" that have been plaguing Yemen for decades, but at the same time, he also sympathized with the southern people "who feel let down." If the community was not so divided over political problems in Yemen, Haashim explained, he believed that they would have "been able to build a strong institution." Instead, he lamented, "we at the YCA haven't done nothing, even though we [Yemenis] are the oldest immigrant community in Britain."

Because community organizers like Haashim perceived that home-country politics

polluted the diaspora community's organizations and its cohesion more generally, community

leaders credited successful civic efforts with a firm disassociation from anything political. The

YCA in Sandwell, located outside of Birmingham, was widely cited by respondents as a counter-

example to the dysfunctional associations in Liverpool and Birmingham because their leaders

had successfully *insulated* their organization from politics. For example, Saleh Saeed, who grew

up in the Sandwell Yemeni community, reported getting together with his friends in the 1980s to

try to "do something about the situation about the Yemeni diaspora." They felt that because their

parents came from rural areas with little education, the Yemeni children were at a huge

disadvantage in terms of their socio-economic status, education, and potential for social mobility.

He said, "we knew as a community that we weren't doing well." Saleh further explained that,

> The politics of Yemen, north and south—that got in the way. After unification, we
> managed to unify our efforts in the UK. And the younger generation was saying you
> know what, leave the politics aside, the UK is our homeland. Yemen is our beloved and
> cherished heritage, but we need to get things right here, our home, and help set up
> something that will establish ourselves as a successful community. We set up the YCA to
> support Yemenis here with *the principle of no politics*, and that's been a very successful
> ingredient in moving us forward. The benefits has meant that we have now been able to
> deal with the challenges that the community has faced—social, education, religious,
> health, recreational. All of the things you expect a community [association] to address.

These sentiments were echoed by Afraf and Ragih Muflihi, a wife-and-husband team

who ran the YCA in Sandwell as of 2012. While Ragih himself was from the south, he attested

that they maintained the Association as strictly apolitical despite the turmoil created by the

secessionist movement. Even celebrating national Yemeni holidays, such as Unity Day, was

banned within the YCA because such commemorations were controversial to many southerners.

Like Saleh, they credited their Association's successes in implementing social welfare programs

with a strict disassociation from home-country politics. While they acknowledged that politics

63

were discussed in the Center, particularly during the once-weekly permitted qat chews (legal at the time in the UK), members were banned from distributing political materials or hosting political gatherings on site. In order to combat accusations of cronyism and to maintain the integrity of the YCA, they also published annual reports on their finances and held regular elections.

In a parallel example, Saleh Alnood, a former head of the YCA in Sheffield, also credited the organization's functionality with insulation from politics. Saleh explained that he maintained this neutrality in running the organization even though his sympathy for the southern movement grew strong enough that he eventually decided to resign. Saleh reported that the 2007 uprising in south produced a notable degree of community-wide conflict, and that his role as head of the YCA eventually clashed with his participation in the pro-secession National Board of South Yemen group. He explained,

> Whilst I was clearly in support of the southern movement, and I made it clear that was my *personal* view, I was also conscious of the fact that I was the chairman of the Yemeni Community Association. I didn't want the politics to get involved with the work that we were doing at the time. And I remembered the day that the National Board of South Yemen was established that year… and standing in the meeting saying please, we can express our politics and views but let's not allow it to divide the community… And automatically we should separate personal views or political activities from the Community [Association]… Some people from both sides… thought I shouldn't have any personal views about the south, that I shouldn't express those views while I'm still chairman… I was really in the middle, but I stood by it for four years until it got to a stage where I thought time to move on… and I thought I don't want to be seen in this position where it appears I'm in conflict with my views [on the southern issue].

Because Saleh eventually came to feel "it was wrong of me not to be, not to offer my… abilities as simple as drafting letters and petitions to governments" on behalf of the southern cause, he resigned from the YCA and joined the National Board. But because separation was maintained between home-country politics and the YCA, Saleh stated that they managed community "coherence [with] less conflict, fewer problems" than experienced by the YCAs in Liverpool and

Birmingham. The same dynamic appeared to be in operation in the US case as well. My request

for an interview with representatives of the Yemeni Association of Scientists and Professionals

was politely declined because representatives viewed my research as political and therefore

irrelevant to their organization. However, I was told by many members of this Association who

later became active on behalf of the Arab Spring that the organization had been and continued to

be strictly apolitical in order to maintain its legitimacy and be of service to the entire diaspora

community.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, several groups were also founded in Britain by

Yemeni "youth," a term used in Yemen and across the diaspora to refer to politically-

independent activists unaffiliated with any of Yemen's existing political factions and older elites.

However, their independent initiatives were also plagued by political divides and factionalism in

the diaspora. For example, Awssan, co-founder of the Yemen Forum Foundation, aimed to

mobilize the broader Yemeni-British diaspora for the purposes of domestic empowerment. He

explained,

> The whole initiative was to build a community organization or community-based
> organization, civil society organization, whatever you want to call it, to kind of help out
> people in all aspects of life. But to start with, to just bring people together. So the idea
> was to bring the youth together first because they don't have the political or the borders
> or the sectarian ideologies some of the elders had. So we traveled to most of the cities in
> the UK… and tried to bring them together.

Members of the Yemen Forum Foundation planned to partner with the Birmingham, Brighton,

Liverpool, and Sheffield communities, although Awssan mentioned specifically that the

Birmingham community posed significant challenges due to the pro- and anti-unity

factionalization discussed above. At the same time, Awssan and his colleagues' statuses as

"independent youth" also paradoxically hindered their mobilization efforts because they lacked

legitimacy among the "elders" with ties to the Yemeni political establishment. He explained:

We weren't in touch with Yemen, which made our lives a lot harder…. The community organizations were in touch with the ambassador or the embassy at the time. For us it's difficult [because we're] not known. It was like, who are these three young guys with this radical ideology of bringing Yemenis together?

Furthermore, despite being from the south himself, Awssan was not a secessionist and had a difficult time convincing southerners in Birmingham to get on board with their plan while they were involved in a conflict over their local YCA. This Foundation was just getting off the ground as an incorporated organization when the revolution began in 2011.

In sum, Yemeni diaspora mobilization before the 2011 uprisings was hindered by factionalism stemming from political conflicts in the home-country, and organizers in the diaspora correspondingly viewed politics as toxic to their efforts. As a result, leaders involved in serving the community had to avoid appearing political in any way, including avoiding any mention of the very events and practices that *made* the diaspora a national community, such as the annual celebration of Unity Day. Other associations remained dysfunctional or sites of contention in the diaspora. So even though the British government had subsidized Yemeni Community Associations that could have served as mobilizing structures for transnational collective action, these organizations remained either divided by factionalism or strictly apolitical. And lastly, the youth, while working to overcome the divisions that plagued the diaspora, were simultaneously hindered by their status as independent mobilizers and lacked the credibility and standing of older elites with ties to the Yemeni political establishment. As a result, civil society among the Yemeni diaspora was rife with fissures before the Arab Spring.

Syrian Divides

Not only were the Syrian's opposition activities significantly constrained by transnational repression before the Arab Spring, but the anti-regime activist scene was also characterized by

factionalism before the revolution. For though Syrian-Kurdish minority activists and Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated activists were unified by their collective victimization, these groups remained split over their *prognoses* to the problem of the regime. As persecuted ethno-religious minority facing region-wide threats of ethnic cleansing and violence, Syrian-Kurdish activists in Britain viewed secession as the solution to the regime repression, whereas Syrian-Arabs with Muslim Brotherhood affiliations sought a political transition that would give their representatives and the Sunni majority a dominate role in Syrian governance. As a result, established regime opponents were divided in significant ways over their claims and goals.

Furthermore, second-generation exile activists also comprised a distinct faction within the anti-Assad movement, opposing other anti-regime movements due to their discontent with opposition-politics-as-usual.[22] The Syrian Justice and Development Party, for example, sought to distance itself from what its co-founder Malik al-Abdeh described as an outmoded opposition. "The Muslim Brotherhood," Malik explained, "are not really effective… like old fogies. They're not doing anything. We need[ed] to do something to re-galvanize the opposition scene. And we need to have young people involved… It's a new generation." But as Malik described, this isolated them in the opposition community due to a sense of competition and threat from other groups:

> We came under a lot of pressure from the Brotherhood… because they saw us as a threat, [and] that we're going to draw away their youth to us….and the whole point of the Movement for Justice and Development was to have some sort of classic-liberal party which is pro-business, free market, that isn't Islamist... We also came under fire from a lot of these old communists who thought: who are these new kids on the block? A lot of them thought we were like Trojan horse for the Muslim Brotherhood, which wasn't true. And funny enough, the Muslim Brotherhood thought we were a Trojan horse for *another* Muslim Brotherhood breakaway faction. We couldn't please anybody!

Overall, similar to the challenges faced by the founding youth of the Yemen Forum Foundation, organizing done independently of established factions and elders in the community

by Malik and his colleagues was met with suspicion and criticism by elder elites in the Syrian diaspora. This was further complicated by the fact that many activists and elites in the Syrian community were rarely card-carrying members of the Muslim Brotherhood, despite their ties to the Brotherhood movement of the 1980s (or their families' ties). As a result, various members of the community were constantly being accused of trying to dominate the opposition on behalf of the Brotherhood regardless of whether regime opponents claimed an official affiliation with the movement or not. As such, the anti-regime movement as a whole suffered from a significant degree of mistrust about who-was-who and working-for-whom, as well as splits with Syrian Kurds who had lost faith that they could ever attain freedom in the Syrian Arab Republic.

CONCLUSION

Well before the shock waves of the Arab Spring reverberated across the globe, dissidents from Libya, Syria, and Yemen fled repression in their home-countries and continued their political activism from abroad. These movements ranged from subversive revolutionary organizations to reformist and civic groups, as well as secessionist movements by South Yemenis and Syrian Kurds. In addition, all three diasporas forged formal or informal empowerment groups dedicated to reinforcing a sense of national identity and the development of their immigrant communities. However, just as resettlement in the West bestowed diasporas with opportunities to work collectively for social change, their mobilization efforts were simultaneously constrained by the diasporas' embeddedness in home-country politics and their ties to kin at home. For the Libyans and Syrians, the Gaddafi and Assad dictatorships' efforts to control, silence, and punish collective action rendered public anti-regime activism a relatively high-risk endeavor and limited the ability of exiles to recruit participants from the broader diaspora community. In addition, factionalism in the Yemeni and Syrian diasporas constrained mobilization efforts in significant

ways, promoting intra-opposition conflicts and mistrust of anyone associated with home-country politics writ large.

In all, obstacles to mobilization were high, and as a result, none of these groups had forged robust organizations or lobbies dedicated to social change at home or the collective transfer of charitable remittances. However, Chapter 2 demonstrates how and why the Arab Spring increased the diasporas' political opportunities for mobilization, producing a surge in anti-regime solidarity and activism across all three diasporas while simultaneously exacerbating factionalism within pro-revolution Syrian and Yemeni opposition groups.

CHAPTER 2

The Resurgence and Emergence of Transnational Diaspora Mobilization during the Arab Spring

On December 17, 2010, a young Tunisian named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire in the town of Sidi Bouzid in an act of protest that became known as the catalyst for the Arab Spring. As police in Tunisia cracked down on demonstrators, what began as a localized protest movement escalated into a nation-wide rebellion against then-president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. After union strikes crippled the country and the military refused to turn on the protesters, Ben Ali fled with his family to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011 in a move that stunned global audiences.

Activists in Egypt soon followed suit, declaring the national holiday celebrating the police services on January 25 as a "Day of Rage." Defying regime threats, protesters broke through police cordons to occupy Tahrir Square in Cairo. After eighteen days of street battles, a series of general strikes by labor groups, and the defection of the military, Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak resigned on February 11. The Middle East's seemingly unshakable authoritarian entrenchment had been broken and their presidents-for-life dethroned—for the time being, at least—and audiences around the world celebrated. Adding to the newfound jubilation was the eruption of demonstrations in neighboring countries echoing the refrain "the people want the fall of the regime!" But unlike in countries such as Jordan and Morocco where protests rescinded and in Bahrain where demonstrations were swiftly crushed, Libya, Yemen, and Syria came to host prolonged revolutionary standoffs. As I argue in the Introduction, the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas mobilized to an unprecedented degree in response to the emergent revolutions in their home-countries. At the same time, however, they also exhibited significant variation in

the *pace* of their public emergence and *degree of solidarity*. This chapter accounts for their collective emergence as revolution supporters and variation in the character of their mobilizations.

My overarching claim is that when the Gaddafi, Assad, and Saleh regimes responded to protests with extreme and indiscriminate force, ensuing quotidian disruptions[23] (Snow et al. 1998) created new opportunities and impetuses for anti-regime mobilization among the diaspora. These disruptions produced the shared grievances and diagnostic frame alignments (Snow et al. 1986) necessary to motivate anti-regime protest and social movement formation. However, because Libyans and Syrians had been subjected to transnational repression, outrage against regime violence was insufficient to automatically convert non-activists to the cause and stimulate widespread public mobilization. In order for a significant number of Libyans and Syrians to "come out" against the regimes, quotidian disruptions at home also had to lower the expected costs of collective action or change individuals' willingness to incur costs from abroad. For reasons that I detail below, the *pace* at which escalations in violence at home produced these changes varied significantly between the diasporas, leading Libyans to come out immediately, while Syrians came out gradually over the course of the revolution's first year. In the Yemeni case, it was only after a quotidian disruption in the form of a regime massacre in March 2011 occurred that a public pro-revolution protest movement emerged abroad. As a result, Yemeni mobilization was delayed for weeks until state-sponsored violence delegitimized the regime and legitimized a revolutionary response for many in the diaspora. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that relative *pace* of quotidian disruptions in these home-countries impacted the pace at which the previously silent came out to raise their voices on behalf of regime change at home.

At the same time, the evolving character of the revolutions in Libya, Syria, and Yemen also influenced the degree of solidarity among emergent pro-revolution groups in the diaspora. In the Libyan case, the emergence of a two-sided conflict—the Gaddafi regime versus the Free Libya Army and the National Transitional Council—unified anti-regime activists and groups across the diaspora around the same diagnostic frame that "Gaddafi must go!" and prognostic frame that armed revolution under the Council's leadership was the necessary solution. In keeping with the slogan of the Arab Spring *al-sha'b yureed isqat al-nitham* (the people want the fall of the regime), the Libyan revolution was perceived as a majority movement of The People against The Regime. As a result, Libyan reformists and revolutionaries in the diaspora came to be united under the same set of grievances and aims and experienced a strong degree of newfound solidarity during this period.

On the other hand, the revolutions in Syria and Yemen exacerbated preexisting fault lines in the diaspora in several ways. First, though separatist groups that had been previously anti-regime in the past joined the revolutions in the beginning, both Syrian Kurdish and south Yemeni secessionists came to feel marginalized under the nationalist banners of the revolutions and threatened by the prominence of defected regime elites in the anti-regime movements. As a result, these groups rescinded their support for the revolutions from abroad. Secondly, because the Syrian and Yemeni revolutions themselves were comprised of tenuous coalitions that lacked a unified and inclusive leadership, diaspora activists lacked a cohesive entity to rally behind. This exacerbated mistrust and fears of cooptation between organizers of pro-revolution diaspora movements abroad and spurred conflict between participants. In sum, though the quotidian disruptions at home increased anti-regime mobilization abroad as never before, the dynamics of

conflict in the home country also shaped the character of diaspora mobilization in important ways.

The Libyan Case: Solidarity, Liberation, and Mobilization

Libya's Day of Rage was announced on Facebook as planned for Thursday, February 17, 2011, a date designed to commemorate the shooting of protesters in Benghazi by regime forces in 2006. As the diaspora waited to see whether Libyans would take to the streets, respondents reported being excited and gravely concerned at the same time. While the protests in Cairo had been broadcasted live on Al Jazeera day and night, thus giving the Egyptian revolution global exposure that put international pressure on the Mubarak regime, the only media operative in Libya in 2011 was the regime's state-run apparatus. Libyans inside of the country also lacked widespread internet connectivity and independent sources of communication, and were furthered deterred from speaking openly over the phone for fear of regime surveillance. Years of trade embargos, a general state of underdevelopment, and regime repression had effectively limited Libyans' contact with the outside world and had rendered them largely isolated. As a result, members of the diaspora worried that if Libyans came out to protest, their efforts would be crushed in the dark.

In light of these concerns, several interviewees sought to be prepared in the event that the Arab Spring took off in Libya. Brainstorming privately with family and friends, many began to set up social media accounts dedicated to disseminating information about protests in Libya. Organizers in Enough Gaddafi also decided to stage a protest, securing a permit to demonstrate in front of the White House on Saturday, February 19th. Others sought out information and gravitated to one of the only sources in existence, the Enough Gaddafi website, though it was taken down and "rooted," according to Hamid, soon after by hackers (possibly contracted by the

regime to mute dissent online). Nevertheless, these youth saw an opportunity in the February 17th

calls that they had been waiting for, even though it was unclear what would become of the

planned Day of Rage. Osama, a friend of the Enough Gaddafi group who had never joined an

anti-Gaddafi protest before, recalled that "I called Abdullah, and I was like do you really think

anything is can happen? And flat out he told me, honestly I do not, but if it is something that

maybe gives the next generation a spark to keep the fight going, then it is worth it."

As Libyans in the diaspora waited, debated, and planned, riots erupted two days early in

Libya's eastern city of Benghazi on February 15th. By cracking down on so-called protest

inciters and arresting the lawyer for the families of the Abu Salim victims in Benghazi, Fathi

Terbil, Gaddafi gave the already aggrieved-wives and families of the slain prisoners a reason to

riot. Due to the lack of media penetration at this time, reports of the early days of the revolution

were largely unconfirmed. However, it soon became clear to the diaspora through their contacts

inside that regime forces had responded to the Benghazi protests with lethal force and incited a

backlash. Civilians and army defectors took over the military's barracks, forcing the sole brigade

stationed in Benghazi to retreat, and protesters claimed the city as liberated territory. Almost

simultaneously, protests spread across the country to cities such as Misrata, Derna, Bayda, Ras

Lanuf, Zawiya, and to the western capital of Tripoli within several days.

The regime attempted to reassert control by offering concessions while simultaneously

killing protesters, conducting mass arrests, and shutting down the internet. On February 21, two

Libyan pilots flew to Malta and defected, claiming that they had been ordered to bomb the city of

Benghazi. Gaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam then threatened to crush the uprisings in a televised

address, which signaled the "final chapter in the comedy that was reform," according to one of

his advisors (Pargeter 2012, p. 229). On February 22, Gaddafi also gave infamous speech that

blamed foreign powers and drug-addicted protesters for the disruptions. As Noueihed and

Warren (2012, p. 180) write,

> His now-infamous pledge to go 'zanga zanga, dar dar' or from 'alley to alley, house to
> house' to 'cleanse' the 'rats' and 'cockroaches' carried echoes of the 1994 genocide in
> Rwanda, when Hutus describes the Tutsis in similarly insect-like terms. Saif al-Islam's
> calls for dialogue and a 'general assembly' were ignored by both the opposition and the
> outside world, while his rambling speech threatened 'rivers of blood' prompted Western
> politicians to fall over each other in their rush to distance themselves from Libya's heir
> apparent… Even though Gaddafi promised an amnesty to those who gave up their
> weapons, threats of 'no mercy' to those who resisted suggested that a terrible vengeance
> would be visited upon Libya's second city.

Regime violence also induced widespread defections in the military and led to the formation of

the Free Libya Army, but eyewitnesses also attested that African mercenaries were deployed to

supplement Gaddafi's remaining forces. Some protesters had secured some small arms from

abandoned military depots, but they were badly outgunned and faced indiscriminate shooting and

shelling by loyalist forces. This was followed by a series of high-ranking defections, including

by Mustafa Abdel Galil, Gaddafi's former Justice Minister, on the 21st of February. He soon

warned the international community that Gaddafi would not hesitate to annihilate entire

populations, claiming "when he's really pressured, he can do anything. I think Gaddafi will burn

everything left behind him" (Al Jazeera English 2011a). International institutions and heads-of-

state condemned the "callous disregard for the rights and freedoms of Libyans that has marked

the almost four-decade long grip on power by the current ruler," as Vani Pillay, the U.N. High

Commissioner on Human Rights, announced (Al Jazeera English 2011b). In all, within a week of

the initial protests in Benghazi, the protester-regime standoff had escalated into a nationwide war

that left approximately 1,000 Libyans dead. Soon after, elite defectors and commanders

announced the formation of the National Transitional Council in Benghazi on February 27th,

giving the Free Libya Army official, unitary representation and what was to become an internationally-recognized government-in-waiting.

Frame Alignment, Solidarity, and Organizational Conversion in the Libyan Diaspora

While it is not surprising that activists who were already public in their anti-regime sentiments set out immediately to mobilize in support of the revolution, the rapid escalation of a zero-sum standoff in Libya had a more far-reaching effect. Namely, it created shared grievances among the youth and elders, old and new politicized groups, "reformists" who had treated the regime as a bargaining partner in recent years and revolutionaries, and many bystanders who had eschewed home-country politics in the past. As a result, quotidian disruptions in Libya produced a newfound solidarity and frame alignment that paired a "diagnostic frame" attributing the Gaddafi regime as the problem with a "prognostic frame" that identified the armed revolutionary uprising under the National Transitional Council as necessary and legitimate solution. These conditions motivated mobilization across a wide cross-section of Libyans and produced a newfound sense of nationalistic solidarity among co-nationals.

Many respondents cited how vital this set of circumstances was in creating sympathies for the uprising among the greater Libyan diaspora. As Hend, a second-generation exile and member of the Enough Gaddafi network, explained:

> It was incredibly unfortunate, the severity of the crisis, but it left a very clear line for us. There wasn't any doubt if Gaddafi was doing this or he was not doing this—like in Syria, where there's a lot of doubt floating around regarding who did what, and what was going on, who's the good guy or the bad guy. We were lucky enough to have all of that very black and white… The severity of his actions made it very clear… Whether or not [others] had been supportive of Gaddafi before, it changed a lot of people afterwards, not to mention those who had already been affected.

Dina, a youth from southern California who had spent time working in Libya during Saif's "liberalization" period before being briefly imprisoned as a suspected subversive, attested how

important Saif al-Islam's reaction to the uprising was in discrediting the regime as a legitimate

bargaining partner. She said,

> Many people actually, at the beginning of the revolution, did not expect Saif to react in the way that he did. And people forget that, but that's still really an important part of the whole puzzle—the way that he came out so strongly in those first days… His hatred was just so shocking.

Saif's speech promoted individuals like Adam, a college-aged youth living in northern Virginia,

to side with the revolution. Despite being a member of a long-time anti-regime family, Adam

had engaged with regime representatives through Saif's diaspora outreach initiative in 2010 and

had planned to continue with this regime engagement in the future. However, the revolution

prompted Adam to change his mind, which he explained in the following way:

> If I'm having a debate with somebody and the person decides to slap my sister, the debate is over… I understand we want to limit as much bloodshed as possible. But when you're fighting a rabid dog, you can't speak with it, you can't calm it down with words anymore. That's it. You've got to put it to sleep, end it then and there… The point of return is long gone. And [the regime] passed it.

Abdullah Darrat of Enough Gaddafi further recalled the transformative effect of the revolution in

unifying members' grievances. He reported that during the initial planning meetings for the first

D.C. protest, he and his fellow organizers debated,

> "What if people bring [the] green flags [of the regime]? What if people don't want to see posters that are cursing Gaddafi?" There were all these things that we were trying to accommodate so that we'd get as many people to come out as possible. But when the 19th came, all of that went out the window. When people were getting killed, people could see the bravery of the youth in the street, and it was all the independence flags, *down with Gaddafi*! It was just unified all of a sudden.

Niz, a British-Libyan doctor-turned-revolutionary living in Cardiff, also explained that the

regime's use of overwhelming force was critical in legitimizing armed revolution as a necessary

method of resistance, rather than a nonviolent sit-in movement that had helped to pressure Hosni

Mubarak to resign in Egypt. He explained,

Very quickly the realization… was that Gaddafi is not Ben Ali or Mubarak. They are all brutal and corrupt dictators, but Gaddafi is a different breed, and public protests at squares—these things were not going to bring the regime down. And that the Gaddafi regime would easily kill 90% of the population if it meant him staying in power… They would continue to gun down protesters. And very quickly the idea came about that this *cannot* be a mass peaceful protest movement. It needed to become an armed struggle, an armed uprising.

For this reason, respondents came to validate the armed struggle by the National Liberation Army, also known as the Free Libya Army, and to back what would become its coordinating body, the National Transition Council, initially based in Benghazi.

Regime violence not only prompted individuals to ally themselves under the banner of the revolutionary flag, but also *converted all known diaspora groups and organizations to the cause* in both countries. For example, Dr. Abdelmalik of Manchester, founder of Libya Watch and member of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, recalled that he and the Brotherhood came to ally with the revolution because of the regime's severe response:

The Muslim Brotherhood had their general meeting in January [2011]. And at that time, the end of January, the Facebook and the internet was full of the Libyan revolution beginning on 17 February… And therefore when we went to the general meeting, which is the highest authority in the *Ikhwan* [Brotherhood], we expected something to happen on the 17th. The argument was over what to expect. Would we expect an outright revolution? Would we expect just some people to come out and then go home, or what? And our position at the end of the day was this: was that if something happens on the 17th of February then we will have to wait for the response of the regime. If the regime uses brutal force and kills demonstrators, then we will go out right [away] with the revolution and there will be no going back. But if the regime backs away and allows these young people to vent their energy and their steam without an incident and without killing anyone, then the reform prospects that we are very keen on will continue… But obviously the regime decided to act brutally against the uprising and started killing right away, and immediately we moved into the revolution mode.

The revolution also transformed previously "neutral" organizations for empowerment and socialization into politicized groups that lent collective support for the revolutions. Dr. Saidi of the Libyan Association of Southern California remarked that, "When the revolution started,

every Libyan gathering became political." Photographs and YouTube videos of gatherings during this period showed participants wearing clothing adorned with the revolution flag, eating revolution-flag colored food, and singing revolution songs. While attending one of these events in Fountain Valley, CA that was coincidentally scheduled days after the capture and killing of Gaddafi in November 2011, I also observed that the event was entirely revolution themed; children gleefully bashed piñatas draped with pictures of the Gaddafi family and speeches by speakers wearing flags like capes were dedicated to heralding their compatriots at home. British-Libyans witnessed this transformation as well. Zakeia ElTaib, founder of the Libyan Women's Union in Manchester, explained that her organization transformed from a social society into an activist organization working in three areas: "one for charity, one for media, one for protests." In all, the diasporas' indigenous organizations and community events came to be pro-revolution in orientation and mission during this period.

Overcoming Transnational Repression's Deterrent Effects

While quotidian disruptions in the home-country and ensuing frame alignments were necessary to stoke anti-regime mobilization abroad, they were also insufficient to automatically induce *public* mobilization by newcomers to opposition movements because of the threats posed by transnational repression. For this reason, Libyans who were not previously "out" against the regimes had weighty considerations in deciding whether to lend their faces and names to the cause out of concern for their family members back home. And yet, the analysis finds that because disruptions in normative degrees of regime repression and control in Libya also rapidly dampened the deterrent effects of transnational repression abroad, respondents attested that the majority of activists "came out" against the regimes immediately during the onset of the revolution. I specify the mechanisms that prompted them to do so below.

79

The primary reason cited by Libyans for coming out against the regime was because the conflict rapidly engulfed their relatives. When their family members joined the revolution or fled the country, this *released* members of the diaspora from the obligation to hide their anti-regime sentiments. For example, Sarah decided to attend protests at the London embassy because her family in Benghazi joined the revolution. When Sarah called her aunt, her aunt declared that:

> "The whole family's outside"—where people were being shot! And I said, "go back inside!" and she was like "*no!*" You could hear shooting on the line, and she's like, "it's either Gaddafi or us. For us, Sarah, the fear is gone."

Esam, co-founder of the Libyan Emergency Task Force, also felt empowered to speak out in the media once his parents escaped from Tripoli, stating that their departure from Libya "helped us to increase our activities without fear for any reprisals against them there." Violent repression at home, therefore, upset the *relational* mechanisms that had previously forced those abroad to keep their anti-regime sentiments private.

The second factor prompting activists to come out occurred when they observed vanguard revolutionaries taking brazen risks and sacrificing themselves for the cause. This led respondents to *embrace* the potential costs of coming out. Even though some continued to receive threats, as when Mohammad of Sheffield received a threatening email and had his computer-based communications hacked, he said,

> Because all I can see, women being raped, children being killed, innocent people being killed, I didn't care, you know. I mean, compared to what the Libyans are going through while I'm sitting in an office in the UK, trying to help. And compared to what they do in [Libya], it is nothing.

Ahmed S., a Libyan-British doctor, decided to reveal his identity during the second day of demonstrations because "there was a fire in me. People are *dying*! I'm talking to my friends who are… protesting in central Tripoli and I'm wearing a mask? That's ridiculous! It just didn't seem right." Even after agents in the embassy were observed photographing the participants, Sarah,

80

also in attendance, recalled that "it was too late. We were out already." Likewise, Ahmed H., a Libyan-American who had been active anonymously before 2011, stated that despite the fact that his sibling was trapped in Tripoli, identifying publicly with the revolution was important for the collective effort:

> I wouldn't cover my face at that point. I made it a point to do everything—[in] all of my online communications, all my appearances, my name was being spoken. To make sure that people understood that if people are going to be out there on the front lines, sacrificing or risking their lives, then the very least I could do from the US was to make my name known and to say I'm with you, no matter what.

Adam, who attended the first Washington, D.C. protest organized by Enough Gaddafi, scoffed, "Everyone was just like, you know what? Screw it. If people in Libya are willing to die for it, I mean, what are you going to do? Take my picture? All right, *here*, I'll take it for you—I'll pose." Abdullah also recalled that Libyan students also came to side with the revolution at this time. When Abdullah and his colleagues in Enough Gaddafi talked to them, "we said, 'Aren't you afraid? You have family in Libya!'"

> And they're telling me, "Those guys are facing bullets! The least I can do is come to a protest, you know?" [They] had this confidence and this loyalty to the lives that are being lost, the people who were dying, and the idea that hey—we're really on the cusp of a real change. And those were a lot of the same students who were forced them to come out for Gaddafi at the U.N., protesting on the other side of the line from us.

This sea change in respondents' orientations toward risk was both a strategy and the expression of newfound empowerment. As Mahmoud, a life-long activist who had been shot by regime agents in London during the 1984 protest, stated, "the mask came off. It became [about] facing them eye to eye."

As the regime was put on the defensive in Libya, the third factor prompting participants to come out was the regime's relatively weak response to dissent in the diaspora and the rapid collapse of its outposts and informant base. Initially, activists expected a significant counter-

mobilization effort because of the heavy-handed tactics used in the past. As Dina of southern

California recalled, some people refrained from joining protests because "they thought that

others were going to report back to the regime, take pictures and take down names and send them

back to Libya. So people were still afraid at first." Osama, an organizer of the first D.C. protest,

recalled that they made plans for "security because [we] had an expectation that Gaddafi would

send his people" to confront them and instigate a fight in order to discredit the pro-revolution

demonstrators. And while the presence of pro-Gaddafi demonstrators "shook up" those who

travelled periodically to Libya, a participant named Manal recalled, these efforts came to be

perceived as an empty "scare tactic." Mohamed of London attested that the students who were

initially coerced into attending pro-regime protests rapidly defected to the revolution side (Hill

2011) and the throngs of pro-Gaddafi supporters that many expected to materialize never did.

The regime's inability to deter dissent through threats and counter-demonstrations further

empowered activists to directly confront the institutions and agents that had long terrorized them.

Tamim, co-founder of the Libyan Emergency Task Force, attested that the D.C.-area community

spoke out to harass and shame the ambassador, Ali Aujali, after he refused to side with the

revolution on a CNN broadcast. After Aujali then officially resigned on February 22, protesters

entered the mission that was still officially under the regime's jurisdiction and ripped down

pictures of the dictator, shouting, "is this a free country or is this Libya?" (Fisher 2011). As

participant Rihab recalled, it was about "*finally* being able to do something… and [making] a

statement on behalf of the martyrs." A similar incursion occurred in London when demonstrators

stormed the embassy and raised the revolutionary flag on March 16.

That said, ten respondents reported guarding their identities beyond the first days of the revolution because their family members were trapped in Tripoli or because they were corresponding directly with rebels on the ground.[24] As Dina attested,

> During Tunisia, I was tweeting in my own name. When Libya started, the first thing my mom said was change your name on everything, make sure it's changed. Take down any pictures. Especially since I had just been there and I had been arrested. So, you know, maybe if that hadn't happened, I could've flown under the radar a little bit easier... But because now I had a file and this and that, there was that chance so it was better to just eliminate the possibility of getting found out. Because my entire extended family is in Tripoli.

However, respondents attested that anonymity was relatively rare, and did not hinder their efforts to garner resources, mobilize their co-nationals, and form new movement organizations under the banner of the revolution flag. Because the regime proved incapable of making good on its promises at the onset of the revolution, members of the diaspora largely experienced a rapid liberation of their own. And despite being an imperfect unity, the barrier caused by fear of consorting with the wrong Libyan abroad largely dissipated.

A Diaspora United by Conflict

In all, respondents overwhelmingly reported experiencing a newfound sense of community as a result of the revolution that brought activists, non-activists, temporary migrants, and even some formerly pro-regime individuals together for the same cause. As Abdo of Manchester recalled, "it unified the Libyan community. Because before the 17th of February, the Libyan community in Manchester was in silence. There *wasn't* a community." But afterward the onset of the revolution, he exclaimed, "People [were meeting] new people. And my own brother met his future wife at one of these events!" This sentiment was echoed by activists based in the US as well. As Khaled recalled, the first D.C. protest on the 19th of February was:

> …the biggest thing I've ever been a part of. Usually when we protest[ed in the past], I would have spent my last dime [to] drive to New York or D.C. for a protest that had maybe thirteen people—and we're driving across the country to be a part of it. The D.C. protest was the most Libyans I have seen in one place in America ever. It was [hundreds of] people who had never been politically active, who had never met before.

Osama, who at the time of the revolution was living in Chicago but had grown up among several other Libyan families in Tucson, echoed that informal community events, such as "the picnics that happened during the revolution… suddenly everyone [is] singing freedom songs, singing the national anthem—any picnic it would be like that."

Of course, diaspora was not a purely complementary and harmonious effort. There were conflicts and mistrust between groups and individuals, as well as lingering resentments by longstanding regime opponents because of all of those who had jumped on the anti-regime "bandwagon," as Ahmed H. recalled. Several members of Enough Gaddafi who helped to organize the protest also recalled competition between opposition members and groups with whom they felt were intent on dominating the protest on February 19th. Ahmed recalled that he spoke with the leaders of other groups in order to tell them,

> Listen, we just need people to show up. If you want to demonstrate solidarity with the people who are on the front lines going through it right now, [then participate]. That's the objective more than anything else. We want to present a common front, a unified front… to the world, you know.

Mohamed Abdelmalik of Manchester also referenced an underlying "competition" over who would appear in the media.

At the same time, respondents also reported experiencing a sense of solidarity as never before. Mohamed said his experience protesting in Manchester around February 19th "was in and of itself amazing" because:

> We were rubbing shoulders with everyone. The thing that brought us together was being Libyan and being anti-Gaddafi. I was talking and standing together with socialists,

communists, liberals, Islamists, we all had one goal and one pain and we were happy to be together.

In addition, collective action in the diaspora was also fundamentally unified around a uniform set of anti-regime claims and goals. As Hend stated, "there was one goal to be achieved… Yes, we all have our differences… but the main goals were to get Gaddafi out, and to stop the killing of people." Mohamed Abdelmalik of Manchester recalled that Libyans were joined together by the fact that the revolution had escalated immediately into "a fight to the death, really." Respondents also reported that despite the emergence of different groups and collective efforts to support the revolution, the revolution-supporting opposition was "united in one fight," as Adam of northern Virginia recounted. So despite the existence underlying differences and disagreements, the Libyan movements that emerged in the diaspora were unified in their support of the armed resistance movement and its representatives. As a result, their various strategies to support the cause that I will detail further in Chapter 3 remained unified around a common set of frames for the duration of the anti-Gaddafi fight.

The Syrian Case: Gradual Mobilization and Persistent Factionalism

In contrast to the swift eruption of a regime-rebel standoff in Libya, Syria's uprising resembled a "slow motion revolution" (International Crisis Group [ICG] 2011a). Calls on Facebook for a "Day of Rage" on February 4 failed to materialize on the ground, and the regime attempted to stave off protests by implementing a series of concessions, including by lifting the ban on YouTube and Facebook.[25] However, these initiatives were also accompanied by crackdowns on activists and state propaganda that blamed the Arab Spring on Middle Eastern leaders' unsavory alliances with the West and Israel. In an effort to encourage Syrians to protest and to combat the ban on international media, interviewees and third-party reports attested that Syrians abroad

began to smuggle the technology to Syrians on the inside, such as satellite phones and recording devices, needed to document protests and regime abuses. A Syrian Revolution 2011 Facebook page, later reported to be linked with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, also appeared online during this time and came to be "liked" by thousands within Syria.

Aggrieved by years of growing inequality, corruption, and everyday abuse and in light of a new mood induced by the Arab Spring, individuals and crowds in Syria began to spontaneously challenge regime officials publicly in ways that were previously unthinkable (ICG 2011a). The regime further stoked a backlash by using disproportionate force against aggrieved civilians and children. For example, about a dozen children were arrested by security forces on March 6 for chanting slogans against the regime in the city of Daraa. After their families rallied to demand the children's release, security forces used live ammunition to disperse them, thereby escalating their anti-regime grievances and calls for change. Other collective displays of dissent emerged in Damascus as well, as when small groups held peaceful vigils to support neighboring revolutions. Cell phone videos of protests being harshly dispersed, such as when security forces dragged activist Suheir al-Atassi by her hair and threw her in jail for participating in one such protest, affirmed to many observers that Bashar al-Assad was not interested in dialogue.

On the 15th of March, the moment that many regime opponents-in-exile had been waiting for arrived. A small demonstration in the central market of Damascus' Hamidiya neighborhood was recorded and disseminated to international news channels for the first time, and the geographical scope of the protests expanded shortly thereafter. Bashar Al-Assad's March 30th speech denounced dissenters as traitors and foreign conspirators. An attempt to form a Tahrir Square-esq sit-in movement in Homs was brutally crushed by a military siege in late April. During a subsequent siege in Daraa, a thirteen-year old boy named Hamza al-Khateeb was

detained by regime forces for attending an anti-regime rally. On the 25th of May, his corpse was

returned to his family displaying evidence of severe torture and mutilation. Images of his body

circulated on the internet and were broadcasted on Al Jazeera, stoking outrage inside and outside

of the country. As the Syrian army moved to quell protests in Baniyas, Homs, Latakia, Hama, the

Damascus suburbs, and other cities in May with lethal force, this provoked defections and grew

anti-regime sympathies. By July, the death toll hit approximately 1,500, and by August, the U.N.

Security Council adopted a presidential statement condemning Assad's response. A joint

statement issued by US President Barak Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, French

President Nicolas Sarkozy, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for Assad to step down

on August 18.

     While many parts of Syria remained relatively insulated from the fighting in 2011 due to

popular fear, loyalty, and a combination of the two, reports circulated that the regime was

detaining and torturing thousands of political prisoners, and that military and *Shabiha* loyalist

militias were massacring civilians at close range, as well as using rape as a weapon of collective

punishment. As the International Crisis Group reported (2011c, p. 2):

> Denied both mobility and control of any symbolically decisive space (notably in the
> capital, Damascus, and the biggest city, Aleppo), the protest movement failed to reach the
> critical mass necessary to establish, once and for all, that Assad has lost his legitimacy.
> Instead, demonstrators doggedly resisted escalating violence on the part of the security
> services and their civilian proxies in an ever-growing number of hotspots segregated from
> one another by numerous checkpoints.

And even as protests and riots spread across Syria through the fall of 2011, the regime retained

control over broad swaths of the population using a range of coercive tactics, including by

stoking fears of a Sunni-extremist takeover among minorities. The pitting of an Alwaite-

dominated security force against a Sunni-majority and Kurdish minorities stoked further ethno-

religious divides on the ground.

Over the course of 2011, numerous revolution-supporting organizations emerged across Syria. Local Coordination Committees formed underground networks to promote nonviolent civil resistance and broadcast the Syrians' plight to the outside world. On July 29, defector Colonel Riad al-Assad announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army and later merged with another group called the Free Officers Movement. The Syrian National Council was also established in Turkey in August 2011, initially recognized by foreign governments as an umbrella body to coordinate and lead the internal opposition (Carnegie Endowment 2012). However, many opposition groups operating inside of Syria contested the Council's authority as in-name only. In addition, defectors and volunteers formed armed resistance units called the Free Syrian Army to protect their towns and neighborhoods from regime violence. However, the decoupled nature of the emergent Free Syrian Army made it "more a wild card than a known entity" in the conflict, and its lack of coordination with the Syrian National Council posed significant challenges in unifying the opposition (ICG 2011c, p. 6). Many other groups were also coordinating resistance at the local and national levels, including the militarized revolution Syrian Revolution General Commission, the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami 2016), and the Supreme Council of the Syrian Revolution (O'Bagy 2012). The proliferation of groups and armed entities in Syria formed a disparate coalition that lacked a unified set of demands and tactics and a representative leadership. As Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami (2016) argue, "The Syrian revolution wasn't led by a vanguard party and wasn't subject to centralised control. It didn't splinter, because it was never a monolith" (location 1139, Kindle edition).

Overall, in comparison with the days-long escalation of the Libyan revolution, the Syrian revolution unfolded in phases that were distributed unevenly across the country. The uprising

was first characterized by pockets of protest and riots that gradually spread to many cities and towns, but did not constitute a national rebellion until many months in. Defectors and civilians later allied themselves with the Free Syrian Army, but this force was comprised of multiple factions that lacked a central command structure. Various coordinating groups emerged inside and outside of Syria that represented the "opposition" by the summer's end, but these groups also lacked a common vision and often contested each other's tactics and legitimacy. International condemnation did little to stave the regime's militarized approach to the conflict, which escalated armed resistance while slandering Syrian civilians-turned-rebels as foreign terrorists. In December, the U.N. High Commissioner of Human Rights reported the death toll as having reached approximately 5,000; by the end of 2012, that figure would increase at least ten-fold.

Gradual Escalation at Home and Varied Organizational Conversion Abroad

As in the Libyan case, the onset of protests in Syria mobilized existing activist networks that were staunchly anti-regime before 2011. For groups like the Syrian Justice and Development Party in London, the onset of the protests in March presented a welcome opportunity to support and incite resistance to the regime inside of Syria. Co-founder Malik al-Abdeh recalled that his group began to play amateur footage of protests in Syria repeatedly on Barada TV to prod Syrians into doing "more of this kind of stuff." Others such as Dr. Radwan Ziadeh and Marah Bukai in Washington D.C. also came out publicly to support the uprising immediately in March, using their political connections to meet with US officials on Capitol Hill and to speak out in the media. After her friend Suheir al-Atassi was released after being arrested for protesting in Damascus, Marah recalled contacting Suheir to affirm that "we'll do what we can do here to support your aims and targets."

However, not all activists in exile were comfortable with the prospect of a Libya-style revolt. Ammar Abdulhamid, activist in exile and co-founder of the Tharwa Foundation expressed grave concerns about the poor state of the revolution's preparedness. Recalling his thinking at the time, Ammar said, "if people are in the street, I'll be with them… [and our] Tharwa network is part of it anyway." However, he also recalled cautioning other Syrian exiles and regime opponents that "we're not ready," expressing concerns about the lack of vision and planning for the complexities of the Syrian case. Ammar argued,

> Telling people to go to the street—this is not the revolution… The revolution in Syria requires a vision for managing the transitional period, it requires policies, it requires a strategy, [such as] how we're going to use the media, how we're going to reach out to different powers. It requires a lot of finessing, a lot of experiences we don't have… And we did not have a representative body.

The uprising also revived the Syrian American Council (SAC), but the gradual character of the uprising did not immediately convert SAC's reform-oriented stance to an anti-regime one. Hussam, who helped to establish the Los Angeles chapter of the Syrian American Council and later became its National Chairman, recalled that SAC's first statement on the uprisings was laughably humble in hindsight. He said,

> It wasn't asking for changing of the regime. It was still addressing Bashar al-Assad as the legitimate president—*Dear President Assad*, basically. We stated support… for the demands of the protesters, which at that time were very, very simple… It was very peaceful. It was about political reforms, freedoms, release of political detainees… And the argument behind it was that's what they're asking for in Syria. And we can only support what they're asking for on the street… There's no need to push the envelope higher than they're doing… As long as the regime is willing to compromise and come to somewhere in the middle, that's my insistence… We made it a condition [that] anyone joining SAC or speaking for SAC [had] to abide and be committed to a peaceful revolution, nonviolent one, demanding freedom and democracy, and a slow process of change.

This initially put SAC at odds with long-time activists calling for regime change. When Marah was invited to SAC's first national meeting in May, she recalled asking them, "what is going to

be your major statement? They said, 'we want to see some changes in Syria.' I told them, 'I'm

sorry, you should go and knock on the door of someone else. For me, I want this regime to go'…

So their ceiling was different than my ceiling."

Just as many Libyans had believed that Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam, would be the

harbinger of meaningful reforms before he came out on the side of his father during the

revolution, many Syrians also held out that Bashar al-Assad, the heir to Hafez al-Assad's

dictatorship in 2000 and a Western-educated medical doctor, would do the same. As Belal, a

Syrian-American from Orange County, California, who had represented the Syrian expatriate

community in dialogues with Syrian regime officials in the past, explained:

> When I met him face to face and we were talking, you know, he really showed humility
> and he showed passion. He was very passionate about making change and I believed him.
> So that's why I became part of the expatriate [group] that wanted to build a bridge
> between here and Syria.

