Arab Reform Initiative

THE NEW ARAB DIASPORA SERIES

WHAT IS NEW ABOUT POST-2011 MENA DIASPORAS?

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Introduction

The phenomenon of mobilization among the diasporas emanating from the MENA region is in many ways not new. Historic diasporas communities, such as the Armenian, Palestinian, Kurdish, and Lebanese, have existed for multiple decades, and their contributions to their homelands has been both documented in the literature and promoted by policymakers and development organizations alike. This includes both the economic impact of MENA diasporas and the critical importance of financial remittances to supporting development and growth back home,[1] but also various forms of political mobilization that have been undertaken by diasporic communities for the purpose of contributing to nation/state-building[2] and recognition processes[3] or, under certain conditions, contesting homeland regimes.[4] In this vein, much of the literature has focused on more traditional forms of diaspora political mobilization,[5] including lobbying and advocacy work designed to shape international public opinion and pressure foreign governments. The idea that Arab diaspora communities can be viewed not only as an economic actor but also, potentially, a political one is not in itself new. Yet, much of this literature on Arab diasporas has been focused on unidirectional flow of remittance – from those in diaspora back to the homeland. Likewise, the view of diaspora communities as either a resource to be harnessed or a threat to be contained has been largely informed by the political and geopolitical realities of host and home states.[6]

Our observations of diaspora political mobilization dynamics and the role that Arab diasporas can play in shaping homeland politics have been enlarged since 2011. Over the last decade, the many political, social, and economic upheavals that have transpired in the region – spanning national uprisings challenging the existing order, deepened authoritarianism and the closure of civic space, economic collapse and the undermining of collective morale, and the onset of violent intractable conflict – have produced multiple waves of migration of those seeking safe harbour abroad.[7] While the image of Syrian migrants partaking in dangerous journeys to reach European shores dominates the popular narrative, the reality of this exodus from the Arab region over the last decade is much more complex.[8] Indeed, what has evolved in the post-2011 period are Arab diaspora communities that have different and more diverse socio-political profiles from earlier epochs, with different degrees of attachment, identification to, and engagement with their homeland – both among new arrivals but also, importantly, those who have long since been in diaspora or who are second or third generation abroad. These Arab diaspora communities have also seen increased dispersal in terms of the geographic locations of resettlement, including both the enlargement and heterogenization of existing host sites but also the emergence of new destinations.

Alongside these transformations in the profiles and locations of these Arab diasporas has been the emergence of new forms of political remittances, involving the transfer of political ideas, norms, and practices in multi-directional flows that challenge the state-bounded concept of transnational politics.[9] These new political remittances and forms of diaspora community organization and mobilization are in many cases actively seeking

1 *See for example Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, ed,* ***Diasporas and Development: Exploring the Potential****, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008; Mariem Mezghenni Malouche, Sonia Plaza, and Fanny Salsac, "Mobilizing the Middle East and North Africa Diaspora for Economic Integration and Entrepreneurship", World Bank, 2016.*

2 *See for example Eva Pföstl, "Diasporas as Political Actors: The Case of the Amazigh Diaspora", In Peter Seeberg and Zaid Eyadat (eds)* ***Migration, Security, and Citizenship in the Middle East****, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Jennifer Skulte-Ouiass and Paul Tabar, "Strong in their Weakness or Weak in their Strength: The Case of Lebanese Diaspora Engagement with Lebanon",* ***Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*** *33(2), 2015; Stephen Syrett and Janroj Yilmaz Keles, "Diasporas, Agency, and Enterprise in Settlement and Homeland Contexts: Politicised Entrepreneurship in the Kurdish Diaspora",* ***Political Geography*** *73, 2019; Maria Koinova, Diaspora Mobilization for Palestinian Statehood, In M. Koinova* ***Diaspora Entrepreneurs and Contested States****, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021;*

3 *See for example Ofra Bengio and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, "Mobilised Diasporas: Kurdish and Berber Movements in Comparative Perspective",* ***Kurdish Studies*** *1(1), 2013; Maria Koinova, "Diaspora Coalition-Building for Genocide Recognition: Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds",* ***Ethnic and Racial Studies*** *29(11), 2019.*

