Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has long fascinated Western observers, more often than not out of a sense of misguided curiosity. Owing to imperialism, Orientalism, and enduring stereotypes, commentary has revolved around a central query: Why is the region and its people so “backward”? The social sciences have remained focused on this question, albeit in a modified form, since the fall of the Soviet Union (Bayat 2013; Munif 2020). As researchers looked optimistically to a post-1989 future that appeared to be liberalizing, they asked why the wave of democracy sweeping the formerly colonized world had bypassed the MENA region. The answer provided, in one form or another, was that regimes led by autocrats, kings, and presidents-for-life were too powerful and the people too weak – too loyal, apathetic, divided, and tribal – to mount a credible challenge to authoritarian rule.¹

Such a view errs, of course, by overlooking how countries across the MENA region have given rise to social movements for liberation, equality, and human rights throughout modern history (Bayat 2017; Gerges 2015). Whether emerging from the gilded elite or the grassroots, its people have always fought against foreign rule and domestic tyranny (Bayat 2013). Even so, mass mobilization against enduring dictatorships seemed unlikely after the “Global War on Terror,” launched by the United States and its allies after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, made friends out of former enemies. Foreign powers fed dictatorships in places such as Egypt, Libya, and Yemen billions of dollars’ worth of aid and weapons. They also cooperated with so-called enemies, such as the Assad regime in Syria, to render and torture suspects of

¹ See Brownlee et al. (2015: Introduction, ch. 1) for a comprehensive overview of the literature oriented around democratization and authoritarianism in the MENA region.
terrorism. By 2010, autocrats augmented by oil wealth had Western nations so cozily in their pockets that their confidence in perpetual rule was sky high.

With so much attention focused on authoritarian durability, it is little wonder that the revolutions to follow caught scholars and governments by surprise (Bamyeh and Hanafi 2015). This new era of revolt began in Tunisia in December 2010; within weeks, demonstrations against corruption and repression had spread to Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain. These uprisings, which have become known as the “Arab Spring,” spanned from the sapphire-blue waters of the Mediterranean coast to the green highlands of the Arabian Peninsula. As tens of thousands of ordinary people demanded their dignity by marching in the streets against corruption and abuse, popular movements and insurgencies destabilized regimes thought to be unshakable. The conflicts that ensued produced both improbable triumphs through selfless heroism and devastating losses through abject slaughter. But well before this wave gave rise to resurgent dictatorships and civil wars (Lynch 2016), the masses shook the earth with rage and made dictators quake with fear.

Revolutions are rarely neatly confined to their places of origin, however. They also galvanize anti-regime activists in the diaspora around the globe, and the Arab Spring was no exception. Diaspora mobilization for the Arab Spring was no trivial matter. Long before foreign governments and international organizations jumped in to support revolutionaries, ordinary emigrants, refugees, and their children protested in Washington, DC, London, and New York City against their home-country regimes; channeled millions of dollars’ worth of aid to poorly equipped insurgencies and beleaguered refugees; and traveled homeward to join the revolutions as rescue workers, interpreters, and fighters. Diaspora activists’ efforts to help their compatriots under siege not only heralded a new wave of transnational activism, but exposed regimes’ crimes against humanity and saved lives on the ground. Their mobilization against authoritarianism also signified a new phase in community empowerment and collective action, particularly among those who had grown up in places where speaking out against ruling dictatorships could get a person imprisoned, tortured, or killed.

As scholars such as Holmes (2019) have rightly pointed out, the Arab Spring is a misnomer since many non-Arabs participated in revolts and protests, from the Nubians of Egypt to the Kurds of Syria. I use this label intentionally, however, because it commonly refers to the protest wave initiated in Tunisia in 2011 and carried on by protesters in Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain in 2011 (and beyond in some cases). In contrast to Bayat (2017), I characterize these movements as revolutionary (rather than “reformulatory”) due to the fact that they demanded the fall of dictatorships, not reforms, and new social, economic, and political arrangements to ensure justice and equity (see also Brownlee et al. 2015; Holmes 2019). Of course, what these demands actually meant to participants in practice depended on who or what movements within the revolutionary coalitions one is referring to (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood versus secular feminists).
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Although the Arab Spring uprisings are well-known, the role that diaspora movements played in this revolutionary wave is not. This is not surprising, given the guiding assumption among social scientists that protesters must be present – proximate, in person, and ready to storm the gates – to challenge authoritarianism. As economist Albert Hirschman (1970) describes in his hallmark work *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, populations aggrieved with their governments can do one of three things. They can either remain loyal and hope for the best, voice their dissent at home through protest – a high-risk strategy in authoritarian contexts – or exit, thereby voting against authorities with their feet. Hirschman argues that exit in the form of emigration, whether forced or voluntary, decimates the potential for voice and social change. By breaking up dissident networks and separating leaders from their adherents, exit acts as a safety valve for regimes by releasing pressure from below, thereby reducing “the prospects for advance, reform, or revolution” (Hirschman 1986: 90).