At the onset of the uprising in Syria, Belal formed the National Syrian American Expatriate

group in Anaheim in March, which he hoped would bring individuals with varied political views

together to support gradual liberalization in Syria. The group of a dozen or so individuals put

together a list of requests for Assad, including presidential term limits. However, Belal's

Expatriate group was formed in secret out of fears of transnational repression, and Belal was the

only member willing to sign his name to the group's demands. He said that the regime's

response to his letter was favorable, but left him waiting in vain as violence on the ground

escalated into the summer and produced over a thousand casualties.

However, once the regime escalated its retaliatory response to protests by laying siege to

entire cities and towns, reformist groups came to support calls for the downfall of the regime.

Hussam of SAC said, "After the regime showed that they had absolutely no interest in reforming

or changing their ways, that's when I said dialogue cannot work." In a further evolution of

SAC's position, he then explained why the organization transitioned slowly from supporting the

revolution to *armed* resistance specifically:

> Initially, most people truly believed the nonviolent path was the only path. It started
> changing, [but] the change didn't happen overnight… That transition first included: what
> do you do with soldiers who defect?... These people are being tracked down by the
> government and killed, and their wives were being raped and their parents were being
> shot... So there was a debate, can they defend themselves and their own families and
> villages? So the first transition was yes… they have the right, actually they have the
> *responsibility* to refuse these orders. And when they go in hiding, if the government is
> pursuing them, they have the right to defend themselves and their families.
> And the next phase became what about these soldiers defending their whole village, their
> whole town, or their neighborhood because the neighborhood is coming to practice
> collective punishment on the cities?… Can they defend their own villages and
> neighborhoods? The answer was yes. And then the next question becomes what if a
> young man joins them because there weren't enough defecting soldiers to defend the
> village? What if a young man says I will join you? Yes. And that transition eventually
> became what if we [the revolutionaries] raid them [government forces] before they raid
> us? What if we go and raid a Syrian army base and take the weapons so that don't use
> them against us? Yeah, that sounds good too.

He added that "I know from here it sounds great to be Gandhi," but because regime forces and

militia known as *al-Shabiha* were hunting down pacifists and defectors, this left the opposition

with no choice but to fight back. Additionally, Belal, the pro-reform head of the National Syrian

American Expatriates group, also came to side with the revolution by the end of the summer. He

said,

> When people rise up for a change, you should accept that. I learned that here [in the
> US]… People were going out in their bare chest, they're resisting, they're asking for
> change. And they were met with weapons, machine guns, and attacked. Basically they
> were paying the price with their life… Even we supported that they carry arms because
> they were getting killed and slaughtered.

In all, the escalatory phase of the revolution from the spring of 2011 into the summer converted

the few politicized organizations in operation before the Arab Spring to the revolutionary cause

by the summer of that year.

However, three social clubs mentioned by interviewees—the Syrian American Club of Houston, the Syrian American Association of southern California, and the British Syrian Society of London—did *not* convert to the revolution. Omar Shishakly, a board member of Houston's Syrian American Club who had also come out on the side of the revolution early on, maintained that the Club in Houston had to remain neutral. As an organization dedicated to providing scholarships and hosting community gatherings, he argued that it was required to adhere to its apolitical bylaws and continue serving the broader community comprised of both pro- and anti-regime Syrians. However, another activist in the community attested that the Club's neutrality essentially made it pro-regime by default because they would not allow community members to use the space or the listserv to advertise events such as fundraisers or documentary films on the revolution and war. This person told me with more than a hint of disdain, "I see the club as kind of an extension of Damascus—Little Damascus thinking they can stay neutral and everything will be okay [in Syria]." The two other associations in California and in London were also perceived by outsiders as taking the side of the regime once the conflict began because they were run by regime loyalists and remained silent on the issue of atrocities in Syria. In addition, the Medical Associations in the US and Britain were not converted to the revolution until 2012, the circumstances of which I explain in Chapter 4.

As violence produced thousands of casualties by the end of 2011 and worsened significantly over the course of 2012, activists report that many members of their respective communities came to sympathize the uprising within a year of its onset. As Sabreen, a youth activist from southern California, reported, different events including a slew of massacres—and often those occurring in people's hometowns and cities—"hit different people at different points. So there wasn't one specific event… [But] you can't really go back on all those massacres, you

can't go back on all those deaths. And you can't just accept the regime after all that." In all, the escalation of the conflict over the course of 2011 *gradually* brought different politicized factions into *diagnostic* frame alignment that the regime must fall and increased revolution sympathies among members of the diaspora. However, social clubs and professional organizations remained "neutral" during this time and did not lend their resources to the anti-regime cause.

Pervasive Threats and a Belabored "Coming Out" Process

As discussed in Chapter 1, the wider Syrian community was subjected to the deterrent effects of transnational repression that threatened emigrants and their families with sanctions for dissent abroad. In spite of these threats, many Syrians increasing went public in their opposition to the Assad regime over the course of 2011. This was because the factors enabling Libyans to go public in support of the Arab spring were also operative in the Syrian case. The engulfment of their significant others into the conflict, the embrace of risk-taking and cost-sharing for moral reasons, and the perceived decline in the regime's capacity to target individuals abroad all enabled Syrians to come out. However, the *pace* at which activists went public was staggered because regime control in Syria largely held in the initial months of the uprising, and correspondingly, regime agents and loyalists threatened activists abroad during the revolution's first year. As Maher Nana, who went on to form an organization called the Syrian Support Group, explained,

> In the beginning… we fear for our family's safety. Because [it] is a very well-known fact that if any person of the family does something against the government or says something, the whole family will be in danger. So our concern was not about ourselves… it's about the family that we have inside [of Syria], you know?

Such concerns were realized in some cases. For example, after protesters met with the ambassador to Syria in Washington, D.C. in mid-April to discuss their grievances, some

participants' relatives in Syria were detained or disappeared, and others received death threats (Public Broadcasting Service 2012). Additionally, when Syrian artist Malik Jandali performed at a rally in support of the 2011 revolution in Washington, D.C., regime agents kidnapped his father and beat his mother in Homs, telling her, "we're going to teach you how to raise your son" (Amnesty International 2011). The brutalization of Jandali's parents was cited by activists from both the US and Britain as a deterrent to coming out. Media reports also detail additional instances of Syrians' relatives being harmed after they spoke out against the regime over the course of the uprisings' first year (Devi 2012; Hastings 2012; Hollersen 2012; Parvaz 2011). Batul, a student who later became active in a youth chapter of SAC, explained that these reprisals made her family too fearful to come out in 2011. Her mother told her,

> "I understand we all want to voice our opinions. I understand we live in America, it's a free country. But you've got to think of the others. Don't be selfish. You're not the one that's going to face the harm—*they* are." That's why [we were] quiet for a year.

Fears were also heightened by the presence of counter-demonstrators at protest events throughout 2011 and beyond. Pro-Assad protesters took photographs and video recordings of revolution gatherings and verbally threatened individuals in Arabic, as I observed first-hand in the L.A.-area. Libyan-American activist Dr. Saidi attended protests for both the Libyan and the Syrian revolution (his wife is Syrian), and observed significant differences between the two:

> When I was marching with Syrians in the beginning… we always had people intimidating, taking photos... Sometimes they are on the streets, sometimes they are in a car. [This happened] much less with the Libyans. *Much* less. Because [though] there were a few pro-Gaddafi, because they saw everyone is against Gaddafi, none of them were willing to stand up or do this intimidation.

> These acts of intimidation by pro-Assad Syrians were not always empty gestures. One

such individual in Virginia named Mohamad Soueid was arrested and convicted of documenting the D.C-area opposition with the intent to "undermine, silence, intimidate, and potentially harm

persons in the United States and Syria who protested" according to the indictment (United States v. Mohamad Anas Haitham Soueid 2011, p. 3). For this reason, my presence at protests was also viewed as suspicious by some during the revolution's first year. For example, one woman observed me jotting the names of participants I recognized during a sidewalk rally in Anaheim in January, 2012 and asked in a flat tone, "why are you writing *names*?" Another then explained, "we're not afraid for ourselves, but for our families." British-Syrians reported the same problem. Ayman, a doctor who had been living in Manchester since the 1980s, recalled that public events did not start in his city until "late 2011" and that he was *"very* afraid" to participate because "I have elderly parents in Syria and I don't want them to be harassed, and we know that people have been." The counter-mobilization of pro-regime groups meant that just because revolution sympathizers demonstrated in public did *not* mean that they necessarily felt free to be identified as revolution supporters.

The threats posed by transnational repression at this time led some activists to engage in "guarded advocacy" by covering their faces during protests, posting anonymously online or not at all, and refusing invitations to speak to the media in order to avoid being identified as pro-revolution. Sarab, for example, first helped activists in New York organize from behind the scenes "because I hadn't gotten approval from my family to be public." The guarded character of activism also led public events to take on a semi-private character. For example, despite declarations by a speaker that "the wall of fear has come down!" at a SAC-L.A. community meeting in December 2011, I was explicitly instructed not to photograph the audience. And because of persistent concerns about infiltration, some activists who came out in the initial weeks and months of the revolution were suspected of being agents provocateurs. Susan of southern California, who had gotten permission from her father in Syria to come out, recalled that "people

were like, why is she doing this if her family is home? Why is she not scared for them? Reality

was, I was scared to death." In all, respondents report that their mobilization efforts suffered

from enduring suspicion between co-nationals. As Rafif recalled:

> Many people used pseudonyms for a very long time. Other people would sort of mask
> their faces or something so they wouldn't be recognized on camera. So people took their
> pace, whatever they were comfortable with, in terms of coming out publicly in support of
> the revolution. That also created some mistrust, right? Why is one guy completely out
> there and not afraid, and then somebody else is still protecting his identity?... It bred
> some mistrust among different members of the community.

Persistent fears in the community also created a challenge for Syrian organizers, because

early supporters of the revolution could not get significant numbers of revolution sympathizers in

their communities to sign their names to petitions or organizations, or otherwise publicly affiliate

with calls for change. This was a problem because organizers wanted to combat regime

propaganda that labeled the revolution as a plot by small numbers of non-Syrian conspirators. As

Said Mujatahid, one of the early SAC organizers, recalled, because of the "phobia in the Syrian

community to say anything against the Syrian regime, I would say the first four months was

difficult. Even some of your closest people will stay away from you because they are afraid of

being associated."

However, as the revolution escalated, Syrians reported coming out after regime violence

converted their families to the cause or forced their loved ones to flee. Sharif observed this shift

among his co-nationals in Bradford, who began to say, "look, if my family in Syria are going on

the street… why do I need to be frightened here in England?" Similarly, Batul was able to "open

up" in 2012 after her relatives in Syria decided to make their anti-regime position known and

gave "their okay" for their US-based relatives to come out. Even those who were already active

and in exile were further empowered to publicly condemn the regime when their relatives gave

them permission to do so. Mohammad al-Abdallah, a political exile whose father was imprisoned

by the regime at the onset of the uprising, was also able to escalate his public criticisms of the

regime after his father reached out to condone his son's activism:

> So when the uprising started, I was on TV commenting and basically… criticizing the government. But I had that concern about my family's safety because members of my family were in prison with the government… But in April, I get a phone call from my father inside the prison. He managed to basically bribe a police officer and use his cell phone. And he called me, [saying] they're arresting lots of people from the street and bring[ing] them to the prison here, but they tell me they see you on TV and they're very proud of you. So please continue doing that regardless of what's happening here.

The victimization of loved ones also compelled respondents to transition from guarded to public

advocacy. Nebal, a student in London, emphasized that though an embassy official contacted

him to demand that he attend pro-Assad demonstrations, he felt that he had "no choice" but to go

public after his brother was imprisoned. Others did so after experiencing a personal loss. As

Abdulaziz, founder of the Global Solidarity Movement for Syria, attested:

> When I start joining the anti-Assad demonstrations in late April, we used to hide our faces with scarves because we're not sure about the consequences, we're worried about loved ones in Syria. In late May, my friend was killed in Hama and I saw the video on Al Jazeera. One week after that, the Syrian embassy again contacted me to ask me to join *their* protests, and I made my decision. I said look, I'm not joining you, you are killing our people… The person said to me, if you don't join us, that means you are against us. I said I *am* against you, go to hell!…. I was using the megaphone, shouting. They were [taking pictures of] me. And I didn't care at that time. It was the spark of my activism in the *open* way.

Secondly, respondents came out after the scope and brutality of regime violence

transformed their objects of obligation, rendering non-familial Syrians as significant others. As

Omar, an activist from Houston, recalled, "my brother and family are in Syria… but people were

losing their lives. And I don't think *our* lives are more precious than those people who lost *their*

lives." Similarly, Firas of southern California came out after the regime sent tanks to put down

protests in Daraa in April 2011. Before this incident, he had covered his face in protests and:

> [I tried] to avoid mentioning my name in any petition. But after using the tanks, it was like no, screw it!… Why should I worry about my family when *all* of the people are

getting *killed*?… I know that this regime uses… collective punishment. But I was like, I'm not going to care… I'm going to go public.

Fadel, a doctor in London, also refuted peer pressure not to go public by referencing the Syria's most famous child martyr: "You can't only be concerned about yourself and your family. If you think Hamza al-Khateeb is not part of your family, I think you are very selfish." Ahmed (not his real name) of London also attested that he came out after Hamza's mutilated corpse body was returned to his parents at the end of May, 2011: "The thing that affected me most was the murder of Hamza al-Khateeb. Before that, I was reluctant to do protests... When that happened, the next day I was protesting outside the embassy."

The perception that costs should be collectively shared sometimes forced activists to choose between their families and the cause, however. Muhammad N., exiled in London, described the agonizing decision of whether or not to give a televised interview because his family in Aleppo might be subjected to reprisals. His brother advised him, "this is a duty on every one of us... If all of us are cowards because we have family in Syria, then it's treason." Muhammad decided to speak to the media, but the decision pitted his family's safety against his principles. For other Syrians, the decision to embrace the potential costs of coming out led to familial disputes, as when Fadel reported:

> I was in a big dispute with my mother. She said aren't you risking yourself? I said I'm not, I am safe here. Then she said, you have a brother and sister back home. I said mom, I have to get out of my silence… and talk and protest. Those people on the ground, they are brave enough to sacrifice their lives. And I'm sitting here, knowing that nobody is going to shoot at me… and I'm still hesitating? No way. This is the least I can do.

Some experienced significant social costs for choosing the cause over their familial obligations. When Nour, an independent activist from a Christian family, opened a Facebook page in February 2011 calling for liberty for Syrians, some of his family members in the US called him "angry. Like, if you don't care about *yourself*, fine, but *we* want to go to Syria."

Friends and family in the US and in Syria began to severe their connections with Nour for fear of "getting in trouble," and he "started to unfriend a lot of people just to spare them the headache." Because two of his uncles in Syria were interrogated by security forces about Nour, he published an announcement on Facebook that his family had rejected him. That way, he reasoned that if the regime questioned any of his relatives about him again, they could see that he did not represent their views. "But it wasn't an easy call," Nour explained, because "I experienced… extreme isolation and social stigma… I lost everything, all my social connections."

Hussam also stated that coming out early on as a member of SAC was a strategy "to help others break the fear, the wall of fear. Because it was unusual for people to go public criticizing the regime." At the same time, however, even though he had initially supporting a pro-reform platform, "we got a lot of heat. I had family members calling me from Syria like what the heck are you doing? Relatives from all over. All of us went through that… although the letter [we first sent to the regime] was, again, very respectful." Many participants reported that they had to cut all forms of communication with their families at home so as not to incriminate them by association, which was emotionally trying.

Lastly, activists came out because they perceived that the Assad regime's increased use of collective and arbitrary violence in Syria meant that going public no longer posed *additional* risks to their significant others. As L.A. explained, such escalations signaled that her family's fate was no longer in her hands:

> Even if I didn't do anything, if they want my family, they will take them for no reason. When my mom tells me you are [putting a] target on us, I say mama, when they want you, they won't wait for me to protest or not to protest.

Sabreen from southern California also stated that though her mother initially asked her to remain anonymous, she later told Sabreen that "it doesn't matter if you speak or not, because they are

targeting everybody." As such, members of the diaspora went public because they came to

perceive that the regime was no longer willing or able to sanction them in a *targeted* fashion via

proxy punishments. As Y. explained,

> In the beginning, because everything was so slow in Syria, the regime was able to crack down on everyone who talked. Then it got to a point where they're not going to keep up. When the conflict escalated militarily, we're like, okay, their focus is not on Facebook anymore.

This rendered high-risk activism as low-risk, enabling activists to transition from guarded to

overt forms of activism.

In all, Syrian anti-regime mobilization emerged to a previously unthinkable degree over

the revolution's first year, reviving dormant organizations such as SAC and leading activists to

form new organizations. And yet, transnational repression also obstructed diaspora solidarity and

mobilization by perpetuating mistrust and fear, and by imposing costs. As Sarab explained, the

decision to "cross that line of fear" was belabored, recalling:

> After I put my first post on Facebook condemning the regime… My finger was trembling and my heart was racing… So it gives you a sense of how repressed… and how conditioned we were to be quiet and never express ourselves as long as I've been alive.

Furthermore, as many members of the Syrian diaspora across the US and Britain came out on

behalf of the revolution over the course of the revolution's first year, respondents report that the

revolution lumped and split the community into pro- and anti-regime camps. The fear of being

informed upon by fellow co-nationals increased polarization within the diaspora, as respondents

reported cutting off communications with those who came out on behalf of the regime, as well as

avoiding and boycotting businesses known or perceived to be pro-regime. And though the

respondents interviewed in this study affirmed that they would continue to be public regardless

of the eventual outcome of the revolution, many knew of others who remain silent or guarded.[26]

Hassan of SAC-LA cited this as a pervasive dilemma for Syrians abroad because "we enjoy

freedom and democracy. We came to this country for those things. That fear should not be there… And still… people are afraid."

A Year On: Factionalized Mobilization

In all, quotidian disruptions in Syria converted existing anti-regime and reform-oriented groups to the revolution, enabled many in the diaspora to overcome the deterrent effects of transnational repression, and produced an unprecedented surge anti-regime activism, as I detail further in Chapter 4. However, as illustrated above, the revolution was also represented by and divided into a multitude of groups without a mutually agreed-upon leadership. As a result, Syrians came to share grievances and prognostic frames that "the regime must go!" but lacked consensus over *who should lead* this effort. This lack of coordination and consensus in the home-country was mirrored in the opposition abroad, as activists came to mistrust one another and their movements fragmented. So just as the Syrian community was beginning to join together and publicly support the revolution, so too did emergent pro-revolution groups in the diaspora experience fragmentation along familiar fault lines.

A major hurdle in sustaining collective action in the diaspora was the fact that leaders of pro-revolution groups and organizations were perceived as trying to coopt the revolution for their own gains. As Malik of the Syrian Justice and Development Party recalled, the London pro-revolution scene quickly succumbed to infighting and competition that were visible during street protests:

> The demonstrations caused a lot of problems within the community itself. Because the same problems, the same divisions that were happening in the Syrian opposition were reflected in this microcosm of the Syrian community in the UK. Because you had the professionals who were like—there was a guy… and he wants to be basically the head of whatever revolutionary body that represents the Syrian community in the UK… even though he was very close with the ambassador until very recently, before the revolution. So you had this guy who wanted, on account of the fact that he thinks he's clever and

he's got a high position and he's highly regarded in the community, but he has to be the boss… And then the Muslim Brotherhood came along thinking oh, hold on a second. We've been doing this for years, this is *our* gig!… So then they started muscling in.

We tried to set up a protest coordination committee, but it kept falling apart because… whenever there was a Muslim Brotherhood guy involved, they would say oh, Muslim Brotherhood is hijacking this thing. It just became extremely messy. And basically it got to a point where there isn't really any organization in the UK that represents Syrians who are against the regime… And this is the challenge when it comes to organizing anything Syrian in the UK… which is, you have certain political forces that believe that they have an automatic right to assume leadership… regardless of who created the body or whatever. One of those forces that was probably the most influential was Muslim Brotherhood.

Making the situation more difficult was the fact that active members of the Syrian

Muslim Brotherhood were (and are) a part of the opposition, but have not been card-carrying

members of an *official* organization with a brick-and-mortar headquarters. This made it all the

more confusing as to who was actually Brotherhood and who was not. In addition, many activists

who denied having an affiliation were nevertheless accused by others of being secret members

working as a fifth column for a Brotherhood takeover of the revolution. For example, in one

interview, the name of a widely-known anti-regime activist in London whom I had interviewed

earlier was raised, and my respondent interjected vehemently, "he is *Brotherhood*, by the way."

When I replied that this person had denied being affiliated in any way with the organization, he

said with a raised eyebrow, "do you think he would actually *tell* you that he is?" In this way, I

came to learn that the Brotherhood was used as a label to refer to 1) actual members of the

opposition-in-exile forced to leave Syria in the early 1980s, 2) current factions within Syria's

revolutionary movement perceived as working in the service of the transnational Brotherhood

movement and conservative political Islam more generally, and 3) activists perceived as

coopting the revolution on behalf of a conservative Sunni Muslim agenda, regardless of their

actual platforms and identities.

This confusion and mistrust exacerbated longstanding factionalism in the community.

Ahmed of London lamented that "you always had this accusation against people in [the first group] that they're Muslim Brotherhood." After volunteering to join a pro-revolution activist group in London, he was accused of being a Brotherhood member by the group's leaders and shunned as a result:

> They identified me as being Muslim Brotherhood. I tell them I'm not and I haven't got anything to do with them. I mean, my father was part of them but he left them when I was very young. He is very religious. I'm not as religious as he is, by the way. And well, they made it very clear that they didn't like my presence with them…

Organizations were also accused of being Brotherhood-run. As Hussam reported with regards to the Syrian American Council, the decision of one of the founding members to exit the organization and start his own group also raised these accusations in the broader community:

> I hear from community members telling me that [this] person told people that [he] decided to quit the organization because it's a Muslim Brotherhood organization… It's easy to throw these accusations—completely baseless, by the way. I heard that even when I wanted to join… But I checked and I talked to people who are members and I talked to people who know them, [and] they said no. Some of them do have sympathies. Some of them are Christians, some of them are Alawites, some of them socialists. They were everybody. And in this case here, I was laughing. I said you know, did that person tell you [that he] was the president of the local chapter? That person must be Brotherhood then, if that organization is Brotherhood! But it's easier to throw these things in the community because they resonate.

Other groups were attributed as being Brotherhood because they were comprised of the older generation of opposition activists, or because activists felt that their leadership style was too domineering or Islamist-oriented. Abdulaziz of London, for example, said that despite the fact that protests in London still brought Brotherhood and non-Brotherhood members together, he left one of the local activist groups because:

> The style was mainly the Muslim Brotherhood objectives. And we are not really happy with the ideology of Muslim Brotherhood, because [they] are in exile since the 1980s. And the people who started the Syrian revolution were the Syrian people *inside* [of the country]. So basically we believed it is good to listen to the people from within Syria,… we can work accordingly with what they want us to do. And the Muslim Brotherhood didn't really want that. They thought they are the only opposition party. They are

104

organized, but they are this kind of dictatorship to some extent… They think they are the only right people, which is not the case… Unfortunately, they are still living in the 1980s.

Belal of southern California also emphasized that the assortment of various groups affiliated with the revolution inside and outside of the country had raised a series of unanswerable questions that was ultimately hindering solidarity amongst opposition sympathizers. "Unfortunately," he stated,

> some groups are working under the radar... They're attracting others and they're organizing things but we really don't know who those groups are. Who do they represent? What are their intentions? There are religious groups… but then who are they? After the revolution, can I get along with these people?... Are they really pro-democracy or they're planning for their own agenda?... Are they Muslim Brotherhood, are they Salafis, are they extremists? I don't know. Just people are jumping and joining groups, and [they] don't know who they are.

In addition to religious and generational divides, the Kurdish separatists who had mobilized against the Syrian regime from Britain also came to split from the growing protest movement early on because they felt disrespected and marginalized by the Syrian opposition. Dr. Jawad Mella, founder of the pro-secessionist Western Kurdistan Association, remarked that he had initially encouraged his colleagues to participate in anti-Assad protests with the Syrians in London, but that other Syrian Arabs at the protests "did not allow them to raise the Kurdish flag." For this reason,

> I then told them: you don't go and I don't go, if the exiled Syrian people will be just like the Syrian government!... They are as bad as the regime when they will come to the power, or be worse. So since the revolution I didn't participate in *any* demonstrations, when before that we had many demonstrations in all locations… We are against the regime, and *we are against this opposition as well*.

On the other side, Ahmed attested that the Kurds made "trouble" at the revolution protests in London because he felt that they attempted to dominate the Syrian nationalist cause with their ethnic grievances. These strains were further exacerbated by the fact that many Syrian-Arabs raised the Turkish flag at pro-revolution protests because of the Turkish government's

support of the revolution. This was an insult to many Kurdish-Syrians, since Turkey had long

been considered an enemy of the Kurds and their separatist aspirations in the region. Ahmed

recalled that,

> We used to have a lot of problems with the Kurds at the first protests. They would attend
> and they would bring the Kurdish front… so *it would look like a Kurdish protest*. And
> then Syrian Arabs would protest, and then sometimes fights happen. Especially once
> when… some people wore Turkish flags. The Kurds didn't like that.

As a result, many Kurds like Dr. Mella broke away from the Syrian opposition, choosing to

withhold their support of the revolution altogether, or forming organizations dedicated to

pursuing distinctly Syrian-Kurdish claims, such as Thaer's Syria Future Current Party.

While some respondents argued that the splitting and proliferation of pro-revolution

groups during the revolution was as a healthy expression of Syrians' newfound freedom to speak

out against the regime from abroad, others felt that the fragmentation of the opposition abroad

was counterproductive. As Hussam of SAC said, the "unhealthy part was when people insist on

remaining part of a one-man organization because they don't want to delude their power or

authority." This had led to a heightened degree of competition and slander within the opposition

community that shocked many activists. As Razan said as she shook her head, "I felt like we're

protesting for freedom, campaigning for freedom. And despite that, we've got this disease within

us—this competition. I couldn't understand it." Her brother Hassan also reflected in a separate

interview, "why have twenty groups? It's better to have one or two… People are still learning

that we need to have unity."

In all, quotidian disruption in Syria released a sufficient number of Syrians abroad from

the deterrent effects of transnational repression to launch protests and social movement

organizations to support the revolution. But at the same time, the revolution lacked a unified and

inclusive representation and a corresponding prognostic frame around who should lead the anti-

Assad movement and how. This produced conflict in the diaspora, including fights leading to fragmentation over suspected Muslim Brotherhood "agendas" and to Kurdish separatists breaking away because their ethnic grievances were perceived by others as subverting the nationalist revolutionary cause. Overall, the Syrian revolution had stoked a heightened degree of mobilization abroad, but without the sense of solidarity and complementarity that characterized the mobilization of the pro-revolution Libyan diaspora.

The Yemeni Case: Mobilization, Factionalism, and Persistent Problems of Politics

Protests broke out in Yemen's capital city of Sanaa on January 15, 2011 in support of Tunisia's revolution. Despite the fact that relatively few journalists were in Yemen to report on the protests, foreign reporters did cover the revolution for its duration for outlets such as *The New York Times* and *The Times of London*, and scenes from Sanaa were also broadcasted to international audiences through satellite channels such as Al Jazeera. Street-level demonstrations grew steadily each week across the country, mixing demands by independent youth for Saleh to step down with calls by the legal opposition for reform, including Yemen's Islah Party and the Yemeni Socialist Party. After Yemen's first "Day of Rage" on February 3rd, protesters pitched tents at the newly-christened Change Square at Sanaa University and in the central city of Taiz. Regime forces killed several participants in response and spurred a steady growth in protests and nascent sit-in movements.

The resignation of Egypt's president on February 11 further escalated Yemen's uprising. Thousands took to the streets to demonstrate in at least eight cities across different regions across Yemen, including in the restive south and its largest city of Aden. However, regime forces correspondingly stepped up their violent response, and *baltajiyya*, plain-clothed security forces and thug groups, were used to disperse protests. According to Human Rights Watch (2011), a

series of coordinated attacks terrorized protesters in the south in late February by assaulting fleeing civilians, preventing doctors and ambulances from reaching injured demonstrators, and disappearing victims. Erratic shootings by regime forces killed about a dozen protesters each week. By the end of February, regime violence prompted Hussein al-Ahmar, a paramount leader of the prominent Hashid tribal confederation, to rally thousands of tribesmen to the cause as he urged northern Houthis and southerners to " 'drop their slogans, adopt a unified motto calling for the fall of the corrupt regime" (ICG 2011d, p. 5). In February and March, some southern protest factions acquiesced to requests by northern opposition leaders not to raise the independence flag.

In early March, Saleh announced that he would implement reforms considered by most to be too little, too late, and also deported several foreign journalists. Saleh's forces continued to attack protesters, but the overall death toll remained relatively low until March 18. During this day of protest dubbed the "Friday of Dignity," or *Jumaat al-Karamah*, Saleh loyalists shot and killed over fifty unarmed protesters at Sanaa's Change Square and injured hundreds (Ishaq 2012). This incident, which became known as the Friday of Dignity Massacre, drew international condemnation and stoked key defections. Saleh's former ally and General Commander of the First Armored Division, General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, announced that his unit would protect the protesters, and Sadeq al-Ahmar, another prominent figure in the Hashid confederation, also came to side with the revolution. This gave the sit-in movement in Sanaa armed protection by Mohsen and the First Armored Division. At the same time, others protests and sit-in movements across Yemen remained exposed, and the regime continued to target them with regularity, leading to dozens of deaths each week.

The defection of former regime allies and elites presented a dilemma for Yemen's uprising, however. The newfound allegiance of General Ali Mohsen and tribal elites with the

revolution was especially problematic for southern Hirakis and Houthis in the north because

Mohsen had led attacks against these groups in the recent past. Protesters in Aden also

condemned interference in their movement by the legal opposition, decrying the fact that "Islah

began to dominate the protest venues and antagonised independents and protesters who

sympathized with the Hiraak" (ICG 2011e, p. 11), and reports also circulated that Islah

supporters attacked independent protesters in Aden. Furthermore, southerners told the

International Crisis Group (2011e, p. 12) that their counterparts in Sanaa were not being

inclusive of southern participants and ignoring their grievances:

> Ultimately, the chief obstacle to cooperation lay in the fact that, by April, Southerners feared the revolution would fail and that it had been compromised by opposition parties and regime insiders such as Ali Mohsen… As it were, after his encounter with Northern protest leaders, a Southern representative remarked: "Youth in the North have the same mentality as the rulers."… Distrust and differences grew over time, and by late April the initial euphoria over coordination with the North had faded. Protesters throughout the South once again vocally called for separation.

So while Yemen's revolution brought an unprecedented number of Yemenis to the streets

to demand change, key factions within the movement came to be split over longstanding

grievances and north-south divides. In addition, independent demonstrators often referred to as

the "youth" within the northern Sanaa-based movement also grew increasingly concerned about

elite cooptation. In lacking a centralized leadership, Yemen's revolution became subjected to

infighting soon after its inception.

The Emergence of Protest Abroad without Organization Conversion

In February, Yemenis in the diaspora began to meet in order to discuss how to support

the revolution. These initiatives were led by individuals who had been active on behalf of

diaspora empowerment initiatives previously, such as Awssan, co-founder of the London-based

Yemen Forum Foundation, and Adel, an organizer with the American Association of Yemeni

Scientists and Professionals, based out of Dearborn. Organizers held community meetings and formed committees, applied for permits to demonstrate, and reached out to known activists in other cities to launch protests in D.C. and London. In addition to organizing through their existing networks, several started Facebook pages, such as the Yemen Revolution UK page, to spread news from Yemen and coordinate actions. Spurred by the excitement of the Egyptian revolution, this period marked the first time that Yemenis in the diaspora launched anti-regime protests that were not about the south specifically. As Dr. Ibtisam al-Farah, a women's rights activist from Sheffield, recalled, "Positively, it was the first time that the community was brought together. It got new faces involved in the Yemen issues. [This] never would have happened without the revolution."

While a core group of activists had already begun mobilizing on behalf of the revolution in February and March, the Friday of Dignity Massacre on March 18th—referred to by respondents below as *Jumaat al-Karamah*—disrupted "quotidian" levels of regime violence in the capital and spurred a dramatic spiked in mobilization and protest participation. Adel of Michigan described it as a "turning point" because the killings motivated many who were not previously active or who were pro-regime to join in their calls for Saleh to step down. Idriss of D.C. recalled, "at that point, there was no going back. Whatever happens, we weren't going to stick with Saleh anymore." Respondents also attested that they found the footage of the protests shocking; Ali of D.C. described how,

> For me personally, what motivated me most was all those videos I watched on Facebook and on the news. All those young people getting killed by Saleh's army… And I felt like I have to do something. If those people over there are facing army with guns and everything, the least I can do is support them with my voice.

For Haidar of Birmingham, the massacre also affected him personally. He said,

Initially, Yemenis in the UK were not involved in the revolution heavily, until what happened in March, 2011, in University Square, *Jumaat al-Karamah*… I remember that day, it was—a black day, when we saw the blood of our friends, our colleagues. Some of my best friends were injured in this massacre. Since this day, we started to move.

Mahmoud of Sheffield also described the effect of the massacre as "shocking" in its scale and because it subsequently motivated ordinary Yemenis in the community to take initiative and organize. Referring to another well-known community figure and longtime regime opponent named Abdallah al-Hakimi, he said,

It [became] not only about me or Abdallah calling people and saying, let's go out. It was amazing how people were calling *us* to say, look guys, you have to do something, we need to mobilize… I think we had one or two demonstrations beforehand, but they were not as big as after *Jumaat al-Karameh*. The response of people was very enormous to that.

Nadia further reported that this event also motivated her to galvanize other women in Birmingham to participate in the London-based protests:

The women weren't involved as much in the organizing for the revolution; they weren't normally invited… When they killed that many people in one day, that was it for me, I had had it… I felt that it was *my* children who were getting killed and hurt… [so] I went and booked a coach [to London]. [My husband] said why did you do that, you haven't even spoken to the men about it. I said that we're going to fill the coach, even if we fill it with women. That was the turning point where I was prepared, if anyone was to say to me 'you don't have the right,' I would say '*yes I do*'… There's a point where you go past thinking am I supposed to do am I not *supposed* to do. It's something you have to do, it's obligatory. So for me that was the turning point.

Marooj of D.C. also attested that the massacre inspired activists across different US cities to begin working together to launch national days of protest in Washington, D.C. She recalled that, "After that day, we really began to start working with other cities and start connecting our actions together and [planned] a national day of action in solidarity with Yemenis. So that day definitely was a big turning point… [I]t brought the movement home [to us]."

Respondents reported that the Day of Dignity Massacre also dampened the anti-revolution mobilization of pro-Saleh groups who had come out early on to counter-protest their

111

events. Hanna, who had been active before 2011 organizing with southern Yemenis in New

York, remembered that:

> In the beginning—and I think we still have—a lot of Yemenis, mainly from the North, were pro-Ali Abdullah Saleh and were pro-government… So that was one of our main challenges. Actually [at] the first rally that we had, we had a group come… rally[ing] against us… And it was mainly people from the embassy, mainly students that their regime was paying for, so they basically came and said well, we're paying for your schooling, you have to come out to this rally and support the regime against the other activists… [But] a lot of them, after the killings and after just the tortures and a lot of things that were going on, [those] Yemenis came to our side. So the pro-government rallies started dissipating.

Adel of Michigan also recalled that the massacre had the same counteracting effect on pro-

regime protest in Dearborn:

> At the beginning, just a few people showed up to a small demonstration. But especially after the Friday of Dignity, lots of people showed up. There were also… two demonstrations that were big in numbers that were pro-government. And those were the people who were members of [Saleh's] *Al-Mu'tamar* [General People's Congress] party… So they showed up with the president's pictures. And there are still people out there in the community who are still supporting the [Saleh] and his policies. But after that Friday, I don't think they did anything after that. It was some of them kind of joined the revolution and some of them just stayed on their own. And the last one was kind of an embarrassment because only like ten or eleven [pro-regime] people showed up to the city hall.

And finally, while some activists abroad, and particularly those from the South, were

concerned that they might have trouble returning to Yemen for going public, many of these

individuals took that risk out of a sense of moral obligation. Arsalan of Sheffield said that his

family worried about potential retribution from the regime, but that "I couldn't stand to stay

home and watch TV while my brothers and sisters were being killed back home and not do

anything." At the same time, no respondents reported covering their faces at protests or

witnessing others doing so, and only one respondent guarded his identity online. Overall,

Yemenis who came out did not report having to grapple with the decision to go public in their

support for the revolution, as did Syrians during this time.

112

However, despite the relative ease of coming out for the Yemeni community, the data also demonstrate that *no Yemeni organizations were converted to the revolutionary cause* by their leaders. Instead, the organizers of diaspora empowerment and social organizations discussed in the previous chapter, including the Yemeni Community Associations in the UK and the American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals, worked to *insulate* their organizations from the effects of the revolution. As a result, activists who worked to mobilize protests, community meetings, and other initiatives on behalf of the revolution did so without the backing or the resources of existing indigenous organizations in their communities.

Because organizers had attributed home-country politics as toxic to the work of community development organizations, they reported making a strategic decision to enforce a no-politics rule during the revolution. Community leaders argued that they were required to adhere to by-laws stipulating a non-political mission, and that being apolitical was perceived as necessary to continue serving the broader Yemeni community. As Saleh of the Sandwell Yemeni Community Association recalled,

> Our response as a management committee of which I'm a part, is that look, this is a free country here, and we want a free country in Yemen. You go and do what you want as an individual, but not under the banner of the Yemeni Community Association. Because… [our] principles are no politics. When the revolution came about… politics reared its head within the community... and there were elements within the community that felt, for example, that yes, we should be very pro-revolution and go out there and demonstrate… It was hard because it started fragmentation in the community. But *alhamdulillah* [thank God], [we were able to] enforce our decision that this is not political organization, go and do your politics somewhere else… And of course, we should not be putting in barriers to stop them to do that. But we won't open up the center to facilitate that kind of activity because it puts the objectives of the organization at risk.

The Yemen Community Associations of Birmingham and Sheffield reported adopting the same strategy in order to prevent the center for being using as a "political tool, either pro- or anti-," as Nageeb of Birmingham stated. Mohammad AlSahimi of Sheffield echoed this view,

stating that because "If we're going to say that we support the revolution, we're also going to have to say that we support the Hirak. Let's leave the Yemen Community Association as a voluntary organization, not involved in politics." The Yemen Forum Foundation was also not converted to the revolution because of the rules stipulated in its by-laws, according to co-founder Awssan, though he his colleagues went on to form a new group to support the revolution. Additionally, the American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals remained a neutral service organization during the revolution, so much so that when I requested an interview with one of its employees, they politely turned me down, citing the fact that they had nothing to do with my research on politics or the revolution.

The National Cause and Southern Marginalization

As discussed in the previous chapter, south Yemenis abroad had mobilized to support the secessionist "Hirak" movement in south Yemen before the Arab Spring, and these groups were the *only* public anti-regime movements in the US or Britain before 2011. At the same time, when the revolution emerged, the southern Yemeni diaspora was split on how to respond. While some respondents perceived the uprising as a natural extension of their anti-regime grievances, others viewed it as a threat to their demands for autonomy. As a result, the Arab Spring produced heated debates within south Yemeni activist circles. Fathi, a journalist from London with origins in the south, described that some of his friends and colleagues felt that they should wait and see what would happen, while others came out immediately for and against the revolution. Fathi himself decided to join the protests immediately, and urged other southerners to do the same.

Just as elites in Yemen had asked southern protesters to lay down their pro-independence flags and mute their calls for secession, so too did organizers in the diaspora work to convince south Yemenis to join northerners to support the broader revolutionary cause. For example,

Nadia in Birmingham recalled negotiating with southern leaders on the phone in order to convince them to participate but not to bring their independence flags. The revolution was for *all* Yemenis, she urged them; "It's totally humanitarian. We will go to London just to show that our aim is to get [Saleh] down. It's not about north and south. If you want to split later, you can. It's not the time to talk about it [now]." Mazen of D.C. reported doing the same and recalled that early negotiations with southerners not to raise the south Yemeni flag were successful:

> There [was] a group from the Southern Hirak movement. They came and they were raising the Southerners' flag. And then we had to, you know, communicate with them. We came to a common ground that this regime is killing everyone, whether they were Northern or Southern. So okay, they have to come and raise the current Yemeni flag and join us with our effort. So we unified against the regime.

Some pro-unity organizers promised not to raise the national Yemeni flag or chant slogans about unity in exchange for the southerners' support as well. These negotiations initially forged pro-revolution coalitions that converged in D.C., New York, and London in the initial weeks of the uprising.

However, many southerners reported changing their views thereafter because they perceived that northern military elites, Islahis (Yemen's Muslim Brotherhood), religious figures, and tribal elements in Yemen were working to subvert their southern compatriots back home. Saleh of Sheffield recalled that the revolution appeared to lose its potential for meaningful change once these elite enemies of the South sided with the uprising after the Friday of Dignity Massacre:

> Momentum was gradual, and it was meaningful, and it was making progress… And then as soon as you got these [people like] Hamid al-Ahmar all of a sudden becoming revolutionaries, I thought, *it's the end*… What can we do? We need them, because they're powerful in order to get rid of the regime. [But] it just distorted the whole momentum that was going on. And I think that was what defeated the revolution, or [was] the beginning of the defeat.

Understandably, Saleh and his colleagues also found the slogans of "unity or death" proclaimed

by Sanaa-based elites such as Hamid Al-Ahmar and General Ali Mohsen to be extremely

worrying. Fathi in London also recalled that rather than benefitting the south, "we realized that

the fall of Saleh [would be] to the benefit of Hamid al-Ahmar and Ali Mohsen… They are as

bad, if not worse, than Ali Abdullah Saleh in terms of [stolen] land acquisition [in the south]."

In addition to losing their faith in the revolution itself, many southern Yemeni respondents also

reported withdrawing their support because they came to feel marginalized in the pro-revolution

movement abroad. For example, Ali, a pro-secession activist from Birmingham, stated

unequivocally that the revolution became another example of how northerners were working to

subvert southern voices and mute their demands in Britain. This was further evidenced,

according to Ali, by the displaying of the Yemeni national flag at these protests, which was a

symbol of occupation to him and many secessionists. He recalled,

> In 2011 we went to London to support the anti-Saleh demonstrations with our brothers
> and sisters from the north; we thought that this is going to bring change… When we went
> as one, we forgot [about] all the [different] parties. The main objective was one: to get rid
> of Ali Abdullah. Everyone forgot their own objective—the Houthi, the south. We had an
> agreement before we left that the banners should have only "get rid of Abdullah," nothing
> about the south and this. But we went there we were shocked to see them lifting different
> banners. Even some of them, the speakers, they were speaking [against] the idea that we
> agreed [upon]… I saw that people were trying to show themselves as a leader, they're
> trying for their own benefit… They had their own agendas. [So] the wool [was pulled] off
> our eyes. They were trying to fool us… Islah party jumped on the bandwagon of the
> revolution, the Islamic ideology, and took it over… They were taking advantage of this
> opportunity and not being fair.

Furthermore, many southerners found newcomers to the anti-regime movement to be

untrustworthy partners. Fakhary, a southern youth activist in Sheffield, felt that because the pro-

revolution protests were organized by many people whom he perceived had "switched sides"

against Saleh, "how would you trust people like that?" he exclaimed. When meeting with a pro-

revolution organizer who was trying to convince all Yemenis to come out and support them, Fakhary recalled,

> I stood up and said hold on a minute. [Before], you were protesting for Saleh in London. Today you're asking us to protest against Saleh! Why didn't you come with us in the previous protest?... We'll come and protest with you, but on one condition: that you come and protest with us on the southern issue. And then after that, they faded.

Abdo of Sheffield, who had been an organizer on behalf of the south for many years, stated that both he and his colleague Dr. Mohamed initially supported the revolution and even connected with activists in Taiz to give a speech through Skype. He said, "We ask them to recognize our revolution in the south, to recognize our specifications about our specific goals and aims. I am not against the public in the north, but against the mafia, the corrupt people." However, after the Islah party and Ali Mohsen sided with the uprising, he viewed the revolution as a counter-movement to the southern cause. When organizers in Sheffield approached him and fellow TAJ members to join them, he refused.

> I had a discussion with people who came to convince us to join them. I said, why didn't you recognize *our* marches [from before] February 2011? You didn't recognize our movement and our rights, our people's aims, what they experience and how they suffer! If you don't recognize that, how will we be together? They said you are calling to divide the country. We said that our differences are not only with Saleh, *but also with you*.

In addition to being upset that purported opportunists were trying to "jump on the bandwagon" during the revolution, according to Ali, southerners also expressed that their northern Yemeni compatriots were being callous and insensitive by pushing aside their grievances. Ali lamented that after he tried to raise southern grievances on the Yemen Revolution UK Facebook page, he was lambasted online for being partisan. "They said it's nothing to do with the south, that the main objective is the Yemeni revolution," he explained. "Don't bring north and south into it. *What do you mean, don't bring north and south into it?* They're neglecting the southern issue. It really *hurts*." His Birmingham-based colleague Abdul

Hamid agreed, adding that, "They don't understand us… They don't feel our pain. I thought the revolution would change them a little bit… but it's the same." The dismissiveness with which some treated the southern issue at this time led to increasing disagreements on and offline. Adel Mutlak Hassan of Sheffield also described his disgust at the fact that pro-revolution Yemenis at home and abroad did not demonstrate good will by drawing up concrete plans to address the problems in the south. He argued,

> They said this is a chance to get rid of Saleh and build a new Yemen when I'm still discriminated against, with no house, no job, a lot of people have been killed since the unity and since 2007. You want us to *forget* about that? Do you have a *solution* for these problems?

As Abdul Hamid, a colleague of Ali's in Birmingham, told me, "Everyone is opposing us, even here, since 2007… When the revolution come, people join us. They say oh, there will be change. And then they hijacked the whole thing."