4 *For more on conditions under which diasporas subject to transnational repression mobilize against authoritarian regimes, see Dana M. Moss, "Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring",* ***Social Problems*** *63(4), 2016; Dara Conduit, "Authoritarian Power in Space, Time and Exile",* ***Political Geography*** *82, 2020.*

5 Benedict Anderson, "Long Distance Nationalism", In *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, London: Verso, 1998

6 Bahar Basar and Amira Halperin, *"Diasporas from the Middle East: Displacement, Transnational Identities and Homeland Politics",* ***British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*** *Vol.46 No.2, 2019; Elise Féron and Bruno Lefort, "Diasporas and Conflicts: Understanding the Nexus", Diaspora Studies 12(1), 2019.*

7 *Philippe Fargues, "Mass Migration and Uprisings in Arab Countries: An Analytical Framework",* ***International Policy Development*** *7, 2017.*

8 *See also Claire Beaugrand and Vincent Geisser, "Social Mobilization and Political Participation in the Diaspora during the 'Arab Spring'",* ***Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*** *Vol.14 No.3, 2016.*

9 *Melissa Finn and Bessma Momani, "Established and Emergent Political Subjectivities in Circular Human Geographies: Transnational Arab Activists", Citizenship Studies 21(1), 2017; Félix Krawatzek and Léa Müller-Funk, "Two Centuries of Flow between 'Here' and 'There': Political Remittances and their Transformative Potential", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 46(6), 2020.*

to make substantive changes to homeland politics and to respond to the cascading crises at home. Yet in other cases, they are instead efforts on the parts of diaspora members to navigate the liminal and uncertain status of being caught somewhere along the spectrum of "here" and/or "there."

This collection of studies, written by Oula Kadhum, Houda Mzioudet, and Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen, seeks to investigate more closely these transformations within Arab diasporas in the post-2011, and to shed light onto what is actually "new" about them. Through three in-depth case studies looking at Iraqi, Libyan, and Yemeni communities in different locations abroad, the studies presented here assess the transformations within these diasporas in terms of profiles of members and locations of exile and how conflict dynamics at home inform not only patterns of migration but also relationships within diaspora communities themselves. The studies also expose new forms and directional flows of political remittances that are taking place, and the various factors that mediate the act of remitting politically. This includes assessing how political identity is formed/transformed through the experience of exile and observation of conflict dynamics from quite different external vantage points, as well as the impact of multiple and overlaying political opportunity structures. Finally, the studies shed light on the impact of these political remittances and offer an assessment of the opportunities and constraints that these new Iraqi, Libyan, and Yemeni diasporas face in their own efforts to contribute to rebuilding, reconstructing, and re-imagining their homelands.

Diversification in Diaspora Profiles and Geographies

The studies in this collection explore different waves of migration and diaspora formation emanating from Iraq, Libya, and Yemen over the past tumultuous decade, considering in particular how the evolution of conflict at home impacted who leaves when. At the same time, the studies also explore how conflict but also revolutionary and pro-change dynamics in the homeland have impacted those who were already in diaspora prior to 2011. One trend that can be observed across the studies is the increased diversification in terms of the political leanings and profiles of those in diaspora, as well as the diversification in terms of geographic distribution and destination. All three countries under investigation here were endowed with important and historical diasporas prior to 2011, and in all three cases large diaspora communities could be found in certain key locations. These include the UK and US, where important diaspora populations have long been located, as well as destinations easily accessible and welcoming within the MENA region, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Gulf countries. While for all three countries diaspora groups held heterogeneous political leanings and by no means constituted a "unified" political force, the onset of new conflict and social mobilization dynamics at home has translated to increasing diversification within the political profiles of those in diaspora. In Libya, for example, the political profile of the diaspora from the 1970s onward was largely composed of dissidents to the Gaddafi regime,[10] and although internally diverse in terms of socioeconomic background and position in the political spectrum, opposition to the Gaddafi regime remained a point in common. Likewise, the Iraqi diaspora during the period prior to 2003 was in large part composed of those excluded by or opposing the Saddam regime and was subsequently marked by political leanings in line with the ethno-sectarian divides as per the post-2003 political order.[11] With regards to the Yemeni diaspora, though its political profile showed diversity as a result of multiple waves of internal conflict the country had experienced prior to 2011, the efforts by political elites to impose their political ideologies on diaspora members created a certain reproduction of existing positions.[12]