Yet, as the case of the Arab Spring abroad demonstrates, dissidents who travel abroad have the potential to induce change from without. In fact, those who remain loyal to the people and places left behind can use voice after exit to demand change at home (Glasius 2018; Hirschman 1993; Hoffmann 2010; Mueller 1999; Newland 2010; Pfaff 2006; Pfaff and Kim 2003). Members of diasporas – a term used here to refer to the exiles, émigrés, expatriates, refugees, and emigrants of different generations who attribute their origins to a common place – do so for many reasons.

For notable exceptions, see works by Amarsaringham (2015) and Quinsaat (2013, 2019).

This is why regimes “behead opposition groups by allowing, encouraging, and forcing exit” (Hirschman 1993: 84) and cast their opponents into exile. Authorities also discredit exiles by slandering them as traitors and outlaws (Glasius 2018).

Here, “diaspora” is a descriptor used akin to the way sociologists use the term “émigrant” – a person who has exited from a country where they no longer reside – but it is also preferable to using the latter term since many diaspora activists have never themselves emigrated, being of the second or third generation, and because many of my respondents called themselves diaspora members. By using “diaspora” to describe activists and their movements and organizations (which is a synonym of diasporic, but less awkward), I refer to the biographical, cognitive, and structural orientations of persons and their social, political, and economic practices vis-à-vis a shared place of origin, that is, a “home-country.” While many diasporas speak of a “homeland” instead of a home-country – as in the case of the Palestinians or Kurds – the actual places where diaspora members are rooted tend to fall within the jurisdictions of states. I thus use home-country and homeland interchangeably in some parts of this book for practical and stylistic reasons.

In order to distinguish the attributed place of origin from the place of residence, I use “host-country” as a synonym of “receiving country” or “country of settlement.” This does not mean that the persons in this study only consider their place of origin as “home” and their place of residence as temporary. I found that many interviewees consider the United States or Britain more so their “home” than anywhere else; for others, they felt belonging to (and rejection from) more than one country as well. In a world where persons are increasingly embracing hybrid identities (Hall 2016) and may attribute their belonging to multiple locations and communities, the distinctions here are made for the purposes of analysis and are not intended to essentialize...
connections to grandparents and friends from home, summertime visits to their hometowns, annual picnics and flag-flying parades, religious gatherings and diaspora associations, grief and nostalgia over childhoods spent in the homeland, and foreign business dealings all serve to bind members of national and ethnic groups to a home-country (Guarnizo et al. 2003; R. Smith 2006). So too do experiences of marginalization in the host-country make them feel more at home in their places of origin. Consequently, diaspora members’ “ways of being and ways of belonging” can bind them to the homeland and become transnational in character (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1002), rather than bound within their place of settlement.6

History shows that exile has long served as an incubator for diaspora voice. While traumatic for its victims, banishment enables dissidents to survive abroad during periods of repressive crackdown at home (Gualtieri 2009; He 2014; Ma 1993; Shain 2005[1989], 2007; Taylor 1989). Many nation-states have been founded by exiles, including China’s Sun Yat-sen, Poland’s Tadeusz Kościuszko, and Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh. Others have captured revolutions already underway, as when Vladimir Lenin returned by German train to lead the Bolshevik coup d’état in Russia and Ruhollah Khomeini arrived by plane from France to forge the Islamic Republic of Iran. Diaspora members from the Balkans, Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Eritrea have bankrolled wars and funded persons’ experiences or felt sense of belonging, which are subject to change over time. As scholars such as Anthias (1998: 563–64), Brubaker (2005, 2015), and Wald (2008, 2009) argue, we should not assume that diaspora members experience “some kind of primordial bond” because “there may be as much difference and division as commonality and solidarity.” This is why this study treats collective action by diaspora members as a dependent variable, as per the calls of Brubaker (2015) and Waldinger (2015).