On the other side, the demands of pro-secessionists to prioritize the southern issue also offended many pro-unity demonstrators, who came to feel that the southerners were the ones trying to hijack the revolution for themselves. Yazan, a youth protester from Sheffield, was outraged that some southerners at the London protests "tried to push their agenda." He recalled that,

> We stopped them instantly. They were never going to be allowed to push their *agenda* in a protest about the revolution. No—don't be cheeky, put your flag down. [If] you want to protest that, protest it later. Right now, the South isn't suffering on its own… "The South's suffering, the South's suffering." We're *all* suffering right now, mate!... We're all here for a common cause that involves the whole of Yemen, not just one bit… I was so upset, I was so angry. Because it was like some of them tried to hijack the entire thing… I was like, Yemen right now is at its most delicate… It's just so opportunistic and I really didn't appreciate that… But when you're in such a sensitive state and then you go and create more division, it ruins it for everybody.

Activists in the US experienced the same tensions. Hanna, who had been a part of the

pro-southern protests in New York before the revolution, said that when South Yemenis came

out for the revolution early on:

> One of the great things we were able to do was also bring in the South Yemen
> Association into the whole movement for Yemen as a whole… Bringing everyone
> together, fighting for one cause, fighting for democracy and human rights, was one of our
> major achievements that we were able to accomplish early on. [But] a couple months
> afterward, when I think a lot of Southern Yemenis just got really tired of the promises
> and a lot of that base started remobilizing [for the south] again… So the huge solidarity
> that we had in the beginning was starting to break.

In addition, when protesters sported t-shirts with the slogans " 'New Yemen, United Forever'

with the Yemeni flag," according to one participant named Adam in D.C., this also made

southerners feel "very marginalized," as Marooj, one of the D.C.-based organizers, recounted.

> And they *were* [marginalized], honestly. Because [organizers] were like, oh, that's not
> our messaging now. We're one… And so they stopped coming. They didn't feel like it
> was their space, and it was unfortunate. Because we all need to be united for the Yemeni
> people. That doesn't mean that we can't have our different opinions about what it means
> [about] what Yemen should look like or whatnot. So it was difficult to have the activists
> from the South participate. They did in the beginning, but they weren't respected.

While Marooj recalled that some southerners re-joined them for specific events later on, they did

so while holding the southern independence flag and came to speak specifically about the

southern issue. "I don't blame them," as Fouad of the New York activist community commented,

since all southern Yemenis have received in general "is a lot of talk—about nothing."

As with the case of Syrian-Kurds, Yemen's ethnic and regional divisions were

exacerbated by the revolution at home. Sub-national grievances were perceived by pro-unity

Yemenis as subversive to the broader cause, while pro-unity messaging came to be perceived by

secessionists as corrupting and cooptive. As a result, the only public anti-regime movements in

operation before the Arab Spring did not become a part of the broader nationalist cause to oust

Saleh. So just as the Friday of Dignity Massacre began to bring Yemenis out onto the streets from San Francisco to London, so too did the revolution split the community.

Fears of Cooptation and the Problem with "Politics"

At the same time that many southerners came to boycott revolution events and protests, pro-unity activists also reported being threatened by the efforts of elites and elders to dominate the pro-revolution protest movement in the diaspora. Activists in Liverpool, for example, commented that this dynamic was pervasive in their very first community meeting about the revolution. Former regime allies dominated the discussion, they attested, which made the youth angry. "While they've got a voice in the community and a valid voice," Kamal explained, "they're not representative really of all of the voices, and they were trying to be dictatorial in how they did it." As a result, the youth broke off to form their own independent group. This dynamic was also pervasive during protest events. As Awssan of London recounted, "Even when protests were initiated successfully, the problem was people were put off because the actual youth leadership were pushed aside." He found it highly problematic that community leaders who used to "sit with the ambassador" drowned out independent youth voices during demonstrations and in the media. These dynamics created a significant "division within only five hundred or three hundred or two hundred people who would come out," according to Awssan. His colleague Anter agreed, stating that it was difficult for the participants to keep working together because they all had their "own agendas."

Rabyaah, a New York-based organizer, also lamented that certain figures within the pro-revolution movement tried to coopt the protests on behalf of what she perceived to be the conservative Islah Party.

We had some within our group who were more conservative, working for their own agenda—essentially for the Islah party. I had a big argument with one of the organizers. We wanted to keep it non-partisan. We're not going to say Islah – we're just an [independent] group, no Islah, no socialists. We're not going to associate ourselves with any party… they wanted to bring their Islah banners. We were at a rally and I said, you had better bring that down right now… . It doesn't represent us, it's not what we're here for... Here we are, already glorifying Bayt al-Ahmar [the Ahmar family] and this *hizb* [party]! Have we not learned anything from this revolution?

Dr. Ibtisam Al-Farah of Sheffield also noted that the main reason that solidarity for the revolution started to break down was because certain figures were taking advantage of the situation. Specifically, she found the fact that pro-Saleh individuals were throwing their support behind the revolution in demonstrations as highly suspicious, and at the same time, other respondents mentioned her as an example of a pro-regime infiltrator.

The lack of trust between participants in the pro-revolution protest movement was further apparent in respondents' personal stories of being slandered as pro-regime spoilers. Speaking of her activist colleague Ibrahim, Safa of London recalled that, "You'd get idiots in Sheffield accusing Ibrahim, who are you to lead the movement? Who are you, the London people?... And you think, bloody hell, who are *you*?" Mazen of D.C. attributed this infighting to elders and elites wanting to do things the "Yemeni" way, rather than the "Yemeni-American" way. He lamented that, "They want to control things. They want to be on top, in power. They want to have their names published in articles. And [lead in] the protest. For example, we did protests here. A lot of people, especially from Michigan. Everyone wants to deliver a speech."

Because trust and solidarity were so tenuous within the movement, many organizers in the diaspora sought to simultaneously support the revolution while distancing themselves from "politics." For this reason, respondents used general prognostic frames to avoid accusations of being proxies for any particularly political party or elite "agenda." When Safa joined the first youth meeting of activists in London, for example, she found that the group was being extremely

121

careful of whom they included in their meetings, and were purposefully vague in their anti-

regime claims and slogans. She recalled:

> Not all of them wanted to have a political framework, which seemed odd to me… They just wanted to basically say that they're not happy with tyranny in Yemen anymore and they wanted to see radical change. The odd thing was that they wanted to see regime change, but I didn't feel that there was anything else. As an older person, who comes with… experience, I needed to feel that I was with people who had a common vision. I think they misunderstood me by thinking 'oh she wants us to get *political*… She wants to direct us into this political minefield.'

Eventually, however, Safa warmed up to this way of thinking because Ibrahim convinced her

that having more specific political claims would "open a can of worms." Summer of New York

also attested that she had to keep her discussions general in order to avoid appearing political and

rousing north versus south grievances: "I just talk[ed] about just the general, we want to kick

Saleh out because we want a better life, we want education… So it was just a *general* type of

talk."

Additionally, in order to keep the pro-revolution protest movement functioning,

organizers purposefully did not establish formal organizations out of fear that participants would

accuse them of coopting, or speaking over, revolutionaries in Yemen. Mahmoud of Sheffield

said that Yemenis had not "moved" to that extent in their history and that mobilizing the

community became a big job, but that they "tried to make it less formal in order to keep

everybody involved and not to create political fractures or fights for representation." They were

also "cautious about finances, because we were independent. We asked people to pay for

themselves and we collected donations from people to pay [for others]" to go to London for

demonstrations. As such, the financial sponsorship of the pro-revolution movement came to be

associated with cooptation, and for this reason, organizers relied on individuals to fund their

participation. Many respondents attested that this placed a significant burden on community

members, especially in light of the fact that a significant proportion of the Yemeni immigrant community was relatively impoverished to begin with. Keeping their claims vague and their movements informal did not insulate activist groups from infighting, however. Ahlam, a Yemeni activist youth with prior experience organizing for other domestic minority rights campaigns, exclaimed,

> It was a whole new ballgame because I realized I wasn't working within an organization. And I haven't had any experience working with loosely-affiliated groups. So I wasn't quite sure how the democratic process was working. People were like, don't tell so-and-so about this meeting! It's like, what is going on here? [Laughs.] But *it mirrored what was going on in Yemen,* all of the fractured things that were happening and how people were losing sight of the larger picture.

In sum, the Yemeni movements that emerged in the US and Britain in 2011 were initially led by youth activists who had been involved in diaspora empowerment initiatives in the past. After the Friday of Dignity Massacre, organizers attested that revolution sympathizers and many pro-Saleh constituents also came to side with the revolution and joined them in their protests. Many activists who had mobilized on behalf of abuses in Yemen's southern region also joined the protests initially and acquiesced to the requests of organizers not to raise the south Yemen independence flag or secessionist slogans. However, after activists witnessed regime elites defect and join the revolution in Yemen and abroad, many southerners came to feel betrayed by their pro-revolution counterparts and withdrew their support. Independent youth activists also observed attempts by elites to coopt the diaspora revolution movement. In response, organizers attempted to keep their frames general and their movements informal so as to be inclusive. Even so, as the Yemeni Spring turned into summer, pro-revolution movements abroad experienced a heightened degree of factionalism and mistrust that proved to be taxing to their efforts over time.

CONCLUSION

As the Arab Spring took the world by surprise and the region by storm in early 2011, the moment that many political exiles had been waiting for arrived. In the Libyan case, the sudden eruption of a nationwide revolt at home produced the quotidian disruptions necessary for activists in the diaspora to back the revolution and justify armed resistance against the regime. These disruptions also enabled closeted regime opponents and revolution sympathizers to overcome the deterrent effects of transnational repression and come out publicly on behalf of the uprising. Furthermore, because the revolution came to be rapidly united under a singular representative leadership and fighting force, this correspondingly unified the revolution-supporting diaspora around a common cause and set of allies in the home-country.

The emergence of the Syrian uprising was far more gradual than in the Libyan case, and as a result, the quotidian disruptions necessary to motivate Syrians abroad to protest and overcome the deterrent effects of transnational repression occurred gradually over time. In addition, the revolution in Syria lacked a unified and representative leadership, and quickly succumbed to power struggles and infighting between groups. This dynamic was mirrored in the diaspora, such that just as Syrians began to come out against the regime as never before, so too did revolutionary movements fall prey to infighting over who should lead and represent the opposition. Suspicions over Muslim Brotherhood "agendas" were particularly pervasive, and Kurdish separatists withdrew their support for the revolution after they came to feel marginalized within the opposition movement abroad. These dynamics exacerbated longstanding fault lines between ethnic and religious groups and between older and younger generations of activists.

Yemenis in the diaspora did not report being subjected to the same degree of fear of the regime from and came out primarily after the Friday of Dignity Massacre on March 18th. Organizers reported that this event significantly increased participation in protests and pro-

revolution groups because regime violence delegitimized Saleh and stoked a sense of outrage and urgency to act in the diaspora. Just as in the Syrian case, however, the lack of a unified leadership in the revolution at home divided the opposition abroad along familiar fault lines. Many southerners came to feel betrayed by what they perceived as northern cooptation of the movement, and many independent activists also observed that elements were working to coopt the revolution on behalf of existing political parties. As a result, the Yemeni revolution produced a heightened degree of mobilization and factionalism abroad, and as in the Syrian case, activists' efforts were plagued by mistrust, in-fighting, and slander.

In all, the revolutions produced a heightened degree of protest and mobilization abroad, and the pace of their escalation and the opposition's degree of solidarity were mirrored among their supporters in the diaspora as well. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, the ways in which the diasporas then worked to assist their compatriots in Libya, Syria, and Yemen continued to be profoundly impacted by changes on the ground, which determined whether and how activists would play a *role* in the revolutions as a transnational auxiliary force.

PART II:

THE ROLES OF THE DIASPORAS IN THE REVOLUTIONS

After the initial eruption of the Arab Spring in early 2011, the Gaddafi regime battled the Free Libya Army and NATO forces in a fight to the death; the Assad regime in Syria waged a scorched earth campaign against its opponents as foreign extremists declared war on all sides; and the Saleh regime in Yemen launched attacks on sit-in encampments and fought pitched battles with defected tribal and military forces. As each revolution became prolonged and increasingly bloody, these crises presented a unique opportunity for movements abroad to assist rebels and civilians on the ground. Pro-revolution activists in the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas possessed the English-language capabilities necessary to publicize the crises to global audiences; they were ideally positioned to pressure the governments of two major world powers and permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to intervene; and they possessed the capital and connections needed to channel resources to their compatriots on the ground. As a result, emergent diaspora movements were poised to play a significant role in their respective home-country revolutions.

Despite the initial surge in mobilization and protest in the US and Britain, however, the participation of diaspora movements in the revolutions varied widely. Libyan activists played a significant role in the revolution by *lending direct support* to revolutionaries and civilians at home and by serving as *intermediaries* between various parties to the conflict for the duration of the revolution. The Syrian diaspora also performed *direct and intermediary roles*, but in contrast to the Libyan case, their abilities to do so became *increasingly limited over time*. Yemeni pro-revolution movements, on the other hand, had an *indirect and limited intermediary role* over the course of the uprising. In light of the shortcomings of existing explanations to account for

126

variation in diaspora mobilization dynamics (as I elaborated in the Introduction), the following chapters explain how exactly the diasporas mobilized to address their home-country crises, how and why their collective dynamics changed over time, and why only some diaspora movements developed the requisite capacities to contribute to the revolutions and address the ensuing humanitarian crisis.

Based on the comparative analysis, diasporas' mobilization strategies and tactics during the Arab Spring included up to four general types of collective action (see Table II.1 at the end of this section). First, they publicized facts and claims about the revolution to outside audiences, which Sidney Tarrow (2005) calls "externalization," in order to help revolutionaries overcome media blackouts in the home-country, gain the attention and interventions of third parties, and to transmit facts and claims to bolster support for the cause. Second, diaspora movements *channeled resources* to their allies and civilians in the home country, including their professional skills and resources, such as medicine, food, cash, and materiel. Third, diaspora activists *linked different parties to the conflict together* in order to facilitate information and resource flows and to recruit third-party sympathizers to the revolution. This included what I call "insider-outsider" linking, referring to when diaspora activists connected their compatriots in the home-country to outsider allies, and "insider-insider" linking, such as when activists connected different parties in the home-country to one another. Lastly, members of the diaspora also *served as an ancillary volunteer force on the ground* as humanitarian relief workers, interpreters, citizen journalists, and members of the revolution's rank and file and leadership cadre. In cases of externalization and linking, the diasporas performed roles as *intermediaries* between movements and populations at home and external groups. When channeling resources and volunteering on the ground, the diaspora played a *direct* role as an *intervening party* to the home-country crisis.

After elaborating the ways and degrees to which each diaspora mobilized on behalf of these goals, I demonstrate how variation in respective roles (summarized at the end of this section in Table II.2) were shaped by factors both external and internal to their movements. As illustrated by the Libyan and Syrian cases (see Chapters 3 and 4), diaspora activists and their movements played a direct and intermediary roles in the revolution when: 1) activists possessed skills and resources needed by revolutionary movements to bolster their capacities to fight and address humanitarian crises; 2) activists had or developed social ties to what I call "insider receptors," such as family members and revolutionaries in the home-country; 3) activists established working relations with third-party allies and sympathizers, such as host-country governments and media organizations, who launched direct interventions into the crisis; and 4) activists had access to newly-liberated space in the home-country. When these facilitative conditions coincided, diaspora movements were able to mobilize to directly address a variety of needs on the ground and to become key intermediaries between third-party allies and their home-country compatriots.

On the other hand, for the Syrian diaspora, facilitative conditions shrunk over the course of the conflict and turned obstructive (see Chapter 4). As a result, activists struggled to continue their work and became cut off from their allies on the ground. However, the analysis also finds that Syrian movement groups that converted or established *formal* transnational organizations to the cause were able to continue performing critical advocacy and relief work over time. The formation of social movement organizations was a key adaptation prompting movement survival, since informal groups died off after volunteers and donors became exhausted. An important caveat, however, was that the formalization of Syrian movements also imposed regulations and constraints on their work that limited activists' abilities to adapt and respond to needs on the

ground. Nevertheless, formalization enabled the Syrian diaspora to maintain the capacity to perform vital functions inside and outside of the country in spite of hostile conditions.

In the Yemeni case discussed in Chapter 5, I demonstrate that the absence of formal pro-revolution or humanitarian organizations limited the ability of the activists to confront the challenges posed by obstructive external conditions. Much to their frustration, organizers felt that they could do little more than hold episodic demonstrations and ad hoc lobbying efforts that lacked a strong degree of organization or coordination. As a result, Yemeni respondents reported that their movements were largely symbolic displays of support and did not have an impact on the ground. In light of the comparative analysis, I argue that nascent movements mobilizing under inopportune circumstances can only play a role—albeit a more limited one than performed under facilitative conditions—if they make this necessary organizational and tactical adaptation.

**TABLE II.1: Typology of Roles Played by Diaspora Movements**

1. **EXTERNALIZING FACTS AND CLAIMS** from the inside to external audiences (e.g., the public, authorities, and the media) and to co-nationals through social media, protests, and lobbying;
      1a. Raising awareness and combatting the information blockade;
      1b. Holding demonstrations and protests;
      1c. Lobbying for international assistance;
      1d. Channeling facts and claims into the home-country.

Public   Diaspora   Home-country
Authorities
Media
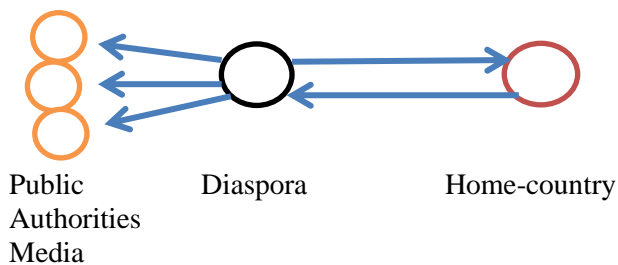
2. **CHANNELING RESOURCES** to allies and civilians at home;
      2a. Channeling expertise/skills;
      2b. Channeling material/fungible resources.

Diaspora   Home-country allies/constituents
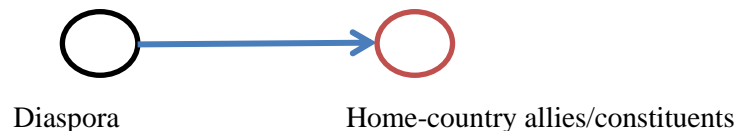
3. **LINKING DIFFERENT PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT** to facilitate externalization, channeling, connectivity, and legitimization;
      3a. Inside-outside linking (e.g., rebels to foreign journalists);

Third-party   Diaspora   Home-country allies
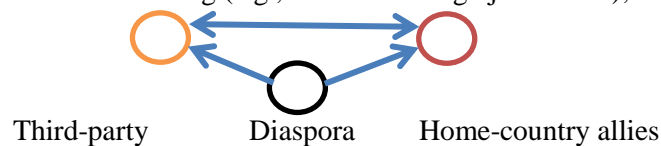
      3b. Inside-inside linking (e.g., rebel groups in two cities).

Diaspora   Home-country allies

4. **VOLUNTEERING ON THE GROUND:**

Diaspora   Diaspora in Home-Country   Third Parties
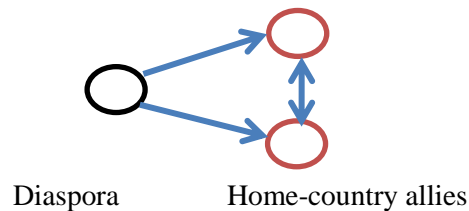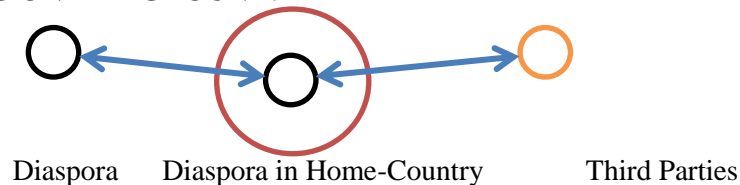
TABLE II.2: Determinants of the Diasporas' Roles in the Revolutions

External Conditions	Internal Organizational Adaptations	
	Strong	*Weak*
Facilitative	Libyan Diaspora Mobilization: Performed direct and intermediary roles for the duration	
Obstructive	Syrian Diaspora Mobilization: Performed direct and intermediary roles that became increasingly limited over time	Yemeni Diaspora Mobilization: Performed an indirect and limited intermediary role for the duration

CHAPTER 3

The Libyan Case

Within a week of the initial uprising in Benghazi on February 15, 2011, the city had been liberated and protests had broken out across the country, defying Gaddafi's decades-long moratorium on dissent. However, as the regime began to recover from this initial shock, Gaddafi launched a sweeping counteroffensive that targeted protesters with lethal force, laid siege to cities across Libya, and shuttered the internet and phone lines. In response, world powers imposed sanctions on the regime, and the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1970 on February 26th condemning the killings. Leaders of the revolution's newly-formed and under-equipped National Transitional Council (NTC) called on the international community to impose a no-fly zone, and the European Parliament called for the NTC to be recognized as Libya's legitimate government. The Arab League followed suit, excluding Libya from its meeting to decide on the League's position on intervention and backing the Security Council.

Gaddafi remained as defiant as ever, however, by threatening to annihilate the opposition. Though defections at all levels imploded his military, loyalist brigades buttressed by mercenaries began to retake towns and prepared to launch a major offensive against Benghazi. In an effort to rebuke the UN, Gaddafi also declared that Libya would retaliate against targets in the Mediterranean and that there would be "No more fear, no more hesitation, the moment of truth as come. There will be no mercy. Our troops will be coming to Benghazi tonight" (*The Guardian* 2011). By March 16, Libyans in Benghazi and across the world waited with baited breath as lines of Gaddafi's tanks hurled toward the city and the UN Security Council voted on Libya's fate.

On March 17, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973 demanding a ceasefire and authorizing the international community to use means short of a ground occupation to

protect civilians. No countries opposed the measure, though five, including Russia and China, abstained from voting. The resolution authorized NATO forces to launch the first ever intervention based on the principles of the "responsibility to protect" to stop genocide and mass killings. As Gaddafi forces shelled Benghazi, French fighter jets launched Operation Odyssey Dawn to push Gaddafi's forces back. Backed primarily by the US, NATO then took command of naval and air operations. By the end of March, the National Transitional Council published a manifesto for liberal democracy in Libya and France recognized this body as Libya's legitimate government-in-waiting. The rebels now had the support needed to defend themselves and to potentially win the ground battle against Gaddafi's forces.

But even with NATO's backing and superior technology, the battle for Libya's future was not guaranteed. As Gaddafi's forces hardened their grip in the western part of the country and NATO defended the liberated east, the battle converged upon Misrata, a critical port city in the middle of Libya's coastline. As the city was shelled daily and cut off from supply lines, the battle for Misrata came to be known as Libya's Stalingrad. A decisive turning point came for the rebels after their forces broke the siege and liberated the city in May, but the push to Tripoli came again to be blocked by a second stalemate along the Nafusa Mountains. As rebels fought to open supply lines to this Amazigh ethnic minority area and liberate cities including Nahlut, Yafran, and Zintan, refugees poured into Tunisia.

Tripoli remained on lockdown for the duration of the revolution, though guerilla and informant networks operated across the country to antagonize Gaddafi forces and communicate enemy positions to NATO. After Nafusa was won in July, the final push for Tripoli began. As rebel forces drove into Tripoli during Ramadan in late August to cheering crowds, Gaddafi's forces fled to Sirte, and the National Transitional Council assumed control. Victory had been

achieved, but at a high cost. By the end of the eight month-long war, at least 25,000 Libyans had died, with many more tens of thousands displaced, missing, and injured.

THE ROLES OF THE DIASPORA IN THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION

The pro-revolution Libyan diaspora played a multifaceted and significant role in the revolution for the duration of the conflict (see Table II.1 in the previous section). First, activists (1) *externalized facts and claims* about the revolution to outside audiences. Externalization was intended to overcome Libya's media blockade, to gain the attention and interventions of third parties such as the diasporas' host-country governments, and to transmit facts and claims to Libyans in order to combat regime propaganda and bolster support for the cause. Second, they (2) *channeled resources* to their allies and civilians in the home country, including their (2a) professional skills and expertise, and (2b) material and fungible resources, including medicine, food, cash, and materiel. These efforts were critical in addressing resource shortages on the ground and the national war effort. Third, the diaspora (3) *linked different parties to the conflict together* in order to facilitate information and resource flows and the recruitment of allies. This included (3a) insider-outsider linking when members of the diaspora connected Libyans in the home-country to outsider allies such as government officials or journalists, and (3b) insider-insider linking when activists connected different parties to the conflict within Libya to one another. Linking by the diaspora combatted the regime's attempt to isolate its opponents and quash them in the dark. Lastly, members of the diaspora also (4) *served as an auxiliary volunteer force on the ground* as humanitarian relief workers, interpreters, and members of the revolution's rank and file or leadership cadre. Overall, activists mobilized to launch direct interventions into the revolution, as well as served intermediary roles between various parties to the conflict. The

social movement groups and organizations formed or converted to fulfill these roles are listed in

Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1: Libyan Groups and Organizations Formed or Converted to the Revolution and Humanitarian Causes during the Arab Spring

Diaspora Group/Organization Name	New (N) Converted (C)	Exclusively an Apolitical Charity?
_US_		
Enough Gaddafi	C	No
Lawyers for Justice in Libya*	N	No
Libya Coordinating Group	N	No
Libya Outreach	N	No
Libya Youth Movement*	N	No
Libyan American Association of Ohio	N	No
Libyan Council of North America	N	No
Libyan Emergency Task Force	N	No
Libyan Humanitarian Action Foundation	N	No
New Libya Foundation	N	No
Britain		
Lawyers for Justice in Libya*	N	No
Libya Link*	N	No
Libya Youth Movement*	N	No
Libyan British Relations Council	N	No
Libyan Muslim Brotherhood*	C	No
World Medical Camp for Libya	N	No
Other		
Libya AlAhrar* (Qatar-based)	N	No
Libya AlHurra* (Tunisia-based)	N	No

*Denotes multi-national membership.

These formal organizations and informal groups publicized the diaspora's grievances and claims,

facilitated resource transfers, and lobbied the US and British governments to support and sustain

intervention. Most respondents sustained a voluntary full-time commitment to the revolutionary

cause over the course of the eight-month war in addition to, or instead of, their preexisting jobs. I discuss their transnational mobilization dynamics in detail below.

1. Externalization

A significant type of collective action undertaken by the Libyan diaspora was to transmit the testimonials and pro-revolution demands of Libyans on the ground to outside audiences, thereby externalizing the revolution. They targeted major media outlets, officials in the US and British governments, and the public writ large. In so doing, Libyans abroad hoped to combat the claims of Gaddafi's state-run media, to peak the media's interest in Libya and grant them favorable coverage, and to convince their host-country governments to intervene. In addition, because the Gaddafi regime severed communications between different parts of the country in order to split the east from the west and to censor the atrocities taking place on the ground, the diaspora also worked to project information about the uprising back into Libya to areas under regime control or under siege.

The data demonstrate that the dynamics of Libya's revolution produced two phases of externalization. Before the onset of international intervention on March 19, the diaspora's efforts in both the US and Britain included publicizing events on the ground through the internet and social media and to lobby their governments to enact a no-fly zone. As Hend remarked, "information is key and whenever it's able to be disseminated, it becomes a global issue, no longer just something that happened in Libya that was wiped off the face of the planet." After the intervention was implemented and journalists began to flood the liberated areas in the east, the diaspora then worked to externalize information coming out of besieged and regime-controlled areas, pressure their host-governments to maintain their commitment to the intervention, and

channel pro-revolution facts and claims back into Libya. The various facets of these campaigns

are detailed below.

1a. Raising Awareness and Combatting the Information Blockade

In anticipation of Libya's Day of Rage, initially planned for the 17th of February, activists

in the diaspora established websites and social media accounts. As Ahmed of Enough Gaddafi,

the US-based youth activist network founded in 2009, explained:

> Leading up to the revolution… we understood our role in the beginning to be the media team. We needed to do whatever we can to make sure that the world knows about what's going on… We [planned] to essentially flood all media outlets with as much information as we possibly could to bridge the gap between [them and] the credible on-the-ground presence. We knew that in Libya there was… no such thing as an independent media that could effectively report on what was taking place. So we thought of our role as being the bridge… we could report [through] our networks on the ground what was happening… [until] the time when somebody from those Western or other media outlets could actually be on the ground reporting in the first person.

Abdullah, the co-founder of Enough Gaddafi, also stated that this "bridging" was vital if

"people on the inside were going to stand a chance." In order to do so, group members

established "central place on the internet to get news" about Libya, according to Hamid, by

launching the website Feb17info.com. Once the uprising began, members of the Enough Gaddafi

network updated the website in shifts. Assia, a member of this second-generation exile network

who was living in Dubai at the time, recalled, "We were all around the world. We would run it in

four hour blocks to keep it twenty-four hours… Our houses were newsrooms." Hamid also

contacted activists in Cairo over social media who had done similar externalization work during

the Egyptian revolution to help them set up "Feb 17 Voices," which allowed Libyans to call and

record their eyewitness accounts about what was happening on the ground. They then linked

those recordings in English and Arabic to their website and to Twitter. As Tasbeeh of Los

Angeles told me, "it did feel like we were transistor radios because there was no one else to take up this mantle. We felt a responsibility to transmit those voices."

Others outside of the US had the same idea, setting up websites, Twitter accounts, and working collectively in impromptu media centers during the first days of the uprising. For example, Ayat, a Libyan-Canadian from Winnipeg, launched *Shabab Libya*, the Libya Youth Movement, with others in the US and Britain. "Obviously, we *had* to," she recounted,

> because there was nobody [inside the country] who's going to put Libya on Al Jazeera for twenty-four hours and show us what's happening... We worked primarily in English. What we wanted to do was tell the world… to help those people making decisions to make decisions in our favor.

Another youth named Haret in Birmingham also set up a Twitter account and a website LibyaFeb17.com to "translate and transcribe" all news coming out of Libya in Arabic to English. Haret said, "I wanted to make that media window for the international world to look at what's happening without any bias. I say the word bias loosely, because I was really focusing on the pro-revolution events. But without any additions from myself." Mazen in Seattle and Anas in Manchester also reported establishing media centers with fellow Libyans in their communities to monitor and disseminate information. As Hend, who was working with the Enough Gaddafi team from her home in Pennsylvania, recalled, "I remember the first week, it was twenty-four hours a day. There was no sleep… We literally overnight just became like a source of information for the outside world." Activists also worked to counter propaganda; Assia recalled that a key part of their work in the early days of the revolution "wasn't just spreading information, but capturing misinformation and labeling it as misinformation."

Many activists in the diaspora did this externalization work for the duration of the conflict because they felt that it was necessary to continue publicizing what was happening in places where journalists had little or no access, such as in besieged and regime-held areas. For

this reason, members of Enough Gaddafi and the Libya Youth Movement continued to disseminate information about the war online for the duration of the revolution. However, others adopted different roles once they observed that the media had sufficiently penetrated their home-country from the east to report from the front lines. As I discuss below, this enabled many to come out from behind the screens and live the revolution in person on the ground in a variety of capacities.

1b. Holding Demonstrations and Protests Abroad

In addition to externalizing the revolution online, Libyan activists also launched targeted protests prior to the NATO intervention. As mentioned in Chapter 2, D.C.-based Libyans launched a series of demonstrations to call for a no-fly zone and to pressure the US government to recognize the National Transitional Council as Libya's legitimate government. Gaddor also recalled that Libyan-Americans from across southern California protested outside of the Federal Building and the Turkish consulate in L.A. after the Turkish government came out against the NATO intervention. In Britain, Libyans across the country joined rallies in front of the Libyan embassy as well, and residents of Manchester affirmed that demonstrations were held on a daily basis in front of the former BBC building and in the city center. Sondes, one of the participants in Manchester, attested that these events provided the Libyan diaspora with an opportunity to share good or bad news, such as the death of a relative in the fighting, amongst friends. "It was a sad time but it was such a lovely time as well because we were all unified, we were all together for one thing," she said.

However, while regular protests occurred in Manchester, most respondents report that protests died off after the UN vote for intervention. Many interviewees attested that because their governments came to side with the revolution, they worked to maximize their time and resources

in other ways. As Mohammad of Sheffield said, either "you go and stand in the square and protest, 'down with Gaddafi!' or you sit at your laptop and try to do something useful... We made the choice. Because the actions, you know, are very fast and nonstop… There are not enough hours in the day."

1c. Lobbying for International Assistance

In addition to sending footage and information to media outlets, activists also worked to compile information for the purposes of lobbying and recruiting political allies in their host-country governments. Manal of the D.C. area, for example, joined a small group of Libyan-American women who formed a group called Libya Outreach. Members of this group issued regular "situation reports" about the state of the uprising and the regime's response and issued it to government officials and think tanks. These reports were designed to emphasize the escalating urgency of the crisis on the ground. The Libyan Emergency Task Force of D.C. also worked with Libya Outreach and others to meet with various government officials, from national security advisors to President Obama to the State Department and members of Congress. Esam, a co-founder of this Task Force, attested that the purpose of their meetings was to "accentuate the gravity and the seriousness of what was going on in Libya so that it became very clear to the decision makers" that the crisis required urgent intervention.

Parallel efforts were established in Britain by individual dissidents, such as M.A. (a longtime activist who had been shot by Gaddafi during the infamous 1984 protest in London) and a newly formed group called the Libyan British Relations Council in order to advocate for a no-fly zone. Mohammad Abdelmalik of Libya Watch also lobbied various European governments to recognize the NTC. Activists engaged in lobbying in both countries reported adopting congruent frames for their pitches, arguing that intervention was in the US and British

governments' economic and security interests, that the National Transitional Council was a legitimate governing organization with democratic aims, and that the West had a moral responsibility to intervene and prevent a massacre in Benghazi. M.R. in Seattle, who worked to lobby his congressional representatives before joining the NTC in Libya, explaining that in order to get anti-war Democrats on board, "you had to shape it or frame it in an American way. Explain Gaddafi and how horrible he is and killing people and this is the humane thing to do. And explain that it's not going to cost the US lives as well."

After the March 19 intervention, activists in both diasporas reported continuing to meet regularly with government officials to persuade them to continue supporting the intervention. As A.R. of the Libyan British Relations Council recalled,

> Before [the intervention], people had no idea what was going on. After, they wanted to make sure that, parliament wanted to make sure that they were fighting a good fight… And we knew that NATO's involvement in this fight was vital. So the main purpose was to keep them *committed* to the fight… So the idea was for the UK government to keep committed at the same level of operations, not to feel under political pressure to withdraw. The other purpose was that we wanted to be a face, an alternative face of Libya. Because you had the diaspora here, educated people to speak the language of the country they live in. So we wanted to show them that because the only thing that was known about Libya was in Gaddafi's image... we wanted to show people that no, Libyans a well-educated people who can speak.

M.A. also worked on lobbying, working closely with Mr. Richard Northern, Britain's ambassador to Libya who was in London during the revolution:

> He was sort of the go-between us and the Foreign Office, and he came to be very close to the Libyan community. And that's why we came to him and we start offering him every help they wanted from us. That was the connection. We work as a team with all of them. Because we were trying monitoring the movement of money… and companies linked to certain [Libyan] assets. *We* were aware of all these things—they don't know everything. We Libyans know what's happening... So I was contributing mainly by giving them information about these things. We didn't want the assets getting in the wrong hands at the time of the confusion.

In all, activists in both the US and Britain reported establishing relationships with key figures

and institutions in their host-country governments in order to provide information and persuade

these actors to sustain direct and intensive interventions on behalf of the anti-Gaddafi movement.

1d. Projecting Facts and Claims Back into Libya

Another vital component of the diaspora's externalization efforts was to project the

information they acquired from their sources on the ground back into Libya. Because the

Gaddafi regime had severed communications between Benghazi and Tripoli and many parts of

Libya remained subjected to surveillance and information blockades, Libyans abroad worked to

fill in these information gaps. For this reason, Ayman, then studying at the University of

Oklahoma, posted hourly updates about the situation on the ground on the website of the

National Conference for the Libyan Opposition "in Arabic—so targeting the Libyan people." In

the days following the intervention, a number of respondents were also recruited by founder

Mahmoud Shamman to launch a pro-revolution satellite station broadcasted out of Doha called

Libya AlAhrar. This station, broadcasted in Arabic, was designed to provide an alternative to the

regime's news channel and to promote the revolution in conjunction with the National

Transitional Council. Shahrazad, who had moved to Washington, D.C. during the first week of

the revolution to launch protests and lobbying initiatives, was invited by Shammam to join the

station. She recalled that:

> Our TV station became the focal place for people to look for information. We were trying
> to connect with the east and the west because Gaddafi controlled the west side of Libya at
> that time. The eastern part was pretty much liberated within a few days. So I had a
> program called *Libya al-Naas*, Libya The People… targeted to Libyans. My show was in
> the Libyan dialect [because] I was trying to get in touch with the common Libyan person
> and bring people together. Gaddafi at that time was trying to divide the people and say
> that the west is doing this and the east is trying to confuse you, the east is this and the east
> did that... So every night, I will show a map of Libya with the green flag on it and the
> new flag closing in on the green to show people visually how things are liberating and

progressing in the different parts. Because they would not get the news [otherwise].

In externalizing information back into the home-country, members of the diaspora founded and launched initiatives to combat regime propaganda, bolster support for the cause, and boost morale.

2. Channeling Resources

2a. Transferring Skills and Expertise

In addition to seeking attention for their cause and working to recruit allies, activists also worked channeled resources to revolution directly in the form of expertise and social capital. For example, Fadel, a Libyan-American who had worked for the US State Department in the past, was contacted by National Transitional Council Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil to assist them in lobbying the US for assistance. Fadel recalled that as an ad hoc advisor and partner to the NTC, he helped them to formulate an argument for intervention based on the principle of the responsibility to protect. He recounted,

> I have a lot of American friends who were involved in the responsibility to protect; I said we have to use this, and I sent it to them [the NTC] in English in an email—I still have this email—and they said, can you send this to us in Arabic? They couldn't read it because in the '80s, Gaddafi banned English. So I sent it to them [in Arabic], and said this is what we're going to do. It has never been used before, but we know Gaddafi is going to [retaliate] at that level… So that was the first advice, in terms of how we can go about getting the support of the international community and the framework we can use.

Fadel, among other respondents, continued to advise the NTC informally as a member of "their supporting cast" throughout the revolution.

Others transferred their connections with and experience in media to assist the revolution. For example, Dina of southern California came to be recruited by the NTC as an advisor and assistant due to her professional expertise in media and communications. After working for Mahmoud Shammam at the Libyan AlAhrar satellite station, he introduced her to the Interim

143

Prime Minister of Libya, Mahmoud Jibril. "I ended up managing all of his press," she recalled, and she traveled during the revolution back and forth from Doha to Libya in order to assist the prime minister directly.

Activists in the diaspora also worked to channel their expertise in medicine to the conflict. Dr. Ahmed Shalabi of London, for example, was relied upon by donors and his colleagues in the World Medical Camp for Libya group to determine exactly what types of aid should be purchased and sent to Libya.

> They needed a doctor's touch, and that's when I really came in, that's when I found something that I was good at… People were already flying to Egypt [immediately] to get stuff into Libya. They were asking me for a list of things, saying I have this amount of money, tell me what I need to buy. I told them what I thought we should buy, one, two, three, four, five… I [also] started communicating, trying to get meetings with other doctors... In fact, the first ever list of needs was developed by Skyping my doctor friends here in the UK... with a variety of specialties and asking them ok, bone injuries, what do I need? Anesthetics, what do I need? That's the first ever list I formed… This [was] the proudest moment of my life.

Dr. Mahmoud Traina of southern California also emphasized that activists relied on doctors to determine what supplies to purchase because "some requests were for things that they had been living without for twenty years and other things were more medically urgent. You'd have to sort through these lists and see what was most urgently needed. That was mostly my role."

Others also lent legal expertise to the revolution. Hend in the US and Mohammad in London, for example, joined a transnational network of Libyan lawyers to assist in the documentation of the revolution and to help build a case in the International Criminal Court against the regime. She said,

> I got on this call, you know these Libyan lawyers, all fairly young, I would say forty years old and under, are all living abroad. They were trying to handle all of the different things, the requests, that they were getting in, because the foreign governments in whatever country they lived in were looking for some consultations. And at the same time, there were things going on in the ground that needed to be addressed as far as collecting evidence, fact finding, investigating. So I started working on that as well. I was

a law student, but it was really interesting because we basically were helping set up investigative committees in Libya to collect evidence.

As the war progressed in Libya, activists in the diaspora also sought to lend their strategic and logical know-how to the revolutionary forces who were largely comprised of inexperienced or civilian volunteer fighters. Abdo from Manchester attested that:

> We set up something called Libya Link. We founded this as a way to… provide expertise in international law, humanitarian law, as well as our own strategic tactical type skills… So if you had the skill, the strategy, you could pool your opinions across or even get involved in logistics to save a life, and maybe win a battle… Objective number two was to help empower the youth, and there were two types. One were the youth who were playing their parts in the operation centers, on the front lines. We were providing support and really developed them in a way to train them up, give them strategies and tactics, logistical type stuff, as well [for]as the youth who were working on the humanitarian side.

In sum, Libyans abroad worked to bolster the revolutionary effort by volunteering as advisors and experts in the fields of politics, medicine, law, media, and logistics. As Sarah of London recalled, "everyone tried to use their own contacts and expertise" in some way, often at the request of revolutionary forces themselves, to address needs on the ground.

2b. Channeling Material and Fungible Resources to the Home-Country

The Libyan diaspora also mobilized to send material and fungible resources to the rebellion and to civilians from the first week of the revolution through the liberation of Tripoli in August. This included humanitarian assistance such as medical aid and food; satellite phones and equipment needed for intra-national and transnational connectivity; and a variety of lethal and non-lethal supplies for the fighting force, from bulletproof vests to weapons.

Initially, the first caravans of aid were moved by Libyan activists abroad through the liberated east from Egypt into Benghazi. But after intervention in March, members of the diaspora estimated that greater needs lay outside of the liberated zone. As a result, they targeted

145

aid shipments to other cities, including to the port city of Misrata during the siege, and helped to

smuggle in supplies to the regime-controlled west, as well as sending aid to the refugee camps

along the Libyan-Tunisian border. For example, Assad of London's World Medical Camp for

Libya recalled that:

> We started initially on the eastern side. That was liberated very quickly, so we only sent one shipment of food and medicine to that side, because after that, the big organizations got involved—the big charities and United Nations... so we moved to the west. And there was also an entry point from Malta, through the sea. So what we did was send two people at the charity's expense to Tunisia and to Malta. These guys were in charge of receiving the goods that we sent and finding a way to send them into Libya. From the Tunisian border, we used to smuggle from there into Libya. And Malta, we hired some fishing boats and some of the Libyans... who came in fishing boats to Malta. And we filled them with as much as we can… After that, there was a boat we used to charter to take the stuff out into Libya… We sent food, medicine, and either satellite phones or satellite-based internet systems to some of the hospitals. So we started to, using our own connections in the country, we started to make contact with people. The hospitals and doctors in the hospitals that we know in areas that were either liberated or where they were fighting for it to be liberated. And what we did was we distributed through smuggling some satellite phones to each of these hospitals so they can call us with their needs. And they also confirmed deliveries… We needed confirmation. And we carried on doing that the whole time.

Among the humanitarian aid assembled for the revolution included supplies that "the men

weren't thinking of," Rihab of the New Libya Foundation commented. For example, Heba of the

Libyan American Association of Ohio recalled:

> One of the number one things was feminine products, that was a huge thing… [And] because of the psychological trauma, a lot of the adults were needing the adult underwear. So we went out and we got the feminine products, the adult underwear, and then we also bought bottled waters [and] nonperishable foods that we could send without a problem. Our forty-foot container was filled to the end.

Other forms of aid included supplies to equip the Free Libya Army, such as

communications equipment and bulletproof vests. Ayman of the Libyan Humanitarian Action

organization founded in Oklahoma attested that they worked to send the rebels communications

equipment before NATO stepped in to fill this role.

At the beginning, the Libyan freedom fighters, they didn't have material support or weapons. That's before March, before the intervention of NATO and other countries. So I participated in the fundraising to raise money to buy some equipment and logistic stuff for the freedom fighters in Benghazi and the Amazigh freedom fighters in the Nafusa Mountains and in Misrata too… to buy those military-grade Iridium satellite phones. And we had a hard time to convince the Iridium company to buy them… because they have restrictions to protect them and what you're going to use them. And finally I was successful in buying a good amount of them… Then we sent them to the Libyan Transitional Council… So these phones were sent to the freedom fighter leaders in Misrata, Benghazi, and the Nafusa Mountains... But after that, in March, lots of European countries, like when NATO intervened, they get a lot of support... So you know… at the beginning, although it was small amount, it's not like country is supporting them, it's just people supporting them—but we tried our best.

Ayman also used indirect methods of sending money to his associates and volunteers in Libya and Tunisia using global wiring services. These methods enabled activists to get money into areas beyond immediate reach and relief. He explained, "when the Gaddafi brigades were sanctioning the Nafusa Mountain area, people suffered from hunger and misery there… They needed money to buy food so I sent money through a MoneyGram, you know. It was quicker."

Salam, a Libyan-American who spent most of the revolution mobilizing from within Tunisia and Libya as part of a diaspora-founded charity initiative called Libya AlHurra, also set up a system whereby donors in the diaspora could purchase credit for the rebels' use of satellite communications. He said, "we posted a list of satellite phones, I think a hundred and fifty of them, that we as a charity had donated. I posted it in a Facebook group. And I was like, if you have ten bucks, go online and [purchase] credit for it. And that's what Libyan Americans did." Other forms of aid included necessary items such as maps that the revolutionaries lacked. Mohammed Abdulmalik of Manchester explained, "I attended a meeting and there was a request for a satellite up-to-date picture of Misrata because missiles were being fired from certain locations… but they could not pinpoint where they were coming from." In response, donors in

147

the diaspora funded the purchase of items such as these and other essential items such as gas necessary to keep the revolution's advance on Gaddafi running.