In the three studies presented here, the authors demonstrate how the new waves of diaspora set off by the events over the past decade, as well as observation of these dynamics from those already in diaspora, have been accompanied by a multiplication of political leanings. Houda Mzioudet, for example, demonstrates how the uprising of 2011 and initial transition process in Libya led to a rapid of departure of Gaddafi loyalists, followed in 2014 by an increasing departure of pro-revolutionary activists either too disappointed with the onset of war or indeed forced into exile because of counter-revolutionary political repression at home. In this way, it was not one but rather a series of departures from Libya, resulting from conflict dynamics at home, that led to increased diversity in terms of political affiliations and ideological leanings of those in diaspora. Likewise, Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen demonstrates how Yemeni diaspora communities have become both more politicized and more politically diverse as a result of dynamics since 2011 and in particular the intensification of conflict since 2015. As she explains, the mass displacement of Yemenis to cities such as Cairo has been characterized by the influx of political elites, journalists, and intellectuals, representing in part pro-revolution forces that carry a political vision for change born out of the post-2011 context. At the same time, the Yemeni diaspora today also reflects the political fragmentation of the Yemeni political arena, moving beyond the North vs. South divides of the pre-2011 period to include diaspora members with strong political leanings towards Islah as well as other regional affiliations such as Hadramout. And in her study detailing the transformations within the UK-based Iraqi diaspora over the past several decades, Oula Kadhum reveals how recent dynamics have led to the manifestation of new political positions, including new anti-sectarian political leanings and affiliations with youth civil

10 Alice Alunni, "Long-Distance Nationalism and Belonging in the Libyan Diaspora (1969-2011)", **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 46 No.2, 2019.

11 Oula Kadhum, "Ethno-Sectarianism in Iraq, Diaspora Positionality, and Political Transnationalism", **Global Networks** Vol 19. No.2, 2019.

12 Mohammed Sharqawi, "Dire et faire communauté en diaspora. Le cas de l'immigration yéménite en Angleterre (1950-2015)", Unpublished Dissertation, Paris: Ecoles de hautes études en sciences sociales, 2020.

movements demanding a restructuring of the political order, as well as a unified political position against ISIS following the 2014 take-over of Mosul. As she explains, these dynamics break with the traditional ethno-sectarian political divides that had marked diaspora profiles in the post-2003 period.

Alongside this increased diversification in political leanings has been new geographical distribution of diasporic communities and groups. All three studies reveal that places where diasporas already existed – London, Cairo, Tunis, among others – continued to be important destinations for new arrivals in the post-2011. Indeed, the facility of re-installation in such places, due to the existence of a local community already installed or the historic ties binding sites, served as major factors attracting further diaspora resettlement. For example, the ease and familiarity of cities such as Tunis for Libyans and Cairo for Yemenis, where visa regulations are lax and where long-standing patterns of circularity had forged pre-existing links between host and home locations, served to attract new arrivals in heretofore unseen numbers. Yet the studies also show new locations where Iraqis, Libyans, and Yemenis are settling in either permanent or semi-permanent fashions and forming diaspora communities. Turkey, for example, has become a new destination for Yemenis and in particular students seeking study abroad opportunities as well as businessmen. Likewise, the studies on the Iraqi and Libyan diasporas both allude to new trends of diffusion across Europe in the last decade,[13] breaking with previous patterns of family chain migration but nonetheless leading to diaspora formation (and not simply irregular migration) thanks to transnational connections through activist networks and virtual spaces.