6 Diasporas need not be organized into a bounded, distinct group to retain loyalties to people and places in the homeland and take up voice on their behalf. Because diaspora members do not constitute naturally occurring groups, scholars have increasingly refuted the notion that their members form pre-configured communities through trauma and displacement (Cohen 1996). Instead, the term “diaspora” is used increasingly to designate persons with a common tie to a foreign place of origin, as in the case of refugees and expatriates, immigrants, and economic migrants (Safran 1991; on the use of the term, see also Anderson 1998, 2006[1983]; Appadurai 1997; Butler 2003; Clifford 1994; Tölölyan 1996). Diaspora members’ transnational ties to the homeland and to one other are often forged through the conscientious mobilization strategies by exiles, emigrants, and states (Abramson 2017; Ragazzi 2014; Søkefeld 2006). Their members may, for instance, form social and political associations in order to foster membership in a community, whether real or “imagined,” and to inculcate a sense of shared history and interests (Anderson 2006[1983]). In these ways, second and later emigrant generations can retain transnational membership and feel deep affection for foreign locales, even if they themselves do not remember their early years in the homeland or have never visited it themselves. These efforts also reinforce loyalties and obligations to the home-country by drawing members’ attention to the realities of home-country conflicts and crises and suggesting what kinds of interventions are needed (Duquette-Rury 2020; Shain 2007: 5). As Shain (2007: 106) argues, transnational connections may be social, psychological, economic, or all of the above; when kin are threatened by home-country crises, these attachments have high stakes and real-life consequences.
nation-building projects from afar by channeling cash and matériel to their homelands (Hirt 2014; Hockenos 2003; Lainer-Vos 2013; Ma 1990; Maney 2000). In a world where having a nation-state grants ethnic groups protection (Mann 2005), minority movements among Tibetans, Palestinians, Basques, and Kurds have demanded sovereignty and ethno-religious rights in their homelands (Adamson 2019; Bamyeh 2014; Baser 2015; J. Hess 2009). Expatriates with axes to grind, such as anti-communist Cubans and Iraqis opposing Saddam Hussein, have also forged powerful lobbies to challenge home-country governments and shape host-country foreign policy (Ambrosio 2002; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007; T. Smith 2000; Vertovec 2005). In these cases and many others, exiles and diaspora movements have become what Yossi Shain (2005 [1989]: xv) describes as “some of the most prominent harbingers of regime change” in the world (see also Field 1971).

As authoritarianism resurges across the globe today and in the foreseeable future (Repucci 2020), diaspora movements will undoubtedly continue to play a central role in an increasingly urgent fight against dictatorships. But although they have played a notable role in fomenting change in their homelands for centuries, surprisingly little attention has been paid to explaining their interventions. To fill this gap, I address two central questions: When do diaspora movements emerge to contest authoritarianism in their places of origin? How, and under what conditions, do activists fuel rebellions therein? By systematically investigating how revolutions ricocheted from Libya, Syria, and Yemen to the United States and Great Britain, this book provides interesting new answers.

The central contribution of *The Arab Spring Abroad* is the provision of a set of conditions explaining when, how, and the extent to which diasporas wield voice after exit against authoritarian regimes. In so doing, the book demonstrates that exit neither undermine voice, as Hirschman (1970) suggests, nor does it necessarily foster voice, as historical examples of exile mobilization illustrate. Instead, I argue that while some exiles use exit as an opportunity for voice, diaspora members’ ties to an authoritarian home-country are more likely to suppress voice after exit within the wider anti-regime community for at least one of two reasons.

The first is that home-country regimes may actively repress voice in the diaspora using violence and threats. When they do, non-exiles are likely to remain silent in order to protect themselves and their relatives in the home-country. The second reason is that home-country ties can entangle diaspora members in divisive, partisan conflicts rooted in the home-country. When these home-country rifts travel abroad through members’ transnational ties, they can factionalize regime opponents and make anti-regime solidarity practically impossible. I find that these two transnational forces – what I term transnational repression and conflict transmission, respectively – largely deterred anti-regime diaspora members from Libya, Syria, and Yemen from coming out and coming together against authoritarianism before the revolutions in 2011.
This book then demonstrates how and why this situation can change. Specifically, I show how major disruptions to politics-as-usual in the home-country can give rise to voice abroad. As regimes massacred demonstrators, prompted the formation of revolutionary coalitions, and led to major humanitarian crises during the Arab Spring, they induced what sociologist David Snow et al. (1998) call *quotidian disruptions* to everyday life and regime control. The revolutions therefore not only produced civil insurrections and wars at home, but also traveled through diaspora members’ ties to produce quotidian disruptions abroad. As I detail further below, as the Arab Spring undermined the *efficacy* of regimes’ long-distance threats and *united* previously fragmented groups, outspoken exiles and silent regime opponents decided to come out and come together to wield voice to an unprecedented degree.