3. Linking Allies Together

3a. Insider-Outsider Linking

From the onset of the uprising in Libya, members of the diaspora worked as "remote fixers," as Tasbeeh of L.A. described, by linking their co-nationals inside of the home-country with allies on the outside. Many activists attested to linking Libyan eyewitnesses to western journalists. The point, according to Farah of the World Medical Camp for Libya in London, was to promote a direct line between Libyans on the inside to the outside world. "I did *not* want to be the voice of the revolution in Libya," she said. "That was really important to me." Heba of Ohio, for example, put her cousin and her friend Fathi in Benghazi in touch with CNN and Al Jazeera for interviews since they were "not afraid to talk" and could communicate in English. Rahma, a Libyan-American living in Tripoli during the revolution, was linked to outside media by Ahmed of Enough Gaddafi from the United States. She told me that Ahmed's initial introduction to one news organization snowballed into regular calls from NPR, the BBC, Al Jazeera English, and the LA Times that lasted for several months until her family was forced to flee to Benghazi.

This kind of linking enabled Libyans inside to be able to "speak for themselves," as Abdullah of Enough Gaddafi affirmed. Amna from Manchester said that some of her relatives in Libya "were surprised at how much we actually knew. I don't think they realized the fact that a lot of the information that was in the media was actually [from] the Libyans who were abroad, getting the information from Libya, and sending it across." Ayat also attested that an important part of this process included vetting their insider contacts in order to cultivate trust with journalists and to prevent the spread of misinformation. Ayat said that some "people I was

148

talking to [in Libya] just kind of assumed that I was a journalist… And I said no, I'm the middle man here. And just, I have to basically vet you. And then if you're a good enough contact," that person was referred to journalists in the West.

Taregh of Oxford also reported that linking also facilitated the movement of diaspora volunteers into Libya as well. He said, "we were trying to organize, connecting people together so people who wanted to go over there to help out would have people that would wait for them and look after them." Using their contacts in Cairo and Benghazi, activists put journalists seeking to get into Libya in touch with individuals who would receive, transport, and accompany journalists into the eastern part of the country. Ayat recalled that even after the border opened, members of the media who had never been to Libya were aided by the diaspora.

> There were a lot of journalists who we gave instructions to go to the Egyptian border, and we had our relatives go meet them and bring them in early on. Technically anybody could've driven in. But it was very early and nobody really knew how to assess the situation. So we said okay, if it makes you feel better, they'll drive you in.

Members of the diaspora also worked to link needy Libyans with outside experts and volunteers. Several of them worked specifically to forge links between mental health professionals and rape victims in the Tunisian refugee camps. One activist from Manchester who wished to remain anonymous, for example, attended a conference in Norway of psychiatrists in order to ask for volunteer doctors to come to Tunisia and volunteer their services. Using private donations, this individual helped to arrange for nine doctors from Norway to come to Tunisia in June to address the needs of women there. As a medical doctor working in Cardiff, British-Libyan Niz also worked to channel in assistance using his connections in Britain. Paying out of his pocket, he contacted his co-workers and recruited five of them to come into Libya to treat injured fighters on the front lines. He recalled, "we paid and planned everything down to the last

little detail for them to fly from Cardiff to London to Egypt, to be driven into Benghazi, to be

driven to Ajdabiya and back to Benghazi where they were staying in a safe house."

3b. Insider-Insider Linking

Activists also facilitated linking between Libyans inside of the country in an effort to

bridge various parties to the conflict together and connect them to the revolution's command

structure. The coordination of various parties fighting on the ground was crucial, said Abdo,

because the revolutionary forces were often geographically dispersed, isolated from one another,

and disorganized. For example, Monem, who was living in San Jose, California at the start of the

revolution, heard from contacts in his parents' hometown of Khoms that "all political activists

and people that were doing activities in Khoms were being killed." In response, he sought to

revitalize a volunteer resistance movement from within the town by asking his brother to deliver

satellite phones to trusted contacts in Khoms through Tunisia. Using his iPhone, Monem then

worked to "connect them with the central command in Misrata and Benghazi. One of the guys in

Misrata was the point of contact with NATO," Monem recalled. "And I said please, I have

information for you because the cells in Khoms could not communicate with Misrata directly."

By connecting the Khoms resistance with other fighting forces, Monem worked to channel

resources to these fighters and to increase their degree of organization and synchronization with

the rest of the rebellion.

Abdo of Libya Link also worked to help coordinate and supply disparate parts of the

rebellion who were not well connected to the base of operations. He said,

> [We were] helping them to provide them with satellites, internet connectivity, for the
> fighters, mobilizing where to fight and what tactics to use, and really creating the link
> between different operations. That was absolutely critical after [General] Abdul Fatah
> Younis left. He was the commander who tried to bring the fighters together. But once he
> was demoted, things were being controlled from outside of Libya by Jabril and his crew.

Which in my views and opinion didn't go down very well because there is no coverage on the streets, they didn't know exactly what was happening. One of the biggest problems was actually getting the various tribes who were fighting independently in many cases, you would find some of them... needed to buy weapons to be able to fight. That was one of the signs of weaknesses of unity between the *thuwar* [revolutionaries].

Overall, by linking pro-revolution Libyans and their external allies to one another, the diaspora facilitated and strengthened transnational and intra-national connectivity during the revolution.

4. Volunteering on the Ground

Lastly, members of the diaspora participated in the war effort on the ground as humanitarian relief workers, interpreters, fighters in the Free Libya Army, and members of the National Transitional Council. They did from within Libya, as well as in and around the eastern border with Egypt, the western border with Tunisia, and from Malta, an island country in the Mediterranean Sea closest to the port city of Misrata.

Because the uprising initially began in the eastern city Benghazi, volunteers initially flocked to Cairo to amass supplies and drive them into Libya. Once Benghazi was liberated, the city then became a hub for Libyans seeking to contribute to the cause in person. As Amr Ben Halim recalled, "We would travel fifteen hours by car [from Egypt]… to drive all the way into Libya. We would arrange delivery but also we wanted to see what's going and see what help we could offer." Abdallah Omeish, a Libyan-American filmmaker from Los Angeles, snuck into Benghazi during the first week of the revolution and began to externalize the cause from the inside. In partnership with Al Jazeera English, Abdallah filmed a documentary on Mohammad Nabbous, a revolutionary activist in Benghazi who became famous for broadcasting a live video stream of the city on the internet. Others lent their medical expertise to the injured. Dr. Mahmoud Traina of southern California, for example, was one of the volunteers who traveled Cairo during the initial days of the revolution to transport aid and lend his skills in Benghazi:

We were getting reports of people getting killed and the hospitals being short staffed, [and about] a lack of medicine and supplies, and I started talking with some of my childhood friends [about this]. [One of them] called me and said we need to help, we're trying to get some medical supplies in… So I talked to my work, I talked to my wife, she was seven months pregnant at that time, and I decided it was time to go. [Around] the 22nd I went to Cairo. [Other expatriates there] had amassed a crazy amount of money—about one million dollars—from different expats, and while in contact with hospitals in Libya we immediately went about arranging a caravan of medicine and food... We went to Benghazi so we drove thru the border… People from all over were coming [to Cairo], it was a diverse group… By the 27th, we had a shipment put together of four trucks of medicine and another three or four trucks of food items and drove them into Libya. Then I went to help in one of the hospitals in Benghazi and they were pretty overwhelmed… The hospitals were not equipped to handle the amount of major trauma that they had to deal with.

As Assia from Kentucky reported, many volunteers, including her brother, went to

Benghazi to "fill the gaps" of what needed to be done. Ahmed of Enough Gaddafi attested that

he and other volunteers filled these roles on the fly in order to help the media and humanitarian

aid distribution effort:

And there just happened to be this team of journalists who were looking to get into Libya. And we were like, well, let's go! We started as their translators and their fixers… And we get to Benghazi probably the 25th or the 26th of February… working there trying to see what we could do to better coordinate a couple different things. Number one, when medical supplies came into the country we made sure that they actually got to where they were supposed to go, so to different hospitals in Benghazi. And then the other things were to try to make sure that different journalists who came in actually had an appropriate understanding of the context that they were reporting on… So we did our best to set up the right interviews for different folks, and tried to translate as much as possible.

Several respondents also went traveled to Benghazi in order to join the fight itself. Adam

of Virginia recalled that his time in Benghazi was spent training to join the front lines and

assisting with media, including with media start-ups run by Libyan youth.

We stayed in Benghazi for a little bit, did our training there. While we were training, at the same time, we were helping with the journalists, doing translations. There were also a few startup newspapers... and they were all [run by] young guys… We were helping with the English side. And this is all going on while we were training. And finally once we were done training, my brigade leader was like, all right, you're going to be going over to the western mountains. I was like, all right, awesome, that's where I want to go… And it was literally like taxi drivers, students, doctors, regular bakers-turned-soldier. It was

college students like me who are now holding an AK and we're in charge of five other guys.

Some volunteers also arrived later to help the Free Libya Army break the stalemate. Abdulssalam, then in his 50s and living in California, for example, entered in Benghazi from Cairo using his American passport to join the *thuwar* to "pay my share for the revolution." His brother, who had fled from Tripoli with his family to Benghazi, connected him with the Libyan Martyrs Militia. Along with several British-Libyans of different ages,

> They took my name and said they would call me when they were ready. One day early in the morning, [my brother] called me and said go to the airport, there was a flight that was going to take me to Nahlout. With no training, nothing—zero. It took us about five hours to get permission to fly, because of NATO... Then we went to Misrata. At that time there was heavy fighting. We landed on the road, on the highway. Like in a movie; desert, mountain, nothing else. You're scared, you don't know what's going to happen.

Libyans from the diaspora (such as Rahma, mentioned above) also mobilized within regime-controlled territories to assist the revolution effort. For example, Dr. Niz Ben-Essa, a young British-Libyan from Cardiff, managed to fly into Tripoli at the start of the revolution to join in Tripoli's protest movement. After the demonstrations were crushed with live ammunition and mass arrests, Niz co-founded an underground resistance unit called the Free Generation Movement. This small group mobilized against the regime from inside of the capital in a number of ways, including by stealing internet satellite communications equipment. Niz said, "we realized… if we don't have a means of communicating with the outside world, much of what we do is going to be fruitless." They also facilitated international media reporting from inside by helping foreign journalists escape their government-minded lockdown in Tripoli's Rixos Hotel:

> We took the international media who were effectively under hotel arrest in the Rixos, we were smuggling them out and taking them to areas in Tripoli to demonstrate that there was resistance and opposition to Gaddafi in Tripoli, because Gaddafi was spinning the idea that everyone in Libya loved him and there were no protests in Libya, no problem in Libya was just Al Qaeda elements causing trouble. And we were taking journalists to

153

areas in Tripoli, getting them to speak to people, seeing sporadic small protests happening in Tripoli. [27]

In addition, Niz's group also communicated with foreign governments and NATO during this time to supply them with information. Being a British citizen enabled Niz to serve as a link between outside intervening entities and fighters on the ground:

> We were communicating with NATO, with the UK foreign office, with Benghazi which at the time had been liberated, coordinating intelligence, passing on coordinates of tanks and security forces and concentrated brigade forces in Tripoli... The foreign office was very interesting because being a British passport holder they were acutely aware that I had entered Libya… They managed to get through to me by email in the end... Once they knew what I was doing, what my background was, they maintained contact and it was the British Foreign Office that put me in touch with the US State Department, which together put me in touch with a liaison, an intelligence-gathering liaison officer for NATO who was basically just compiling evidence in terms of strategic locations, logistics, where security forces were based, coordinates, photographs, things like that.

As Gaddafi forces pummeled Misrata and the Nafusa Mountains, many members of the diaspora also worked around Libya's northern and western borders to assist the harder-hit areas. Rihab, a Libyan-American activist who founded an organization called the New Libya Foundation, joined a network of Libyan expatriates operating from Malta who were mobilizing to combat the siege on Misrata:

> We had a registered bank account and we had an EIN number so we could collect money. So we collected about twenty thousand dollars' worth of funding and got about three hundred thousand dollars' worth of medical equipment... So I took these boxes with me over to Malta, and this cash. And at that time, Misrata was completely surrounded by Gaddafi forces… There was a group of Libyan businessmen who were in Malta. And they had these ships and they were sending supplies, arms and stuff like that over to Misrata. Also, they had a shortage of milk and medical supplies and diapers and things men weren't thinking of, that's what we spent a vast majority of our cash on. It was just kind of, how do you get these needs covered?... So I stayed there for about three weeks, in Malta. And that's when the Red Cross started moving and the much larger aid organizations started getting some movement.

Others traveled into Misrata after the worst of the fighting to assist in the recovery. Taregh, a mental health expert from Oxford, recounted:

A psychiatrist friend and myself decided to go into Libya in June 2011. Misrata was under siege at the time, so we were smuggled in via one of the fishing boats. Our primary object was to needs assessment... [of] the distress and trauma, because the city was under siege for so long… So I went around all the different hospitals, spoke to different mental health workers who had absolutely no training or experience in working with trauma… After about a week or ten days, I came back to England to raise money for a training program.

The Tunisian border region became a hub for diaspora mobilization as well. After other international organizations began to step in to assist Misrata, Rihab then turned her focus along with other expat volunteers to "support Libyan women off of the border" with Tunisia. After assembling private donations, they opened up a center for women and their children in a local grade school in the Tunisian city of Tataouine to hold classes and provide social support to the women, many of whom had lost children in the fighting. Assad of the London-based World Medical Camp for Libya also traveled to Tunisia to help facilitate the transfer of goods. "With certain big shipments and sensitive equipment like satellite phones or internet satellite systems," he said, "we had to personally go so we could deal with the paperwork. It was logistically a very difficult situation. Some equipment you have to go and present papers and beg, and in some cases bribe."

In addition to facilitating relief, the diaspora also worked to monitor the work of larger organizations. Abdo of Libya Link, for example, stated that part of their role was to pressure large aid organizations, such as the U.N. Refugee Agency, to raise the standards of aid delivery and care in the camps. After visiting one of the camps, he attested that the conditions for the refugees were appalling and that Libyans lacked food and basic hygiene services. As a result, he and his colleagues worked to pressure the officials managing the camps to improve their services and threatened to report the conditions to the press unless the quality of care improved. Salam, a Libyan-American volunteer, also traveled from the eastern front to Libya's western border with

Tunisia to address the refugee crisis and transport supplies into the liberated areas of Libya. He

echoed Abdo's comments that the UN camps were poorly resourced. As a result, the diaspora

worked to supplement services in the camps and to negotiate with the managing officials:

> Despite everything that they did, it was still terrible… And I remember talking to the UNHCR, I thank them for everything they did, but I think that that career makes you jaded… The amount of care that I thought was humane was very different from what they thought was humane. And I understand as an agency, their resources are limited and whatnot… so as a charity, we did what we could. We provided a mobile hospital and a refrigerated pharmacy. My role kind of fit in with trying to coordinate with the internationals because, I mean, I speak English.

Salam's work also included renting apartments for Libyan refugees in Tunisia, negotiating with

Tunisian authorities to allow Libyan fighters to come into the country for medical treatment,

buying fuel to send back into Libya, and purchasing walkie-talkies and "all types of

communication devices." Salam stressed the fact that "it was a free for all. Whichever way we

can help, we were going to help."

Several Libyans in the diaspora also worked to address the rape crisis from within the

refugee camps. Salam, for example, said,

> And we tried very hard to raise awareness in Libya about rape… We produced these [recordings] where one in the Amazigh language, one in a Tripoli accent, one in a Benghazi accent, where boys, young men, would speak, explaining to people that listen, these are victims. They didn't do anything wrong. You shouldn't be ashamed of them… We wanted to get the message out that one, these people need help, and for a long time. It's not like oh, your physical wounds are healed, you're fine… I don't think that Libyans understand culturally that the psychological effects of rape are sometimes lifelong. And we kind of wanted to stress that. I know that Libyan expats, especially the female Libyans in America, were just adamant on this.

As the Free Libya Army and NATO expanded liberated territory over the course of the

summer, members of the diaspora began to work beyond the confines of Benghazi and the camps

as well. Dr. Esam Omeish of the Libyan Emergency Task Force decided to assist in his capacity

as a medical doctor during the summer after the urgency of his lobbying activities had died down.

> In late July I started thinking that I've done enough politically and it is time for me to do something medically. I'm a trauma surgeon, so I wanted to go back to Libya and help out, especially as the fights were intensifying and the medical need was becoming greater. I went with Doctors Without Borders and a group called the International Medical Corps to the Western Mountains in Libya… We basically manned hospitals [in] a town called Yefren… which was the closest hospital to the front lines. I probably stayed there about three weeks. We did tons of surgeries with anesthesia and ortho.

Haret, who had been working from Doha with the Libya AlAhrar satellite station, also decided that he did not want to spend the entirety of the revolution behind a computer from a hotel in the Gulf. After a time, he said that this felt ethically dubious because "it was too comfortable. When you're reporting about people who are in hell… it just didn't seem right." In response, he traveled to Zintan in July where his father was volunteering in a hospital. After meeting journalists from the AFP and the Associated Press, he volunteered go with them to the front lines as a translator. "Every morning we'd wake up, we'd jump on the first truck heading to the front line," Haret recalled.

Lastly, members of the diaspora also worked directly with the National Transitional Council on the ground. As mentioned above, for example, Dina from southern California came to volunteer as press coordinator for the interim prime minister. Mazen of Seattle also came to join the National Transitional Council to help with logistics, as he explained with a wave of his hand, because "wars *are* logistics." He worked first for the NTC's Oil and Finance Department and then for the Temporary Finance Mechanism, which enabled the NTC to receive outside funding by borrowing money against frozen assets in order to keep the revolution and the country functioning during the war. As the coordinator of the Temporary Finance Mechanism under NTC minister Ali Tarhouni, Mazen said that they worked to keep oil and electricity

flowing to Benghazi and to distribute cash in the hard-hit Nafusa Mountains. Mazen said, "I was a volunteer the whole time, so there was no salary or anything. I had three phones that wouldn't stop ringing. Each for one area. One for the Temporary Finance Mechanism, one for the fighters, and one for the administrators."

In Summary

Libyans in the diaspora mobilized as an auxiliary force to support the revolution from February 2011 through the liberation of Tripoli in August. By externalizing the revolution online and through lobbying, channeling expertise and material resources into Libya, linking various parties of the conflict together, and volunteering their labor on the ground, activists filled a multitude of needs facing the revolutionary fighting forces and the civilian population. As Ayat of the Libya Youth Movement recalled, their job came to be the revolution's "middle men." For those equipped with expertise and bilingual abilities, the diaspora comprised a kind of elite rank-and-file force alongside their compatriots in hospitals, brigades, and the National Transitional Council. Put another way, Libyans abroad did more than launch demonstrations during their free time on the weekends or hit "like" buttons on Facebook. Instead, they became an integral part of an internationalized effort against a dictator that most activists described as life-changing and all-consuming for the duration.

By *why* then were the Libyans able to play these roles? Below, I explain the conditions enabling activists in the diaspora to play an elevated role in their home-country's revolution.

FACILITATIVE CONDITIONS

Activists and social movements in the Libyan diaspora played the four primary roles cited above in the revolution for its duration because of several facilitative conditions. First, the

diaspora's cohort of educated professionals possessed the skills, resources, and social capital necessary to address needs created by the conflict and supplement an under-equipped revolution. Second, the diaspora possessed social ties to family members and revolutionaries, which I call "insider receptors," in Libya. These attachments formed essential nodes in the revolution's transnational advocacy network that enabled the diaspora to transmit information, channel resources, and link various parties to the conflict together. Third, because outside allies and sympathizers came to participate directly in the revolution, these allies established relationships with and recruited diaspora activists as intermediaries. And lastly, activists' access to free space, the relative ease of border crossings created by the rebellion, and the maintenance of liberated territory by international allies enabled members of the diaspora to enter the country, channel in resources, and participate directly in the war effort. For these reasons, diaspora activists were able to adapt their tactics over time to respond to a variety of needs on the ground. I discuss these factors in detail below.

1. A Resourced and Resourceful Diaspora

Libyan activists were first empowered to play a role in the revolution due to the fact that many in the diaspora possessed skills and experience in the areas of media, law, business, health, technology, politics, and civil society. Because knowledge and skills in these areas were needed to buttress an under-resourced fighting force and leadership, many members of the diaspora recalled that their expertise came to be useful and their roles became elevated as a result.[28]

For example, in addition to applying their medical training in field hospitals or using their technology expertise to set up websites, Libyan activists abroad also expanded upon their existing skill sets and social capital. For example, Dr. Ahmed Shalabi described that his role was not only that of a medical consultant for the London-based World Medical Camp for Libya

charity, but that he also became a buyer and mover of aid. As he described, after receiving a list

of needed medical supplies to send to Libya, he was left with the question:

> How do I get them? So I started Googling pharmaceutical companies in the UK, equipment companies, I went to my local pharmacist in the hospital asking him about costs. *I needed to know everything!* I went to the theater in the hospital, I said I need to get equipment, which companies do you deal with? I went to surgeons, I said which ones are best, where do you get them? And I started getting lists of companies and calling them about antibiotics, external fixators, [asking] which ones are the cheapest? I managed to find a company that sold used medical equipment, contacted them, and I got great prices from them, it was like a godsend. And then, the next problem was, how do I get them to Malta? We have to find air shipping!... One of the other guys in the charity managed to get a Libyan friend who coordinated with this freight company, they stored everything we got for free, which was really good and they managed to get all of the stuff air freighted all the way to Malta. We had to make sure that everything was in place, that all the boxes were ready. It was nonstop… At the time I was a foundation year-one doctor, someone who just recently graduated… [and] I was given the full responsibility of getting the lists, making the purchases, talking to the companies.

As in Dr. Shalabi's case, many other respondents found themselves promoted beyond their years

in their roles as revolution supporters. Dina, for example, recalled that:

> I ended up getting contacted by a producer from Anderson Cooper. And I'm sitting here aspiring to get a job in the media; my Master's is in Communication, I was unemployed. So I'm getting firsthand experience in something I really wanted to do… and hopefully really contributing to a cause at the same time! I just had all these random media contacts that just converged. People that I hadn't heard from in years were like, "Hi Dina, so I'm working on some contacts for Libya and was hoping [you could help.]" It's just because, you know, there's not very many Libyans... And from that day, I was literally the on-call consultant for Anderson Cooper 360… So really working closely with the entire editorial production team to figure out what we're doing for the show for the night, five days a week.

In this way, people like Dina became "key cogs for media, link[ing] to people," as Dr. Traina of

southern California affirmed. Hend, who was in her second year of law school when the

revolution began, also recalled that her activism for the revolution granted her the opportunity to

serve as a legal advocate for the revolution, even though she had not yet obtained her law degree:

> I attended a training there at the ICC, which was really interesting because it was only for lawyers… with 10 years' experience. Ten years ago, I was in fifth grade, you know!... So after I completed that training, I then went to London to meet up with some of the

160

lawyers that I was working with, but only really on the internet… There was one in London, one in Paris, one in Spain, one in Dubai, some in Libya… In London we had a series of consultations with [Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office] Alistair Burt, and we would go with his office and discuss with him the issues that were going on, and we'd phone in someone on the ground in Libya to explain more, what needed to be done, or what the UK could do to support them. So we did a lot of that that summer—ICC cases, investigating, but also advocating in general. My colleague who was with me went to the UN to advocate there, and so we had a lot of things going on at that time. We created guidelines for pro-revolution fighters once the armed conflict began on how they could comply with international rules of engagement without violating any sort of human rights and we did so at the request of the National Transitional Council, and basically we boiled them down to little flip cards that they could carry with them, laminated little cards, which was a flow chart of if you're in this situation, what do you do, what don't you do. And so we were engaging at all different levels on the legal front.

In addition to amplifying their existing professional skills, others also transferred their skills across fields. When Abdo of Libya Link explained that one of his team's roles was to assist elements in the Free Libya Army with tactical and strategic planning, I asked him how he was able to do this with a professional background in business. He replied:

Our background was not primarily military, but we all had to do what we had to do. So if we had to develop military expertise, we developed military expertise! A lot of it was actually the experience from the business world. Strategy is strategy at the end of the day. If you're from the business world or commercial space, you're being competitive and we took some of those ideas and strategies to the opposition space… Scenarios were done using various game theories. For training, we looked at the needs and developed on that. We had access to skills in those respects, and we had ideas about what can be done.

This facilitative condition points to a paradoxical outcome of Gaddafi's political and economic legacy. By pushing many of Libya's most well-to-do and highly educated out of the country in search of freedom and opportunities, the regime itself produced a highly-skilled and relatively-resourced diaspora primed to mobilize against the regime under the right conditions. As Hend remarked,

Those abroad ended up becoming very educated, very well connected in their societies, and they were able to influence from the outside. That was something that Gaddafi did to himself, because he did forcefully exile those people. But everyone used their kind of expertise and their skills to contribute in any way they could. A lot of influential Libyans

161

were consulting other governments, and were very well connected enough to raise a lot of funds for aid. Not a single thing was left undone, I think, by Libyans abroad.

2. Social Ties and Insider-Receptors

The second factor enabling the diaspora to play a role in the revolution was their ties to what I call "insider receptors" in Libya, including family members and friends. The diaspora relied on these insiders to be their eyes and ears on the ground and provide the information needed to externalize Libya's conflict. To this end, activists in the diaspora began "calling up friends, calling up family, getting all of these [pieces of] information," as Hend of Enough Gaddafi explained, at the onset of the crisis. Respondents perceived that Skype was a safer method of communication than speaking over the phone; those calling by phone from regime-controlled areas such as Tripoli often had to speak in code. Activists also cultivated new contacts by asking for referrals. Ayat of the Libya Youth Movement recalled that "when things began, I called my cousins, [my colleague] Omar called his, we started asking people on Facebook for their contacts, whoever was willing to talk." In addition to receiving first-hand accounts from his relatives in Misrata, Ahmed of Enough Gaddafi also reached out to a Libyan-American named Rahma who had moved to Tripoli with her family in 2010; she got on his "radar" after posting anti-Gaddafi messages on Facebook. Rahma came to be one of Ahmed key contacts for getting information out of Tripoli, which was especially important because the city was kept under lockdown for the duration of the revolution.

Some activists in the diaspora also recalled referring family members and friends who had spent time in the US to the media because these persons were fluent in English. This could be dangerous work, however. Dr. Traina of southern California attested that his sister in Misrata "was being interviewed a lot by news stations. She got interviewed by Anderson Cooper a few times. But then they started targeting people who were doing interviews, so the family said you

have to stop!" Rahma in Tripoli also recalled that "I kept changing my SIM card... I was kind of scared, but… I wanted to try and do *something*." So just as insiders often relied on the diaspora for aid and assistance, the diaspora also relied on insiders to bear the greatest risks and costs in the revolution in order to externalize the conflict.

In addition to providing the diaspora with information to relay to government officials and the media, insider receptors also helped the diaspora to calibrate their mobilization efforts to precise needs on the ground. Dr. Ahmed Shalabi of London recalled that during this period, contacts of friends helped to put him in touch with the right people to get the information he needed:

> Through Skype, a friend got me the details of a doctor in Canada. This doctor got me the details of a friend of his who was in the Misrata port, who ran the port and was running coordination and had satellite internet. I was able to speak to him [but] it was very hard to gain people's trust. When I called him, he was like, who are you? I was like ok, I got your contact details from this chap in Canada, I'm Ahmed Shalabi, a Libyan doctor working from the UK. I want to help... but I need to know what you guys need. Get me a doctor. He said ok, give me one hour, I'll get you a doctor from the hospital where all the injured are being taken and he'll tell you what they need. So I got him, an hour later. And this doctor now is a friend for life. It was an honor working with him... he told me I need this, this, this.

Activists in the diaspora also relied on those inside Libya to smuggle and transfer the aid that they had assembled and deliver it to hard-to-reach areas inside of Libya. Salam recalled that getting supplies to these areas was dependent on the work of smugglers and fighters:

> At one point, the World Food Program wanted… to go deliver food but they couldn't because of protocols and whatnot. So what we decided to do was because we'd been going and coming from Zintan back and forth and we had a great relationship with the fighters there, we decided we would create a post in Zintan and deliver all the food there. Once we got there, we were still worried about how are we going to get this [aid from Zintan] to Yefren. We decided to seek out the Boy Scouts—not the children, the Boy Scouts organization [in Libya].[29] And we purchased, I think it was like seventeen mules, and they carried it to Yefren on mules, because there was no other way to get it in there, the roads were occupied by Gaddafi's troops.

163

Overall, the preexisting relations between members of the diaspora, such as those between family members, and the newfound alliances forged between the diaspora and Libyans on the inside during the revolution enabled the diaspora to work with the revolutionaries to get information out and resources in. As Assad of London, this was all made possible through:

> *contacts*. You know that theory, six degrees of separation? In Libya, it's probably three… If you think about the logistics, they're almost impossible to do in these circumstances. But because people knew each other and we could talk to each other and this person vouch for this person and this person vouch for that person, we managed to create the network that actually functioned.

3. Third-Party Participants in the Revolution

The participation of third-parties in the revolution, including the media and diasporas' host-country governments, significantly bolstered the role of the Libyan diaspora in the revolution as well. This is because as foreign governments and media organizations came to join in the revolutionary effort, they recruited the diaspora to serve as intermediaries, including as fixers, interpreters, and advisors. For example, because the foreign press lacked a presence in Libya and contacts of its own before 2011, they relied on the diaspora to provide the contacts they lacked. Hend of Enough Gaddafi recalled that almost immediately after initiating the Feb17info website, "we started getting phone calls and phone calls from CNN, from BBC, can you get me someone to do an interview?" Multiple respondents also reported that journalists such as Anderson Cooper took a special interest in the Libyan revolution; Dina, as I discussed above, was recruited by the network as a consultant for his show to provide contacts. She said, "I ended up operating my own little media consultancy and getting people on newscasts full time." And even after members of the media began to communicate with Libyans inside of the country independently of the diaspora, they nevertheless relied on many bilingual activists from abroad to translate on the front lines.

The role of the diasporas was also bolstered by the fact that US and British government officials not only met with diaspora representatives and listened to their grievances, but that they came to rely on them in an advisory capacity for information for the duration of the intervention. Sarah, a member of the Libyan British Relations Council, recalled that:

> We did lobbying in Parliament, we'd see 10 Downing Street, MPs (Members of Parliament). Every week there were meetings. They were asking about [the revolution], they wanted to see what was going on, briefings. It was amazing. We had a lot of support from that kind of side… The MPs, they were more interested in the information gathering… and things that we talked about were creating humanitarian corridors, getting aid in, and stuff like… [T]hey wanted information and we were happy to provide it or provide them with contacts. So we definitely had support in the political establishment.

Mohammed Shaban also explained how the sympathies of the British government enabled them to work with the officials on related issues, such as facilitating the defection of Libyan embassy workers:

> The Foreign Office took us seriously… They were quite helpful. The fear I had is that I would call them and say look, we have someone who wants to defect within the embassy but he needs certain guarantees. I thought [Mr. Richard Northern, British Ambassador to Libya] would not reply to me. But actually he would say okay, come over, let's discuss it… And that's why I say I think they made a decision early on that Gaddafi's time was up. What we did wasn't to make the decisions *for* them, but make it easier for them to connect all the dots.

Rihab of the Libyan Emergency Task Force reported that initially, the response of US officials was that they had no interest in Libya. But after the situation on the ground escalated, various departments in the broader establishment became eager to meet, receive information, and hear the diasporas' arguments for intervention. Rihab said that "we didn't strategize for these things to happen. These people emerged as being interested in this issue naturally. We didn't line it up that way." Tamim also echoed this point:

> We started setting up a strategy and working on developing relations with the White House, with the State Department, with Congress, the House and Senate, and with other organizations that could support and help our effort. And it must be said that the welcome

165

and the open arms that we received from all of these entities, the great support—NGOs, think tanks, there was some great people, great people who helped us out, organizations as well as individuals. First of all they opened their doors to listen. Second of all, they opened their doors to ask how can we help, how can the US government help Libyans? What is needed on the ground? Tell us. And that was at all levels. *At all levels*. This was an amazing experience for me.

Tamim also affirmed that the support of Ms. Samantha Power, an advocate for humanitarian intervention, advisor to President Obama, and member of the National Security Council, elevated their standing and expanded their role. Tamim became the contact person for Ms. Power during the intervention, and the group continued to meet with the White House staff over the course of the revolution and be in touch with the Libya Desk at the State Department as well. During a stalemate in the fighting during the summer, the White House considered an offer by the Gaddafi government to split the country into east and west. The Task Force was invited to the White House to discuss this proposal, which they vehemently opposed. Through their relationship with these foreign policy elites, Tamim recalled that:

> So eventually we found doors open with the State Department, doors of communication open with the command center with Germany with NATO… and everyone wanted to help. How can we coordinate, how can we solidify our position?

> The interventions by NATO after March 19 also accentuated the diasporas' role by turning information on the ground into potential intelligence to be used in the war effort. In turn, their information-gathering efforts became involved in the logistical and tactical effort against Gaddafi's forces. Mohammad in Sheffield recalled that through satellite phones,

> we were talking to the people on the ground in Misrata and Brega. And we had different eyes on the ground. But we used people we trust and we know because Gaddafi was dying to pass the wrong information and NATO will act on it. And then NATO, they'll hit the target and the target is civilian. Gaddafi was dying to do this. So we were so careful. We tried to make sure twice, three times, ten times, it's the right location, the right source. Otherwise, we will not pass it [to NATO].

In this way, selected members of the diaspora came to be long-distance intelligence officers for NATO. Another respondent in Leeds involved in this kind of work showed me the emails that she had sent back and forth to her NATO contact, with the coordinates of enemy movements reported by her contacts on the ground and obtained through Google Maps. Abdo of Libya Link also attested that Google Maps was vital to this work, as it allowed members of the diaspora to pinpoint the precise coordinates of enemy locations. While respondents acknowledged that NATO did not rely solely on the diaspora to provide intelligence, as Niz of the Free Generation Movement explained,

> They would never tell me if the information I was providing was useful or was used. My understanding is, having spoken to lots of people after the revolution, is that they were just gathering information from just so many different areas and… seeing how it corroborated with their own intelligence.

Activists sustained these activities until revolutionary forces overtook Tripoli in August 2014.

4. The Importance of Free Space and Cross-Border Movement

Lastly, the diaspora was able to supplement the revolution as a volunteer force on the ground because firstly, the uprising liberated territory from the Gaddafi regime, which was then maintained and expanded by the NATO intervention. This not only enabled members of the diaspora to get inside of Libya during the revolution; it also provided them with a relatively stable base from which to launch operations. Secondly, the fact that Egyptian and Tunisian authorities allowed Libyans to travel back and forth across the borders and move supplies into Libya enabled the diaspora to play a role in refugee camps on the border and within the country as well. This is not to say that activists did not have challenges; as mentioned above, Assad recalled having to bribe Tunisian authorities on occasion to allow them to transport certain supplies. However, I did not find any reports of transnational mobilization being blocked at any border crossings by authorities over the course of the revolution. As Salam recalled of his

experiencing traveling back and forth between Tunisia and Libya, "The amount of times we'd crossed the border… I was a familiar face. Sometimes it was multiple times a day."

In addition, no respondents who traveled to Malta, Egypt, or Tunisia to get into Libya from the US or Britain reported being hassled or prevented from traveling by their host-countries beyond the additional scrutiny and questioning that Arabs and Muslims have commonly received in airports since September 11, 2001. The diaspora's access to liberated space and ability to cross borders was therefore a fundamental factor in enabling them to volunteer on the ground.

Conclusion

In sum, key facilitative conditions enabled the diaspora to play a dynamic role in the revolution over time as intermediaries between Libyans and their outside allies and as direct participants in the war effort. They possessed the expertise and skills necessary to meet the needs of the revolutionary fighting force and the civilian population; the diaspora had contacts on the ground that took risks to provide the diaspora with information and to transport and receive their aid; outsider parties to the conflict recruited the diaspora to advise and assist them with their interventions; and activists' access to liberated space allowed them to volunteer in and around Libya. These conditions enabled the diaspora to mobilize transnationally for the duration of the conflict at home and in ways that were adapted in an ad hoc fashion over time to address pressing needs on the ground. As I demonstrate with regards to the Syrian and Yemeni cases, however, not all diasporas were granted such opportune conditions for mobilization. The next chapter describes the Syrian case, demonstrating how the diaspora worked to launch a similar set of interventions as their Libyan counterparts, but faced increasing limitations over time.

CHAPTER 4

The Syrian Case

The emergence of protests and civil disobedience in Syria's 2011 uprising accomplished what was previously thought impossible. Not only did Syrians refute the assumption that they were too loyal or complacent to rebel, but revolutionary collective action created space for dissidents of all types to speak out against their oppression, including ethnic and religious minorities, Islamists, feminists, anarchists, and leftists. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, as protesters were gunned down and detained by the thousands, the Assad regime's disproportionate response produced a predictable backlash. As members of the military defected and civilians mobilized to defend themselves, the rebellion took up small weaponry (often made available by Gulf countries and Gulf-based donors) and began to fight back. This militarization was the subject of intense debate among Syrian activists, but the decision to take up arms was barely a choice. Various units comprising the Free Syrian Army (FSA) emerged across Syria in early 2012 to liberate towns and villages from regime control, and local councils formed to coordinate security, provide services, and in some cases even hold local elections.

In 2012, the UN and the Red Cross dubbed the Syrian revolution a civil war, which angered Syrians and mischaracterized what was a disproportionately one-sided bombardment. Nevertheless, "nobody could deny that a cycle of mutual violence had taken route" (Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami 2016, location 1523 Kindle edition). The rebels' desperate need for weapons and cash led to heightened competition between groups, and only some FSA brigades received non-lethal aid from the US, followed by some "light" lethal aid in late 2012. Weapons and funds by Gulf allies were also inconsistent; FSA troops often went hungry and lacked the bullets with which to load their guns. As criminal activity spread in the wake of desperation,

corruption and abuses committed by some FSA-affiliated groups put local Syrian activists in a bind. Local Coordination Committee groups questioned whether report these abuses and risk discrediting an already-discredited movement, or to sacrifice their principles and turn a blind eye. By late 2012, about a thousand groups operated in Syria, with roughly half associated with the FSA. The Supreme Military Council was established in December 2012 as an attempt to coordinate the FSA, but had limited success.

Even after FSA forces gained key territory such as the city of Aleppo in mid-2012, liberated areas were subjected to merciless bombardments with artillery, barrel bombs, ballistic and scud missiles, and chemical weapons, including sarin, mustard and chlorine gasses. Suffering from regime blockades, survivors were forced to fight over scraps; when besieged cities surrendered, this invited the regime to come in and detain or massacre at large. The regime's siege-and-starve strategy led to important reversals in rebel gains by 2014 and to the near total obliteration of cities such as Homs and Aleppo. Calls for a Libya-esq no-fly zone were raised by Syrian activists and rebels, but went unheeded by the international community. Furthermore, the regime supplemented its military with Hezbollah and Iranian forces which helped to retake territory across Syria. In all, merciless collective punishment transformed much of the original revolutionary effort for social change into defensive work for survival. The regime purposefully targeted the civic sector, killing, imprisoning, and forcing into exile progressives with non-violent and democratic ideals. As Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami (2016: location 2024 Kindle edition) write,

> Even as it destroys the old system, a successful revolutionary movement must create alternatives. When Syria (necessarily) became a battlefield, the voices of the civil organisers who'd made the revolution were increasingly drowned out by the thunder of bombs; and power—which in 2011 had been brought to community level—was increasingly claimed by authoritarian militia leaders competing for funds and local dominance. Syrian elites, such as the Coalition, were unable to establish a presence on

170

the burning ground. If the FSA had been seriously supported from outside, if Assad had not been so generously armed and funded by Russia and Iran… then the armed struggle might have lasted months rather than years, and civil activism might have quickly regained its role. But the war stretched on, and the liberated areas became death zones. This was the vacuum in which jihadism would thrive.

The influx of Salafi fundamentalists into the war has also been linked to the regime's manipulations. For example, in 2011 the regime released 1,500 Salafis from its prisons while imprisoning and torturing peaceful protesters and children like Hamza al-Khateeb (see Chapter 2) to death. One regime defector testified that this was a strategy to convince the world of the legitimacy of the regime's response and to further scare its minority base into remaining loyal. Not coincidentally, the regime's earliest claims about the revolution being the work of foreign conspirators came to fruition. Syria also became a draw for jihadists from places such as Chechnya looking to fight infidels in the Alawite-dominated regime. The Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra also joined the fight in summer of 2012, bringing with them discipline, fighting experience, and resources from private donors in the Gulf. Some jihadi groups also stepped in to provide services to the population suffering from basic resource shortages. Many had better reputations than their moderate FSA counterparts for being disciplined, organized, and motivated to die in martyrdom in accordance with their apocalyptic beliefs.

Having split from Al Qaeda over differences in the tactics perceived as necessary to establish an Islamic Caliphate, foreign fighters under the black banner of the "Islamic State" (ISIS, or the *Daesh*) also flooded into Syria from Iraq in 2013. After being initially beaten back by FSA factions, they then resurged with a vengeance after a successful assault in June 2014. Armed then with American weapons and cash pillaged from Iraq, ISIS fighters opposed everyone except themselves, killing Syrians, beheading foreign journalists, and destroying Syria's cultural history. And yet, the Assad regime maintained a non-aggression pact with ISIS,

bombing the FSA instead and using ISIS' presence to bolster the regime's standing in the international community. In November 2013, another faction called the Islamic Front was formed as a coalition of various groups such as the Jaysh al-Islam—later accused of disappearing civil society activists in the Damascus suburbs—but these groups were also in fierce, win-or-die competition with the likes of Ahrar Al-Sham, Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS. And even as Kurdish organizations such as the Democratic Union Party (PYD) staked out liberated space from both the jihadi and the regime in Syria's northern region, they have also been accused of acting as intolerant and undemocratic as the forces they displaced.

In response to gains made by the rebellion in the Damascus suburbs, the regime launched the worst chemical weapons attack since the Iran-Iraq war on August 21, 2013. This attack killed approximately 1,730 Syrian civilians, including hundreds of children. A survivor of this attack, an activist who goes by the assumed name Qusai Zakarya, later testified to the UN about the horrors of witnessing mass death by sarin. This put President Obama's earlier claim that the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime constituted a "red line" to the test. These words proved to be empty, however, which further discredited the US in the eyes of the Syrian opposition. After the British parliament voted against retaliatory strikes on August 29th, the US agreed to a Russian proposal that would allow the Assad regime to remove its chemical arsenal over the course of the next year. This not only reaffirmed the regime's legitimacy as a bargaining partner in the conflict, but enabled the Syrian army to continue launching gas attacks, most notably in the form of chlorine, and killing civilians by barrel bombs and other extraordinary means.

The Syrian National Council was formed in August 2011 to represent the revolution from Istanbul. This included those who had been a part of the 2005 Damascus Declaration (see

Chapter 1), the Kurdish Future Movement, Muslim Brotherhood members (who held over a

quarter of the seats), and members of the non-violent Local Coordination Committees. At the

same time, the Council lacked authority and ground presence in Syria and was subjected to

internal disagreements. Several leaders resigned in March 2012 citing corruption, Muslim

Brotherhood domination, and a failure to gain international support for the FSA. A Kurdish

coalition known as the KNC also departed over differences regarding their regional sovereignty.

In November 2012, a more sweeping National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and

Opposition Forces was formed in Doha through international pressure that absorbed the Council

and included more FSA representatives and liberals. Optimism was short lived, however, as the

Coalition suffered from the same problems. Muaz Khatib, the first president, resigned after six

months in response to a lack of support and meddling by outside states. By May 2013, major

groups condemned the Coalition and demanded more representation. As described by Yassin-

Kassab and Al-Shami (2016, location 3490 Kindle edition):

> The Coalition, like the SNC before, produced the ugly spectacle of factions and
> personalities squabbling over the throne of a country which was going up in flames.
> Perhaps the politicians shouldn't be blamed too much for this. The ability to put aside
> personal and factional interests for the sake of a common goal, to adapt, to accommodate
> the other's point of view, requires a background level of trust in the national community
> and its institutions, and long experience in democratic collaboration. Syria had been a
> cast-iron dictatorship for four decades, so these conditions did not apply. Beyond that, the
> Syrians had no Benghazi in which to base themselves, no field on which to enact
> transitional authority.

At the same time, the Coalition offices, referred to by Syrians as the *Etilaf*, were granted as

foreign missions under the leadership of Ahmad Jarba. But "despite its hard work and diplomatic

progress, all the Coalition won on the ground from its participation was the heightened disgust of

activists," according to Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shami (2016, location 3529 Kindle edition).

The delivery of aid has been impeded by forces on the ground in violation of international law, but proposals to condemn the regime's methods have been blocked by Russia and China in the UN Security Council, and UN envoys who have attempted to broker peace deals and ceasefires have failed to do so to date. In September of 2014, US forces began bombing ISIS targets as well as those of Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar Al-Sham, along with infrastructure upon which Syrian civilians depend. This period also witnessed the battle for the Syrian-Kurdish city of Kobani against ISIS by the FSA and the PYD. Increasing supplies from Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia and new coalitions between the FSA led to some victories, but the regime's scorched earth policies have made it difficult to gain ground.

By the time I conducted interviews with Syrian activists in the fall of 2014, the situation looked increasingly bleak and at the time of this writing it has only gotten worse, with over 470,000 Syrians reported dead. Backed by Iranian manpower and Russian airstrikes, the regime of Bashar Al-Assad is intent on destroying what remains of the country in order to save it for itself. This continues even as international actors, from Russia to the UN and the US and Britain, now agree that Assad must be a part of Syria's future. By the end of 2014 when the interviews commenced, four million refugees languished in camps or risked death to reach Europe, over seven million Syrians had been displaced internally (a combined total of half of Syria's population), and at least 220,000 Syrians had been killed. Today, the Assad regime has produced the worst refugee crises since World War II; over 150,000 prisoners face unspeakable treatment in prisons, an estimated 800,000 Syrians are starving, and towns and cities from Yarmouk to Madaya also face the outbreak of disease.

THE ROLES OF THE DIASPORA IN THE SYRIAN REVOLUTION AND WAR

The analysis finds that the Syrian diaspora launched the same fundamental types of interventions into the revolution and war as their Libyan counterparts by 1) externalizing facts and claims, 2) channeling resources, 3) linking allies together, and 4) volunteering on the ground in and around Syria (see Table II.1). As I explain below, they played a role in the revolutions directly and as intermediaries between parties to the conflict. The various organizations and groups formed or converted to perform these roles are listed in Table 4.1. However, unlike in the Libyan case, the Syrian diaspora faced far greater obstacles to transnational mobilization over time, and I describe how these increasingly hostile conditions limited their capacities to play a role in the revolutions in significant ways.