As the studies reveal, and in line with findings elsewhere,[14] conflict dynamics at home follow those in diaspora and become reflected in social divisions and lack of trust between members of a diaspora community, broken down along conflict lines (be they regional, ethno-sectarian, or other). The studies presented here on the Iraqi and Yemeni cases, for example, both depict how the outbreak of new conflicts since 2011 has led to deteriorating levels of trust and social interaction within diaspora communities long-since settled in the UK. In both cases, this breakdown in trust and everyday social mixing reflects the lines of tension in the homeland. In this way, Sunni and Shia Iraqi communities in the UK find themselves not only living apart but even largely unaware of one another's existence. Likewise Northern Yemenis and Southern Yemenis, who previously interacted at social gatherings, are increasingly separated, and as a result the informal mixing of different political positions has been curtailed. As the authors depict, these relational breakdowns have a negative impact on the capacity for diaspora mobilization, especially within the realm of political action. The studies also demonstrate how the reproduction of conflict lines in diaspora also determines in some cases the place of settlement, creating homogeneous pockets of ideologically aligned diaspora groups. Yet at the same time, the studies also indicate that the large-scale mixing happening in major cities seeing huge influx of permanent and semi-permanent migrants, such as Tunis and Cairo, are creating new possibilities for social interactions heretofore unseen. These sites can thus potentially serve as locations for more coordinated diaspora mobilization in the future.

Political Remittances and Mediating Factors

The collection of studies presented here demonstrate a variety of different ways that Iraqis, Libyans, and Yemenis in diaspora are remitting politically and culturally, in addition to economically. This includes more traditional forms of diaspora activism in situations of conflict, including efforts to channel humanitarian aid to communities in the homeland and lobbying foreign governments, but also a variety of new forms of activism and political engagement. As the authors reveal, the new diaspora activism since 2011 includes various efforts to document, archive, and pursue justice for human rights violations through translocal engagement, linking host and home sites for the transfer of material and immaterial resources, as well as cultural engagement activities including heritage protection and cultural exchange and revival. Thus, for example, Houda Mzioudet outlines how online transnational communities of members of the Libyan diaspora have allowed for an Amazigh cultural revival movement, while Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen discusses the organization of cultural gathering places such as Yemeni bookshops to transmit homeland culture in host sites. Likewise, Oula Kadhum points to new forms of cross-sectarian mobilization since 2014 for the purpose of protecting Iraqi cultural heritage.

What the studies also indicate, however, is the complicated set of factors that mediate when and where diaspora members mobilize and the types of mobilization that they choose to undertake. Indeed, as is clear from the research presented here, activist trajectories pre- and post-2011 are not linear: while some who have never been mobilized for issues related to their homeland have come to do so in observing recent events in their country of origin, others who were actively involved in protest movements or other forms of engagement have now halted their activism. Indeed, and especially in the cases of Libya and Yemen, many of those who have left since 2011 represent pro-revolution activists who were forced into exile as a result of conflict dynamics; yet for some, this activist trajectory has not continued in host countries. On the flip side of this coin, among those who have left their countries over the last decade are migrants who, though they were never politically active before, have now mobilized from their position in exile. The factors that mediate diaspora mobilization are quite varied, and include current and future

13 See also REACH, ***Iraqi Migration to Europe in 2016: Profiles, Drivers, and Return***, 2017. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/reach_irq_grc_report_iraqi_migration_to_europe_in_2016_june_2017%20%281%29.pdf

14 Elise Féron, "Transporting and Re-inventing Conflicts: Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Conflict Autonomisation", ***Cooperation and Conflict*** 52(3), 2017.

relationships to the homeland, migration generation, the multi-contextual political opportunity structure, and positionality – all of which intersect in complicated ways.