At the same time, the final chapters of the book argue that even after diaspora members take up voice in unprecedented ways, they only come to make impactful *interventions* in anti-authoritarian rebellions if two additive factors come into play. Drawing from the comparative analysis, I show that they must (1) gain the capacity to *convert resources* to a shared cause, and (2) gain *geopolitical support* from states and other powerholders in order to become auxiliary forces for anti-authoritarianism. When they do, they can channel cash to their allies, mobilize policymakers, and facilitate humanitarian aid delivery on the front lines. Otherwise, activists may voice their demands on the street, but they will not become empowered to fuel rebellion and relief when their help is needed most. Taken together, by bringing attention to the important, but dynamic and highly contingent, roles that diaspora movements play in contentious politics, this study demonstrates when voice after exit emerges, how it matters, and the conditions giving rise to diaspora movement interventions for rebellion and relief.

Before elaborating these claims, this chapter summarizes the events of the Arab Spring, explains the puzzles that motivated this research, and justifies the comparisons that form the basis of my analysis.

1.1 THE ARAB SPRING UPRISINGS

The Arab Spring began with a lone spark of discontent on December 17, 2010, when a young Tunisian named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest police harassment. This act of despair galvanized demonstrations, and after a police crackdown, protests escalated into a nationwide rebellion against the twenty-three-year dictatorship of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. After labor strikes crippled the country and the military refused to shoot into the crowds, Ben Ali and his family fled Tunisia to Saudi Arabia, stunning global audiences on January 14, 2011. Just days later, activists in Egypt followed suit. On January 25, protesters in Cairo broke through police cordons to occupy a central downtown location called Tahrir Square. After setting up an encampment, snipers and thugs attacked the sit-in movement in full view of the international media.
Protesters stood their ground in Cairo and beyond, set police stations ablaze, pleaded with the military to defect, and spurred a nationwide labor strike. After failing to quell the protesters with force, Egypt’s pharaoh-president Hosni Mubarak resigned days later, on February 11.

As rumors circulated as to which regime would be next, activists and ordinary people in the region’s poorest country, the Republic of Yemen, came out in force. From the dusty, cobblestoned roads of the capital Sana’a to the humidity-soaked lowlands of the south, citizens of one of the world’s most heavily armed nations marched peacefully to demand the resignation of their longtime president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Vowing to stay on, it did not take long before Saleh unleashed gunmen to clear the streets. The brazen murders of unarmed protesters, including a massacre on March 18, dubbed the Friday of Dignity (Jumaat al-Karamah), led to the defection of military, government, and tribal elites. After pitched battles with loyalists in the summer, Saleh remained dug in – that is, until a bomb planted in the presidential palace sent him to a hospital in Saudi Arabia. Facing pressures at home and sanctions from the United Nations, he eventually signed a deal, brokered by the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to step down in November 2011 in exchange for legal immunity.

While Egyptians battled regime loyalists back in February, rumors circulated online that Libya was planning its own “Day of Rage.” The regime of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi attempted to preempt protests by arresting a well-known lawyer, Fathi Terbil, in Libya’s eastern city of Benghazi. Instead of preventing protests, however, the arrest of this local hero did the opposite. Benghazians had long suffered at the hand of Gaddafi, who had come to power in 1969, and Terbil’s arrest provoked a riot. As the military in Benghazi defected or fled, protests spread westward all the way to the capital of Tripoli. In response, Gaddafi promised to cleanse the streets of “rats” and “cockroaches” (Bassiouni 2013). After the United Nations Security Council approved intervention against his onslaught, a nascent insurgency of military defectors and volunteers became embroiled in a revolutionary war backed by global powers. But intervention by NATO was no guarantee of success. A terrible siege against the port city of Misrata and a stalemate along the Nafusa Mountains dragged on into the summer. In August, however, the forces of the Free Libyan Army (also known as the National Liberation Army) broke the impasse and marched on Tripoli, prompting Gaddafi and his loyalists to flee into the desert. By November, the self-proclaimed “King of Africa” was captured and killed, signifying the end of a forty-two-year-long nightmare.