TABLE 4.1: Syrian Groups and Organizations Formed or Converted to the Revolution and Humanitarian Causes during the Arab Spring

Diaspora Group/Organization Name	New (N) Converted (C)	Exclusively a Charity/Service Org?
US		
All 4 Syria	C	No
American Relief Coalition for Syria	N	Yes
American Rescue Fund	N	Yes
Coalition for a Democratic Syria	N	No
FREE-Syria	N	No
Karam Foundation	N	Yes
Maram Foundation	N	Yes
Southern California Coordinating Committee	N	No
Syria Relief and Development	N	Yes
Syria Support Group	N	No
Syrian American Council	C	No
Syrian American Engineers Association	N	Yes
Syrian American Humanitarian Network	N	Yes
Syrian American Medical Society	C	Yes
Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies	C	No
Syrian Christians for Democracy/Peace*	N	No
Syrian Emergency Task Force	N	No

Syrian Expatriates Organization	N	Yes
Syrian Justice & Accountability Center*	N	No
Syrian Institute for Progress	N	No
Syrian Sunrise Foundation	N	Yes
Texans for Free Syria	N	No
Tharwa Foundation	C	No
United for a Free Syria	N	No

Britain

Bristol Justice for Syria	N	No
British Solidarity for Syria	N	No
Global Solidarity Movement for Syria	N	No
Hand in Hand for Syria	N	Yes
Help for Syria	N	Yes
Human Care Syria	N	Yes
Rethink Rebuild Society	N	No
Syria Relief	N	Yes
Syrian British Medical Society	C	Yes
Syrian Christians for Democracy/Peace*	N	No
Syrian Justice & Development Party	C	No
Syrian Legal Development Programme	N	No
Syrian Parliamentary Affairs Group	N	No

*Denotes multi-national membership.

1. Externalization

Like their Libyan counterparts, Syrians worked to transmit information from the ground out of

Syria and externalize it to global audiences in the hopes of gaining sympathy and support. The

analysis demonstrates that this work was intended to combat Syria's media blackout, name and

shame third parties and regime supporters, and garner interventions and assistance.

1a. Raising Awareness and Combatting the Information Blockade

During the gradual escalation of the Syrian revolution in 2011, members of the diaspora

worked to overcome the regime's media blackout and state propaganda. As in the Libyan case,

they worried that protesters would be isolated, slandered, and crushed without exposure to global

audiences. Efforts to externalize protests and corresponding regime repression were made

possible by activists inside of Syria who took risks to transmit information to their relatives and

friends abroad. Diaspora activists' contacts later snowballed into broader networks of dissident

insiders. For example, Muhannad, an independent activist from southern California who had

lived for part of his youth in the Syrian city of Hama, recalled that:

> People were sending me videos of anything they can document, any kind of crime or shooting at a protest… so they can clear it off their phone and I can upload it to social media. It would all go to YouTube. We'd also get phone calls: "can so-and-so send you this and that?"

Abdulaziz Almashi, a Ph.D. student in London who became a full-time activist after the regime

cut off his scholarship, also attested that their role was to echo and amplify messages from their

contacts on the inside:

> On the outside, we must reflect what our people need on the inside Syria. So we have a connection with media activists in every single city in Syria via Skype or Facebook. And we are always in touch with them…. We ask them, what do you exactly what? What message do you want us to deliver on the outside? So we take our instructions from them and deliver it to the public, the media.

Several respondents who returned to their hometowns in Syria in 2011 to join the protest

movements there also attested that they relied on outsiders to transmit information. Ibrahim Al

Assil, a student in the UK at the time that the revolution broke out, returned to Damascus in the

summer to join in civil disobedience efforts and came to be an organizer with the Syrian

Nonviolence Movement. During this time, he attested that Syrians in the diaspora were useful in

helping publicize their amateur videos of protests:

> They were in the US, in the UK, in Qatar and the UAE and other countries as well… I used to ask for a lot of help from them, especially because they have faster [internet] connections. In Syria, we used a kind of VPN to be secure, which made the connection even slower. So anything that needs to be done online, anyone outside Syria was very helpful. And also to get in touch with the media. So for example when civil disobedience took place in Syria in December 2011, the majority of the work [publishing] documentation of it and getting in touch with the media was done outside Syria.

177

When Ibrahim was forced to leave Syria and return to Britain, he then took up this work from the outside to receive and sent footage recorded by activists in Syria to the media himself.

As various organizations emerged within Syria to coordinate and lead the anti-regime protests, members of the diaspora worked to externalize facts and claims as their long-distance interpreters and representatives. Malik Al-Abdeh, the co-founder of the opposition group the Syrian Justice and Development Party, recalled being catapulted into the position of unofficial spokesperson for the revolution:

> After the protests [first] happened, [journalist] James Longman called me straight away… got me an interview on Sky News, and that was the start of probably hundreds of interviews. I'm not exaggerating. Everyone from BBC World, BBC News, ITN, Channel 4 News, CNN, you name it, all wanted someone who speaks English and who can put some context… So I was kind of like de facto a spokesman for the opposition even though I never had any kind of official role.

And though Malik did not have an official role, many in the diaspora did come to represent some piece of the opposition in an official capacity. Several respondents became part of the Local Coordination Committees, the civil anti-violence group mentioned above, as well as members of the Syrian National Council, which was formed in August 2011 in Istanbul to represent the revolution until it was subsumed by the Syrian National Coalition the following year. This was critical, recalled Marah of Virginia, an independent activist, because "we have the opportunity to go on TV, to communicate with the international community and to deliver their message." Mohammad Abdallah, a civil society activist who came to the US in 2009 as a political refugee and led the Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre as of 2014, recalled:

> I start working with a group of activists trying to organize activities on the ground. After the Local Coordination Committees emerged, I became one of their spokespersons for six months, from almost April to October in 2011 to communicate some of the demands of Syrians to the [US] government… I *had* to do it, because there was a vacuum… After that, I joined the Syrian National Council when it started.

Rafif Jouejati, founder of FREE-Syria, a humanitarian organization and Syrian think tank in

D.C., also came to translate and speak for the Local Coordination Committees from the US. She

attested that this work helped to fill in the gaps before the media established their own

connections with activists inside of Syria.

> I responded to a Facebook post that was asking for someone to translate some news of
> what was happening on the ground, and I responded; they invited me to join the
> translation team. This was back before every news bureau had a correspondent either on
> the ground or near. When the spokesperson left to do other things, they asked me to take
> on that job, so I did. [In addition] to posting on YouTube and Facebook, we developed an
> impressive media list. There was an email service that went out, and the daily summary
> of the death toll, the destruction. We posted everything to the LCC's Facebook page
> where we uploaded videos. Anybody who wanted to receive the news had access. Our
> goal was to make sure that the average reader or listener or news follower had access to
> information about what was happening on the ground. It was very important to us—and it
> still is—that events in Syria don't go unnoticed.

A.A., a youth from Michigan who volunteered for the Syrian American Council, also worked as

a volunteer for the Shaam News Network, a global network of citizen journalists and volunteers

inside and outside of Syria working to publicize events on the ground:

> We were contacting news channels urging them to cover demonstrations back home in
> Syria. All of this was done under the Syrian American Council. A couple of months later,
> through some connections of Syrian friends here [in Michigan], I started working with
> Shaam News Network, SNN, which is a news channel run [from Syria] using social
> media websites. It's one of the sources that the media here in the US and international
> media used to start covering what's happening in Syria. The media used a lot of the
> materials that Shaam News Network would provide on their Facebook page and YouTube
> channels. My involvement was to moderate their English channel on Facebook and work
> as a translator to translate the Arabic news into English news, and post all of this on
> Facebook.

Dr. Haytham Al Hamwi, a former political prisoner who had left Syria in 2007 for Manchester to

work on his Ph.D., established the Rethink Rebuild Society during the revolution with the help of

local Syrian donors. Part of this group's mission, he said, was to advocate for the cause by

serving as spokespersons for the media and communicating with the broader public as well

through awareness-raising events:

First, we addressed the media… [by] responding to their requests. When they needed somebody to talk about refugees, to talk about the peace conference in Geneva, they call us. We are one of the resources to talk about the Syrian cause. Second, we advocate the Syrian cause doing work with ordinary people. We go to places like mosques, churches, universities. About twenty times we have given a talk called "Voices from Syria." The first [part] is about the situation in Syria, the political situation before the revolution, why the revolution happened, what was the response of the regime. And then we talk about personal stories. I give my personal story; why they imprisoned me, what happened to me in prison.

Others also worked online to assert their interpretation of events and to document the conflict by establishing blogs, such as Malik Al-Abdeh's Syria Transition blog and Ammar Abdulhamid's Syria Revolution Digest blog. Others worked to launch social media campaigns on Twitter to gain attention. Razan, daughter of an exiled Syrian dissident in London, began tweeting and translating news from a newly-formed network of activists on the ground on as @RazanSpeaks. Her activities included:

live tweeting their protests, for example. I had a lot of contact with people on the ground. We had online meetings. Several would tell me I'm going out on protest now, please tweet it. That was probably the best work I ever did, being in contact with people on the ground, translating for them. [These activists also produced] a magazine and I was also part of the translating team. The Arabic one was distributed inside Syria—a very dangerous business—and the English one was [published] online.

Kenan, a Syrian-American law student from Chicago, also helped to launch an awareness project called "The Syria Campaign" on Twitter:

We started something called the Weekly Twitter Campaign. And it was a core group of seven or eight or so Twitter users who were Syrian and we would come up with a hashtag and we would try to do whatever we could to get that hashtag to trend. We had a few really memorable ones; I remember we did a campaign in summer of 2011 against Shell gas because they were still operating in Syria… So we got an audience in the media, the media was following the Twitter campaigns and we were able to deliver messages.

In all, activists worked with their partners on the ground to overcome the information blockade and publicize events taking place within Syria through online venues, in person through Western-based television and radio stations, and by holding community events. They hoped that

180

exposure of the regime's actions would prompt decisive intervention by their host-country governments. As writer-activist and Karam Foundation founder Lina Sergie attested,

> At that point, we really were in the mindset that the media doesn't know what's going on, nobody knows the truth. If only they knew more, then there would be a change. We were convinced that people didn't know that the regime was bombing from the sky, and we felt it was our duty to tell people what was going on and circulate the videos and connect the media to different people like doctors and activists and fighters on the ground.

1b. Holding Demonstrations and Protests Abroad

As detailed in Chapter 2, the "coming out" of Syrians in the US and Britain on behalf of the revolution was significant. As many members of the diaspora overcame the deterrent effects of transnational repression, they worked to externalize their grievances and demand the downfall of the regime through protests and demonstrations. Most respondents reported that after a critical mass of participants came out communities such as London, Manchester, and Los Angeles, activists held weekly or monthly protest events in 2012 or 2013. I observed through participant observations of demonstrations in Orange and Los Angeles counties that this activism was not just directed at local targets and bystanders, but also to Syrians at home as well. As Firas of southern California recalled, "Most of the protests, we chanted in Arabic. We feel we have to do the same as Syria. We know everything is getting recorded, so it will reach over there." A.A. in Michigan also recalled,

> The most important thing that really moved us to do some demonstrations here is for us to take videos of us demonstrating here and to send it to our people in Syria to encourage them that you have people supporting you from outside of Syria. To say that we are all in this together, [to provide] emotional support… When I echoed the same chants that I used to hear from videos on YouTube of people back home in Syria, it gave me the feeling that I'm there, I'm actually part of this whole thing… This was, we would say, the happiest days of the revolution.

Haytham of Manchester also stated that protest participation grew steadily over time in front of the BBC building and that community members booked coach buses to travel to London

181

to join the demonstrations on a weekly basis. I also observed that activists in southern California

protested at embassies and consulates representing the regime's allies, including the Russian and

Chinese consulates, and counter-demonstrated against events hosting pro-regime spokespersons.

Firas of the Southern California Coordinating Committee recalled that demonstrations or events

by pro-regime persons, often referred to as the *Shabiha*:

> these are the people who bring us all together. In front of the Federal Building, it was like
> hundreds of people against the *Shabiha*. And in front of the hotel where Bashar Jaafari[30]
> came, all organizations decided, you know, we're going to go over there. So the enemy
> was bringing us together, unifying us.

Hussam, also of SAC-LA, attested that it was easier to bring people to protest against a specific

pro-regime target "because you're channeling anger at the regime," rather than in an "open-

ended" way to the public at large. That said, several individual activists maintained their

commitment to regular protests even though they had few supporters. Omar Shishakli in

Houston, for example, recalled that protests eventually dwindled down so much that he ended up

standing alone with his sign every Sunday:

> I think you can still [send] a message, even if you show the message to a few people…
> But also this is for me too, to not forget. And it's easy for us to be busy with life and
> forget what's happening in Syria. If we do not continue to do this, actually for me, what
> I'm doing on a weekly basis, that's what keeps me tied to what's happening.

Abdulaziz Almashi, organizer of the Syria Solidarity Movement and the Global Solidarity

Movement for Syria, felt the same as Omar. Through social media, he worked to coordinate

demonstrations in dozens of cities on the same weekend across the globe annually, which

included a protest that I attended in Costa Mesa, California in early 2013. During our interview

in the fall of 2014, he refused to give up on these activities despite the often poor turnout because

he considered it his "duty" and "obligation":

> For the last three years and a half, we have demonstrations in front of the Russian
> embassy, 10 Downing Street, the American embassy sometimes, the House of

Parliament, the Chinese embassy, on a weekly basis. Yesterday we had one. Every single Saturday, we have a protest in London. We *must* show our support of our revolution every single Saturday.

Abdulaziz also targeted the BBC for what he perceived as an over-representation of the pro-regime perspective by invited guests appearing on the news.

As the war in Syria progressed, many respondents attested that the media appeared to have become jaded with the conflict, and though the act of protesting felt liberating for members of the diaspora, it seemed that they were "maybe not doing much else," according to Firas. For this reason, some activists worked to innovate their tactics in order to regain public attention. Lina Sergie of Chicago and co-founder of the Karam Foundation, for example, launched the One Hundred Thousand Names Project to communicate the extreme costs of regime repression during the third anniversary of the revolution. Partnering with her colleagues in the Syrian American Council:

I saw this video online that had a graphic visualization of different facts about the Syrian revolution. One of the facts in that video says if you were to read one hundred thousand names of the people who have died in Syria so far, it would take you seventy-two hours. So I emailed [my colleagues] and I told them, let's read the names of the dead for March 15th [2014 anniversary] in front of the White House for seventy-two hours. That was the start of the One Hundred Thousand Names Project. We got tons of media. We repeated this again in June in front of the UN. It was a global reading. And in several cities, including inside Syria, the hundred thousand names were read in twenty-four hours during the election of Bashar al-Assad, the reelection. And we did it again in August 2014 in front of the White House where we read fourteen hundred names [of the chemical weapons' attack victims]… There are two components of the memorial: the Oral Memorial for Syria, the actual reading of the names. Also, the book of names. We printed out fifteen copies. We did it for the UN. We hand delivered them to the fifteen ambassadors of the UN Security Council in coordination with the Syrian National Coalition. Not everybody accepted the book, but we tried to take it to everybody. And Samantha Power still has the book, according Qusai Zakarya, on her desk.

Overall, activists launched regular protests gradually over the course of 2011 and reported that protest activities generally peaked in major cities in the US and Britain in 2012. After the conflict dragged on and resources were drained, regular demonstrations diminished

with the exception of major commemorations, such as the revolution's March 15th anniversary, and protests against extraordinary events, such as the chemical weapons massacre of August 2013.

1c. Lobbying for International Assistance

Syrian activists also lobbied local, national, and international representatives and institutions starting at the onset of the revolution. These efforts were initiated by exiled activists who were already public in their anti-regime sentiments, such as Marah Bukai and Dr. Radwan Ziadeh in the US, and grew to be represented by such groups as the Syrian American Council, the Syrian Emergency Task Force, the British Solidarity for Syria group by late 2011. Respondents reported lobbying for decisive backing of the revolution, and that their demands escalated over time in response to violent escalations on the ground. Activists began asking for sanctions and condemnations but escalated their demands over time to call for the implementation of no-fly zones and increased humanitarian aid.

Respondents reported that officials in the US and UK governments were willing to meet with them and were receptive to their requests, but that resulting actions were delayed and weak. Radwan and Marah also felt that their earliest meetings with Secretary of State Clinton were productive. They called for several points, according to Radwan:

> First meeting we had was with Secretary Clinton at the State Department. This was in June 2011, before any of the opposition organizations had been established. At that time, actually, the meeting was very good. We requested from Secretary Clinton four things: for President Obama to ask Bashar al-Assad to step aside… which he did not do until August. Then to increase the sanctions on oil companies. Then work with the UN Security Council to [pass a] resolution condemning the violence in Syria. And to work on the sanctions against people in the Syrian government; ban them from traveling, stop giving them visas. Secretary Clinton, at that time, takes things very seriously. My focus at that time was to get any kind of international support. Because we know what's happened before in Syrian in the '80s. There was no reaction from the international community. My focus at the time was to get a special session on Syria with the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. We have many meetings here at the State Department to convince

them to request special meetings. That was in April 2011. You need at least sixteen countries to sign for this special session to have in Geneva.[31]

After the regime escalated its response over the course of 2011, many activists came to advocate for the implementation of a no-fly zone in order to stop the bombings of liberated and civilian areas by the regime. Activists argued that this was both necessary and obligatory under the principles of the "responsibility to protect" doctrine. As Y. of Manchester, a graduate student in international law, argued,

> The idea behind the [Responsibility to Protect] principle is that where there's a mass atrocity situation, such as that in Syria, the international community has a responsibility to step in if the government is failing to protect its people…. You can find a lot of differences between Syria and Libya that would make intervention less favorable in Syria. Okay, fine. That doesn't mean that the international community no longer has a responsibility.

However, after it became clear to activists in both the US and Britain that their governments were not going to intervene against Assad, either by enforcing a Libya-style no-fly zone in 2012 or launching punitive strikes against the regime for its use of chemical weapons in 2013, activists nevertheless continued to lobby for lethal assistance on behalf of the moderate, vetted brigades in the Free Syria Army, funding for civil society-building movements and initiatives inside of Syria, and for expanded humanitarian aid. Given the US and British government's preoccupation with the spread of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, respondents also attested that their lobbying work had also included arguments that the Assad regime enables the operation and spread of ISIS and is the primary cause of casualties and instability in Syria. As Hussam, National Chairman of the Syrian American Council, recalled:

> Early on, I will say until [2013], we've been focusing on pressuring and convincing the Obama administration to arm and train the Free Syrian Army. The argument is that unless we do so, Assad will continue to engage in murder, shootings, sending barrel bombs, missiles on people. And as the regime weakens, that void, that vacuum would be filled by extremist groups such as ISIS. So there's a threat in allowing for the FSA to be weak… Now we're focusing on reminding the Obama administration that they're engaged in

defeating ISIS, there is no solution to the threat of ISIS without the elimination of the Assad regime and the establishment of a strong democratic Syria… Otherwise the conflict with ISIS will go indefinitely and Assad is actually benefitting from this targeting of ISIS that has no strategic end. Our argument is that ISIS is a result of Assad's oppression and a result of the vacuum created through the repression of Assad's regime. So that is our main focus. Other areas include pressuring the administration to increase their foreign humanitarian aid to refugees around the world, Syrian refugees… Also continuing to push the issue of supplying weapons and training to vetted moderate Syrian opposition. And we'll continue to push that. If they're convinced that yes, in order to defeat ISIS completely we need to defeat Assad, that means we have to support somebody on the ground to do so—and hopefully that is the vetted moderate Syrian opposition.

Abdulaziz also attested that members of Britain's Syria Parliamentary Affairs Group, which was not formed until late 2013, came to lobby for similar measures:

And we are trying to do our best to show, look, what's going on in Syria is mainly caused by Assad. And even the extremism is because of the lack of action from the international community. I mean, if you look at the ISIS, they just appeared about fourteen months ago [in 2013]. And the Syrian revolution has been going on more than three years and a half. If the international community, the UN Security Council, [upheld] their responsibility we wouldn't have reached the point where we have this extremism.

While neither the US or UK administrations have elected to take the decisive interventions asked for by Syrian lobbyists, activists engaged in political advocacy have nevertheless established relations with an amalgam of allies in Congress and other political elites. For example, Syrian-American activists have continued to communicate regularly and meet with members of the Senate and House Foreign Affairs' Committees, members of the National Security Council, various military departments, and with think-tanks, among others. Mouaz of the D.C.-based Emergency Task Force has also worked to lobby MPs in the British government as well as other foreign governments. Others have worked to lobby on issues pertaining to ethnic and religious minorities in Syria. Ayman Abdel Nour, co-founder of Syrian Christians for Democracy (later changed to Syrian Christians for Peace), which is a part of the Coalition for a Democratic Syria in the US, worked "to inform the west and the leaders that the

Christians are not as the regime is trying to portray." Nidal Bitari, a Syrian-Palestinian refugee who received asylum in the US with his wife in 2013, also worked to externalize the situation in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Syria to the United Nations by writing on the subject and—diverging from the calls by organizations such as SAC—calling for a truce to end the siege. This put him at odds with Syrian-American organizations, however, that have long held that negotiations with the regime only further enable regime repression.

Around the time that some politicos in D.C. and Britain were suggesting that their governments partner with the Assad regime against ISIS, Mouaz Mustafa of the Syrian Emergency Task Force also launched a major campaign to shame foreign governments into rejecting this option. This effort, referred to by Mouaz as the "Caesar file," publicized the testimonials and evidence of a military defector who had photographed thousands of deceased detainees murdered by torture and starvation. Mouaz brought Caesar to testify at hearings in Congress (much to the consternation, he added, of certain US officials who did not want to the publication of these atrocities to happen) in order to pressure the US government not to ally with the regime against ISIS:

> The Caesar file is unprecedented in that it's something that can start tying the noose around Assad's head—not for the legal process, which is important in accountability and justice. But more important for me is how we can use that politically… to prevent any thought of [the US government] working with the regime. It would just be embarrassing for the President—impossible—if he knew everything [in the Caesar file] and still worked with Assad.

Political advocates also worked to expand their potential ally pool in light of the weak support of the revolution by President Obama. Mouaz, for example, established a partnership with the Holocaust Museum in D.C., which has hosted several events and an exhibit of the Caesar photographs featuring speeches by prominent members of Congress, former Syrian prisoners, and Holocaust survivors. In addition, the Syrian American Council has brought civil

society activists working in Syria such as Raed Fares and Razan Ghazzali to the US to give a speaking tour and to lobby members of Congress. SAC members also worked to bring victims of the chemical weapons to the US, such as Qusai Zakayra—a civil society activist who almost died from the sarin gas attack—who has become a prominent spokesperson for intervention and has testified at the United Nations and met with Samantha Power on several occasions. Others have worked to draw attention to the regime's atrocities on a smaller scale. Hathyam's Rethink Rebuild group in Manchester, for example, held a tribute to a British doctor named Abbas Khan who worked as a medical volunteer in Syria before he was tortured to death in a regime prison in 2013:

> His two brothers came here, came here and [one] gave a very emotional speech. Three Members of Parliament came, and Greater Manchester Commissioner Tony Lloyd, and the mayor of Manchester. It was a memorial for Dr. Abbas, but we also told the audience, look, he is just one example of tens of thousands killed in Syria and tortured. We called on the UK government to act on [behalf of those inside] Syrian prisons.

Activists also lobbied locally against individuals affiliated with the regime to pressure them to resign, or to shame their affiliated sponsors and organizations. For example, Syrian-American students and local activists launched a campaign against Dr. Hazem Chehabi, the Syrian Consular General in Newport Beach and president of the University of California, Irvine Foundation. These activists held protests in conjunction with other student groups to pressure Chehabi to resign from his post at UCI. He later resigned from his post as Consular General after the US administration and other governments (including the UK) expelled diplomats in response to the Houla Massacre of May 2012, during which over 100 people, including families and children, were slaughtered at close range by regime forces.

In sum, activists worked to lobby for changes to their host-country governments' foreign policies and to prevent the US and British administrations from reneging on their verbal

condemnations of the Assad regime and commitments to the revolution. Despite the fact that these governments did not implement the major demands such as a no-fly zone and targeted strikes, activists nevertheless found allies among members of Congress, Parliament, experts, and other officials, and worked with them and others regularly from 2011 onwards.

2. Channeling Resources

2a. Transferring Skills and Expertise

During the onset of the revolution and subsequent humanitarian crisis, activists worked to lend their preexisting expertise to the revolution in the areas of health, engineering, media, and law. For example, the two medical associations that operated in the US and British diasporas before the revolution—the Syrian British Medical Society and the Syrian American Medical Society—came to channel their resources to the conflict. As discussed in Chapter 1, diaspora associations such as these were operated in the service of the home-country regime and were often led by regime loyalists. However, the onset of the revolution and the corresponding humanitarian crisis in Syria led many doctors abroad to rebel against this loyalist domination.

Dr. Fadel Moghrabi, who came out early on for the revolution, attested that he joined the Syrian British Medical Society during the revolution in 2012 "for one reason: because corruption was everywhere [in Syria], and it was reaching here as well. When the people were killed in the street, the Syrian British Medical Society was silent, because half of the leaders were connected to the government." Fadel then worked to mobilize his colleague to threaten a mass resignation unless several regime loyalists were removed from the Society's leadership. After these doctors succeeded in pressuring the organization to hold new elections, Fadel and his colleagues joined the board so that "now we can open up, we can talk freely, we can talk as a medical society looking at scale of atrocity going on against doctors, against medical facilities, hospitals,

paramedics, all those things." Dr. Ayman Jundi, another member of this Society from

Manchester, explained that this transformation enabled them to channel important resources to

besieged areas:

> We went down [to Syria] and did a few courses. We've been organizing trips for people
> to go and operate in field hospitals. That kind of activity started very early on. And very
> quickly the society became seen as an arm of the revolution… but it's not a political
> organization… It's just as it happened, the medical need is in the areas that are being
> bombed by the regime. The regime's hospitals are still functioning, they're still working,
> they're getting their supplies. Not so the hospitals on the other side. So the emphasis of
> the society has been where the need is.

According to interviewees, a similar transformation took place in the Syrian American

Medical Society (SAMS) based in Ohio, recounting that pro-revolution Syrians had staged a

coup, reorganized the board, and turned the Society into a proactive humanitarian relief group.

Even though they remained a neutral party in the conflict, Firas recounted that the group changed

from having only "minor activities before the revolution" to working to channel their skills to

help casualties of war inside of Syria and to reach "their potential." According to Dr. Ayman

Jundi of Manchester, who also co-founded the humanitarian group Syria Relief, groups such as

these are working to volunteer in and offer Syrian doctors "advanced life support courses,

surgery in war zone courses, and major incident management courses." Both of the British and

American Medical Societies later merged under the transnational umbrella of the Union of

Syrian Medical Relief Organizations to coordinate the flow of resources into Syria.

Other professional organizations were founded during the revolutions with the aim of

assisting Syrians inside of the country with humanitarian aid delivery and infrastructure needs.

Syrian-American engineer Khaled Nahlawi, for example, founded the Syrian American

Engineers Association to work on near and long-term rebuilding issues in Syria. Khaled said that

by searching for like-minded groups on the Internet, he located engineering groups such as:

"For Rebuilding Aleppo" or "Engineers Association" around Damascus or in Daraa. You contact them, you send them your name. Usually they are skeptical, but you have to gain their trust and once you have their trust, then you'll start working with them and planning out what areas they need help in so you can alleviate and help them work through those issues.

In this way, Khaled has been working to transfer the Syrian-American community's expertise to work on rebuilding infrastructure, including the installation of water purification systems and the building of bread mills in besieged areas.

Other activists worked to advise the Free Syria Army and various military and political leaders of the revolution, at least for a time. Maher Nanna of Florida, a co-founder of the Syrian Support Group, worked in an advisory capacity to help bolster the practices and legitimacy of the armed resistance:

When the Free Syrian Army was formed, which was defected soldiers who refused to fire on civilians basically… me and a bunch of guys, we thought that the Free Syrian Army is made of people who are not really organized, they don't have a long term plan, they don't have experience in organizing or leadership or how to run a country. So we decided those people needed to have organization advice—someone to teach them about what they need to do. So we were working on all of that, and we helped them develop what is called the *Proclamation of Principles for the Free Syrian Army*. I put it online. It's twelve points talking about liberty, democracy, freedom, equality of treatment to all citizens, condemning revenge killing, condemning use of chemical weapons or weapons of mass destruction, [having] peaceful relationships with neighboring countries, restoring order and peace in Syria… The people there, the officers there, they were very receptive… They were very enthusiastic that they are doing this because they really believe that this is what they stand for, and they signed on it. They formed what is called the Military Councils. So for each province, there was a Military Council that basically was supposed to lead the effort and the organization among the fighters and prevent them from those battalions turning into gangs or war lords.

Others also worked as ad hoc advisors to members of the opposition in Syria or Turkey with whom they had established relationships. Respondents also traveled to opposition hubs in Turkey or Qatar to deliver workshops on political training, human rights and international law, and media training, as well as how to "document all of the crimes and human rights abuses,"

191

according to Ahmed (not his real name) from London who witnessed some of these trainings in

Turkey. Ammar Abdulhamid of the Tharwa Foundation also established an initiative to work on

transitional planning for a post-Assad Syria with the Public International Law and Policy Group.

Dr. Radwan Ziadeh, head of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Washington,

D.C., reported a similar initiative: "Our focus is on [planning] the democratic transition… and

[in that] way helping the Syrian opposition to get much more organized." In all, Syrians have

been working to channel their professional experience and expertise to the revolution, to the

broader humanitarian crisis, and for short and long-term development and governmental

capacity-building purposes in their home-country.

2b. Channeling Material and Fungible Resources to the Home-Country

In addition to channeling their expertise to Syria since the revolution, activists in the

diaspora also mobilized to channel material and fungible aid to dissidents and displaced Syrians

through their contact networks. This included communications equipment, such as satellite

phones and covert recording devices, for the purposes of externalization. Mohammad Al-

Abdallah, based in D.C. and director of the Syrian Justice and Accountability Center, recalled,

> [Many] focused at some point on sending satellite internet and satellite phones because
> one of the earlier strategies the government did inside Syria was when they surround a
> city, besiege a city, they basically stopped the communications. And the response from
> the community here was okay, let's equip the activists there with satellite phones and
> satellite internet so they can basically reach out to TV stations and to media and to human
> rights groups and tell them about how Syria was. So that was one of the main activities
> that happened in the beginning, mid 2011 to early 2012.

Maher Nanna of the Syria Support Group, for example, went to Aleppo in June 2011 to observe

what was going on for himself. After joining the protest movement there:

> I came back to the States and I decided to start being active with the revolution and at that
> time, you know, all our activities were how to send hidden cameras in pens or in glasses

or in the shape of a lighter or a watch, banners, computers, laptops, satellite phones, satellite internet, and so on.

After Syrians were forced to flee their homes and became displaced beginning in 2011, activists in the diaspora also purchased and delivered aid through their contacts inside of Syria.

Dr. Ayman AlJundi of Syria Relief in Manchester recalled that:

> Initially it was informal. We recognized there were a large number of people who tried to flee from Syria into Turkey and were stuck at the borders. They were sleeping on the ground and when it rained, they had to sleep in the trees. It was just awful to hear about that. We didn't even see it at that time because there wasn't footage or reports, but we heard about it from contacts and friends and families and what have you. So at that time we decided amongst us to raise as much as we could. It was all done on trust. We'd ring people and say we need money for this purpose. We can't really provide a receipt or confirmation where the money went for but if you trust me, please do send the money… [Some] guys who went over bought tents and blankets and clothing, and got it across the border to these people that were displaced.

Nebal in London echoed that the sending of aid was learned on the fly. "I was a Ph.D. researcher," he said. "I had no idea about how to do charity work. It wasn't organized work in the beginning. We were just sending the money straight away to the activists inside Syria."

As the number of refugees swelled to the millions and the conflict on the ground grew increasingly fragmented between competing groups by 2013, apolitical humanitarian aid became the major focus of the diaspora. Once carried out solely through informal networks, this work came to be conducted through a combination of formal organizations and the remittances of individuals and networks to their family members and communities inside of Syria. This work has been critical in reaching populations within Syria who are blocked by the regime from receiving aid from international organizations (Svoboda and Pantuliano 2015). Omar Shishakly, an activist from Houston and a board member of the Maram Foundation, described how his brother Yakzin, the founder of Maram, was compelled to formalize his efforts in order to receive aid from international organizations:

193

[My brother] was going inside Syria to the liberated areas along the border and then saw that there were a few hundred people in need. They didn't have any papers to allow them to enter Turkey, and at the same time, they can't go back because they're afraid of getting killed. So we raised some funds [for] tents and things like that. So it started with three, four hundred—now the number is about twenty-five thousand people. The problem about this camp is that it's not a regular refugee camp. For that, you need to be outside your country. If you are inside your country, you are called internally displaced. Usually the aid that comes to those people comes through the government of the country of the people internally displaced. In Syria, the United Nations can't give aid to those people. Red Cross cannot give aid to those people. We struggled with this because at the beginning, we were tapping the local community here in Houston and a few people that we know to kind of raise funds and to help those people. Like five hundred, a thousand, three thousand. And then the numbers [of internally displace persons] increased dramatically… We went everywhere trying to get funds for them. But if you're not an organization, then you're can't, [you don't qualify for aid]. So then we established Maram Foundation to be able to raise funds to aid those people.

M.E., an activist from London, also established a non-profit organization to channel aid to the regime-controlled area of Suwayda, his hometown. This was the best use of his limited resources, he argued, because Suwayda had become a hub for displaced Syrians within the country and could not be reached by international organizations:

The situation inside Syria accelerated and the number of displaced families become really, really large numbers… At that time, I decided I'm not going to work with the outside [refugees in Turkey]. I'm going to try to help in an area where I can be more effective. Because my resources are very minimal—we rely mainly on personal fundraising from people we know and businesspeople who we knew from the city of Suwayda and the Arab world… The big organizations can't send aid in there. So we rely on our people, who's on the ground… and other people overseas who manage to donate a little bit each month to send some money for them to continue their operation… I decided that I'm going to do some things where really hardly anybody's touching it, which is mainly the children with special needs. Children being traumatized and badly affected by witnessing torture, rape, killing, things like that, together with the women and their families who have special needs as well… I set up a center in the city [where] we've done psychodrama, psychotherapy… We managed to enroll about seven or eight thousand children from the families who came to the city in the normal school in Suwayda. Any funds I get, I get whoever donated to transfer it directly to the people… and we don't have any expenses because we are all volunteers. If they can't get it to Syria, I'll send it to Lebanon and from Lebanon, they send it to Syria… Everybody knows everybody in that city. It's really like community work. Trying to help everybody who came from outside and needs help to do such a thing.

In summary, resource channeling efforts were initially directed toward facilitating

connectivity of activists to the wider world for the purposes of externalization at the onset of the

revolution. Activists then report turning their attention primarily to the wounded, refugees, and

the internally-displaced. Since the start of the Syrian revolution, aid-delivery organizations have

proliferated from zero such groups in the US or the UK numerous groups listed in Table 5.1

above. While informal remittance systems have been established and persist, many activists have

had to rely on donor support from larger organizations to survive and continue meeting needs on

the ground. Though the exact number is unknown, the US and British diaspora has donated tens

of millions of dollars' worth of aid since the start of the revolution.

3. Linking Allies Together

3a. Insider-Outsider Linking

In addition to channeling expertise and fungible resources to their compatriots at home,

the Syrian diaspora also conducted "linking" work in order to connect dissidents inside of Syria

with outside allies. Activists initially worked to connect Syrians on the ground with journalists

and politicians in order to facilitate externalization of the conflict. For example, after being put in

touch with activists inside of Syria by another member of the diaspora named Rami Jarrah,

writer-activist and Karam Foundation founder Lina Sergie worked to connect these dissidents

with journalists in the States:

> Rami connected me on Skype with somebody from Daraa who was part of the Shaam
> News Network was doing all the YouTube videos… After that, I basically was on a daily
> contact with him, and through him, I got connected with people in Homs, during the Baba
> Amr siege [in February 2012]. That was the moment when journalists were looking for
> people on the ground constantly; I would connect journalists and the media to the
> activists all the time.

Haytham in Manchester also attested that this work was vital in empowering Syrians to speak for themselves whenever possible:

> When the media called me… I said okay, you want somebody from Homs, I will bring somebody from Homs. [I know someone who] has his relatives there, he can ask them. It's not me… who gives the information... [It's about] linking.

Ibrahim AlAssil of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement also attested that their linking activities included putting Syrian activists in touch with potential international donors as well:

> When some groups became more mature, they were asking more to get in touch with international NGOs. Not only those who work in humanitarian aid but also those like small groups in Syria who were trying to spread awareness inside Syria and to help some development of projects. At that time, they realized they needed to get in touch with international NGOs, to know how to register their NGOs, to get funds for their organizations, for their managerial expenses, to get trained so they can grow more in a professional way… So mostly these were the tasks of all members in the US and the UK, to expand our network with the media and to get in touch with international NGOs to help us to grow and to plan and to develop our strategic planning for the future.

Maher Nanna, co-founder of the official Syria Support Group (established to channel expertise and resources to the armed opposition), also attested that their linking work included facilitating trust and understanding between two sets of potential allies:

> Of course all of this, we were coordinating, communicating with the State Department mainly… We were actually bringing and introducing people, officers from the Free Syrian Army, to the US government and helped with vetting them… I mean, the most important thing that we did really was making the connection… So our role mainly was two things. Number one, to present the US side to the Free Syrian Army and let them know the United States stands for freedom, liberty, democracy, equality… We were raised [in Syria] on the conspiracy theory, on the belief that the United States and Israel are evil, the sources of all the problems in the world. So when the Free Syrian Army was formed, we really wanted to let those guys know that this is not true. They were hopeful that the United States were going to provide support. We wanted to assure them that we live here, we are American citizens, we know how the system works, we know what the United States stands for, and all of those myths are incorrect. So we were trying to present the US side of the equation. At the same time, we wanted to connect those FSA members to the United States administration and tell them that those guys are really freedom fighters, they really have a cause, they are fighting for that cause. They are not war lords, they are not gangsters… We helped a lot in making that connection basically.

3b. Insider-Insider Linking

Members of the diaspora also worked to link activists inside of Syria with one another in order to coordinate civil disobedience in regime-controlled areas. For example, Alaa Basatneh, a college student living in the suburbs of Chicago and the subject of a documentary called #ChicagoGirl (Piscatella 2013), performed this work from the US. She assisted activists inside of Syria by acting as an intermediary between clandestine organizers, by helping to coordinate demonstrations, and by mapping escape routes using Google maps. This work enabled activists inside of Syria to keep their identities hidden by communicating through Alaa, which was important because captured protesters were tortured and forced to relinquish their contacts. Nebal in London, co-founder of the British Syria Solidarity group, explained how he came to facilitate this insider-insider linking among activists affiliated with the General Commission of the Syrian Revolution in Aleppo from London:

> When I went on TV, at that point not a lot of Syrians were speaking out in the media… So I was contacted with people from Aleppo, from inside, saying that we need a contact from outside Syria and we've seen you on TV, and we think that we can trust you... We'll provide you with photos, we'll provide you with videos… It was me and another girl, she lives in Saudi Arabia and was working with these guys inside Aleppo, a core of five people from different areas who don't know each other. And they should *not* know each other so that if one is caught, he can't tell about the others. Because this happened with [another one]—one was caught, and all the nine working with him were caught because he had no choice but to tell about it. So that's why it was our duty to connect them, to agree about the timing and the place of the demonstrations and then spread it to all other activists inside. So that one if one of them was caught, he doesn't know any other ones. So mainly that was the job at the time. And they were providing me with information about how many people had been killed, what's going on inside Syria. We pass [that information] to the media, because at that point, the media didn't have those contacts.

While this type of activity was not as reported among respondents as externalization or resource channeling, activists in the diaspora with contacts on the ground did work to some extent to facilitate insider-insider linking during periods of protest in the early stages of the revolution.

4. Volunteering on the Ground

197

Syrians in the diaspora have also played a role in the revolution by volunteering inside Syria and around its borders to externalize the revolution, deliver resources, and participate in various resistance movements and oppositional groups. Activists such as Maher Nanna also worked to bring in journalists to report from the ground, as when he brought in CBS' "60 Minutes" team in the fall of 2012:

> I took the team of CBS and we went inside Aleppo. I hosted them in my family's house with all my family members and we showed them the city, we show them the destruction. We also introduced them to those leaders of the Free Syrian Army.

In addition to working as fixers and translators from inside of Syria, Maher and others participated directly in protests and mobilization activities. Ibrahim of the Syrian Nonviolence Network also traveled from Britain back home to Syria in 2011 in order to participate in civil resistance movements before being forced to flee through Lebanon in the fall of 2011. He said, "in mid-2013, I started to visit Syria again from the north. Going to Aleppo and at that time, even to Raqqah before it was occupied by the Islamic State." He said:

> We had different goals. One of them to coordinate and to meet people we work with inside Syria. Other goals was, for me personally, I felt after a year and a half outside Syria, it became more difficult for me to understand what is going on… If you are Syrian and even if you are in the US or UK, you are part of what's going on, but if you are geographically away, it is not really helpful for understanding what's going on. And from another side also, activists and people on the ground, they [aren't] encouraged to listen to people who have been outside Syria for a long time because they probably feel that [those outside] are emotionally disconnected. Many of them started to say, you don't know what's going on in Syria, you don't feel us—especially when you are asking them to keep or stay peaceful. They say you don't know, you don't know the brutality we face, you don't know the horror of the Syrian army, the Syrian *Shabiha* [loyalist militias]. So I felt that I need to start to go back to Syria to understand what's going on. That will help us to plan for our movement in a better way and to get more in touch with other activists, to rebuild the trust with people on the ground and to be more effective in what we're doing. And that's why I started to visit Syria with other members of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement.

While Ibrahim's work on the ground was to support civil disobedience, two other individuals attested that they had fought with the Free Syria Army. One young man was a Libyan youth from Britain whom I had interviewed initially because of his activism documenting and fighting in the Libyan revolution; the other was a Syrian-American youth from Connecticut. Both men had withdrawn from this activism by 2013. The Syrian-American, L., who did not come from a political family or have any interest or experience with political activism before the revolution, first traveled into Damascus in order to see for himself what was happening in Syria. He then joined the protest movement there and worked with the Damascus Media Center. As the revolution escalated, L. then participated in aid delivery and weapons smuggling, as well as fighting on the front lines with an FSA brigade in Aleppo. Unlike my Libyan interviewees, he did not report fighting alongside other members of the diaspora during this period.

As the humanitarian crisis progressed, other activists worked to transport aid into Syria directly. Ousama of the Syrian Bristol Community, for example, drove ambulances as part of a volunteer convoy into Syria several times, which he arranged in coordination with medical councils inside of the country:

> We used to take the powder called Celox, very famous in Canada, used by loggers who cut trees using chainsaws. It stops bleeding straight away. In the city of Aleppo, they formed the medical council and they started coordinating all the activities. They also supervise or they oversee about eighteen hospitals in the north. So we found that the best way is to take everything to them. They sort it out and they see where everything is needed and they divert it… Because there are a lot of amputees as well, one of the things we concentrate on taking is wheelchairs and crutches.

Mohamed Taher Khairullah, an activist and the mayor of Prospect Park in New Jersey, also began to travel into Syria in December of 2012. He said,

> It started as an individual effort and it developed into joining an organization. Right now I work with Watan USA, which is a 501c3 organization. We're approved by the IRS and we're tax deductible. I've been to Aleppo and many villages in the governance of Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, mostly to deliver aid and to make contacts on the ground for future projects.

Because the needs are rapidly changing… I stay in touch with people who are, do work on the ground and through them, we assess what we need to do. And we obviously, as an organization, we also have projects that are consistently running such as school, two bakeries.

After hitting a wall in terms of lobbying for decisive forms of intervention, activists such as Dr. Radwan Ziadeh of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies and Mouaz of the Syrian Emergency Task Force, both based in D.C., also began to work from Turkey in the hope of contributing to the revolution's success more directly. Mouaz recalled that:

Lobbying wasn't panning out, so I went down to the border and opened an office in Antakya [in 2012]. Because first of all, see if I can do something that helps people where I can see it translated to something… Now we have an office in Antakya, four offices and expanding inside liberated areas in Syria.

As Mouaz described in a documentary film about these activities (Kalin and Lukacs 2014), he and another activist named Razan Shalab Al-Sham, a political émigré from Homs, worked in the liberated areas to establish civilian police forces and judicial councils. These projects were designed to fill the security vacuum left in the wake of war, as well as to serve as a model for civil governance in a post-Assad Syria. Mouaz also paired these efforts with lobbying the US and British governments to support these initiatives. This required going back and forth into Syria to implement these projects and to survey towns and villages for their potential to implement these projects.

As referenced above in the discussion on the channeling of expertise, activists also attested that Turkey has become a hub for training Syrian activists. Sabreen, who worked in Turkey for many months to coordinate aid, said "in every hotel in Gaziantep, you can walk in any day and find a training happening. No joke. The same with Lebanon." From Turkey, Sabreen also worked for the Syrian Interim Government as part of their Assistance Coordination Unit. This Unit has been coordinating the flow of aid into Syria to fill the gap left by the late start and

insufficient response of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

According to Sabreen,

> OCHA never showed up [in 2012], so there was basically no coordination in Turkey among NGOs. So the opposition created this Unit to fill that role… and I started working with them as a project coordinator [in] Turkey for eight months. I was working with international donors and I was developing projects for them. So basically what I would do is I would talk to local Syrian NGOs and develop projects. Say they want to do a water project. So I did a lot of grant writing. I was handling all donor relations, all external stuff and [my colleague] was doing all internal stuff… He would go to the area and he would coordinate all of what's coming in and out. And he would sit with the local NGOs and the local councils and have them all collaborate and work together. And then they'd come up with a process on how they're going to distribute and what are the criteria. So that way we get documentation and it helped donors feel secure with us... Because they had no one who knew English. That's the reason why I was there… Donors, they have no connection to the inside and they also have a language barrier. So it's like nobody knows how to talk with anybody… There's a lot of international people, but they're in one world. And then there's people who are in between, [like] me.

