

The Egyptian American Diaspora During and in the Aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011

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Abstract

Diasporic communities identify themselves as part of their homeland's national community and feel responsibility for the well-being of their homelands, which may result in a desire to engage in homeland affairs. A diaspora's influence over the homeland is shaped by three major factors: the diasporan community's unity and organizational capacity and the homeland's and host state's political opportunity structures. The Egyptian American diaspora in the US is one such diaspora group that has always yearned to partake in homeland affairs. Under the Mubarak regime, these types of attempts were curtailed to a large extent. The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 presented a historical opportunity for the Egyptian American diaspora to contribute to the shaping of homeland's future. This article seeks to analyze the role of Egyptian Americans during and in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution.

Keywords: Egyptian diaspora, the USA, homeland, diasporic influence, Egyptian revolution of 2011

Amerika'daki Mısır Diasporasının 2011 Mısır Devrimi Sırasındaki ve Sonrasındaki Rolü

Özet

Diaspora grupları kendilerini anavatan toplumunun bir parçası sayar ve anavatanlarının geleceği için kaygılanırlar. Bu nedenden dolayı da anavatanla ilgili konulara müdahil olmayı arzularlar. Diasporanın anavatan üzerindeki muhtemel etkisi üç ana etkence şekillenir: diaspora grubunun birliği ve örgütsel kapasitesi, anavatanın ve göç edilen ülkenin siyasi fırsat yapıları. Amerika'da yaşayan Mısır diasporası da anavatanlarıyla ilgili konularla her zaman kaygı duymuştur. Ancak Mübarek rejimi bu diaspora grubunun anavatandaki etkinliğini büyük ölçüde kontrol altında tutmuştur. 2011 Mısır Devrimi bu anlamda Amerika'da yaşayan

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Mısırlılar için tarihi bir fırsat sunmuştur. Bu makale Amerikalı Mısırlıların Mısır devrimi ve sonrasında anavatanın geleceğini şekillendirme çabalarını analize etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mısır diasporası, ABD, anavatan, diaspora etkisi, 2011 Mısırdevrimi

دور الجالية المصرية في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية خلال وبعد الثورة المصرية
لعام ٢٠١١

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: خلاصة

تعتبر مجاميع الجاليات انفسها جزءا من مجتمع الوطن الأم وتشعر بالقلق حول مستقبل وطنها الأم. ولهذا السبب فان هذه المجاميع ترغب دوما في ان تتدخل في المواضيع المتعلقة بالوطن الأم. ان التأثير المحتمل للجالية على الوطن الأم يتمحور في ثلاثة عوامل رئيسية هي : وحدة مجاميع الجالية وطاقاتها الاستيعابية التنظيمية وهيكلية الفرص السياسية للوطن الأم وللبلد الذي هاجروا اليه. ان الجالية المصرية التي تقيم في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية تشعر بدورها وفي كل أن بالقلق حول القضايا المتعلقة بوطنها الأم. غير ان نظام مبارك كان يحد بقدر كبير من فاعلية هذه الجالية في الوطن الأم. وبهذا المعنى فان الثورة المصرية لعام ٢٠١١ قد شكلت فرصة تاريخية للمصريين المقيمين في الولايات المتحدة. ان هذه الدراسة تتناول بالبحث والتحليل جهود المصريين الامريكان في مجال تحديد مستقبل الوطن الأم خلال وبعد الثورة المصرية.

الكلمات الدالة : الجالية المصرية، الولايات المتحدة الامريكية، الوطن الأم، تأثير الجاليات، ثورة مصر لعام ٢٠١١.

Contemporary diasporas play an increasingly important role as actors in international politics which have the capacity to influence both homeland domestic politics and host state foreign policy towards the homeland. Such a capacity differentiates them largely from the victim diasporas of the past. The increased speed of globalization has positively affected the diasporic role as the advances in technology, communications and transport have helped diaspora groups to maintain

closer relations with the homeland in the last few decades.¹ While the effect of diasporic activity can be positive by supporting transparent, democratic regimes in the homeland or helping with the homeland's development through remittances and mediating between the homeland and host states, such activity can have a destabilizing effect on the homeland by triggering domestic or international conflicts.²

Diasporic communities still identify themselves as part of their homeland's national community and feel responsibility for the well-being of their homelands.³ Despite living outside the homeland, why do diaspora communities desire to partake in homeland affairs? The reason is because the very essence of their identity as a diaspora is closely tied to the homeland. In Safran's (1991) frequently cited definition of diaspora, the homeland occupies a central position as a major component of diasporic identity. According to Safran, "Retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including its location, history, and achievements; the idealization of the putative ancestral home and the thought of returning when conditions are more favorable and the belief that all members should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity" are the characteristics that differentiate diasporas from other social groups. Without the image of this homeland, a diasporic community is nothing more than a group of migrants. It is the idea of the homeland that keeps diasporic identity and unity alive. Therefore, diaspora groups often wish to engage in homeland affairs.

While the homeland is a crucial element of diasporic identity, it does not automatically lead to diasporic engagement in homeland affairs. Such an engagement requires active participation from diasporas which involves a strong motive, organization and cohesion.⁴ In order to exert influence on homeland politics, a diaspora group should be united and

1 Michele Reis, "Theorizing Diaspora: Perspectives on 'Classical' and 'Contemporary' Diaspora" *International Migration*, Vol.42, No.2, 2004, pp.47-48.

2 Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory" *International Organization*, Vol.57, Summer 2003, pp. 449-50.

3 Gabriel Sheffer, "A New Field of Study: Modern Diasporas in International Politics" in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1986), p.3, Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", p.452.