In February, once-unthinkable forms of public criticism began to emerge in Syria, which had been kept under the thumb of a totalitarian family dynasty for more than forty years. As demonstrators in Damascus were beaten and incarcerated for holding peaceful vigils, protests erupted in outlying cities such as Dara’a against local corruption and daily indignities. The response
of Bashar al-Assad’s regime was murderous, and the imprisonment of children who had scrawled Arab Spring slogans in graffiti only stoked more outrage. While the growing protest movement initially called for reform, repression turned protesters into full-scale revolutionaries. Bashar al-Assad unleashed the full power of the military and loyalists against civilians according to the creed “Bashar, or we burn the country,” and revolutionaries were left with little choice but to defend themselves from being massacred. Facing barrel bombs, Scud missiles, and chemical weapons, entire towns and cities were decimated by Assad and his backers (including Hezbollah, Russia, and Iran) in the following months and years. The ensuing war also enabled foreign extremists, from Ahrar al-Sham to the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), to flood in from Iraq, which Assad used to further justify mass destruction. As hundreds of thousands were killed and millions fled, the violence produced the world’s worst refugee crisis since World War II. Ten years later, pockets of resistance remained active, but the regime’s allies had enabled its survival. However, it should not be forgotten that for a time, the Syrian people had brought it to the brink.

More to the point: In the early days of the Arab Spring in 2011, the fate of these movements was far from certain; as spring turned into summer, people across the world tuned in day and night on their laptops and televisions to watch the uprisings unfold. Stomach-churning reports detailed the exceedingly high price that ordinary people in the region were paying for speaking out. Victims included defenseless youth in Yemen, mowed down by snipers; video footage displayed their lifeless bodies lying side by side, wrapped in white sheets stained with blood. Libya’s most beloved citizen-journalist with a kind smile, Mohammed Nabbous, was shot and killed in March during Gaddafi’s attack on Benghazi. In May, global audiences learned that a thirteen-year-old boy named Hamza al-Khateeb had been tortured to death by Syrian forces for smuggling food to protesters under siege. Nevertheless, the people persisted. Libyans rallied around the slogan “we win or we die” of famed freedom fighter Omar al-Mukhtar, a martyr of the resistance against Italian colonizers. Syrian men carried their children on their shoulders to the city of Homs’s iconic New Clock Tower to chant “al-sha‘ab yurid isqat al-nitham!” (the people demand the fall of the regime!). Tens of thousands of Yemeni women and men occupied the highways of Sana’a, the sloping streets of Ta‘iz, and the lowlands of Aden in the south to demand liberty, bread, and dignity.

Further afield, other movements were crushed or quelled. Bahrain’s sit-in movement in Manama was swiftly suppressed under the weight of Saudi tanks, while protesters in Morocco and Jordan struck a tacit détente with their kings. Meanwhile, the masses in Libya, Syria, and Yemen faced prolonged and bloody standoffs over the course of 2011 and beyond that would forever change the region. It would also have an indelible impact on anti-regime diasporas across the world.
1.2 THE ARAB SPRING ABROAD

As the Arab Spring spread across the region, so too did it activate supporters in the Libyan, Syrian, and Yemeni diasporas. Over steaming teacups in a crowded London tea shop, a young professional named Sarah recalled how the Arab Spring marked her entrée into the anti-regime struggle. After Gaddafi’s forces had fired on unarmed protesters in February, she told me, Sarah’s aunt rang her from Benghazi to report that her young cousin had been killed. Sarah was stunned. She had not even been following the news that day, much less anticipating an open revolt that would impact her family so deeply. After a shocked pause, Sarah urged her aunt to stay indoors. But her aunt had refused, declaring, “Sarah, it’s either him or us.” In the words of Omar al-Mukhtar, the time had come to win against their oppressor or die trying. Gunfire rattled in the background as Sarah hung up the phone.