In all, the Syrian diaspora has worked as a volunteer cadre in and around Syria on a variety of initiatives to fill critical gaps in the international response and to influence and bolster various opposition movements on the ground.

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES TO SYRIANS' TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION

The analysis demonstrates that the four conditions enabling Libyan activists to play a range of significant roles in the revolution and war effort also initially enabled the Syrian diaspora to do the same. The diaspora's resources and expertise, their social ties to and partnerships with insiders across Syria, the participation of third-parties in the revolution (including their host-country governments and the media), and newly-liberated free space in the home-country and cross-border access granted them opportunities to contribute to the cause. However, unlike in the Libyan case, the Syrian diaspora was subjected to increasingly significant obstacles to mobilization over time due to a range of external factors, including changes on the ground in Syria. The analysis demonstrates that these obstacles include resource shortages, the

rise of ISIS and a heightened War on Terror security environment, broken relations with their contacts in Syria and with the opposition, weak third-party interventions, and increasingly limited access to Syria and liberated territory therein. As a result, by the end 2013, activists reported facing resource shortages, plummeting morale, a deflated protest movement, and a sense of disconnection from the activists and movements that had inspired their pro-revolution activism in the first place.

However, despite these obstacles, the Syrian diaspora movement did not die off or cease to play a role in the conflict. The reason is because *the diaspora converted and established formal organizations dedicated to transnational collective action*. In other words, the diaspora continued to play a role because donors and activists formed a professionalized transnational civic sector dedicated to launching sustained interventions into the Syrian crisis. The diversion of resources in the diaspora to the maintenance of diaspora organizations and to the salaries of a full-time staff enabled a once informal and ad hoc movement sector reliant on volunteers to survive, specialize, and persist over time. At the same time, as scholars of bureaucratization and oligarchy have argued, formalization also presented its own sets of challenges and imposed some significant limitations on these groups, particularly on the transfer of aid to the home-country. Nevertheless, the establishment of formalized systems with host-country accreditation was critical for enabling activists to develop the capacity to continue serving their home-country as intermediaries and to fill the gaps left vacant by the international response. I discuss these dynamics in detail below.

Resource Exhaustion over Time

Respondents first report that a major challenge in sustaining their activism has been resource shortages. This became a particularly pervasive problem as activists' donor base—the Syrian

202

diaspora itself—came to be tapped constantly for donations and remittances as the need for

charitable aid increased over time. As Dr. Ziadeh attested, millions of Syrians who have been

displaced and rendered unemployed have come to be wholly reliant on the support of their

family members in the diaspora:

> When we talk about four million refugees in neighboring countries and nine million
> displaced, everyone has his family affected. My mother crossed the border into Turkey,
> along with actually my sister. I have other brother in Jordan and other sister in Lebanon.
> I'm responsible for [them]. No one can afford that for two or three years, no matter the
> income you have. And this is why the Syrian communities here focus much more on their
> immediate families.

This is not to say that members of the diaspora have ceased to donate to charitable organizations

or to volunteer; if anything, their remittances have increased over the course of the conflict. But

at the same time, the diaspora community could no longer be relied upon by organizers to write

enough checks to supply the donations needed to meet the ever-expanding needs of millions of

Syrians. As Nebal of London explained, "what's the point of asking someone, some Syrian, to

donate money when you know he himself has to provide food for three, four, five families

already?"

Organizers also reported that protest participation had waned significantly by 2014 for all

events except commemorative activities due in large part to financial difficulties. Haytham of

Manchester explained that they amassed funds to pay for protesters to travel to London for "six,

seven months until we were exhausted financially, because every coach costs one thousand

pounds." Nebal, an organizer with the group British Solidarity for Syria, also attested that

participants came to feel that their time and resources would be of better use elsewhere:

> At the very beginning when it was easy to go every Saturday to demonstrate…
> Nowadays, many in the community would say that what's the point of spending two
> hours every Saturday protesting—it would be better for me to work and make some
> money to send to Syria instead. And I totally agree with that. But as a symbol, it's

[important to have] big marches to mark the anniversary of the revolution, to mark the big massacres.

The Rise of Extremists in Syria and the War on Terror Security Environment

After the proliferation of religious extremist groups from Jabhat al-Nusra to ISIS within Syria that are deemed as terrorist organizations by the US and British governments, activists reported that the growth of these groups in their home-country significantly dampened their abilities to mobilize resources for vetted Free Syria Army rebels and civilians alike. Activists in both countries reported that donors had raised significant concerns about their remittances being tied in any way to the support of activities or groups deemed illegal by their host-countries. Aware that the security apparatus in both the US and Britain were monitoring donations to Syria, fears of being caught in the War on Terror security net stoked widespread fears and deterred community members from sending fungible aid. Furthermore, proving that resource deliveries were not going into the wrong hands placed an additional burden on Syrian activists. Ayman AlJundi of Syria Relief remarked that concerns by the host-country governments and by donors increased dramatically after the emergence of ISIS in Syria in 2013. He recalled:

> In the beginning, charity commission was a little bit more lenient with us. [Before], I really couldn't tell you the name of the person who received the food parcel. They wanted details, but when we said we gave it to this group of workers we have and they distributed it in that village, that was fine, they were happy with that. And they would even allow cash transactions, which are even more difficult to trace. Now the instructions are if you cannot give us the name of the very final destination of your donation, don't do it. You can't even go there because they're so worried about money being, going into the wrong hands, going into aiding terrorism, going into buying arms. We have to be absolutely to the nth-degree clear as to where the money had gone. Otherwise, we'll just be closed down and we can't afford to have that happen because lots of people rely on us. We have schools that need to be funded, salaries of teachers that need to be paid, books and school equipment that have to be bought, et cetera—and that's only schools. Of course, there are hospitals and there are the food parcels and all that kind of, it all relies on the fact that we are functioning, and we cannot let them down. So we have to be very, very clear and very, very careful in how we raise the money and how we spend it… And in fact, there has been a couple of campaigners—they weren't registered charities—that

were caught delivering money to arms or suspect groups or whatever, and they had the book thrown at them.

Omar Shishakly, a board member of the Syrian American Medical Society, also described the post-ISIS climate as "scary" because now activists and donors could potentially be "considered terrorists. Because if you look at the history of some organization who were doing good work, later on, the US government changed the way and they treat it differently and they consider them a terrorist organization." Ousama of Bristol also attested that he had been questioned over his volunteer activities driving ambulance convoys into Syria by the British police.

Activists also reported facing targeted discrimination when attempting to register their organizations and wire funds. For example, one activist working for the Syrian Legal Development Programme in Manchester told me that their group had difficulties opening a bank account, despite being an incorporated organization, because of their Syria-specific designation. This was not paranoia, as the British bank HSBC had closed down Syrians' personal bank accounts in 2014 (Bachelor 2014). For this reason, Haytham of the Rethink Rebuild Society decided not to put the word "Syria" in his organization's title because he worried about this type of discrimination.

Dr. Jundi in Manchester also attested that families have had additional difficulties sending remittances directly to their family members "because of the restrictions on money transfers, the sanctions that banks are imposing on bank accounts and what have you. So even that simple process of family helping family has been crippled to a large extent." Respondents also attested that doctors they knew who had gone into Syria to do volunteer medical work had been hassled at airports. Overall, Mohammad Al-Abdallah of the Syrian Justice and Accountability Centre said that Syrian Americans were generally fearful of "getting calls from

the FBI or other agencies saying hey, your money ended up in terrorism and elsewhere," for

obvious reasons.

This is not to say that Syrian activists have been taking this treatment lying down. Several

respondents reported that they have been meeting with various officials to discuss and challenge

these discriminatory practices. Hussam of the Syrian American Council recalled that:

> The targeting of Syrian Americans as they travel or as they donate actually has been
> something that SAC has brought up in meetings with Department of Homeland Security
> continuously, along with other representatives from other Muslim and Arab communities.
> And these issues are being taken seriously by DHS. We've been promised some action to
> ease up some of those unfair treatment or people being visited by the FBI and other
> agencies. [But] you add it to the whole mix of things happening, it creates another layer
> of disappointment, fear, intimidation.

Broken Connections with Insider Receptors

A third condition limiting the role of diaspora activists in the Syrian conflict over time

has resulted from the Assad regime's systematic targeting of civil society activists and its

depopulation of the country. The regime's pulverizing repression has shrunk the diaspora's pool

of insider receptors and severely damaged their activist networks. As a result, respondents came

to be disconnected from Syrian revolutionary movements on the ground, which limited or

foreclosed their externalization, resource channeling, and linking activities. For example, Lina

Sergie of Chicago recalled that as of 2013, "I stopped doing any of the Skype work anymore

[because] a lot of the people I knew are dead or they disappeared. Most of the people I knew in

Homs, they all died, one after the other." Razan also attested that the hemorrhaging of activists

from Syria left her without a direct and clear way to contribute to the revolution:

> I had a lot of contacts with people on the ground… [Working] with them secretly,
> translating articles for them. They'd be inside Syria or they'd tell me we're going offline,
> if anyone asks about us, don't worry, we're going to go to such and such base. All
> happened the first year of the revolution. Those are probably the best kind of moments of
> my life, where I actually felt like I was part of the revolution, because I was helping
> facilitate protests inside wherever it was by being in contact with these people. But then I

lost contact with [almost] all of them. They either left Syria or died.

Ibrahim Al Assil, who continued to work with activists on the ground as of 2014, also attested

that the overall number of volunteers available to work with the diaspora has been decimated by

regime repression:

> In Damascus now, it's also very, very difficult to find activists because most of them got killed or detained or they had to flee the country, or they are now very afraid to become involved. Because now if someone is detained in Damascus, most probably they will never be released again and they will die in a detention center. So whether inside or outside Syria, it's now more difficult to find volunteers.

In this way, no-holds barred repression by the Syrian regime has largely succeeded in severing

the links forged between insiders and outsiders and damaging the transnational advocacy

networks that made externalization and the channeling of resources into Syria possible.

Fractured Partnerships and Withdrawal from the Opposition

The fragmentation of the opposition on the ground, discussed at length above and in

Chapter 2, also compelled some activists in the diaspora to withdraw their support from the

opposition and to stop serving as representatives of the revolution. Nidal Bitari, a Palestinian-

Syrian activist with the Syrian Expatriates Organization, stated that the problem became that

"you don't know for whom you are promoting now or advocating." Dr. Radwan Ziadeh and

Marah Bukai who had joined the Syrian National Council at its founding in August 2011 also

both withdrew from this body in 2012. Marah cited having a problem with the lack of

accountability in the Council's funding structure:

> There is no transparency. [For example], from where they are getting the money to hold their huge meetings? We've never seen any of their sources. And was this money used to buy arms? And then sent *to whom*? We don't know. *From* whom? We don't know. And I don't want to be part of that. I told the head of Muslim Brotherhood frankly, if we don't know from where you are getting the money to hold these meetings and what you are doing with this money and how big the amount is and where it's going, I have no interest. You cannot *use* me. Use someone else… [With this] mistrust, corruption, lack of

transparency, no accountability, no responsibility—who will trust you? How could United States of America trust you? How could the Syrian people trust you?

Radwan also withdrew in November 2012 after being with the Council for almost a year because there was "too much in-fighting, too much losing focus." Sabreen, an activist from southern California, also left her position working for the Syrian Interim Government's Assistance Coordination Unit in Turkey due to corruption. She said,

> In the Unit, there was a lot of corruption going on. People were directing humanitarian aid to some of their hometowns so they would gain credibility in it… And the people who founded this unit, who are some of the most legit people I've ever met in my life, a lot of them left because they couldn't handle the corruption. People that stayed are the ones who went on strike basically. So then we went on strike… And they decided to bring us a new CEO who turned out to be just as corrupt.

Others withdrew their support even though they did not have an official role. Malik Al-Abdeh, co-founder of the Syrian Justice and Development Party and Barada TV in London, withdrew from publicly supporting the opposition after he uncovered a scandal involving a lie told by a member of the Syrian National Council.[32] As a journalist, Malik said,

> in my very naïve British kind of upbringing, this is a citable offense! You can't have a politician lying in that way. So I spoke to the head of the whole channel [of Barada TV] and said, look, here's the story. And he's like, what are going to gain from exposing this? We've got everything to lose and nothing to gain. The regime is going to love the fact that an opposition leader is lying. We're just going to be seen as causing a shit storm within the opposition, and we're going to get hassled from that guy. So just drop the story. I said all right. That evening… I went home and I thought, *how am I any different than the editor of those government-run state-owned newspapers in Syria*?... I thought, this is self-censorship. This is not what the revolution is about, and if I can't hold those people to account now when they're in opposition, imagine when they're in a position of power. They'll probably send people to kill me in the TV station. I'm living in London and I'm subject to censorship. Where is this revolution going? So that made me say this is completely messed up, and there's a lot of corruption and incompetence on the part of the opposition… [After that], I decided to take a step back. People called me [for interviews] and I said, I'm not available. I have nothing really to say. I turned down all these requests to go on TV, because I was put in a position where you have to defend the opposition because 'you're the opposition guy'… And I thought, I'm not even paid by the opposition to do PR or do messaging so why am I doing it for free? So I thought, forget it.

Overall, problems within various opposition groups led many activists to rescind their support for various official bodies and individuals representing the revolution.

Weak and Indecisive Third-Party Support

As in the Libyan case, the Syrian diaspora came to be relied upon by various third parties as intermediaries for the media and their host-country governments. However, the relatively weak support lent to the Syrian revolution by the US and British governments—small arms, some humanitarian aid, and statements of condemnation of the Assad regime—in comparison with their participation in the NATO-led intervention against the Libyan regime in 2011 had a mixed effect on the Syrian diaspora's roles. As I detail further below, the US government and international organizations' intermittent and non-decisive interventions into the crisis have provided an opportunity for the diaspora to liaise with elites on matters of policy and to push for an expanded governmental role. But on the other hand, the lack of decisive intervention also delegitimized the Syrian diaspora's political work in the eyes of the broader Syrian community.

The weak support of the US and British governments for the revolution relative to what many Syrians initially expected put activists in a difficult position. For example, the reversal of the Obama administration's proposal to launch strikes against Assad after the chemical weapons attack of August 2013 dampened Syrians' trust in the US government, and by proxy, also in diaspora activists who has been working as intermediaries. Dr. Ziadeh, for example, explained that US policies, including the refusal to strike in August 2013, strained his relationship with Syrians on the ground:

> This was very disappointing and difficult to explain to the Syrians. And now I still have the same difficulties—to convince the Syrian people how it's important to work with the administration to fight against the ISIS because this is the only way you can [eventually] get rid of the Assad government. But the people in Syria have been frustrated because they're hearing from the media, the officials, the only focus was the ISIS, the terrorists.

And everyone [knows] that the Assad machine has killed far more than what the ISIS killed among the Syrians.

The lack of strong state support also led to the demise of the Syrian Support Group, an organization dedicated to supporting the FSA. Maher, one of its cofounders, explained:

> The lack of support, lack of arms, lack of money, lack of everything—[because of this] none of our work reached any [of its goals]… All the aid that has been sent has been given to small groups, very randomly distributed… So basically at that point, we didn't really have much to do because things became so chaotic. There was nothing that we can provide or help with. Even the people there inside, their moods start turning against the United States and they were actually *blaming us that we were the ones who let them down basically. And at that point, we really didn't have any leverage. When we talk to them, there's nothing to offer. There's no reason for them to talk to us*. Even though we are Syrians, they still they look at us as Americans. So we lost that strong relationship. Even I remember, I would talk to my family there… and they would tell me… why should we keep talking to you? You disappointed us for two years… I left the Syrian Support Group almost a year and a half ago [in 2013]; it lasted for almost another year and it closed [in 2014] because of lack of funds, lack of anything, lack of purpose basically. *The trust was broken, number one. And number two, there was no meaningful assistance*. The only assistance that was presented was the meal ready to eat and the medical emergency kits to the Free Syrian Army. Now you go there and meet with people and tell you, you know, we have missiles coming on top of our heads and you're giving me meals and emergency bags. It was pathetic to them.

In addition, all of the respondents engaged in lobbying efforts attested that they had lost a significant degree of support from the Syrian diaspora because of disillusionment with advocacy by the end of 2013. As Dr. Ziadeh stated:

> The special session requested [in 2011 by the US at the UN Human Rights Council], issued a resolution requesting a fact-finding mission on what's happening. I testified on that session to send a strong message at that time to the Syrian government that things are not like in Hama in the '80s. Now you have Human Rights Council and the international community built a different system not to allow what's happened in the past to repeat again. But now we discover all of that's useless. Now they UN confirmed the number of the victims exceed a 190,000, the number of the mass atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity… And that affects, of course, the mobility of the Syrian diaspora. In the beginning, it was very active, mobilized. They tried actually to do very much lobbying pressure on the US government. But right now, it's less and less.

Marah also attested that protests also came to be perceived by many as pointless because "by the third or fourth year nothing has happened. I don't believe there is any reason to go shout next to the White House or embassy."

Precarious Free Space and Limited Access to Syria

The precariousness of liberated space within Syria and ever-increasing restrictions on movement across borders into the country also significantly constrained the diaspora's abilities to serve as a volunteer force on the ground over time. Unlike in Libya, where liberated territory was protected and expanded by revolutionary and NATO forces, Syrian territories have been left undefended to relentless regime bombings and been subjected to constant power struggles. Most respondents had stopped going into Syria in or by 2013 due to the threat of kidnappings (by either the regime, corrupt members of the Free Syria Army, or criminal gangs), the expansion of extremist groups such as ISIS, and the re-taking of territory by the regime. Rafif of FREE-Syria explained,

> At the beginning, we used to be far more able to deliver humanitarian relief. We have more constraints now with ISIS operating as well as the regime. We were a little bit more optimistic about some women's initiatives earlier on. Those are now impossible. We're finding a lot of constraints and challenges.

L., who had fought on the front lines, also attested that increasing desperation and criminality among some opposition groups had made this work doubly dangerous. After explaining that two of his European humanitarian aid worker friends had been kidnapped and ransomed by a corrupt FSA member, he remarked,

> Now you can't trust anyone. Once they find out you're American—bare minimum, [that can get a ransom of] ten thousand dollars to any group. Imagine how fucked up that is. Even though you're a Syrian, because you're American born, you're a target now. And people are greedy and desperate, so why not.

In addition, activists have found that Turkey is the only country that provides them with relatively passage in and out of Syria. Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt have been far less accommodating to activists seeking to volunteer to assist refugees or smuggle supplies into Syria. Overall, shrinking liberated space and limited access to Syria has increasingly reduced the ability and willingness of activists in the diaspora to volunteer on the ground.

FORMALIZATION AND SPECIALIZATION AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT SURVIVAL MECHANISM

Activists in the diaspora initially mobilized on behalf of the revolution largely as volunteers. However, the escalating severity and prolonged character of the crisis rendered mobilization through volunteerism and informal social networks largely untenable. As I describe above, the exponential growth in humanitarian needs drained the community financially, and the rise of extremists in Syria such as ISIS heightened War on Terror-related oversight of donors in the diaspora. These conditions made reliance on volunteer labor and informal remittance systems increasingly unreliable. As a result, the analysis finds that activists intent on pursuing transnational mobilization were compelled to establish formal organizations to legitimize and protect their work, as well as to qualify for funding from non-Syrian donors. At the same time, though the formalization enabled activists abroad to pursue political advocacy and charitable works, this strategic adaptation also imposed rules and additional constraints on their activism. However, organizations without the financial backing of a board or wealthy donors to pay for even one or two full-time staff have since died off or become comatose and frustrated activists' efforts to maintain a role in the crisis at home.

Respondents attested that the formalization process required donors to divert some portion of their contributions to the maintenance of diaspora organizations themselves. Haytham,

director of Manchester's Rethink Rebuild Society, described how his organization's survival depended on the commitment of wealthy private donors to pay for staff salaries:

> From January 2012, we had an office for our British Syrian Community of Manchester. At that time, I was doing my Ph.D. I opened this office daily for three hours in the evening time and it stayed like that for one year… At that time, the money came like job by job. Let's say that, okay, we need the coach to London, we need one thousand pounds… After I finished my Ph.D. I told them, look, I have to find a job or continue with you for any amount of money just to live on. And [the donors] said no, we need you, so stay with us… Two years ago, we started to make it more systematic. So now people are paying let's say a regular payment of twenty pounds a month, and we have some businessman paying more… to cover the cost of the office, employees, some activities. Now we are five people after a long journey. We moved here to this proper office one year ago.

Mouaz, the full-time executive director of the Syrian Emergency Task Force based in D.C., also explained that his political advocacy work is funded by his organization's board:

> They donate enough—I mean, the boards of my organizations are all Syrian and they donate for the salaries and the office space and so on for the team that we've got. And that's why we've lasted a really long time, four years of doing this regularly and it's a lot of money… even though compared to other organizations and lobbies it's little money. But for them to sustain that for a very long time is admirable. So they're dedicated, and they see the work that we do, making a difference or that could make a difference, and they're doing their part.

Organizations that did not formalize or have the backing of a set of donors became dormant or died off. In contrast to the formation of several D.C.-based lobbying organizations, for example, I did not find any organizations dedicated full-time to lobbying or political advocacy in London as of 2014. Though respondents reported some ad hoc volunteer-based lobbying efforts, including by a handful of volunteers comprising the Syrian Parliamentary Affairs Group, most interviewees lamented the weakness of the British-Syrian community's lobbying efforts. The Parliamentary Affairs Group, for example, was only formed after the failure of the UK government to launch strikes against the Syrian regime's chemical weapons attacks of August 2013, and was a part-time volunteer group comprised largely of Syrian doctors.

Other groups that had previously engaged in advocacy, such as members of the British Solidarity for Syria, were inactive by 2014 due to a lack of resources. Nebal, a former coordinator of these advocacy efforts, said that "to be honest, we've got no resources." Mazen of London agreed, explaining, "We have some small groups, lobbying groups or parliamentary groups. They're professional by any means. These things needs a lot of financial support and professional support. Unfortunately, we haven't got it."

Syrian-American political advocacy groups that professionalized, on the other hand, have come to partner with a range of officials across governmental institutions and think tanks. While these allies have not been able to change the Obama administration's policy outright, they do exert influence and have issued significant public critiques of the Obama administration's policies on Syria. This policy coalition includes members of the Senate and House's Foreign Relation Committees, the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and key elites, including Frederic Hof, the former special advisor for the transition in Syria for the US Department of State, and former US Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford. Their calls for a different policy approach to the Syrian conflict have created opportunities for diaspora lobbyists to establish partnerships and working relationships with these officials. As Ayman Abdel Nour of the Syrian Christians for Democracy group described, this work has produced relations at all levels of government with the exception of the White House:

> I want to meet all the institutions which I can have meetings with, and I'm already meeting with them… because I need to deliver the case of the Christian Syrians, what they want to say, what their aims, what's their ambition, what they prefer, what they want the US to do. This is our message. I succeeded to deliver it to most or to all of the institutions—but not to the White House, because it's closed.

Another aspect of this adaptation over time has been the specialization of the diaspora's work in order to address unmet or under-met needs of the Syrian population and in order to use

their finite resources efficiently. As Mazen, founder of the non-profit Help for Syria organization

of London recalled,

> To start with, we were not professional. Everybody—one a doctor, one a teacher, one a businessman—all wanted to help, and in the beginning, everybody was doing everything. We were going out demonstrating in front of the embassy, we were trying to go to the parliament in here, we were communicating with the newspaper with the news with the TV, networking, doing humanitarian work… Then we started realizing you have to specialize in something. It's wrong to do everything. Leave the doctors to do the medical field. Leave the psychiatrists to do [mental health] support. Even if you're going to do humanitarian, specialize in either in nutrition or homes or clothes or children or women… That's why I withdrew from where I used to work in Turkey and Lebanon and Jordan. I am from the city of Suwayda. So first, it's inside Syria and is very difficult to get to. Second, it's in a city still under government control. Third, there are a lot of displaced families in there, really in need. And they cannot go to the Red Cross under their names because of their relations, their husbands and kids who are fighting. So that's where I concentrate my work, in an area where I can be more effective for most people in need.

Lina of the Karam Foundation, based in Chicago, also realized after a time that doing both

political and humanitarian work was unsustainable. Referring to her experience and that of her

fellow activists in the Syrian American Council, she remarked, "We were so tired [because] we

were so focused on the next emergency. We [decided that we] have to change our lifestyles

because this thing is going to go on for a very long time…" For this reason, Lina came to

prioritize the humanitarian work of the Karam Foundation and delimit the focus of this

organization to assist with food deliveries and education, leaving medical aid to fellow

organizations like the Syrian American Medical Society. As Ibrahim Al Assil recalled, "There is

a huge need inside Syria. But at the same time, if we decide to do too many things, we will end

up doing nothing."

The Challenges of Formalization

While funding from larger donor organizations enabled Syrian diaspora movements to

survive, this strategic adaptation also brought its own sets of challenges. As Ibrahim Al Assil

explained after reflecting his own experience with trying to fund the Syrian Nonviolence

Movement, one problem with relying on international NGO funding is that these organizations

often dictated the work of the diaspora from on-high:

> To become fulltime, they need a source of money and need to be employed. Some of them, they got funds for that from NGOs, or they were employed [directly by] other NGOs. That has pros and cons. That means they're more professional, they have access to more money. But at the same time, they have less freedom to choose what they want to do. Because when you are part of an international NGO, they plan for you already what you can do. There are actually some NGOs who are ready to fund Syrian groups and give them kind of freedom and space where they can decide what they want to do. But also some of them, they have a clear or certain agenda and they say this is our goal and this is the kind of project we want you to do, so you either do this and we support you or you don't do it and we don't support you.

Ibrahim also recalled that these organizations tend to sponsor projects with delimited start and

end dates, rather than promoting long-term projects or empowering the growth of Syrian

organizations themselves. That said, some diaspora organizations have been able to harness

funding from larger NGOs and major private donors to supplement their broader goals. As Dr.

Jundi of Syria Relief in Manchester explained,

> [These organizations] have been raising lots of money in the name of Syria, but in reality, they haven't been able to use it because they either cannot take it into Syria or they opted to use it in the [easier] environment of refugee camps. Yes, there is a need there, but nowhere near as much as the need inside… So we have developed a very good working relationship with a number of major NGOs, some of whom prefer to [have] sort of zero exposure. We've managed to put proposals together that they would fund and cover part of our administrative cost... They couldn't deliver it, so *we* can deliver it, acting as their agent. And they'd get all the documentation that they need [from us]. And that's been an important part of our success because a though lot of our fundraising relies on the five pounds, ten pounds, twenty pounds that people give, the big bucks come from these either big NGOs or charitable organizations that want to do something for Syria but cannot, or want to do something but are reluctant to be seen openly doing it. There are also a number of industrialists or businessmen of Syrian origin working in the UK, made their fortunes in the UK and they want to give something back. Some of them actually cooperate with us in support of our programs… So that means we don't have to worry about these programs [that they fund]—we can focus on stuff they're not interested in like food supplies and that kind of mundane thing that isn't visible.

At the same time, Syria Relief was not in any way allowed to be "political," discuss, or affiliate

with the revolution, or even use the opposition's flag or logo. This created a delicate situation for

the organization. Dr. Jundi said that in one case,

> And we had somebody who, on his website, was openly selling items [with the revolution flag on them] and donating twenty percent of the money he raised to Syria Relief. We got reprimanded by the Charity Commission for it even though we had nothing to do with it. We didn't ask for it, we didn't know that he was doing it—just because we were mentioned in the same sentence as revolutionary items, that was a no-no. So we have to be absolutely squeaky clean when it comes to abiding by the regulations.

L., who had worked within Syria to deliver aid and fight with the Free Syrian Army for a time,

noted that the formalization of aid transfers from the diaspora was problematic for pragmatic and

moral reasons. He lamented:

> When I gave out cash to families in need in Syria, to widows and orphans, [Syrians in the US] told me it's illegal for me to give out cash to civilians. That I need *receipts*. I'm like, are you *kidding* me? You *have* to break rules… That's how you get results. You can never even have a revolution [in the first place] if you follow the rules! The whole revolution is illegal! It makes no sense.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Syrians have performed a number of important roles over the course of the

revolution, including externalizing the conflict, lobbying for expanded international assistance,

providing aid to places and populations out of reach by larger international aid agencies, linking

parties of the conflict together, and volunteering on the ground. The inadequate response of

states and international institutions to the conflict further bolstered reliance on diaspora

organizations as intermediaries and direct contributors, particularly in the realm of humanitarian

support, and motivated the formation of fulltime organizations and lobbying cadres.

But even as the diaspora performed a number of critical roles, activists nevertheless

perceived their efforts as insufficient. As Lina of the Karam Foundation lamented,

217

The problem is the work that we have to do is not the work of organizations—it's really the work of nations. Because no matter what we do, it's never enough. We can't give out enough food, we can't set up enough schools. The Syrian American Medical Society can't help every single person that's injured.

Regime violence and the failure of states and international donors to protect Syrians in Syria has also placed an enormous strain on the resources of individual Syrians and diaspora organizations, and compelled many individual volunteers to take significant risks to deliver aid into Syria. As Ousama remarked, "*we have to do this work*. We have about seven million displaced inside the country and these people need to be looked after." The infiltration by ISIS into Syria in 2013 and the broader War on Terror environment has further subjected members of the diaspora to oversight by domestic law enforcement agencies for transferring remittances and volunteering on the ground. Yet, transnational mobilization persists largely due to the formation of a transnational organizational field within the Syrian diaspora. As the following chapter will demonstrate, the inability of the Yemeni diaspora to do the same left them unable to confront challenges to mobilization and significantly limited their role in the revolution.

CHAPTER 5

The Yemeni Case

Yemen's revolution began on January 15, 2011, marking the participation of tens of thousands of Yemenis in mass sit-ins, protests, and strikes across the country. As I described in Chapter 2, the Day of Dignity Massacre on March 18th marked a turning point after plainclothed regime loyalists, *al-baltijiyyah*, open fired on unarmed demonstrators in Sanaa's Change Square. The killing of approximately fifty demonstrators stoked the defections of regime elites such as General Ali Mohsin, Commander of the First Armored Division, who brought his forces to the Square. However, the defections of elites such as Mohsin and members of the al-Islah Party caused significant friction within the protest movement, threatening the movement's previously nonpartisan and peaceful character. In addition, other protest encampments in cities such as Taiz and Aden remained unprotected and were subjected to intermittent attacks in the following months.

By April, efforts were underway to convince President Ali Abdullah Saleh to agree to a peaceful transfer of power. The Joint Meetings Parties, Yemen's coalition of opposition parties, convened to offer Saleh a deal to transfer power to his Vice President, Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi. The Gulf Cooperation Council (comprised of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) backed this idea, proposing their own agreement—what would come to be known as the "GCC agreement" or GCC deal—offering Saleh and his family total immunity from prosecution in exchange for a gradual transition of power. As Saleh stalled, hoping to win the standoff, regime attacks continued on protest encampments, prompting officials in the US, UK, UN, and European Union to make statements condemning the violence and calling for a transition of power. Saleh agreed to the terms of the GCC deal in late April, but

was given thirty days to sign it, which he used to again try and force protesters from their tents. On April 28, the crisis escalated when loyalist forces again shot at demonstrators in Sanaa, killing at least one dozen demonstrators and injuring approximately 200. Yemenis across the country launched coordinated strikes in response. Saleh's forces continued to try and disband the protest movement, cutting electricity to Change Square in Sanaa. Periodic shootings and assaults killed about a dozen protesters on a weekly basis across Yemen.

After Saleh refused to sign the GCC deal on May 23 and the thirty-day signing period expired, Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar of the influential and armed Hashid tribal federation moved his fighters into the capital, and a street battle against loyalist forces ensued with artillery and mortars. Concerns of a potential civil war ensued as the fighting claimed approximately 120 lives of soldiers, tribal militia, and civilians. Six days later, the military launched an operation to crush the protest encampment in Taiz known as Freedom Square, firing live ammunition and water cannons into the square and killing dozens. Tribal militia under Sheikh Hamood al-Mikhlafi defended the square and ran off government forces. These attacks prompted US President Barack Obama to call on Saleh to fulfill his commitment and sign the GCC deal at a joint press conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron in London. Back in Sanaa on June 3, the street battle continued. A mortar attack (for which no party claimed responsibility) hit the Presidential Palace in Sanaa, badly injuring President Saleh, several other top officials, and killing several guards. Saleh was flown to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, and Vice President Hadi assumed office. This attack temporarily ended the street battles in Sanaa, but the standoff continued as protesters continued to occupy the streets.

Having survived the attack, Saleh issued a decree on September 12th from Saudi Arabia to transfer some presidential powers to Hadi, authorizing him to negotiate a transfer of power

based on the GCC deal. However, a renewed crisis broke out on September 18 after government and *batlijiyyah* forces open fired on protesters across Yemen in a series of coordinated attacks, resulting in the deadliest day of Yemen's revolution in months. Over fifty people were killed over the next several days, and Saleh's military forces fired rockets at the Change Square protest camp in the capital, prompting the First Armored Division to strike back. Saleh returned to Yemen in October to the continuation of intermittent clashes. On the 21st of October, the UN Security Council voted unanimously for Resolution 2014 that condemned the violence and called for an immediate transfer of power under the GCC deal. After an envoy to the UN worked to restart negotiations, Saleh signed the deal on November 23 and was granted full immunity. This did not mark an end to the protest movement, however, as demonstrators vowed to continue their calls for Saleh's prosecution. Nevertheless, calls for the fall of the regime—now headed by former Vice President Hadi—ceased at this time, signifying the end of Yemen's 2011 revolution (though not of the political turmoil and multi-sided war that continues at the time of this writing). Saleh traveled to the US for medical treatment at the end of January and returned to Yemen for the February 21st election. Vice President Hadi was the only candidate on the ballot and won easily, marking the official start of Yemen's transitional government.

THE ROLES OF THE DIASPORA IN THE YEMENI REVOLUTION

The data and analysis demonstrate that pro-revolution Yemeni diaspora movements played an indirect and limited role in the revolution by engaging primarily in (1) externalization efforts. In contrast to the Libyan and Syrian cases, their collective efforts were mostly focused on voicing the grievances and amplifying the demands of the "independent youth" in Yemen to the public, media, and officials in their host-countries through demonstrations and lobbying. Few respondents reported that their collective actions were aimed at (2) channeling resources, such as

221

expertise or material and fungible aid, to Yemen, (3) linking parties to the conflict together, or

(4) volunteering on the ground. Overall, with few exceptions, activists in the US and Britain

viewed their roles in the conflict as outside supporters with a limited capacity to aid or partner

with the revolution directly. The social movement groups formed to support the revolution, listed

in Table 5.1, were informal and comprised of part-time volunteers. As described in Chapter 2, no

pre-existing diaspora organizations in either the US or Britain were converted to the revolution,

nor were formal organizations established for the purposes of political or humanitarian advocacy

during the revolutionary crisis of 2011.

TABLE 5.1: Yemeni Groups and Organizations Formed or Converted to the Revolution and Humanitarian Causes during the Arab Spring

Diaspora Group/Organization Name	New (N) Converted (C)	Exclusively a Charity/Service Org?
US		
Popular Support Committee to the Youth Revolution in Yemen	N	No
Yemeni American Coalition for Change	N	No
Yemeni Youth Abroad for Change	N	No
Yemeni Youth for Change in California	N	No
Britain		
Change Point Liverpool	N	No
Independent Yemen Group	N	No
Liverpool Yemeni Youth Movement	N	No
Yemen Revolution Support Group	N	No
Yemeni British Coalition to Support the Yemeni Revolution	N	No

*Denotes multi-national membership.

1. The Diaspora's Primary Role: Externalization

1a. Raising Awareness and Combatting the Information Blockade

The most commonly-reported aim and activity of the diaspora was to externalize the grievances and demands of independent anti-regime protesters in Yemen. Yemenis abroad first worked to do this by publicizing pro-revolution facts and claims on social media through their individual accounts and group pages, such as the Yemen Revolution UK's Facebook page, personal blogs, and in one case on a (non-blog) website. Ahlam Said, an activist in New York, worked with Atiaf Alwazir, a Yemeni-American from the D.C. area who participated in the revolution in Sanaa, to publish photographs of the protests on a website called Yemenis for Justice. Atiaf recalled that Ahlam helped to amplify her activities in several ways while she was in Change Square:

> We would give Ahlam the photos, the information, and the idea was to have an interactive map of where the protests are, reports related to the revolution, things like that. Ben [Atiaf's husband and journalist] and I had a blog with just photos, and she saw it, and she said how about we do something more. And then a bunch of them were also very active on Twitter, sending information. Specifically I had given Ahlam my number, [telling her] in case something happens I will message you immediately so that you can tweet it. And I think once or twice she tweeted for me while I was at a protest; I texted her, international texts.

Atiaf also served as a contact for other youth activists abroad like Hanna, a pro-south and pro-revolution activist working from New York (see Chapter 2). Hanna explained that Atiaf was trusted in part because of her status as a Yemeni-American:

> Atiaf was one of our main contacts and she was someone who we knew from here… so we trusted her a lot. Because when it comes to getting information from Yemen… there's a lot of misinformation or a lot of information that can be blown up just to make the situation seem a lot more dire than it is… However, Atiaf was born in Yemen but she was raised here in the US and D.C. I worked with her a lot.

Similarly, when in New York, Summer Nasser received information from her relatives in Aden about events on the ground and published them on her blog. She said,

> [Information was] hard to verify… If I'm talking about shellings or things like that, I would call back home [to family in Aden] at the time and be like, did you hear this, did

you hear this? Are there people in the hospital dying of sniper wounds? And then I'd confirm [through them]."

Several activists in London reported doing the same. Abubakr, a journalist and an independent activist from London, recalled that his relatives in the Change Square sit-in movement "used to text me stuff to update my Twitter, my Facebook."

Activists abroad also worked to raise awareness offline as well. Marooj in the D.C. area did so through the arts, and put on a photography exhibition in June 2011 with several Syrian activists and in partnership with The Yemen Peace Project, a small non-profit organization run by non-Yemenis (including myself). In coordination with Marooj, several interviewees from San Francisco followed suit as well and put on a photography exhibit. Frustrated by what he perceived as a lack of mainstream media coverage of the revolution, Abubakr in London also wrote articles and gave talks about his experiences on the ground (discussed below) at universities and think-tanks such as Chatham House. Other respondents also served as unofficial spokespersons on the media when invited to do so; Mazen of D.C. recalled that "because we're basically the voice of the peaceful protesters here in the US [in] the local media, to the American public," his Yemeni Youth Abroad for Change group appointed an activist named Faris as their spokesperson to speak on networks such as Al Jazeera and MSNBC. However, no activists reported acting as official representatives of any revolution groups abroad. Instead, as Faris explained, their roles were to transmit the general grievances and claims of anti-regime youth:

> All we did was really to reiterate the voice and the concerns of the youth movement in Yemen… [to] serve as their voice here in America. And we felt that it was really our obligation to try to make their voices heard. As far as our involvement, a lot of it was just redundancy in trying to get the voice across.

Ahlam of New York also attested that "What we were doing—or what we thought we were doing—was amplifying the voices of the people in Yemen. Simply amplifying."

1b. Holding Demonstrations and Protests Abroad

Yemenis abroad also staged demonstrations and protests aimed at the public, the media, relevant embassies, international institutions, and their host-country governments. Activists in the US gathered regularly in front of the Yemeni embassy and White House in Washington, D.C., the UN in New York, and in their local communities in Dearborn and San Francisco to stage periodic rallies. According to Rabyaah of the New York-based Yemeni American Coalition for Change, "we were like ok, as long as there are people on the streets every day in Yemen, for us, the only practical way to support is at least once a week we have to some sort of rally or town hall meeting." D.C. and New York-based respondents reported sending press releases about their activities to the media, and also holding joint protests with other communities on several occasions; participants traveled on busses from cities such as Dearborn and New York to converge on D.C. for mass rallies on several occasions, including the week after the Day of Dignity Massacre. Mazen of the D.C.-based Yemeni Youth Abroad for Change recalled they also coordinated demonstrations with Yemenis in Germany on one occasion, while Marooj of the same group made short films of their protests and posted the videos on YouTube "to try and get the word out there." Ahmed Alkholeidi of San Francisco emphasized the importance of demonstrating solidarity abroad:

> It's a small thing, but we used to contact people from there, from Change Square in Sana'a. And those small things for them were big. They see that their families outside Yemen, they're supportive of whatever they're doing there… They know that they're not alone in this struggle… Second, the regime used to say that those people who are protesting there in Yemen, they're just odd voices there, trying to make the international community think there is nothing there in Yemen… We wanted to show that, no, it's not just people who are there. Even Yemenis who are outside Yemen are protesting… Yemeni people deserve to live freely just as the American citizens do. And there was a lot of aid going to the Yemeni government which was used to kill the Yemeni people. We wanted that to be stopped too, honestly. That's another reason we were out there.

Respondents in Britain reported a parallel dynamic, organizing protests weekly in

London and bussing in hundreds of participants from cities such as Liverpool and Birmingham

for these events. They demonstrated outside of the Yemeni embassy and in front of institutions

such as 10 Downing Street and the US embassy to protest the financial support of the Saleh

regime by the US administration. Respondents reported garnering BBC, Al Jazeera, Press TV (an

Iranian international satellite channel), and Al-Hiwar coverage (a London-based satellite channel

affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood). Mahmoud AlAzani of Sheffield said that:

> We knew journalists, we had a good list of journalists from all channels, from the BBC to
> Al Jazeera to Al-Hiwar… all channels. And we informed them in advance that we are
> moving and we make our point clear and publicize it.

Activists like Safa Mubgar in London of the Independent Yemen Group also worked with

Mahmoud in Sheffield to write press releases about the demonstrations targeting media outlets in

Britain and in Yemen as well. Abubakr in London stated that they worked to gain sympathies of

bystanders as well. He said,

> At protests, we tried to talk to people passing by. It wasn't just about shouting Arabic
> chants. We had leaflets… We had two people outside of the protest area coming up to
> people, explaining why are we protesting today, what are the reasons, here's a leaflet.
> And that worked, to a degree, because there were a lot of people chatting for a good five,
> ten minutes. And that felt good, in a weird way. It felt like we were actually doing
> something.

Like their counterparts in the US, British-Yemenis also attested that a central purpose of these

protests was to demonstrate their support for Yemenis back home. As Haidar of Birmingham

recalled,

> I remember one phone call, I received from my friend [in Sanaa]. He said: don't think
> when you go to London and demonstrate for us that it's a useless thing. When we saw
> you guys on the TV raising a Yemeni flag, supporting us, the next day we have a very
> strong feeling that we're not alone. We have some brothers everywhere, they are with us.
> So it had a very very good impact on them…

Arwa Al-Nahdi in London also described the importance of demonstrating their support to

Yemenis back home by sending them videos of their protest events: "the most way we were

connected to the Yemenis there, after we made the videos of the demos, we made sure that the

Yemenis know that we are with them and that we are making their voices heard."

In both countries, several protest events were held after President Saleh signed the GCC

deal at the end of November 2011. However, respondents attested that *regular* protest activities

ceased at that time; as Khamdan of D.C. explained, "most of our job was done" after Saleh

agreed to a transfer of power.

1c. Lobbying for International Assistance

Respondents reported meeting on several occasions with a range of officials in the US

and British governments to express their grievances and convey demands. These included asking

their host-country governments to voice stronger support for the revolution, to pressure the

regime to stop attacking protesters and for Saleh to resign, and to cut their financial backing of

the Saleh regime (the US administration did freeze aid to Yemen in April). As Faris, spokesman

for the Yemeni Youth Abroad for Change group of D.C., recalled,

> The only thing we really wanted to do is for them to vocalize or at least show support or
> put some type of pressure on the Yemeni government to try to stop the killing and the
> oppression that was occurring at that time. Although the protests were peaceful, the
> retaliation from the government was not. So all we wanted to do was pretty much
> emphasize or at least put some type of pressure to kind of put boundaries on the violence
> that was taking place.

Organizers across concentrated communities arranged for a cross-community delegation to meet

with officials in the White House, the State Department, the National Security Council, and

various congressional representatives as well. Kaled Alamerie of New York recalled that

officials were receptive to their grievances, but that they were unable to identify an alternative to the regime:

> They were very supportive; they gave us really detailed examples of how [untrustworthy] the regime really is. They know that the regime has used US military aid to be diverted to fight other conflicts; against the Houthis. The weapon was returned. But their question was, who is going to take Saleh's place?... They didn't want things to suddenly fall apart.

Munir of D.C. also reported that the US administration was split, some continuing to defend their support of the regime, while others such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were more clear in their condemnation of Saleh. Adel of Dearborn, on the other hand, reported that his meetings with House Representatives and one Senator were disappointing because of the "lack of outcomes."

British-Yemenis did much of the same. London-based activists working as the Yemen Revolution Support Group delivered written demands to the Prime Minister's office and to the Secretary of State, members of Parliament, Foreign Secretary William Hague, the Department for International Development, and the Saudi embassy "to say that you need to be more serious about what's happening in Yemen," according to Haidar of Birmingham. Safa, who was responsible for writing letters and petitions for this group, attested that she also worked to draft template letters for members of their community to write their MPs, as well as petitioned the Department for International Development for emergency humanitarian aid.

Respondents had a range of reactions to these meetings with political officials, from apathy to enthusiasm. Some, like Haidar in Birmingham, said that in general, officials were keen to listen to them, were "very honest with us," and were generally supportive of their demands. Mahmoud AlAzani of Sheffield, for example, reported sending letters to the UN and having productive meetings with Chatham House, Amnesty International, and with Alistair Burt, the minister for Foreign Affairs in the Middle East. Fathi in London, co-founder of the Support

Group, reported that on the other hand, their government did not take a strong enough stance "that they took in Libya or Egypt—something more solid. [In our case], it was more like a compromise that suited them and their interests, rather than benefitting the Yemeni people."