The relationship to the homeland – existing, perceived, anticipated, or desired – informs to an important degree if and how those in diaspora mobilize. In her study of Libyans in Tunisia, for example, Houda Mzioudet demonstrates how circular mobility and the desire to resettle in Libya once the situation improves acts as a break on mobilization: out of fear of creating future problems for themselves upon return (depending on outcomes of the conflict), some Libyan exiles in Tunisia prefer to fly under the radar and thus avoid any form of mobilization that could be considered overtly political. Yet the anticipation or project of return does not act as a uniform barrier to mobilization. In covering the evolution of the Iraqi diaspora in the UK, for example, Oula Kadhum's study reveals how the potential for more favourable political and social structures at home in fact favoured diaspora mobilization, and in particular in the aftermath of 2003 when a return under improved conditions seemed possible. A secondary factor mediating the relationship with the homeland, though, is generation in diaspora: all three studies reveal interesting insights with regards to second and third generation Iraqis, Libyans, and Yemenis in various diaspora locations, and how the observation of dynamics since 2011 has transformed their degree of engagement with the homeland. In line with research elsewhere,[15] all three studies reveal that moments of potential transformation produce a positive impact on diaspora mobilization of descendants of migrants. Thus, for example, descendants of Libyans who were born in North American and Europe experienced new feelings of citizenship and belonging to the Libyan nation in the wake of 2011 and the liberation of the country from the confines of the Gaddafi regime. Likewise, second generation Iraqis in the UK were spurred to mobilize or, in the very least, lend moral support to the idea of saving the Iraqi state in the aftermath of ISIS' takeover of Mosul in 2014 and the failure of the government to defend the territory. Conversely, the studies also demonstrate how disappointment with failed revolutions or systemic changes can push second and third generation diaspora members into less mobilization and identification with the homeland. In the case of Yemenis in the UK, for example, the inability to return to visit the country as a result of the conflict, along with the feeling of hopelessness about the situation, served to decrease the sense of attachment and hence interest in mobilization of those in the second generation.

Alongside the relationship with the homeland, however, the studies quite clearly demonstrate that diaspora political mobilization and the type of political remittances that occur are largely patterned on the "triadic political opportunity structure:"[16] the multiple and embedded political contexts of home sites, host sites, and the transnational interactions and geopolitical relations between the two. As the studies show here, this triadic political opportunity structure includes the civic space afforded to diaspora communities and the ability to organize politically or not in host sites; access to elites and the discursive environment vis-à-vis the homeland within host sites; the threat and ability to enact repression (both national and transnational); and the relationship between host and home states. In the study on the Yemeni diaspora since 2011, Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen, for example, demonstrates how the degree of space given to diaspora activism alongside access to political elites in the UK vs. Egypt explains the very different forms of remitting that take place. For those in the UK, activism is not only permitted but even structured by homeland political actors that are granted the space to organize their diaspora communities and have access to British political institutions. For those in Egypt, however, the closed civic space alongside increasing restrictions on migration rights have favoured cultural mobilization in lieu of political. Likewise, in her study on Libyan diaspora mobilization, Houda Mzioudet demonstrates how the decrease in the threat of transnational repression after the fall of the Gaddafi regime allowed for increased mobilization on the part of diaspora activists, but how new threats of repression emerging in host sites (and in particular Tunisia) served to re-erect barriers. As related to this change in threat of repression, her study also reveals how the position of Tunisia vis-à-vis Libya, based on historically strong ties and an effort to remain neutral throughout the conflict, has resulted in restricted political mobilization - with the exception of activities channelled through formal, UN-led peacebuilding processes that utilize Tunis as the operational base.

Yet what the studies also show is that the triadic political opportunity structure does not affect all members in the diaspora in the same way. On the contrary, Oula Kadhum demonstrates how positionality vis-à-vis conflict dynamics serves to create favourable opportunities for some and unfavourable opportunities for others, thereby empowering certain diaspora groups or communities to remit politically while disempowering others from doing so. As her research shows, this positionality affects transnational ties and access points but also feelings of belonging and the ability to project future relations with the homeland and/or host site. In this way, for example, diaspora members who hail from Iraq's Sunni population have been excluded from participating in the reconstruction of Iraq as their position within current dynamics in the homeland has led to marginalization. The studies in this collection thus contribute to a broader understanding of the multifaceted factors that affect diaspora political mobilization and the types of non-economic remittances that occur, ranging from the multiple political structural factors that act as opportunities or constraints to action to the subjective manner in which identity, community, and the relationship to home and host sites evolve and transform as political dynamics shift.