The following day, Sarah continued, she met her Libyan friends at a cafe. Usually, they chatted about work or played squash. Today, clasping their hands around ceramic cups, the mood was sullen. Sarah’s friend finally spoke up. He proposed that they go protest at the Libyan embassy. They agreed, but Sarah was nervous. Despite having attended demonstrations for other causes in the past, she had never done anything political for Libya before. Sarah pulled the hood of her sweatshirt tightly around her face as they waited for a bus to Knightsbridge in central London. Libya’s uprising had just begun and the consequences were uncertain, but it had suddenly become unthinkable to stay at home and do nothing.

For Libyans forced into exile, on the other hand, the Arab Spring was the moment that they had been waiting for their entire lives. Thousands of miles away, in the trimmed suburbs of Los Angeles, a young couple named Hamid and Dina told me their story. Like Sarah, Dina’s activism for regime change was new; Hamid, on the other hand, was a seasoned veteran. His uncles had been killed fighting Gaddafi in the 1980s, and the family had been forced to flee after his birth. This dislocation bonded Hamid to fellow exiles—lifelong friends such as Ahmed and Abdullah, Hibba and M.7—whose hatred of Gaddafi smoldered like a burn on their guts. From these friendships they forged Gaddafi Khalas! (Enough Gaddafi!), an organization dedicated to publicizing the regime’s atrocities and organizing a protest against Gaddafi’s 2009 visit to the United Nations in New York. With regime change looking evermore hopeless by this time, the members of Enough Gaddafi! felt a responsibility to keep the torch of resistance alive. “We had no money and no experience,” Hamid told me, “but we had heart. Besides, who else was going to do the job of reminding the world

7 Some names are pseudonyms, or have been shortened to first names or a first initial, according to the preferences of the interviewees and Institutional Review Board-mandated procedures from the University of California, Irvine when these data were collected. Names reported to me second-hand during interviews have also been anonymized.
what a monster Gaddafi really was?” In the years before the revolution, however, their movement was a lonely one. Libyans abroad generally avoided uttering Gaddafi’s name, much less broaching the subject of regime change.

In the early days of 2011, Hamid followed the riotous protests underway in Tunisia and Egypt with a fastidious obsession, staying up nights to watch the rebellions unfold on his computer. Once rumors circulated that Libya was going to have an uprising of its own, the Enough Gaddaf! network was ready. If the Libyan people were brave enough to speak out from behind a thick wall of censorship and isolation, he and his colleagues told me, outsiders needed to take notice. Armed with little more than their laptops, Hamid and his friends transformed instantly into the revolution’s public relations team. They exposed regime violence unfolding beyond the view of the international media, posted recordings of Libyans’ testimonies on Twitter, and documented the death toll in real time. Once at the very fringe of global politics, Hamid and his friends were catapulted overnight into its center by the Arab Spring.

As anti-regime activists like Hamid launched an all-out information war against Gaddaf! using the Internet, newcomers like Sarah amassed donations for places like Misrata, a city that became known as Libya’s Stalingrad after relentless shelling by the regime. Dina, who met Hamid over the course of the war, traveled from California to Doha and into Libya’s liberated territory to coordinate media for the revolution’s government-in-waiting. They were joined by many others. Surgeons and students booked tickets to Cairo, driving for hours to volunteer in Libya’s field hospitals, remote battlefields, rebel media centers, and tented refugee camps. Businessmen, bureaucrats, and teachers who had previously given up hope of a future without Gaddaf! transformed into lobbyists, imploring outside powers to stop the regime’s slaughter of civilians. From the first hours of Libya’s uprising in February to the fall of Tripoli in August, activists from the diaspora mobilized to lend their labor and their voices to the revolution. Determined not to let their conationals suffer in silence, the anti-regime diaspora joined the struggle in every way imaginable as an auxiliary force against authoritarianism.

Likewise, Syrians in the diaspora intervened for rebellion and relief as the uprising escalated from isolated pockets of resistance to a war that engulfed their homeland. Syrian youth in Chicago and London helped protesters in Damascus to coordinate flash mobs using their MacBooks. White-collar professionals from Arkansas and Florida ushered reporters and politicos, such as US Senator John McCain, into liberated territories while guarded by grim-faced men carrying automatic rifles. Longtime exiles introduced revolutionaries in Syria to US Ambassador Samantha Power at the United Nations and spoke with Jon Stewart on The Daily Show. Volunteers from Bristol and Manchester drove ambulances and delivered trauma kits to hospitals in the liberated province of Idlib. Activists also flooded into Turkey to join the revolutionary government-in-waiting, send aid across the border, and hold trainings on how to document war crimes. Long before pundits claimed that the Syrian