2. Channeling Resources

2a. Transferring Skills and Expertise

While activists channeled their professional skills into mobilizing the diaspora itself and externalizing the revolution, I did not find any evidence that diaspora groups channeled their skills or expertise to revolutionaries on the ground at a collective or organizational level. Furthermore, unlike the Syrian and Libyan cases, diaspora movements did not mobilize medical, legal, or technical networks or teams to assist the revolution directly. Atiaf Alwazir, a Yemeni-American who worked as a citizen journalist and activist in Change Square for the duration of the revolution, attested that she knew of several Yemenis in the US who helped "by suggesting ideas, strategies" and that "there were discussions on Facebook" intended to lend revolutionaries advice and planning with demonstrations. However, in contrast to the other cases, efforts to relay advice were done so on a selective and individual basis and appear to have been limited to suggestions pertaining to how and where to protest peacefully.

2b. Channeling Material and Fungible Resources to the Home-Country

Efforts to channel aid to Yemen also occurred on an individual ad hoc basis, producing a stream of emergency remittances. However, none of the Yemeni diaspora groups included in this study sent emergency medical supplies or cash to this field hospital or any of the other protest sites. *Individual* donors did channel funds to Change Square's field hospital, for example, either by wiring money transfers to family members there, or by donating to The Yemen Peace Project, a

US based organization run by non-Yemenis (and co-founded by the author). Marooj in D.C. partnered with the Yemen Peace Project to sell t-shirts and other items to raise money for the injured, which was wired to a few trusted individuals on the ground. Recipients included activist Atiaf Alwazir (Marooj's sister) and her husband Ben, who would then deliver cash to the doctors.[33] Adel in Dearborn also attested that community members raised money for the families of the victims of shootings in Sanaa, and that cash was channeled to Change Square's field hospital as well. The only other mention of aid transfers directed to revolutionaries was one Yemeni-American respondent who reported sending several cameras to Change Square; however, he never received confirmation whether these cameras ever reached their intended recipients or not.

In London, Safa, Awssan, and several others shipped a container with food, clothes, medicine, and medical equipment to Aden, Yemen's southern port city, in an effort to aid the impoverished. They did so by partnering with an Aden-based charity, al-Firdos, whose head arranged to receive the shipment. Awssan said that the community's response to this project was "excellent." Two Yemeni businessmen anonymously sponsored this effort by providing a warehouse for stage space and paying for the shipping of the container. This aid was intended for Yemen's needy writ large, however, and not for anti-regime protesters.

3. Linking Allies Together

Only three interviewees reported conducting insider-outsider linking by putting activists in Yemen in touch with journalists. For example, Fathi, a London-based journalist with the BBC, reported that he created a database of activist contacts and shared this information with other journalists. In addition, Atiaf, who was in Yemen at the time, said that her New York-based colleague Ahlam would contact her to facilitate the entry of journalists into Yemen:

A couple of people would email and try to connect the people in Yemen with journalists here in the US, so Ahlam would email me a couple of times and say my friend is coming to Yemen, can you please help this person, or she would email the journalists and say I think you should talk to these activists. So we worked a lot with Ahlam when she would try to connect.

In comparison to the Libyan and Syrian cases, however, linking work was relatively rare, and no respondents reported conducting insider-insider linking between parties on the ground within Yemen.

4. Volunteering on the Ground

Several respondents traveled to Yemen during the revolution for the purposes of documenting the conflict and externalizing it from the ground. They reported doing so an independent observers, with the exception of one activist who reported for two media organizations from Change Square. Raja Althaibani of New York, for example, was motivated by the Day of Dignity massacre to leave college and become a citizen photojournalist in Sanaa. Because the regime deported many foreign journalists the week of the Day of Dignity Massacre, these circumstances gave her a unique opportunity to make a contribution:

In 2005 I applied for a Yemeni residency card… and that's why I don't need a visa to get into Yemen. And at that point [during the revolution] they weren't issuing visas to anyone, especially from the US. So I went, it was pretty easy to get in. I can blend in and integrate and report... I speak English, I have media contacts, so my added value was sky rocketing at that point... I was like, I could contribute a lot.

Raja went as an independent observer and published her photographs and writings on her blog and on social media; she remained in Yemen from March through August. Lacking a journalist's background, she recalled learning how to document the conflict on the fly.

Several other activists spent stints in Yemen, working like Raja to document and externalize the uprising. For example, Raja helped to convince her friend Amel, another activist and protest organizer in New York, to join her in Sanaa. Amel was in law school at the time but

had a background and interest in film; she received permission to take a leave from graduate school and joined Raja to work as a journalist in May. Amel began by reporting for Press TV and switched shortly thereafter to Al Jazeera. Summer Nasser of New York also returned to her family's residence in Aden several times during the revolution with the intention of contributing in some way. She avoided joining the protests, however, because she did not want to become embroiled in the southern separatist issue. Instead, Summer worked to document the stories of refugees and to serve as a witness for events on the ground. She published her observations on her blog (freedomnjusticeseeker.wordpress.com) and was also "pushed" by New York Yemeni activists, according to her, to speak about her experiences at protest events. Abubakr of London also joined his family in Sanaa during the revolution for about one month in April, working as an intern for *The Yemen Times* during the day and participating in the sit-ins and protests at night.

Atiaf Alwazir from the D.C.-area was working in Sanaa at the time of the revolution and decided to join the movement as a citizen journalist and activist. She was active on many fronts, assisting the youth in Change Square's Media Center, conducting trainings on how to use Twitter, and documenting incidents of regime violence and the names of the victims. Atiaf learned how to write articles and make videos during this time through information gleaned from Google and through her activist contacts in other countries, such as Egypt. She published her writings on her blog, Woman from Yemen, and worked with Ahlam in New York to publish on a website called Yemenis for Justice before it was hacked and taken down. Atiaf served as an important insider-receptor and contact for fellow Yemeni Americans such as Raja, Amel, and other non-Yemenis interested in reporting on or otherwise contributing to the revolution. Furthermore, as discussed above, she was also entrusted by some outside donors to deliver donations from the diaspora and the Yemen Peace Project to Change Square's field hospital.

In sum, several members of the US and British diasporas traveled to Yemen for a temporary period, but their roles were primarily relegated to observation, documentation, and reporting on events on the ground.

The Diaspora's Limited Role and Weak Sense of Efficacy

Before the GCC deal was signed by Saleh at the end of November 2011, the regular weekly protests and lobbying activities were "truly dead," as Omar of the Liverpool Yemeni Youth Movement recalled. I found that diaspora movements across the various communities experienced the same decrease in their externalization activities. Marooj of D.C. explained,

> [Protesting] was a weekly thing, I would say, for a very long time. And then, I guess, it just started trickling down. Not so many folks were coming down anymore, [feeling like it] doesn't make a difference, nothing's changing. I would say [that the movement died] maybe towards the end of September. And it was just kind of like, what should do we do? Should we gather? That's when it kind of died out… People were working, have families. They can't just dedicate six hours a day.

Adel of Dearborn also cited that their Popular Support Committee to the Youth Revolution in Yemen was formed as "a reaction to what's going on back home. So if there is something major, then somebody will do something about it. And if there is not, it would just stay quiet." Amel of New York also lamented that their ad hoc mobilization efforts had "no long-term strategizing, there's no long-term planning. You do last minute protests. I feel that that work for the short term, but I don't feel that's effective in the long term." Hanna echoed this sentiment, lamenting that for both the pro-secession and pro-revolution protests, "I've always felt our efforts were reactionary and we lose momentum after a rally or protest was over."

Many respondents also reported that the diaspora missed opportunities to have a greater impact and play a bigger role in the revolution and its aftermath. Ahlam, who had a background

in non-Yemen related activism, explained that her experience mobilizing with fellow Yemenis in

New York left her wondering,

> how do you keep their morale up, and keep things really organized and clear? And not
> leave people out? Because people were coming from different places, and get really
> offended by little things. It's hard to deal with it when this isn't people's full-time jobs
> and coming to the table with a variety of skills. Really, *we should have just had one
> person manage that full time*, but it was just different people… I don't feel that the
> messaging was always as tight as it could have been, but I think the people who did it did
> a good job. But there were missed opportunities, whether it was writing op-eds, or
> thinking more creatively about ways to communicate what was going on in Yemen other
> than a press conference. Or missed opportunities for real direct action… and that's
> something that I would have liked to see. In general, the weaknesses I see in the Yemeni
> community here are that the numbers of people who are willing and able to communicate
> with the media are very few… So how do you amplify with what little you have?… I just
> feel that we didn't have the strategy… I didn't really feel like what we were doing had an
> impact… We're keeping ourselves busy, but with all of these internal issues, if we're
> going to do something we need to do it right!

Marooj also noted that their D.C.-based movement lacked the creativity and resources to

continue bringing attention to the Yemeni crisis in an effective way:

> There was this sense of urgency. And that always is problematic because how do you
> build something that's long term while still addressing the urgency of the situation? So
> that was a question we constantly were asking ourselves… Does [protest] really create
> change? It creates awareness, yes, to some degree. But ongoing protests, not really. You
> have to shift your energy towards something else…. I was like, visibility is important...
> What else can we do instead? So we tried to get more creative. It was also difficult to
> work with traditional Yemeni men because… they didn't really get it. [Tactics such as]
> flash mobs or messaging around the city, like wheat-pasting posters about Yemen. They
> weren't down with that. I could have taken it upon myself, but *it also takes resources and
> bodies to do that*.

Others expressed the difficulty in trying to lobby effectively without professional training or

experience. This led to several encounters that some respondents reported as embarrassing.

Awssan, for example, recalled that with a meeting of thirty Yemenis (twenty-nine of whom were

British citizens, according to Awssan's count) and himself,

> The first meeting we had with the British ambassador to Yemen—this is not a quote, but
> what he basically said to us was, "how will we work together to take Yemen forward?"
> And what they came up with at the end of the meeting, the thirty people who sat down

234

with him, was [based on the idea that] "the British don't want to help." And I was like, *what?! That was the first thing he said*… And we totally rejected that, instead of going into talks with them… I always believed that the British institutions have the power to influence and have the power to really do some serious work… [and] I think at the time, the British government was quite open to what we think of the GCC, how they can influence the GCC. We gave no input into that. Nothing at all…

Safa in London had a similar complaint, citing a lack of professionalism among some

participants:

> If I decide to work with a bunch of people, whether it's with activists, or Chatham House, or DFID [the Department for International Development], you have got to make a decision, ok, I'm… not slander the people I'm trying to work with… Either that, or don't work with them, *khalas* [it's finished]!... What I had were people who would decide to come to our meetings with the Foreign Office with an axe to grind. And that made it a lot complicated… And then they go on Facebook and say "these bastards, they're not doing anything."… If you want to work and achieve anything, it's not going to help you to badmouth [diaspora activists] or the British government or the Americans. *Let's just do the work*.

Ibraham of New York also reiterated the problem with relying on volunteer labor and amateur

activists during the revolution:

> We had lot of challenges. Our community was not very much involved in any political or human rights advocacy in the US. They were political in the sense where they understand what's going on, but they never took it to the streets in a form of organized advocacy. They read news, and specifically Yemeni news, but they never organized themselves into lobbyist groups or any kind of advocacy group… Especially when a lot of them work twelve hours, seven days a week. When is the appropriate time for them to come out? And lot of [people in our] community hardly understand… how to use the media and the political system, how to navigate it. So that was another challenge. When I first started doing this with my colleagues, almost everyone did not know how to get a police permit. Basics. [Like] how to phrase slogans, signs… how to frame [their messages]... And the few who know how to do it were completely swamped with a lot of extra burden… A number of us were overwhelmed… All these challenges were very difficult. You're starting from scratch trying to guide people how to do advocacy, show them A to Z.

In addition to the burdens placed on organizers, Leonie Northridge, who worked to

organize forums on Yemen for Chatham House in London beginning in late 2011, said that "it

seemed that most people wanted to be involved but didn't know how." Shaima, a lead organizer

in Birmingham, expressed her frustration to me numerous times that she and her fellow Yemenis

lacked a mechanism as to how to help their home-country directly:

> How do you do that when there's no interconnection, really?... I think it's not clear where the diaspora can play a role, exactly…. Even though I want to help Yemen, I just don't know how I would… And here, we're educated, we have resources, we have activist resources. So what I want to know is how we can use these resources and get them over to them. I don't know how. And I still don't know how. Because there's so many Yemenis who are educated and all the rest of it here and we have so much resources to everything. Education and this. Even if you're not educated to a certain level, there's opportunities here. And it's about just being able to pick it up and move it. But how do you do that?

This dilemma was echoed by respondents across the diaspora. For example, when I asked Omar

Mashjari, a member of the Liverpool Yemeni Youth Movement, how their mobilization was

impacted by the Day of Dignity Massacre, his response reflected their movement's inability to

tangibly help the revolution. He said,

> We were more saddened on an individual level. But we thought, they died, what can we do?... We can't do anything particularly for them. All we can do is give them our emotional support… It brought their reality of the revolution home to *us* more than anything… The diaspora was very much on the back foot. We didn't quite know what to do, to be honest with you… We had no platform, we had no capacity, we had no connections

Many protest participants also felt skeptical about the purpose of their protests. For example,

Afrah of Liverpool mentioned that,

> I think even sometimes it's not even about getting their reaction. I think *we* felt a bit better. We felt that at least we've done something, we worked on something. Because sometimes we're looking at the news and thinking, what can we do? We live so far away from it… We want to show and let them know that we are there, we are listening and we are proud, so I think it's as much to make us feel better as well as [showing] our support.

> Atiaf Alwazir, the Yemeni-American activist who connected outsiders with the protest

encampment in Change Square, said that when Yemenis in the diaspora did try to get more

directly involved in the protest movement, their intentions—while sometimes welcomed—were

often misplaced. She said,

In some ways, they could have done more, as a community. As individuals, a lot of people did a lot, worked hard on an individual basis. But as a community—I think it reflects back to the fact the community is not organized enough or tight enough… You're in the center of the policy! This is what I used to tell people in the east coast. New York, DC, or in the US in general. Because a lot of Yemenis-Americans would get into details about where people should march. I would say, leave it up to the people in Yemen to decide where to march. Too many details! They have a good heart, but that shouldn't be your priority. I told them this many times. I told them, focus on doing policy, advocacy outside, videos… I think when you're far, it's harder, you have a clear vision. You're not inside these internal debates, and it's chaotic. [The Yemeni-Americans would] say, why the hell are they not doing things this way? And get so frustrated.

So why then did diaspora movements play a limited role in the revolution when they were frustrated with their level of efficacy and wanted to do more? The following section explains the factors that limited their aims and interventions in the revolution.

CHALLENGES TO YEMENIS' TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION

The Yemeni revolution sparked transnational collective action among the diaspora dedicated to externalization through anti-regime protests and lobbying. However, though some of those abroad sought to lend tactical advice to protesters, channel funds to Change Square, and report on the revolution in person, the primary role of pro-revolution diaspora activists was to act as outside transmitters and amplifiers for the independent youth movement—*not* to serve as an auxiliary force in the revolution itself or as intermediaries between parties to the conflict. The reason is because the conditions enabling Libyans and Syrians to play a range of direct and indirect roles in the revolutions were not sufficiently present for the Yemeni diaspora to contribute in the same ways or to the same degree. Specifically, activists lacked insider-receptors to partner with inside of Yemen; third-parties did not recruit the diaspora as intermediaries; and the revolution did not produce a sufficient degree of free space for the diaspora to channel in aid or to volunteer on the ground. In addition, activists also reported being further constrained by a hostile War-on-Terror security environment in their host-countries and that their movements

deteriorated due to resource exhaustion over time. Additionally, because Yemeni groups did not adapt to these constraints by establishing formal organizations dedicated to transnational mobilization, this produced a corresponding deficit in the diasporas' capacity to adapt to these challenges in contrast to their Syrian counterparts. I explain these dynamics below.

The Lack of Insider-Receptors in Yemen's Revolutionary Movement

Yemen's revolution was not represented by an official entity or organization, and this constrained the diaspora's role in the rebellion. There was no revolutionary leadership cadre akin to the National Transitional Council in Libya that relied on Libyans abroad to stock a start-up government, for example, or civil society network such as the Local Coordination Committees in Syria that recruited members of the diaspora as interpreters and representatives. As a result, *the diaspora lacked revolutionary organizations with which to connect, affiliate, and represent*. Thus, unlike in the Syrian and Libyan cases, the diaspora's role—to amplify and support the general demands of the "youth"—was far more ambiguous. This was apparent when I pressed respondents to detail their framing strategies for lobbying, which employed general demands requesting support for the revolution and condemnation of the regime, but could not offer a prognostic *alternative* to the Saleh regime.

By not having an official standing or a central revolutionary movement to represent, activists were also fearful of misrepresenting the revolution. Ahlam in New York, for example, was always concerned about people in Yemen "telling us to back off." For that reason, she said, she was careful not to speak on behalf of Yemenis. She said, "At a point you realize, what is there that you can do, you know? And then I just had thoughts about, like, what is my role as somebody who hasn't really lived there? And yes I have ties there, but I'm privileged… and [do] I have the right to speak on behalf of these people. It was really bothering me."

Furthermore, in contrast to Libya's national revolutionary outbreak in February 2011 and Syria's by 2012, the Yemeni revolution did not produce a national quotidian disruption. Instead, many parts of Yemen were isolated from the protest movements and continued to function as usual. And though sit-in movements created liberated space within major cities like Sanaa, Taiz, and Aden on the streets, these revolutionary encampments were concentrated in urban centers, and outside of them, everyday life was largely unaffected by the sit-in movement. Because the revolutionary encampments were concentrated inside of major cities, activist leaders with no kin-based connections to people in those locales reported feeling disconnected from revolutionaries on the ground. As Shaima, one of the most active organizers in Birmingham, recalled,

> When we were getting reports from Yemen ourselves, from some of my cousins in the village, you didn't *feel* it. Even though they held an opinion, they didn't feel part of the revolution. They didn't live it because they weren't in the city. It depended on where [they] were.

Awssan, an organizer in London, also emphasized the challenges he faced by his lack of ties with those in Change Square in Yemen. Without family in Sanaa, Awssan felt disconnected and uninformed about the main movement in Change Square. While his colleague Ibrahim could "contact his cousin in Sanaa" to get information,

> Trying to find out what's happening in Yemen was the most difficult thing. Getting in contact with the right people in Yemen, independents who would give me an idea of what's happening on the streets, for me, it was [difficult].

Besides Yemeni-Americans who were in contact with Atiaf, few respondents reported connecting with activists inside of Yemen. Ahmed Alramadi, who participated in the Change Square movement (and was detained and tortured during this time) before he came to the US in May 2011 explained this as due to "a lack of connections. The Yemenis abroad had [few] informants or local links inside," he recalled, and that instead, the focus of Yemenis on the

239

outside "were sending messages to places outside, like protesting in front of the United Nations to get us attention." Overall, the disparate geographical character of the Yemeni revolution meant that many of the most active organizers in the diaspora did not possess the requisite direct ties and connections to insider receptors and protest movements on the ground.

The Absence of Decisive Third-Party Interventions

The US and UK governments were involved in the revolution to the extent that officials expressed concern about the uprising's effects on the growth of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, condemned regime violence, and expressed their views on the Gulf Cooperation Council agreement. However, neither the US or British governments played a decisive or intervening role in the revolution, and no respondents reported observing splits or arguments between officials on US or UK-related policy on Yemen in 2011. For these reasons, there were no elite cleavages for activists to capitalize on, and members of the diaspora did not get incorporated into political circles as advisors or interpreters. So while some respondents attested that various officials were willing to meet, listen, and ask for their input, their lobbying efforts did not transition into sustained relations or an advisory role into the host-country response. As a consequence, *members of the diaspora were not recruited as middlemen or intermediaries by any sectors in their host-country governments*.

Other types of third-parties, including international organizations and the media, also did not launch significant interventions into the revolution. No humanitarian organizations were willing or able to enter the revolutionary encampments to assist the wounded. Despite the presence of some international NGOs in Yemen, such as Islamic Relief, many activists did not perceive these groups to be trustworthy or useful. Because these organizations had to operate

with the regime's permission, respondents noted that the aid would not reach the revolution

encampments. As Faris of D.C. explained,

> As far as NGOs, we were trying to reach out… So we tried to go through, whether it was
> Islamic Relief or other aid organizations that were already in Yemen—but there was an
> issue of actually distributing the supplies out to the people there… You have global
> NGOs that have been established for decades and the branches that were present in
> Yemen were being run by pro-Saleh officials. So in a sense, even well-noted NGOs were
> not able to distribute the funds that were allocated and for the people on the field, because
> of the fact that those people were anti-Saleh.

The lack of trusted and approved receptors for aid meant that activists and individual

donors had to channel aid through informal networks to individuals—a system that relied on

personal connections. As discussed above, if activists lacked familial contacts in these places,

they lacked a trusted pathway to channel remittances to protesters and field hospitals. It is very

likely that the individual donations made through personal contacts, such as those wired to Atiaf,

represented only a tiny fraction of what the diaspora could have contributed to assist the victims

of regime repression in urban protest encampments had they had trusted and official channels to

do so.

Media penetration was also weak in comparison with the Libyan and Syrian revolution in

part because the regime stopped international journalists from entering the country from March

2011 onwards. (At the same time, there was some coverage, as freelance journalists who

managed to keep a low profile covered the revolution for its duration.) For these reasons,

activists abroad were not recruited as advisors, consultants, fixers, translators, or partners for

international aid organization or media outlets during the revolution.

The Lack of Liberated Space and Access

Another major obstacle to diaspora participation in Yemen's revolution was due to the fact that

unlike in Libya and Syria, the uprising did not evolve into an armed rebellion against the state.

241

Instead, it was comprised of an amalgam of independent protesters, youth and students, tribesmen, and groups affiliated with existing political parties and military factions who occupied streets and squares in a showing mass civil disobedience. Despite the occasional outbreak of pitched battles between various factions and the attack on the President's Palace, the revolutionary movement did not escalate into an armed movement with the aim of seizing territory and institutions. And because none of the armed groups in Yemen seized power for themselves (that would only happen later in 2014 with the advent of a Houthi coup and subsequent war), independent protesters and preexisting political movements never came to control any access points, territory, or institutions within the country. As a result, *the revolution did not clear or create sufficient free space and pathways for the diaspora to deliver and transfer resources to revolutionaries*.

As a result of these conditions, the channeling of aid from abroad remained as difficult, if not more so, than it had in years past. As mentioned above, the only method to get aid into the revolutionary encampments was for individuals to wire funds to other individuals on the ground, such as their family members or known activists like Yemen-American Atiaf AlWazir, for in-person delivery to the Squares. The channeling of remittances into Sanaa required contacts on the ground and a significant degree of trust, and was not systematic by any means. Additionally, when Safa and her colleagues in London worked to ship a container of aid to Aden in partnership with a local NGO in 2011, as described above, Safa recalled this effort as "a fucking nightmare. In Yemen they tried every trick to block it, saying that the papers are all wrong. To the last second, this shipment was not going to happen… We had so many people trying to sabotage it." While getting about 30,000 pounds worth of aid to Yemen was a "beautiful" thing, Safa described the process as perilous because the diaspora remained dependent on Yemeni

bureaucrats to allow the aid to be delivered. Overall, in contrast to the Libyan case in particular, the revolution in Yemen did not sufficiently disrupt the quotidian in terms of creating openings for resource transfers from abroad.

The Post-9/11 'War on Terror' Security Environment

The diaspora also faced obstacles in transferring resources through remittances because of the War on Terror security environment. Scrutiny and surveillance by law enforcement—and particularly of the New York City-based Yemeni community—since September 11th made the prospect of channeling aid to the revolution risky to some activists and the wider community. Ibraham of the New York-based Yemeni American Coalition for Change group explained that this situation made him and others in his community fearful to send supplies or cash to the revolutionary encampments. Without official government guidelines as to how to channel aid in a transparent and protected way, Ibraham felt lost as to how to assist the Squares:

> When a lot of people were being murdered in the squares, we wanted to provide medicine and food. But we can't do it because we have concerns about the US policies when it comes to sending that kind of aid. They can prosecute anyone, saying that the food fell in the wrong hands… And the government did not provide us with guidelines and or ways to send medicine and food. There is no designated list of organizations that we can work with on the ground, and no US organization that is willing to do that. So we had great difficulties trying to do that throughout the whole year. And it would be great if the US somehow, maybe through USAID program or another program, [could facilitate that] because the Yemeni community can contribute a lot in supporting the needy. I would say that the Yemeni community, especially in New York, is so wealthy. But our hands are very tied. Yemen needs food and medicine, and as Yemeni Americans—and even as Americans—we are very cut off in trying to send support or do fundraising for Yemen.

Resource Exhaustion over Time

Lastly, respondents overwhelmingly reported that a major obstacle to sustaining their externalization work was the drain on resources, including time and funds, as the Arab Spring turned into autumn. As Mahmoud AlAzani, a Sheffield-based organizer, described how relying

on self-funded volunteers and private donations made it difficult to constantly send coach busses of protesters to London:

> Honestly speaking, it was a high cost because the mobilization of people across cities exhausted us financially as well. With all of this, we do our normal jobs [at the same time]. The level of pressure that was on me was just crazy. Safa [in London], she was going mad because she is doing her full time job and she put a lot of commitment into these activities.

Activists across concentrated communities in the US as well reported that it quickly became too expensive to continuously send busses of participants to host-country capitals to protest, and that volunteers largely exhausted their free time and personal resources in the months between March and November or earlier. Ibraham of New York also attested that organizers became burnt out trying to mobilize the community: "I spend all my vacation protesting and rallies and stuff like that... And the people that are always doing activism work, they burned out, lost resources, doing a lot of work. They have so much things to do."

Insufficient Organizational Adaptation

As I argued in Chapter 4, the Syrian diaspora was able to overcome some of the obstacles shared with the Yemeni diaspora, such as a hostile security environment and resources shortages, by converting and establishing formal political and humanitarian aid organizations to address the home-country crisis. This critical organizational adaptation enabled many Syrian activists to overcome dependence on exhausted volunteers and a drained diaspora donor base and to continue supporting their partners and constituents on the ground. The diversion of prized diaspora resources to a full-time staff enabled Syrian organizations like the Syrian Emergency Task Force, the Syrian American Council, Syria Relief, and the Rethink Rebuild Society also enabled these groups to accrue vital funding sources from external organizations and private donors. While formalization was no panacea to the variety of challenges facing diaspora activists

inside and outside of the home-country, it was necessary for their activism to survive under obstructive conditions.

In the Yemeni case, however, the absence of this organizational adaptation meant that the pro-revolution diaspora was unable to sustain their activism over time or to launch more direct interventions in the revolution, both political and humanitarian. Forming official organizations dedicated to channeling resources would have mitigated fears stoked by the War on Terror security environment by providing a legitimated channel through which to amass and send donations. Investment in a full-time lobbying staff dedicated to pressuring the US and the UK to modify the terms of the GCC deal, for example, would have assuaged activists' anxieties about appearing unprofessional and lacking a strong advocacy platform. Overall, even with the significant difficulties posed by conditions in the home-country—of which war-torn Syria in 2014 was an example par excellence—adaptations by the diaspora could have amplified their roles and sense of efficacy in specific and important ways. Instead, their mobilization efforts were episodic and only indirectly supportive of the revolution at home. This left many respondents feeling that the diaspora had failed to meet its mobilization potential. As Hany of Sheffield recalled in speaking about the effect of the Arab Spring on the Yemeni diaspora,

> It was good in the sense that it's woken a lot of people up… It's good in the sense that it brings out this new talk, how we can improve Yemen, as opposed to just complaining, moaning. It gave us a platform to talk about and deal with issues now. In that respect it was good of course. But I don't think it's manifested as much as we have wanted. There's a lot more that we can do—and that we need to do.

CONCLUSION

Overall, collective actors in the Yemeni diaspora worked to amplify the grievances and demands of revolutionary youth in the home-country through social media, demonstrations, lobbying, and several other awareness-raising activities in order to lend symbolic support to the revolution and

increase sympathies for the cause abroad. A minority of activists reported channeling resources, linking, and volunteering on the ground, but these activities were rare and were not part of the diaspora's *collective* strategies or tactics. Respondents overwhelmingly reported being unable to contribute directly to the revolution, and reported feeling frustrated over their limited role and weak sense of efficacy.

The analysis demonstrates that the diaspora's limited roles in the revolution were shaped by several factors outside of their direct control. The lack of insider-receptors, lack of decisive third-party interventions and elite political allies, and the absence of liberated territory in Yemen, as well as the War on Terror security environment and resource exhaustion by volunteers over time rendered diaspora mobilization as episodic and only indirectly supportive of revolutionaries at home. Furthermore, in contrast to the Syrian case, the lack of professional organizational formation and conversion prevented the diaspora from confronting these challenges and adapting to them over time.

However, just because the Yemeni diaspora had a very limited impact on the revolution did not mean that the revolution had a negligible impact on the diaspora. In Chapter 6, I compare the effects of the Arab Spring across the three diasporas and demonstrate how the revolutions produced other outcomes on political mobilization among Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis abroad.

CHAPTER 6

The Effects of Episodic Transnational Mobilization on Diaspora Politics

Activists in the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas mobilized to support their home-country revolutions to varying degrees, and as the preceding chapters describe, external conditions and internal movement adaptations shaped their respective roles in the uprisings. However, the effects of the revolution on diaspora mobilization were not limited to these aforementioned campaigns. In this chapter, I discuss how the Arab Spring also prompted activists to 1) launch campaigns directed at social change in their host-countries, as well as 2) to continue mobilizing transnationally in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings. (For the latter, I address the Libyan and Yemeni diasporas only because Syria's anti-regime movement continues at the time of this writing).

For example, Libyans in the US formed organizations to sustain their role as brokers between their host-country and the post-Gaddafi Libyan government, to promote Libyan-American interests and culture, and to gain voting rights in the home-country in the post-revolution period. Syrian activists mobilized against the ISIS from abroad and against discrimination they experienced resulting from the growth of extremism in Syria's civil war. And though Yemenis lacked pathways and the capacity to directly support the revolution, they mobilized to affect change in their local communities and to shape the context of reception for Yemeni elites when they came to the diaspora; some also established transnational humanitarian organizations to address poverty in Yemen in the wake of the uprising.

I argue that these collective actions are important short-term outcomes of the Arab Spring for several reasons. First, episodic transnational mobilization can lead diaspora activists to broaden their demands for political recognition in the home-country during post-conflict periods. Second, their transnational mobilization can bolster the visibility, voice, and civic participation of the diaspora as a distinct identity group and citizen constituency in their host-countries. Third, the mobilization of social movements seeking social change in the home-country can prompt activists abroad to implement corresponding changes in the diaspora community. And lastly, the ways in which diasporas mobilize to welcome or oppose the visitation of home-country elites to the host-country shapes the contexts of reception for those elites and can raise the profile of home-country causes accordingly. I explain these dynamics below.

LIBYAN-AMERICAN INTEREST GROUPS: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF VISIBILITY AND VOICE

As I describe in Chapter 3, Libyans in the diaspora worked to support the revolution in a number of ways. After rebel forces entered Tripoli in August 2011 and ostensibly ended Gaddafi's rule, many volunteers from the diaspora returned to back to their normal lives, while others decided to repatriate to Libya after years of exile. Other Libyan-American activists turned their attention to establishing organizations to bolster the visibility and voice of Libyan-Americans in the post-revolution era in several ways. First, respondents who had led lobbying efforts from the D.C. area during the uprising established interest-group organizations in order to bolster Libyan-Americans' roles as intermediaries between the US and Libyan governments and to promote intra-community ties and culture. Second, activists worked to secure voting rights for the diaspora in home-country elections in response to a political opening for inclusion.

The national interest groups founded in the wake of the revolution included the Center for

Libyan American Strategic Studies and the Libyan American Public Affairs Council, which were

spearheaded by Dr. Esam Omeish, co-founder of the pro-revolution Libyan Emergency Task

Force, and other community elites who had worked to lobby US officials to intervene during the

revolution. The stated mission of the Center for Libyan American Strategic Studies, for example,

is to:

> *enhance strategic ties between Libya and the United States* through meaningful
> information exchange, critical analysis and research and relevant policy
> recommendations… to United States and Libyan government officials and policy makers
> as well as scholars and civil society leaders.

This Center aims to continue the work of the Task Force by advising US officials on matters of

policy toward the home-country. Relatedly, the mission of the Libyan American Public Affairs

Council is to support Libya's transition to democracy by lending expertise, as well as to

encourage US institutions to play a role in supporting the transition:

> To preserve and implement the ideals of the Libyan revolution by fostering democracy,
> rule of law, freedom, free press, good governance, transparency, civic responsibility &
> free-market economics. Working with American leaders, NGOs, government, research
> centers, and members of the Libyan-American community, *LAPAC will offer technical
> assistance to the emerging democracy in Libya*. Our advocacy and public affairs
> campaigns will serve to ensure that American government and media will offer the
> necessary support to the legitimate Libyan democratic institutions and prevent the return
> of any form of autocratic rule.

Dr. Omeish, Sharazad Kablan, and other pro-revolution spokespersons also mobilized to

form the Libyan American Organization in September of 2011. Dr. Omeish described this

organization as a "progression" of the Libyan Emergency Task Force, though the stated mission

emphasizes the horizontally-focused maintenance of ties between community members as much

as the vertically-oriented goal of connecting with US officials:

> The Libyan American Organization (LAO) is… focused on *helping Libyan Americans
> connect and support each other*, as well as *promote* [sic] *Libyan heritage through*

educational programs and cultural events. Our goal is to become the go-to organization for reaching and connecting with members of the Libyan American community… Members of the Libyan American community care deeply about seeing a prosperous and peaceful future for Libya. The Libyan American community includes highly successful professionals and entrepreneurs in several diverse fields, and *we believe that all generations of the Libyan American community have an important role to play in helping our motherland Libya through education, positive influence and constructive programs and activities*. We also believe that members of the Libyan American community can serve as a bridge between our two countries: the US and Libya, and promote understanding and cooperation based on shared values.[34]

Salah Burgazia, co-founder of the Libyan American Organization, described that this organization was formed to promote a distinctly Libyan-American identity and constituency, as well as to bring in new leadership to the community. He explained that:

After the fall of Tripoli, we as a group decided, let's hold a meeting in NYC for different organizations to come together and discuss now, post-revolution, what do we need... And our goal is just to look forward. In the past, the Libyan organizations here were very Libyan and were more driven by the opposition to the Gaddafi. Post-revolution, you realize there are different needs, different dynamics, and our focus is more on the Libyan *American* aspect, rather than the Libyan only. And also we're targeting a lot of youth. Building an organization, we want the youth the take it over so our board of directors, the president. I am one of the primary founders, but I'm not the president, and that's by design… We want women and the youth to be heavily involved in the organization.

To date, this group holds national conferences annually and issues statements regarding violence and post-revolution problems in Libya.

Several activists in the US diaspora also mobilized in 2012 to secure voting rights in the home-country. Revolution-time activists Shahrazad Kablan and Najah Dawaji petitioned the United Nations and the Libyan government to extend voting rights to the diaspora before elections in July 2012. Najah recalled that she and Shahrazad were on the phone with their contacts in the Libyan government "twenty-four seven" on the issue of voting rights, and joked that officials in Libya eventually acquiesced just so that they would be left alone. According to blog post written by scholar Laurie Brand (2014) for *The Washington Post*, the government "issued the decision to allow [out of country voting] only a few weeks before the July 7, 2012

polling for the General National Congress." While it cannot be determined whether the efforts of individuals like Shahrazad and Najah were the sole or most important causal factor in granting voting rights to the diaspora in countries such as the US, the efforts of these activists were nevertheless necessary to implement and oversee the voting process once the right had been granted. Shahrazad explained, "We can't take a break. It's not a time to relax. We have to support the democratic process in Libya... So we will be doing elections here in DC, LA, Denver, and Houston.[35] I'm overseeing the whole thing."

Overall, before the revolution, the Libyan diaspora in the US and Britain lacked professional or member-driven organizations (see Chapter 1), and during the war, their organizational efforts were led by volunteers on an ad hoc basis through formal and informal social movement groups (see Chapters 2 and 3). As such, a significant outcome of the revolution has been the *institutionalization* of a national identity group and the promotion of the diaspora's role in home- and host-country politics. Several caveats apply, however. First, whether these organizations survive will largely hinge on whether donors channel funds to sustain these organizations over time. Second, whether the broader Libyan diaspora trusts these interest groups to represent them will depend on whether these organizations demonstrate transparency and take steps to promote the inclusion of youth and women from varied backgrounds. Otherwise, the domination of organizations like the Libyan American Public Affairs Council by older men— whom some of my respondents perceived as representing conservative Islamist interests—is unlikely to be perceived by the wider diaspora as legitimate and representative. And third, whether the diaspora participates in out-of-country voting over time will be shaped by whether organizers like Shahrazad continue to mobilize the community to participate in home-country elections, as well whether Libya continues to hold elections in the first place.

Additionally, British-Libyans did not report engaging in post-revolution mobilization efforts to promote their visibility as an identity group or status as governmental advisors. This is likely due to the fact that ethnic or national lobbies are widely perceived as important players in US foreign policy more so than in Britain. As Salah recalled when describing how the Libyan American Organization was formed, "we studied the different organizations—Turkish, Jewish, Moroccan—to decide what it is really that works for us." By looking to existent national and ethnic lobbies in the US, activists in the Libyan-American community appear to have adopted what they perceived to an effective model of political and cultural representation. Second, several of the Libyan organizations, including the Strategic Studies Center and the Public Affairs Council, were spearheaded by the same individual (Dr. Esam Omeish) who had political experience running for local government in Virginia before 2011 and as a lobbyist during the revolution. It is likely, therefore, that his longstanding interests in political participation and strengthened relations with the US government were a major factor driving the formation of Libyan-American interest groups. Furthermore, this is not to say that members of the British-Libyan community were detached from Libyan politics in the post-revolution period; only that their roles as political entrepreneurs and advisors were not formalized in the same way in its aftermath.

SYRIAN COUNTER-MOBILIZATION AGAINST EXTREMISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE HOST-COUNTRY

As I discuss in Chapter 4, Syrians in the diaspora faced an increasingly hostile political context for transnational mobilization over the course of the revolution. The influx of religious extremist organizations, including Ahrar Al-Sham and the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) into the conflict subjected the Syrian diaspora to increased oversight by domestic security agencies. In

addition, Syrians as an identity group became associated with anti-Western sentiments and the

threat of violence. As Y., a Syrian-American activist in her early twenties lamented,

> I'm the 9/11 generation. I grew up in… a very liberal area, never had any problems in
> terms of discrimination or racism. But at the same time, you know through the media
> you're always the one [who is] always the outsider, you're not American, you're a threat
> to the US, you're a threat in general… And now the way things are turning on their heads
> in Syria with this whole terror threat—God, now I'm back to being a terrorist.

Furthermore, terrorist acts by the Islamic State, such as those launched by an ISIS cell in Paris on

November 13, 2015, also raised concerns by government officials about Syrian immigrants and

refugee resettlement. However, the formation of transnational advocacy organizations dedicated

to supporting the revolution granted activists the capacity to collectively combat discrimination

in the home-country. Working through organizations such as Manchester's Rethink Rebuild

Society, London's Syria Solidarity Movement, and the Syrian American Council, activists

counter-mobilized in response to these issues in a number of ways.

Anti-Extremism Outreach

At the time that I conducted interviews with Syrians in Britain in 2014, hundreds of

citizens were reported to have joined the Islamic State movement in Syria, and Prime Minister

David Cameron was considering stripping recruits of their British citizenship. In response to this

crisis, several activists involved in organizations such as the Syrian Solidarity Movement and the

Rethink Rebuild Society participated in efforts to counter-mobilize against ISIS' recruitment of

British Muslims. Abdulaziz Almashi of the Syria Solidarity Movement reported meeting with

Islamic leaders across London to "call on the Muslim community not to go and join ISIS," he

explained. "And [to say that] if you want to support the Syrians, there are so many [other] ways

to do so." Haytham AlHamwi of the Rethink Rebuild Society also decided to address this issue

by publishing a statement in March 2014 in conjunction with the UK branch of the National

Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, the Syrian Association of Yorkshire, and the Syrian Revolution Committee in Newcastle. Haytham recalled that the act of addressing the influx of British citizens as foreign fighters in the Syrian conflict was controversial in the community because some of his constituents worried that people will "not distinguish" between Syrians and foreign extremists. However, Haytham decided that addressing this issue was necessary because:

> we have responsibility to discourage sending off people to go there. They should listen or hear this voice *from Syrians themselves* that *we* don't want you to go there! Because [sympathizers] listen many times to Syrians shouting "please help us!" And so they think okay, we will go to help you and fight there. But no, we don't want help in this way. So I sent all the community—I have about three hundred people in my contact list—this statement. And I said please vote for this or no in a week. And the majority said yes.

The statement does not mention ISIS specifically, but addresses the broader rationales for joining the fight in Syria and outlines clear reasons why interested individuals will better serve the revolution by engaging in mainstream political activism from the host-country by lobbying, donating, raising awareness, and through prayer.

Anti-Discrimination Campaigns

Corresponding with the rise of extremism in Syria, members of the diaspora found that their identity-based transnational ties to the home-country conflict and religious extremism by proxy had resulted in specific forms of discrimination in the home-country. As mentioned above, activists in Britain found out that HSBC, one of the largest banking corporations in the UK, had closed the accounts of Syrian nationals since late 2013 (Bachelor 2014). One respondent, a Manchester-based Syrian activist who had been active mobilizing on behalf of the revolution, discovered that her husband's account and several others had been closed without explanation. She encouraged her husband to speak out about this, but because he was in the process of

254

applying for residency in Britain, "he said, I don't want the headache… but I'm like no. If this is happening to you… then they're going to find it easy to do it to someone else. I was like, this is absolutely unacceptable."

After being further encouraged by her contacts at RAPAR, a Manchester-based human rights organization, to "raise hell" about this problem, this respondent then sought out the support of the Syrian Rethink Rebuild Society. She explained, "I wanted to have the backing of a Syrian organization…. A human rights organization might not have the trust of Syrians—because especially when you're working with Syrians, trust is a very big issue." After reaching out to Haytham AlHamwi, they worked collectively to combat this discriminatory practice by "contacting the press, giving interviews, and now speaking to MPs and trying to get the issue going through Parliament." As a result of this campaign, HSBC's actions were publicized in national papers such as *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Daily Mail*.

Refugee Resettlement

In addition to addressing discriminatory practices, Syrian diaspora organizations have also worked to counter anti-refugee rhetoric and anti-resettlement policies. In light of the ever-growing refugee crisis spurred by relentless bombing and a collapsed economy in Syria, organizations such as the Syrian American Council have worked since 2013 to support refugee resettlement in the US and to mobilize against prohibitive refugee settlement legislation at the state and federal levels.The Council and its umbrella coordinating organization, the Coalition for a Democratic Syria, have pushed for a number of initiatives, including lobbying the Department of Homeland Security "to extend and redesignate Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Syrian nationals," according to their June 14, 2013 email newsletter. Continuing through the time of this writing, US-based advocacy organizations like SAC and the Coalition for a Democratic Syria

continue to issue statements applauding the entry of refugees into the US and encouraging

officials to admit more refugees through an expedited entry process.

SAC has also mobilized Syrian Americans to participate in congressional hearings about

the refugee crisis in order to signal their interest and importance as a political constituency to

policymakers. In a 2014 email newsletter from SAC, for example, the community was

encouraged to attend a January 7, 2014 hearing hosted by Dick Durbin (D-IL) on the refugee

crisis. The email stated that:

> This hearing represents a renewed interest in Syria from the US Senate, which has not
> held a hearing on Syria for several months. However, RSVP numbers are low, and
> organizers are considering downgrading the hearing to a smaller room. *It is critical that
> the Syrian American community make a show of force at the hearing*. A large turnout will
> encourage future hearings on Syria in Congress, which will in turn *place the crisis in
> Syria higher on Congress members' priority list*. By attending as members of the Syrian
> American community, we also let our senators know that *we are still watching them*, and
> that we still expect them to address the extraordinary refugee crisis facing our people.

After the Paris attacks in November 2015 by ISIS, Syrian organizations also counter-

mobilized to oppose a political backlash against Syrian refugees by governors and members of

Congress. Activists launched a campaign in November 2015 to initiate face-to-face meetings

between governors and Syrian refugees across the country in order to counter refugee-barring

measures. They did so in part by partnering with other non-Syrian organizations as well:

> The Syrian American Council… joins in the call of major American organizations such
> as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the US Council on Catholic Bishops to *reject
> the calls by over 25 governors to prohibit the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the
> United States*. Our country is a nation of immigrants, and taking in refugees has been a
> noble bipartisan tradition since the founding of our country. We invite the governors who
> are calling for the closing of door to refugees to reconsider their decision and meet
> directly with refugee families in their states who come from all faiths and ethnic groups
> and have fled ISIS and Assad.

Overall, the Syrian revolution and subsequent war has raised the profile of the

community in a negative light. Just as Arabs and Muslims became increasingly visible after 9/11

and correspondingly associated with terrorism, so too have Syrian-Americans and Syrian-Britons been subjected to suspicion, increased scrutiny, and discrimination because of their ties to Syria and suspected association with extremist forces in operation there. In addition, Syrians abroad have been faced with an additional dilemma, which is that some Muslim sympathizers across Europe and elsewhere have exacerbated this problem by traveling to Syria to join the fight. In response, transnational activists launched campaigns in order to combat extremist recruitment and discriminatory practices in the host-country through formal advocacy organizations. In all, the building of a transnational organizational field has granted the diaspora with the requisite resources and standing to advocate against domestic problems facing the community and to assert their rights and visibility in home-country politics.

THE YEMENI REVOLUTION'S RIPPLE EFFECTS

In addition to Yemenis' efforts to externalize the revolution described in Chapter 5, the uprising spurred other collective actions aimed at voicing anti-regime grievances and assisting the home-country in the uprising's aftermath. First, youth activists in Liverpool were motivated by the uprising to mobilize for leadership change in their local Yemen Community Association and to collectively challenge its pro-regime elite domination for the first time. Second, activists mobilized to shape home-country elites' contexts of reception when they came abroad to the diaspora's host-country and to perform "insider-outsider linking" (see Part II) during these visits. For example, by facilitating the visitation of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Tawakkul Karman to the US and Britain, Yemenis abroad played a key role in linking this relatively unknown activist to Western officials and institutions. And when Ali Abdullah Saleh visited the US for medical treatment in early 2012, Yemeni activists in New York demonstrated against him, and a spontaneous confrontation brought media attention to their grievances. Lastly, several Yemenis

in Britain worked to address Yemen's longstanding humanitarian and development crisis by forming organizations in the aftermath of the revolution, which marked the first attempts by the sizable diaspora in Britain to establish formal transnational advocacy organizations. I discuss these dynamics in turn below.