15 *Lea Müller-Funk, "Fluid Identities, Diaspora Youth Activists and the (Post-)Arab Spring: How Narratives of Belonging Can Change Over Time", **Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies** 46(6), 2020.*

16 *Ali R. Chaudhary and Dana M. Moss, "Triadic Political Opportunity Structures: Re-Conceptualising Immigrant Transnational Politics", Working Paper 129, International Migration Institute, Oxford Department of International Development, 2016.*

Impact and the Role in Peacebuilding

Conflict-generated diasporas are of course not always potential actors in peacebuilding processes; on the contrary, diasporas can mobilize in ways that contribute to reinforcing dynamics of conflict at home[17] or act as spoilers[18] during peace processes. For the purposes of the research conducted here, however, the authors have specifically explored how the diaspora communities they are investigating are currently mobilizing for the purposes of peacebuilding, reconciliation, or reconstruction in the homeland – and what possibilities exist for further leveraging diaspora mobilization in these efforts. Across many of the interviews, the authors find that a "do no harm" principle informs at least in part the willingness of diaspora members to engage in mobilization towards the homeland. Thus, for example, Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen explains how fear of exacerbating the conflict acts as an impediment to mobilization among those in the Yemeni diaspora in the UK. Likewise, as Oula Kadhum explains, decreased confidence in the Iraqi political elite, and especially after the failure of the government to defend the territory in 2014, has turned mobilization efforts away from the political realm and towards support of civil society and the charitable sector instead. Indeed, a recurring theme throughout the three studies in this collection is diasporic efforts to channel humanitarian relief and fill information gaps as a means of addressing the conflict without interacting directly in the political sphere.

Yet mobilization and the act of political remitting for the purpose of rebuilding the nation or state are occurring within the diasporas under investigation here, and different forms of impact can already be observed. One theme that emerges is the re-conceptualization of the nation and bases of belonging that is emerging through the process of diaspora political remitting. In her study on the Libyan diaspora, for example, Houda Mzioudet depicts how the construction of online communities linking diaspora members across a variety of host sites has allowed for the extension of the imagined Libyan community and an enlargement of what "being Libyan" means. As she shows, these multi-directional flows of remittance have not only allowed for transnational Libyan Amazigh revival to emerge but have also contributed to increased commitment on the part of previously atomized listeners to building a more equal and freer Libya in the future. Likewise, Oula Kadhum reveals how new organizations have been formed in the UK, interacting with both British and Iraqi audiences, in order to support the 2019 civil and youth movements in Iraq and put forth a new nationalist vision of an anti-sectarian Iraq that echoes that being proffered by protesters back home. And Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen discusses the emergence of currents within the Yemeni diaspora in support of a new vision for the state and a rethinking of Yemeni identity, and the types of cultural mobilization occurring in support of these ideas. In this way, diasporic interactions both across diaspora communities and in interaction with those still in the homeland are contributing to a rethinking of what it means to be "Libyan" or "Iraqi" or "Yemeni" and what should be the foundations of the nation-state in the future.

In addition, the studies here all depict not only how diaspora mobilization is contributing to both Track I and Track II peacebuilding processes but also how diaspora actors are seeking to achieve justice for crimes committed during the conflict. The studies on the Libyan and Yemeni diasporas, for example, demonstrate how diaspora actors are incorporated in formal peacebuilding through their participation in dialogue and consultative processes. Perhaps even more importantly, the studies also depict how diasporic organizations are contributing to the pursuit of justice, despite the absence of formal transitional justice processes for the moment. In the case of Libya, for example, diasporic organizations such as Lawyers for Justice in Libya are not only undertaking human rights activities but are also putting forth justice-based discourses in the transnational public sphere in order to shape the way we think about justice-related issues in the Libyan case. Likewise, the study on the Iraqi diaspora reveals the critical role being played by activists in the UK to raise awareness in a largely silent foreign public sphere regarding state-led crimes being committed against pro-change protestors at home. In this way, they are contributing to a broader understanding of violations and demands for justice in the Iraq case beyond the high-profile crimes and international criminal cases as related to ISIS. These actions in the pursuit of justice from vantage points of diaspora represent some of the most innovative ways that these new Arab diasporas are contributing to truth and reconciliation in the post-2011 period.