The Campaign for Regime Change in Liverpool's Yemeni Community Association

As explained in Chapter 1, Yemenis in Britain had established Yemen Community Associations (YCAs) for the purposes of community empowerment and immigrant assistance with the help of government subsidies. The YCAs in Sandwell and Sheffield were functional organizations that maintained a reputation among respondents for being effective, nonpartisan, and trustworthy; the YCA in Birmingham, despite lacking resources and being the focus of intra-community fights, had implemented a meaningful electoral process in recent years and its leaders were working to improve its programming by the time I conducted interviews in 2012. In Chapter 2, I described how the YCAs were kept apolitical during the revolution by their leaders for fear that that these organizations would be undone by factionalization and pro-secession/pro-unity splits among their members. So while some of the YCA leaders supported the revolutionary protest movement in Yemen and others supported southern secession, these institutions were not converted into transnational organizations because of the "problem of politics."

The YCA in Liverpool, however, was a different story. Perceived by Liverpudlian revolution supporters as dysfunctional, corrupt, and an arm of the regime, this organization became the target of activists after the emergence of Yemen's uprising. As members of the community held meetings to debate over how to respond to the uprising in early 2011, some of the independent youth decided to take action to force a change to the YCA's leadership. As

Kamal Mashjari recalled, the youth movement "all wanted to do something *locally*. The idea was, let's oust the old regime from the community association—they're all supporters of Ali Abdullah Saleh anyway." His brother Omar further attested that "why the YCA is important to us is because it has a distinct status in the sense that it's approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yemen, it's approved by the embassy." For this reason, Omar explained that their aim was to "change the direction of the organization democratically." Organizers set out to register new members of the YCA in the hopes of voting out the incumbent leadership in an upcoming election. Another participant in this campaign named Bashir Alwin recalled that they recruited between 70 and 80 members of the community to register as members of the YCA by having them filling out a membership application and paying a three-pound fee. Their expectation was that with a surge of new members, the community would vote out long-time incumbents who left the organization in "tatters," according to Abdul Basit, who had served as the YCA's secretary in 1997.

Despite their enthusiasm, however, their campaign to register new members by going door-to-door in the community was ultimately unsuccessful. First, Neshwan recalled that the YCA was never open but for one or two afternoons a week—an accusation that Abdul Alkanshali, the head of the YCA, refuted—which made it difficult to find a time to deliver the applications. Second, once election-drive volunteers found the YCA to be open and rushed to deliver the applications, Omar reported that trying to get the Chair of the YCA to accept the applications was another matter. According to Neshwan, Alkanshali refused the applications by claiming that the YCA required that each new applicant had to present their paperwork individually in person. Abdul Alkanshali affirmed this in an interview with me by accusing the group of violating the rules:

[They submitted] forged documents. First, they didn't use the proper documents from the YCA. They printed their own stuff. And then they went round getting signatures… The rules said that the person himself must come into the YCA, fill the application form, and none of that happened.

Neshwan recalled retorting to Abdul that they would bring each new applicant to the YCA to do so, but that "He said no, we can't accept you. Why? '*Because you are coming here to overtake*.' That was explicit. *Overtake*. 'And we can't let you do this.'" Bashir said that in response to the YCA's refusal to accept the new applications, they launched a spontaneous protest and the police were called. But in the end, the campaign to reform the YCA failed, "and now it's still a problem," he said.

Since this campaign, Bashir explained that they decided to ignore the YCA because it was a failing organization that was "collapsing within itself." But despite the fact that this effort did not have the intended effect, respondents described this campaign with relish in interviews with me over a year later in light of the community's relative ennui and passivity in dealing with the YCA in previous years. AbdulBasit described that:

> [The revolution] activated the *challenging nature* within us. Before we were just like, accepting we [have a] dysfunctional community association. We [had] a dysfunctional country—we just accepted it. What the revolution did is make that initial jump start for us all.

Kamal also viewed this campaign as important because it signaled to local elites that the youth were not going to be so accepting of the status quo in the future:

> Once you reach a tipping point, there's no going back. And we've reached that here [in] diaspora itself and in Yemen—we've reached that point now where there is no going back to the old ways where you get elders who come and do nothing and talk rubbish, and then wreck the community like they've done.

Overall, the Liverpool YCA represented a microcosm of Yemen's electoral authoritarianism to the pro-revolution youth and warranted a collective challenge at the onset of the Arab Spring. But even though the youth movement of Liverpool was unable to pressure the

YCA leadership to accept new constituents, their campaign nevertheless demonstrated the effects of Yemen's uprising in creating an impetus for locally-oriented change within the diaspora community itself. In light of Yemen's peaceful uprising, members of the community were motivated to transition from passive disgruntlement to collective action in order to challenge the status quo through increased political participation in associational membership and voting. Additionally, the rebellion of the youth against the elderly elite broke a longstanding taboo in the community of respecting one's elders and deferring to them on political matters. Whether or not this produces other tangible outcomes in community mobilization, however, has yet to be seen.

The Internationalization of Tawakkul Karman

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Yemeni activist Tawakkul Karman in the fall of 2011 was important for a number of reasons. The Prize recognized her long-time commitment to free speech and human rights in Yemen, and was widely perceived as a nod to her vanguard role leading non-violent demonstrations in Sanaa during the Arab Spring. In addition, Ms. Karman was the first ever Arab woman to receive the prize, and only the second Muslim woman to receive it as well. After the news was announced, however, Ms. Karman was unexpectedly catapulted into the role of *global* spokesperson for Yemen's revolution—a role for which she was relatively underprepared, having limited connections with institutions outside of Yemen and no foreign language ability. In light of this, organizers in the diaspora played a key role in her internationalization by raising funds to bring her abroad and by linking her to policymakers, the media, universities, think tanks, and to the diaspora itself.

When Ms. Karman first came to the US after her Nobel nomination in October 2011, activists in the Yemeni-American diaspora worked to amplify the impact of her visit by introducing her to various organizations and institutions, as well as assisting with Arabic-to-

261

English interpretation and translation. In so doing, they capitalized on her newfound fame and on policymakers' curiosity about Ms. Karman to raise the profile of the revolution more generally. This came at a critical time when members of the UN Security Council were considering Resolution 2014, which condemned violence in Yemen and called for Ali Abdullah Saleh to sign the GCC deal. Rabyaah, one of the protest organizers in New York, recalled that:

> When Tawakkul came, we were working closely with her… Ibraham, Ahlam, and me were at the hotel almost 24/7, and this is while [the UN Security Council] was working on drafting the 2014 resolution. I don't think Ibraham slept for two weeks straight. He got her interviews with top Security Council members in the first few days. Do you know how difficult that is? Because it was right before they were going to vote on the resolution. The Security Council resolution was not exactly what we wanted, and the GCC deal was in there which was a disaster, but it was something, because this was at the height [of] the violence. They had just burned down those tents in Taiz and burned people alive. So it was a very critical time. We also organized a town hall meeting with her.

Organizers also attested that in addition to lobbying US-based officials, her visit also reinvigorated the community to come out and reaffirm their support for the home-country. Adel Mozip, one of the main organizers in Dearborn, Michigan, also described how the community came out to meet and hear Ms. Karman even though their activism on behalf of the revolution had begun to die down by that time:

> People started getting bored of demonstrations… and what ignited [the community] was the visit of Tawakkul Karman to Dearborn and Ann Arbor. It was the biggest event that Yemeni Americans did show up to.

After her US tour, activists in Britain also worked to bring Ms. Karman to the UK. In London, Safa Mubgar (whose activism during the revolution was described in Chapter 5) secured private donations to make Ms. Karman's UK visit possible, and that she founded a small organization called The Independent Yemen Group in order to coordinate publicity and Ms. Karman's lobbying tour in December 2011. Safa explained, "I felt very strongly about Tawakkol Karman receiving that great honor. For me it was an acknowledgement of the Arab Spring." A

cross-community coalition of activists who had worked with Safa to organize protests in the

preceding months also mobilized to connect Ms. Karman with institutions and the diaspora.

Mahmoud Alazani of Sheffield attested that they connected Ms. Karman with as many audiences

and institutions as possible, including international and local television stations, the Parliament,

Amnesty International, Chatham House, and with Foreign Secretary William Hague. She also

gave speeches at town hall events in Birmingham and Sheffield to the diaspora.

Women activists in both the US and Britain also noted that Ms. Karman's tour among

diaspora communities was significant in breaking down gender barriers by gathering men and

women together in the same place. Rabyaah, for example, noted that this had a profound change

on her personal life as well:

> Mind you, in New York City, getting men and women together in one room is very
> difficult because it's very conservative… a lot of the New York people are from the
> villages. We organized a town hall meeting and every *Yemeniya* [Yemeni woman] I knew
> came out. [Ms. Karman] was amazed—I was amazed—at how many people came out. I'd
> say maybe 250 men and 150 women *in the same room*!… She sat there and lectured these
> conservative Yemeni men that you need to trust and believe in your daughters. And they
> sat there and listened… At the rallies I would say, women don't show up. At the rallies
> it's me, Ahlam, Summer—the maximum was 10 at every rally. But at this town hall, it
> was magnificent. That was for us really successful… I studied women and gender rights
> at Columbia University, and I've always been outspoken for women's rights. But on a
> personal level I felt trapped in an unhappy marriage. At one point I said I am leading
> these rallies, and saying it's a new day in the Middle East, and I'm afraid to get out of
> this unhappy marriage? Overnight, I was like no, I'm not going to do this [anymore]… It
> had a fundamental impact on our personal lives.

Others attested that Ms. Karman's elevated visibility in the diaspora also stoked an

unprecedented showing of support for Yemeni women more generally. Shaima Saif, who

organized a Women Unite for Yemen rally in London during Ms. Karman's visit, attested that

the fact that men came out to participate in her rally for women and to see Ms. Karman speak

was "revolutionary." She said,

We organized a huge protest in London and it was called Women Unite for Yemen. It was especially for women and children… [and] we were calling for the men to come and support the women…. We had so much support from the men, and that was really shocking. We booked two coaches from Birmingham, and there was actually more on the men's coach than there were on the women's coach! It was seriously like a revolutionary moment within itself. You could see the difference in the community. It was fantastic.

Overall, activists in the US and British diasporas mobilized to amplify Ms. Karman's visibility and connections to domestic communities and to host-country elites and institutions. In so doing, they facilitated the voice and exposure of a relatively inexperienced and unknown Yemeni activist to the Western world. These collective efforts also temporarily broke down gender barriers in the diaspora by bringing men and women together in town hall meetings and heralding women's leadership in the revolution more generally. In light of the fact that most women activists in the diaspora reported being significantly underrepresented in pro-revolution protests, collective efforts to raise the profile of Tawakkul Karman also bolstered Yemeni women's visibility and voice in the diaspora at large.

The New York Anti-Saleh Protest, January and February 2012

The US-based diaspora community also mobilized in response to a unique opportunity in late January 2012. After soon-to-be former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh was permitted by US officials to come to Manhattan for medical treatment, a small group of about twenty Yemenis, including organizers from the Yemeni American Coalition for Change as well as pro-secession southerners, gathered in front of the Ritz Carlton hotel in the freezing cold to stage a demonstration. After Saleh emerged from the hotel on February 5, smiling and waving to those whom he erroneously perceived to be cheering supporters, one of the protesters charged Saleh and attempted to throw his show at him. The shoe missed and this protester was tackled by

264

police, but the incident received significant press attention, including from *The New York Times*.

Furthermore, as Rabyaah explained, this spontaneous confrontation produced a sense of:

> …intense solidarity with what's happening on the ground and feeling like we're actually *doing* something!... We made a big scene, like "shame shame Ritz Carlton" and [Saleh] came out and it was mayhem… It was a big deal in Yemen. A lot of papers wrote about it. For us being here, *this was the closest we got to the revolution…* I threw my gloves at him, and I said [to the police] "you had better give me my gloves back! Do you know who you're protecting? Do you know who is in there?" They empathized with us. They went easy on [the man who threw the shoe at Saleh]. What an experience.

Ibraham, another organizer, also recalled that this demonstration was important because:

> We got the media—even [overseas] they reported about the shoe throwing. And so we brought attention. I think people underestimate the power we had… I think the plan was to keep him away from the media so his crimes are not exposed. So through our networks, we were able to find out where he was.

Yemeni diaspora activists also worked to try and hold Saleh accountable for his crimes while in the US. As Kaled Alamerie recalled,

> When Ali Saleh came to the US, we did a lot of research to see if we can hold him accountable. We contacted a nonprofit organization and spoke to lawyers. But since he was still the president, he's protected by the Secret Service, there was nothing we could do. All we could do was rally in front of the hotel.

So while respondents lamented that their protest numbers were small and that they were otherwise unable to launch a legal case against Saleh, this protest event was significant in that it brought attention to the diaspora's anti-regime grievances against Saleh and his special treatment by the US government, thus creating a negative context of reception for their nemesis abroad.

The Formation of Transnational Aid and Development Organizations

Another notable outcome of the Yemeni revolution on collective action in the diaspora was that activists in Britain founded several formal transnational organizations dedicated to aid and development in the months following the revolution. The formation of these start-up organizations in 2012 after Saleh's resignation was significant in that this sector was entirely

non-existent at an organizational level among the diaspora before the revolution (see Chapter 1).

Because many organizers in the diaspora wanted to do something concrete for Yemenis back

home but were plagued by political factionalism, Awssan Kamal decided to found the Yemen

Relief and Development Foundation in order to channel diaspora resources to Yemen's

longstanding humanitarian crisis in a non-partisan way. This was done in partnership with a

larger and well established international NGO called Islamic Relief. Saleh Saeed, the Chair of

YRDF in 2012, recalled that:

> Our first meeting was to discuss, what can we as the diaspora do to help the situation in Yemen? Following the same principles—no politics. And that organization was set up as a vehicle for the Yemeni diaspora to support the situation on a humanitarian basis. And we've all been active, and we have fantastic volunteers… It's historic, really, because it's the first time that the Yemeni diaspora in the UK have operated in a unified sense. Everyone does their own thing in their own cities, so this is great. I think it's unified us.

The members of the YRDF also coordinated fundraising efforts by other pro-revolution

activists in the aftermath of the revolution. This included Sheba, founded by pro-revolution

youths from Liverpool, and Yemen Bright Future Organisation, co-founded by Habib Al-Ariki in

London. Habib said,

> We had an amazing outcome of the revolution. Nearly four or five youth organizations have been formed here in the UK… We had an idea to coordinate these organizations under one umbrella and make it more focused, because if we gather our efforts, I'm sure that the outcome will be more tangible.

The Yemen Bright Future Organization also decided to focus its efforts on capacity building;

Habib and his colleagues went to Yemen in June 2012 to get in touch with NGOs in Yemen and

to plan training projects. As professionals with expertise in education, business, and the media,

he said, "we have a target and a mission, really focused on Yemenis, not on the UK."

When I interviewed Yemenis in Britain in the fall of 2012, respondents raved about the

recent series of YRDF community dinners that had raised tens of thousands of pounds of

donations in conjunction with Islamic Relief. Saleh said that the 2012 YRDF dinner in

Birmingham "really moved me" because of all of the youth volunteers who made it possible. "It

made me feel full of hope and optimism in that the younger generation before… [That] now

we're passing on the baton to even younger people… who are taking it further both for the

community here and for the people in Yemen as well." Shaima, a volunteer with the YRDF, also

expressed how proud she was to see a packed hall of several hundred Yemenis gathered for a

charity fundraising dinner in Birmingham:

> [Because] there was a revolution in Yemen, the ripples have affected us all over the
> world. We are all now questioning how we can help. We never did this before, not to this
> extent… There was a revolution in the UK without a doubt.

However, the YRDF nevertheless faced several challenges. Though this organization was

initially funded by its Islamic sector partners who paid Awssan a small salary to head the

organization full-time, Awssan was unable to fundraise and sustain the organization by himself,

and the organization died off by 2014 along with other volunteer-based groups such as Sheba

and Yemen Bright Futures Organization. In addition, while the YRDF was in operation,

organizers' efforts to amass aid continued to be plagued by problems of mistrust and

regionalism. Some respondents reported that they did not trust any organization that would

partner with Islamic Relief due to perceived corruption in that organization; others complained

that their donations were unlikely to go to the hometowns or regions, such as the south, where

they had ties. Nadia, a YRDF volunteer in Birmingham, also reported that they could not hang

the Yemeni flag at the charity dinner as a result of persistent north-south community divides

because doing so would have been considered pushing a pro-unity agenda. So overall, while the

YRDF's efforts were successful in that they worked to collectively channel significant amounts

of aid from across the diaspora to Yemen for the first time, such efforts were episodic and

267

undermine by persistent problems—particularly mistrust, regionalism, and resource shortages—that plagued collective action across the Yemeni diaspora during the revolution.

CONCLUSION

In all, the Arab Spring produced a number of effects that illustrate how socio-political upheaval and change in the host-country can impact diaspora mobilization. First, in the aftermath of the Libyan diaspora's surge of transnational mobilization to support the revolution in 2011, activists worked to sustain this newfound solidarity and momentum in the US by establishing interest groups and advocating for the diaspora's right to participate in home-country elections. At the same time, organizers also worked to promote a distinctly Libyan-American identity and to bring new faces into community leadership through the Libyan American Organization. These findings suggest the importance of transnational mobilization in fomenting domestically-oriented mobilization as well. Rather than being mutually exclusive, the Libyan case demonstrates that diaspora mobilization enabled the community to assert both home- and host-country membership, citizenship, and recognition simultaneously.

Relatedly, the Syrian case illustrates the importance for communities under threat to channel resources into formal advocacy organizations. Those that did so developed the capacity to continue addressing the home-country conflict (as I demonstrate in Chapter 4) and confronted domestic challenges and discrimination as well. So though the rise of extremism in the Syrian conflict cast a shadow over Syrians abroad by associating them with anti-Western terrorism, the formation of Syrian advocacy organizations enabled activists to address this problem and challenge discrimination in the host-country, often with the support of other religious and ethnic interest groups. As in the Libyan case, this suggests that transnational and domestic diaspora mobilizations are not mutually-exclusive categories, but are instead mutually-reinforcing.

268

Lastly, the analysis finds that though Yemenis faced numerous challenges in mobilizing transnationally during the revolution, the uprising nevertheless had several important effects on domestic mobilization and post-revolution transnational mobilization. For one, the uprising motivated activists to challenge elite domination in their communities and to break taboos that have led to the marginalization of independent youth and women. Second, the diaspora shaped the context of reception for home-country elites by linking their allies such as Nobel Prize winner Tawwakul Karman with home-country institutions and by raising negative publicity against regime leaders. And lastly, activists worked to establish organizations that could bring a fractured and mistrustful diaspora together to channel resources to humanitarian causes in Yemen. While these actions were episodic, these short-term outcomes signified a notable change in the status quo from years past and gave respondents hope for change in the diaspora itself.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion and Implications

In 2011, revolutionary movements erupted across the Middle Eastern region and galvanized supporters in the diaspora to work collectively for regime change and relief at home. This study investigates how members of the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas mobilized to support their compatriots during the Arab Spring uprisings and explains why the character of their collective actions—including the pace of their public emergence, their degree of solidarity, and their roles in the revolutions—varied significantly (see Table 0.1 in the Introduction), as well as to understand the outcomes of their episodic transnational mobilization for diaspora politics more generally. Though existing accounts argue that diasporas are well-positioned to mobilize in accordance with political opportunities bestowed by their democratic host-countries and at the supra-national level, these explanations are inadequate for explaining weak and missing cases of transnational mobilization and variation in their collective action dynamics. In order to explain variation among the cases under study here, this dissertation analyzes three sets of data using grounded and process-tracing analytical methods: 240 interviews conducted with activists and community organizers; ethnographic participant observations of Syrian-American pro-revolution events that took place from 2011 to 2014; and secondary sources on diaspora movements and the revolutions.

The findings demonstrate that diaspora mobilization dynamics are shaped by multi-level and relational factors that not only include political opportunities in the host-country, but also conditions in and diasporas' relations with relevant actors in the *home-country*—including sending-state regimes and opposition movements on the ground—and with *third-parties* who mobilize in response to home-country crises, such as host-country elites and the media. Overall, I

270

argue that these conditions and networked relations shape the character of diaspora mobilization over time and determine whether the actions of diaspora movements ultimately matter for their compatriots under siege. The findings of the comparative analysis, in summary, are as follows.

Part I begins by describing the state of diaspora mobilization before the Arab Spring. Chapter 1 illustrates how some exiles and émigrés seized upon the opportunities bestowed by a liberal receiving-state to contest dictatorships in Libya, Syria, and Yemen from abroad. At the same time, however, members of the community did not "come out" to form public opposition lobbies, social movement organizations, and transnational charities until the onset of the revolutions in 2011. The reason is because diasporas' transnational ties simultaneously embedded them in host-country conditions, which constrained their mobilization and participation in the "social movement society" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) in several ways. First, the threats posed Libyan and Syrian regime surveillance and retribution of the diaspora—what I call "transnational repression"— fuelled widespread perceptions among community members that opposing the Gaddafi and Assad dictatorships from abroad could incur significant costs, such as exile or the harm of their family members at home. As a result, the regime's presence in the diaspora fuelled fear, self-censorship, and mistrust among co-nationals abroad, rendered their community events strictly apolitical, and limited the abilities of exiled activists to recruit sympathizers to their movements.

Second, the analysis in Chapter 1 finds that heightened degrees of regime violence against particular regional, religious, political, and ethnic groups in Yemen and Syria produced corresponding splits within the anti-regime opposition abroad. South Yemenis and Kurdish-Syrians, for example, mobilized to support secessionist movements back home, which put them at odds with others in the diaspora who condemned secession as an inappropriate *prognostic*

271

solution (Snow and Benford 1988) to home-country dictatorships. In this way, factionalism in the home-country split the opposition abroad and produced further mistrust and infighting, and organizational leaders in the Yemeni community worked to insulate their organizations from the problems of home-country politics. For these reasons, each of these diasporas were significantly under-mobilized prior to the Arab Spring.

Chapter 2 then demonstrates how "quotidian disruptions" (Snow et al. 1998) in the home-country presented diasporas with newfound emotional and instrumental impetuses for mobilization. However, the analysis also demonstrates that mobilization was not an automatic or uniform process during this period of crisis and opportunity. Rather, the pace and severity of these disruptions as they unfolded over time corresponded with the pace of diasporas' "coming out" as a public anti-regime front. This study demonstrates that newcomers to activism only came out to engage in public protest during the Arab Spring under specific conditions: 1) when regime violence engulfed their loved ones, thereby upsetting transnational repression's relational effects; 2) when they perceived that going public was a moral impetus in light of the sacrifices made by vanguard activists (Hirsch 1990), such as the torture and murder of Syrian child Hamza al-Khateeb; and 3) when they perceived that the regimes were no longer able to impose costs on dissidents abroad because the regime's institutional infrastructures and informant networks had defected and collapsed, or because the regime had become too consumed with war at home to target individuals abroad. Related to the second condition listed above, Yemenis also came out en masse to protest in the diaspora when regime violence at home disrupted the quotidian by violating normative expectations of state behavior (Moore 1978) during the Day of Dignity Massacre.

However, Chapter 2 also shows that even when Arab Spring supporters came to be unified around a set of diagnostic frames that "the regime must go!", a lack of shared prognostic frames among Syrians and Yemenis over the solution to the problem of the regime—such as who should lead the revolution and what tactics they should use—produced fissures within opposition movements at home and among their varied supporters in the diaspora. In this way, quotidian disruptions can liberate diasporas to contest home-country regimes and stoke an unprecedented degree of anti-regime mobilization abroad while simultaneously exacerbating preexisting social fault lines and heightening factionalism within the anti-regime opposition.

In keeping with the arguments set out in Part I, Part II finds that the roles that diasporas played during the revolutions and humanitarian crises were shaped by changes to their home- and host-country environments and their relations with a broader set of relevant actors and institutions. As illustrated in Chapters 3 through 5, the case studies demonstrate that the strength and sustainability of diasporas' collective actions were determined by whether they forged working relationships with *allies in the home-country*, *political elites and allies in the host-country*, and *relevant third-parties* working to intervene in home-country crises, such as members of the media, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and international institutions like the UN and NATO. When these entities *incorporated* the diasporas as representatives, assistants, advisors, interpreters, and informants during acute conflict periods, activists abroad came to play a role as *intermediaries* in the revolution. Diasporas also came to play *direct* roles in home-country crises when their transnational ties to "insider receptors" facilitated the transfer of resources to their compatriots on the ground and when disruptions in regime control enabled members of the diaspora to access their home-country and needy populations. However, this research demonstrates that when diaspora activists lack insider ties,

these ties break over time, and access to the home-country is blocked or becomes precarious, diasporas' abilities to play direct roles in home-country crises will be significantly constrained.

However, as illustrated in Chapter 5, under conditions that are hostile to transnational mobilization, activists can nevertheless make specific tactical adaptations that allow them to pursue their collective goals. Specifically, the analysis shows that collective actors can persist in spite of broken ties with insiders, increasingly hostile home- and host-country conditions, and resource exhaustion by diverting precious resources into the formation of full-time formal advocacy organizations. As demonstrated through the analysis of Syrian activism in both the US and Britain, the professionalization of social movement organizations granted diasporas the accreditation and legitimacy to continue pursuing their political goals and to direct humanitarian aid to the home-country. Such adaptations were not cost-free, however, because professionalization imposed significant rules and regulations on the scope of diasporas' transnational actions. However, as illustrated in the Yemeni case, informal movement groups that did not divert resources into the formation of full-time transnational organizations died off in light of repressive oversight, resource exhaustion, demoralization, and disconnection from the diaspora's compatriots on the ground.

In Part III, Chapter 6, I then turn to the consequences of episodic transnational mobilization for the mobilization of Libyans, Syrians, and Yemenis in the host-country in the short term. This study shows that episodes of contention can have numerous effects on political mobilization in the diaspora, prompting activists: 1) to lobby for their rights and recognition by the home-country when opportunities emerge for political inclusion in post-conflict periods; 2) to combat the negative effects of home-country conflicts for the diaspora, including discrimination in the host-country that stems from their association with perceived threats abroad and

274

corresponding discrimination, racism, and xenophobia; 3) to import the principles and lessons of home-country conflicts into the diaspora and promote changes therein; and 4) to shape the "context of reception" for home-country elites, including for both foes and friends, through episodic demonstrations, petitions, and lobbying. However, in keeping with my argument above, diasporas are more likely to continue mobilizing over time in significant ways if they support and maintain a formal organizational field dedicated to advocacy. In this way, the episodic transnational mobilization of immigrant and minority groups can have important and far-reaching implications for their domestic visibility and "voice" in the host-country (Hirschman 1978). In all, this study has numerous implications for the study of social movements, diasporas, and conflict that I elaborate below.

The Importance of Grounded Comparative Approaches

This project first illustrates the methodological promise of using a grounded approach to understand and analyze collective action dynamics among social groups. This is particularly important for the study of populations that remain largely invisible in social science research due to an iterative cycle of theoretical neglect and a lack of existing historical and survey data. In this way, this study highlights the importance of substantiating community dynamics that are often subsumed under alternative aggregate categories (such as Arab, which excludes ethnic categories such as Syrian-Kurdish and Libyan-Amazigh) through interview and ethnographic data collection methods. The findings also emphasize the importance of taking respondents' accounts seriously because they often reveal perceptions and experiences not accounted for in other types of data sources, as I find in the case of transnational repression and intra-community factionalism. Furthermore, in contrast to predominant analytical tendencies in social movement studies to focus narrowly on the emergence and frequency of protest events (Earl et al. 2004), the

275

grounded approach used here sheds light on activists' fuller tactical repertoires and the ways that other types of initiatives can reach across borders and make a difference for populations and movements across borders.

At the same time, this approach does not mean that investigators must rely solely on respondents' testimonials to characterize and analyze their collective dynamics. Accounts should instead be used to formulate exploratory questions to be explored and tested across cases. These accounts should also be triangulated with external data sources whenever possible and grounded in comparisons that reveal variation and causal effects. This further emphasizes the usefulness of comparative case-study research in revealing patterns across cases in ways that defy prediction and insiders' beliefs (Bloemraad 2013; Ragin 2000, 2008; Yin 2008). This study, for example, was initially designed as a cross-country comparison because reports by Yemeni activists attested that diaspora activism during the revolution had varied significantly between the US and British contexts in ways that warranted investigation. However, through extensive and comparative fieldwork across the two countries, I discovered that in contrast to what many Yemenis respondents *believed*—that *other* diaspora communities had done a greater and better job at mobilizing to help the revolution than they had—Yemeni activists across local and national contexts were instead impeded in similar ways by a common set of factors. So though the orienting assumptions that shaped the research design turned out to be unsupported in the data, the cross-country case comparison nevertheless revealed how the mobilization dynamics of diaspora groups across communities are shaped by a similar set of meso-level political conditions and transnational networked relations. In this way, the comparison revealed important information about similarities in the mobilization patterns of co-nationals across contexts, differences between the three national groups, and the mechanisms producing these findings.

Theoretical Implications

I also draw several theoretical implications from this study for future research on mobilization, transnationalism, diaspora and immigrant populations, and violent conflict. First, existing theories of transnational and diaspora mobilization to date have been overwhelmingly derived from case studies of large multinational protest events, elite exile movements, and prominent interest groups. In contrast, this study argues that extra-institutional diaspora movements are not free to mobilize as atomized and unencumbered long-distance nationalists as existing characterizations suggest, nor are they as ubiquitous as previously assumed. Instead, this study argues that understanding the conditions under which diasporas mobilize necessitates attention to their embeddedness in multi-level structures and dynamic sets of relations. The multi-level relational model derived here, therefore, helps to explain in large part why populations that are well-positioned to mobilize collectively against home-country regimes, launch social movement organizations, and play a role in home-country conflicts only do so under certain conditions, and to varying degrees.

As I argue in Part I, for example, attention to the effects of home-country authoritarianism and transnational repression on immigrant communities reveals how sending states continue to interact with their nationals abroad after "exit" in ways that impede their "voice" (Hirschman 1978). These conditions can also deter the broader anti-regime diaspora from mobilizing in accordance with their rights of free speech and assembly in democratic host-countries and deter them from participating in the "social movement society" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) more generally. Further investigation into the layering effects of home- and host-country conditions among other populations will undoubtedly shed light on missing and weak cases of

diaspora mobilization—and particularly among diasporas with ties to highly-repressive states, from Eritrea to Saudi Arabia and China —that are so often neglected in the literature.

This study also suggests the importance of attending to diasporas' relations with other relevant actors during heightened periods of contention at home. When diaspora activists establish working relationships with other participants in transnational advocacy networks, they can play significant roles in home-country conflicts as intermediaries between parties and directly as fixers on the ground. When they do not, their actions become significantly constrained and only indirectly supportive of their compatriots at home. This perspective refocuses our attention to the broader constellation of institutions and relations within which diasporas are embedded, rather than placing diaspora movements squarely at the center of our focus. In so doing, this study answers calls by recent studies to "put social movements in their place" (McAdam and Boudet 2012) and to understand how the "strategic action fields" in which movements are encapsulated shape why they emerge how and when they do, as well as the conditions under which they come to matter (Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

Furthermore, this study has implications for understanding the conditions under which diasporas and immigrant communities with shared anti-regime grievances come to unify as "long-distance nationalists" or fragment along sub-national lines during opportunities for national mobilization. As Luis Guarnizo and his colleagues demonstrate in regards to cases of Central American immigrant politics (Guarnizo et al. 1999; Guarnizo et al. 2003) and Maria Koinova (2011, 2013) argues in regards to Balkan diaspora movements, conflicts and violence in the home-country can stoke sub-national identities that influence the rise of competing claims and shape intra-community conflict in important ways. This study finds the same effect for Middle Eastern diasporas, suggesting that this dynamic applies widely across cases. As such,

intra-community conflicts and the emergence of sub-national identity-based movements are intimately tied to political dynamics in the home-country.

This research also has implications for the study of how movements adapt to their environments in ways that shape their participation and collective efficacy over time. For example, this study extends McAdam's (1986) assertion that social movement participation is a dynamic phenomenon. For members of the Libyan and Syrian diasporas who were not already "out" as regime opponents before the Arab Spring, their opportunities for protest presented by the uprisings were overlaid with corresponding fears of incurring costs on their loved ones and exile for expressing dissent from abroad. Such threats led many Syrian activists across the US and Britain to engage in what I call "guarded advocacy," which staggered the coming out process of the diaspora writ large to contest home-country authoritarianism and violence. This suggests that analyses of high-risk activism should account for how anti-regime sympathizers adapt to conflicting social pressures (Kitts 2000) by engaging in intermediate forms of activism that lie on a continuum between inaction and overt movement membership.

This study also argues that activists and their movements confronting an increasingly hostile environment for transnational mobilization—whether due to factors such as increases in domestic oversight and repression, severed ties with their counterparts across borders, resource exhaustion, or some combination thereof—must adapt to these constraints by establishing formal advocacy organizations if they are to survive and continue pursuing their collective goals. Collective actors within the Syrian diaspora that did so were able to continue pursuing their goals, albeit within an increased set of rules and restrictions. This study speaks to longstanding debates in the literature over the effects of the professionalization of social movements by demonstrating that formalization as a movement survival strategy is not mutually exclusive from

279

tactical conservatism. At the same time, however, it is the compromise that under-resourced and repressed movements must make when their transnational mobilization is threatened by conditions out of their control. In addition, this study also argues that the formalization of a transnational organizational field further assists diaspora and immigrant communities in advocating for rights and recognition as constituencies of both their home- and host-country polities.

This study has additional implications for understanding the transnational dimensions of the Arab Spring and of violent conflict in general. Just as scholars continue to debate the causes and consequences the French and British revolutions and the American Civil Rights Movement, scholarly debates over the Arab Spring have only just begun. This study suggests that scholars of the 2011 uprisings and its aftermath look beyond internal country dynamics and the "closed polity" (Gleditsch 2007) to investigate how protesters and insurgents worked garner the support of their allies abroad, the types of support received, and how these cross-border relationships have impacted their campaigns (e.g., Moss 2014). While I do not suggest placing diasporas at the center of analysis of the Arab Spring or any other conflict, I do suggest that scholars to attend to how movements on the ground "draw in the crowd" (Schattsneider 1960) to gain leverage in the fight against the overwhelming force of their opponents (Keck and Sikkink 1998). For contemporary social movements disrupting authoritarian entrenchment across the globe, it will be important to attend to how the ever-expanding means of communication and connection across borders transnationalize revolutions and civil wars, thereby impacting conflict dynamics on the ground in important ways (Cederman et al. 2009; Checkel 2013; Gleditsch 2007; Hironaka 2005; Wayland 2004).

Lastly, this dissertation suggests that more research is needed to understand how cross-national coalitions not only shape the dynamics of conflict, but also the aftermath of acute crises, as when diasporas flood back in to fill political offices and establish parties, man businesses and hospitals, and promote civil society initiatives in the places that they or their elders had left behind (Koinova 2010). For even when the resources and expertise of diasporas are needed for rebuilding purposes in post-conflict periods (Smith and Stares 2007), significant tensions may arise between those who maintain a foot in both worlds (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001) and those who never left, especially since diasporas can again exit when conflicts reignite. As the Libyans whom I interviewed in Tripoli in 2013 attested, resentments over "re-patriates" as active players in post-Gaddafi Libyan politics and society produced friction between those who had never left and the so-called "double *shafras*," a pejorative term referring to those who carried both a Libyan and an international SIM card in their mobile phones. Indeed, many of the respondents who had repatriated to Libya left their home-country once again after a resurgence in armed conflict and the influx of ISIS fighters on the hunt for anything and anyone perceived as foreign and Westernized. Because diasporas can often enter and exit in accordance with how political opportunities expand and contract over time, activists—however eager to assist their compatriots at home—may never fully achieve social re-integration into their home-countries and may play a tenuous role in nation-building processes. Future studies would therefore do well to understand whether and how diasporas can reintegrate into economic, social, and political life in their places-of-origin in the aftermath of the conflicts that brought them home again.

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ENDNOTES

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[1] I use Moss and Snow's (in press) definition of social movements as "collectivities that seek to challenge or defend institutional and/or cultural systems of authority and their associated practices and representatives."

[2] Existing studies of transnational mobilization by social movement scholars are overwhelmingly focused on what Sidney Tarrow (2005, p. 2) calls "self-conscious internationalists," referring to those movements that strategically seek to transcend the local by cultivating ties with international organizations and institutions (Bob 2005; Tsutsui 2015).

[3] See McAdam and Boudet (2012, p. 1-27) for a detailed critique of the movement-centered approach in the study of mobilization. They argue that scholars should examine communities at risk for mobilization and whether the movements that emerge matter, rather than only focusing on cases of important or successful mobilization in order to avoid overstating the frequency and importance of social movements.

[4] Here I use Snow and Moss' (2014, p. 1134) definition of priming as "an increased sensitivity to certain stimuli due to prior experiences. It is a pre-sensitizing process that increases the probability of activating a concept, frame, emotion, or line of action based on exposure to an earlier, similar stimulus or experience."

[5] Here I employ David Snow's definition of identity as "a shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences… in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of 'others'" (2013, p. 267).

[6] Significant spatial distance between dissidents in democratic states and repressive autocracies is also likely to add to the degree of protection they experience after emigration and can embolden them to act publicly against the regimes. For example, I expect that Syrian activists in the U.S. and Britain have greater freedoms to engage in public dissent in comparison to dissidents in Lebanon, which is a weak state sharing a border with Syria and where the Syrian government has been known to carry out assassinations in the past.

[7] See Huynh and Yiu (2015) and Portes and Yiu (2013) on "blocked transnationalism."

[8] Internal Review Board approval has been obtained for the use of human subjects in this research (HS# 2012-8918 and HS #2012-8887, University of California, Irvine).

[9] A trip to Benghazi was also planned, but fell through at the last moment due to an emergency experienced by my prospective host family. My Libyan colleagues were also concerned about me visiting the city alone in wake of the attack on the U.S. consulate and the death of officials including Ambassador Christopher Stevens earlier that year. For this reason, I took their advice to cancel the trip after my host was forced to cancel with me. However, while in Tripoli, I made every effort to interview repatriated members of the diaspora with ties to Benghazi, and this turned out to be relatively easy, since many of my prospective interviewees traveled regularly from Benghazi to and through Tripoli for work or family reasons.

[10] No prospective interviewee was excluded from the study due to in ability to speak in English, though the respondents' degrees of proficiency varied.

[11] For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, open codes denoting the harm of relatives in the home-country, such as "uncles interrogated" and "father detained," were grouped into the focused code of "proxy punishment"; I then used this analytical category to distinguish *proxy punishment* as a sub-type of transnational repression by diasporas' home-country regimes.

[12] I cannot claim that the movements and organizations reported in Table 1.1 account for the entirety of informal and formal groups in the U.S. and British diasporas operative before 2011. This is because some movements were informal, underground, short-lived, or "one-man shows" (i.e., run by a single leader) whose efforts may have been unaccounted for in the sample and/or unknown by other respondents. However, based on the accounts of long-time activists and community leaders familiar with social movements in the diaspora in general and secondary-source research on the diaspora, this table represents all public diaspora organizations and well-known informal and/or underground movements before 2011.

[13] The Abu Salim Massacre in Libya occurred in 1996. Regime forces executed approximately 1200 prisoners at one time, many of whom were affiliated with Islamist movements, at the Abu Salim prison in Tripoli. This massacre was hidden from the public and kept from the families of the victims for many years.

[14] Other leaders of this South Yemeni movement were contacted with several interview requests, but I never received a response. Because this group had no public online profile or official status that I could find, it remains unknown whether this group's membership extended beyond the New York area or approximately how large the movement was.

[15] Ali Naser Mohammed lost the southern civil war of 1986 against another faction in the Yemeni Socialist Party led by Ali Salem al-Baydh.

[16] Saleh recalled that the names of the two former YCAs in Sheffield were the Yemeni Workers Union, which represented the northern Yemeni diaspora, and the Yemeni Community Association, which represented the south.

[17] The Thatcher government responded to this incident by severing diplomatic relations with Libya, and the death of Yvonne Fletcher remained a point of contention between the two governments for over a decade.

[18] As Paul (1990, p. 5) writes, "the Syrian government has almost certainly been responsible for killing, injuring, restricting free speech, and otherwise violating the rights of persons outside of territory it directly controls" in the Middle East and Europe.

[19] Several Libyans also reported that they or their colleagues were tipped off by domestic intelligence services about regime-related threats in the U.S. and Britain. This further attests to

the importance of immigrants' host- and host-country bilateral relations in shaping the migration of dissidents abroad and the degree of protections they receive after resettlement.

[20] I use the term factionalism rather than sectarianism because of sectarianism's connotation with religious schisms. While religious divisions are pervasive in these diasporas, factionalism better encompasses the multifaceted character of divisions within the diaspora by region, ethnicity, political party, and generation.

[21] At Omar's encouragement, I also interviewed the chairman of the YCA in Liverpool named Abdul Alkanshali; he did not deny being affiliated with Saleh, nor that the organization had significant solvency problems.

[22] This also included "classic" communist opposition groups that I was not able to locate for this study, though several interviews did identify as socialist/communist. One interviewees well-versed in Syrian diaspora politics reported that these groups were based primarily in France.

[23] As discussed in Chapter 1, quotidian disruptions are defined by David Snow and his colleagues (1998, p. 1) as "actual or threatened disruption of… the taken-for-granted routines and attitudes of everyday life," including the structure and character of social control in a given society.

[24] Six Libyan respondents joined the insurgency in Libya during the first week of the revolution. I treat anonymous mobilization in war as distinct from guarded advocacy abroad because of the obvious differences in direct risk.

[25] According to the International Crisis Group (2011a), much of the internet-connected population were already using these sites before 2011 through proxy servers.

[26] Several participants in L.A.-area protests declined to be interviewed in 2014. A mutual friend explained that because the territories in which their families reside are constantly changing hands, they no longer wanted to be publicly identified as supporting any one side in the conflict.

[27] Having visited the Rixos Hotel during my 2013 fieldwork, I asked Niz how it was possible that he and his colleagues smuggled journalists out past the hotel's fortifications, which included a long driveway and a gate. He said that by communicating with journalists and using moles who worked within the hotel, they would make arrangements for the journalists to pretend to go outside of the gate for a cigarette and then jump into a waiting car. He explained that the poor training of the security services provided opportunities for them to exploit as a guerilla movement:

> You have to understand something… I'm not trying to belittle what we did or what anyone did, and I'm not trying to belittle what the risks were, but Libya has been… very neglected for forty-two years. Not only from an education or health care or infrastructure point of view, from every aspect you can think of, but also the quality and the standard of training and expertise of the intelligence service. And the security services. Put bluntly, I

293

think there were a lot of them, they were brutal, they were aggressive, but they weren't intelligent and they weren't well equipped and they weren't well trained.

[28] This is *not* to say that only the well-to-do or highest educated Libyans contributed to the effort. But at the same time, many white-collar activists possessed the necessary means to transform into full-time volunteers for the revolution, sometimes in lieu of their regular jobs, and sometimes in addition to them.

[29] Colonel Gaddafi was a boy scout in his youth and supported the organization in Libya.

[30] Bashar Jaafari is the permanent representative of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Al-Assad regime to the United Nations in New York.

[31] The UN Human Rights Council did indeed hold a special session on the "Situation of Human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic" on April 29, 2011.

[32] This scandal illustrates the growing mistrust and corruption within the opposition that produced dilemmas and withdrawals among members of the diaspora. According to Malik: "Around February 2012, one Syrian opposition figure who was big within the Syrian National Council… his brother was murdered in Aleppo in mysterious circumstances. So he went on Al Jazeera and said my brother is a martyr, they regime killed him because they couldn't get to me so they killed my brother instead. On the same day, an armed group from Aleppo called the Abu Amara Brigades, they claimed on their Facebook page that they had killed him because he was a regime spy. And then later that day, they took down this post from their Facebook. So I thought, this is interesting. It's one or the other, it can't be both… So I got one of the journalists at Barada TV to look into the story. Eventually we spoke to the members of the Abu Amara Brigades and they said yeah, we killed him because we warned him several times, he was with the pro-regime militia, was using his restaurant as a meeting place and he was supporting them. And we told him to stop doing it and he didn't listen so we killed him. I asked them, why did you take it down on the Facebook? Well, he said that what happened was the brother of the guy who was killed was so embarrassed by the fact that his brother was supporting the regime and he's supposedly this opposition guy… There were bribes going down… So I said, are you prepared to go on the record and say this? They're like, yeah, fuck it. We're going to go on the record and expose this. Okay, fine.

So I said that this is investigative journalism at its best, right? So to be fair, we need to phone the guy [in the Syrian National Council] to get his story. We called him and spoke to his right hand man, his personal secretary. And the personal secretary went crazy. He said we're gonna fuck you up. Tell Malik that 'this is like a personal challenge. You mustn't say this.' He also said that's not his brother, it's just a guy who has the same surname or something. Anyway, just complete bullshit. So I said okay, fine, but those guys are prepared to go on the record and say he was a regime stooge and they killed him. So what's the response? And he went crazy. At that point, I realized, this is the big story, this is the big political scandal. Because that means that guy's a liar. He went on Al Jazeera and said my brother's a martyr knowing that he wasn't a martyr."

³³ When I visited Sanaa's field hospital in June 2012 with my spouse Will Picard, who is also the Executive Director of the Yemen Peace Project (2010-), the head doctor attested that his team had received donations from abroad. However, it is unknown how much money was channeled to the field hospital from various sources overseas.

³⁴ Quoted from <http://www.libyanamericanorganization.org/about/> (Last accessed March 20, 2016).

³⁵ Shahrazad was referring to the upcoming Libyan elections in June 2014 for the Council of Deputies.