Future Prospects

The three studies in this collection reveal the enormous obstacles facing the prospects of increased diaspora mobilization for the purpose of reconstruction and political renewal at home. The process of political polarization and increased mistrust among those in diaspora, the closures of civic space and the decreased operational capacity of existing organizations, and the waxing and waning of feelings of belonging as a result of evolving conflict dynamics are all common features inhibiting more pronounced political mobilization. Nonetheless, the studies here also demonstrate that certain opportunities for leveraging the many resources of the Iraqi, Libyan, and Yemeni diasporas do exist. Mobilization along less overtly political issues, such as community-level reconstruction via translocal activist lines and cultural heritage protection, could offer a means for increased diasporic engagement that both overcomes divisions and also contributes meaningfully to rebuilding home sites. Such actions,

17 Fiona B. Adamson, "Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization and the Transnationalization of Civil War", In Jeffrey T. Checkel (ed) **Transnational Dynamics of Civil War**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

18 Yossi Shain and Ravinatha P. Aryasinha, "Spoilers or Catalysts? The Role of Diasporas in Peace Processes", In Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond (eds) **Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution**, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006.

moreover, can also be pillars in local-level reconciliation efforts[19] while also working around some of the potential obstacles as imposed by the triadic political opportunity structure. Likewise, the field of transitional justice and truth-seeking actions are areas in which diasporic groups have much to contribute and can indeed make important gains given their different access points, capacity to link to home sites, and different judicial mechanisms at their disposal.[20] The recent success of Syrian diaspora activists in pursuing transitional justice through European mechanisms provides an instructive example regarding the type of ecosystem that can be established for such efforts to come to fruition.[21]

Indeed, as the studies here conclude, for amplification in mobilization to occur, the operational capacities of diaspora groups need to be increased. While certain groups are currently finding ways to work around closures to civic space or the decrease in funding opportunities, leveraging diasporas for peacebuilding and reconstruction requires more operational coordination and more organizational skills. The authors of the studies in this collection offer a variety of ways in which this can be achieved, including partnering with other organizations and creating umbrella structures. Yet beyond organized and deliberate mobilization for the purpose of peacebuilding and political impact in the homeland, what the studies show is that political remittances are occurring in a variety of forms and directions. And while some are indeed directed towards the homeland, others are instead directed across diasporic spaces and within host sites. The transformations within Arab diaspora communities since 2011 have contributed to exchanges of new political ideas, practices, and norms; given that the process of diasporization of MENA populations is only likely to continue in the coming years, understanding how these various political remittances are affecting not only diasporic communities themselves but also home and host sites opens new avenues for a future research agenda.

19 *See for example Ataa Alsalloum and Andre Brown, "Towards a Heritage-Led Sustainable Post-Conflict Reconciliation: A Policy-Led Perspective",* ***Sustainability*** *11(6), 2019.*

20 *See also Noha Aboueldahab, "Innovation in Transitional Justice: Experiences from the Arab Region", Brookings Doha Center, 2020. Available at* https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/innovation-in-transitional-justice-experiences-from-the-arab-region/ *For examples outside the MENA region, see for example Camilla Orjuela, "Mobilising Diasporas for Justice. Opportunity Structures and the Presencing of a Violent Past",* ***Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*** *44(8), 2018.*

21 *See also Espen Stokke and Eric Wiebelhaus-Brahm, "Syrian Diaspora Mobilization: Vertical Coordination, Patronage Relations, and the Challenges of Fragmentation in the Pursuit of Transitional Justice",* ***Ethnic and Racial Studies*** *42(11), 2019.*

About the Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is an independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change and social justice. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality, and gender equality.

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