4 Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", p.462.

motivated in the formulation of their goals. Diaspora groups should also be politically and materially well-organized in their host states.⁵

The factors that are related to diasporas' own organizational skills are very important, but they are insufficient to explain diasporic influence on homeland affairs. Both homeland and host state opportunity structures are very critical in determining such an influence. Firstly, homelands should be responsive and permissive to diasporic influence. Usually, diasporas are more successful in influencing homeland politics when homelands are permeable under crisis conditions, especially when the state is weak or failed.⁶ Finally, host state conditions are very influential in allowing or limiting the activity of diaspora groups. According to Sökensen, political opportunities such as communication, media, transport, as well as legal and institutional frameworks that diasporan communities operate within, are essential determinants of diasporan engagement in homeland affairs.⁷ Such political opportunity structures are defined largely by host states, starting with allowing the activity of diasporan communities within their territories.⁸ Host- state related factors are very important in that they may lead the societies to decline in diasporism or may lead them to look for new host states that are more permissive.⁹ Shain and Barth underline that some liberal-democratic host states allow diaspora groups to organize and operate as interest groups with the goal to influence the foreign policy of the host state vis-à-vis the homeland.¹⁰

Egyptian diasporic activity and engagement in homeland related affairs is greatly shaped by the diaspora's unity and organizational capacity as well as homeland and host state political opportunity structures. First of all, like other diaspora groups, within the Egyptian diaspora there are also fragmentations along social, religious and regional lines.

5 Nedim Ogelman, Money J., Martin P. "Immigrant Cohesion and Political Access in Influencing Foreign Policy" *SAIS Review* Vol.22, No.2, 2002, p.145, Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", p.473.

6 Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", pp. 451-452, p.473.

7 Sökefeld, Martin (2006). "Mobilizing in Transnational Space: a Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora". *Global Networks* 6 (3), p.270.

8 Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", pp.463-464.

9 James Clifford, "Diasporas" *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.9, No.3, August 1994, p.306, Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (2001). *The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices*. Transnational Communities Programme Working Paper WPTC-01-22, <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/WPTC-01-22%20Ostergaard.doc.pdf> (Accessed on 22 March 2012).

10 Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", pp.450-453.

This forms one major obstacle towards the unity and achievements of the diaspora. Second is the host-state-related factor. Egyptians living in the West and in the Arab countries differ in their diasporic activity, primarily because of host state political opportunity structures. The Egyptians in the West are more active and more organized compared to those living in the Arab states. Among the countries in the West, perhaps the American political system is the one most conducive for diaspora politics. Historically, many diaspora groups strived to affect US foreign policy towards their homelands. Hence the Egyptian diaspora living in the US will be the main focus of this article. Finally, the homeland is the third central factor enabling the diasporic activity. Under the Mubarak government, such activity was greatly limited by the regime. As underlined above, diasporic activity can be most influential when the homeland regime is in crisis and when the state is weak or failed. Therefore, this article aims to trace the Egyptian American diasporic activity during and in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution¹¹ with a focus on homeland and host state related dynamics.

Egyptian American Diaspora and Homeland Politics

Egyptian diaspora formation starts with the first migration waves of Egyptians to Western countries and countries of the Arab world as early as the 1960s because of a variety of economic, political and social problems in the homeland. While the pattern of migration to Arab countries has been primarily due to temporary work contracts with no intention to stay permanently, Egyptians who have been migrating to the West (Europe, North America and Australia) tend to stay permanently in their countries of destination.¹² According to the statistics published by the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in the year 2000, the total number of Egyptian migrants abroad (both temporary and permanent) was 2, 736, 729 or, 3,9 %of the country's population. From this, the total of Egyptian migrants in Arab countries was 1, 912, 729, 923, 600 (48.3%) of which lived in Saudi Arabia, 332,600 (17.4%) in Libya, 226, 850 (11.9%) in Jor-

11 Like many other diaspora groups, Egyptian American diaspora groups are fragmented and not united in their views about homeland related issues. Acknowledging this, I analysed the mainstream Egyptian diaspora groups within the US in this article, while there are many other groups that exist within diaspora representing a variety of political views.

12 "A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages" IOM, July 2010 p.16, <http://www.egypt.iom.int/Doc/A%20Study%20on%20the%20Dynamics%20of%20the%20Egyptian%20Diaspora%20%28English%29.pdf> (Accessed on 13 May 2012).

dan and 190, 550 (10%) in Kuwait while the remaining resided in Iraq, UAE, Qatar, Yemen, Oman, Lebanon and Bahrain. According to the same data, the number of Egyptians living in the West was 824,000, of which 318,000 (38.6%) lived in the US, 110,000 (13.3%) in Canada, and 90,000 (10.9%) in Italy while the remaining resided in Australia, Greece, the Netherlands, France, the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain.¹³

As the data above indicates the largest part of the Egyptian diaspora in the West lives in the United States. With regard to the education levels of the Egyptian diaspora, according to OECD data 62.7% of the Egyptians living in the United States have a tertiary education, which is among the highest for Egyptians living in selected OECD countries.¹⁴ The Egyptian diaspora in America have organized around various diaspora organizations. Some of these prominent organizations include the Alliance for the Egyptian American (AEA), the Egyptian American Community Foundation, the Egyptian American Cultural Association and the Society of Egyptian Americans. There are also a variety of other organizations which are organized mostly at the local level such as the Egyptian American Society of Minnesota, and the Egyptian American Society in the Western United States.

Egyptian American diaspora organizations are traditionally active in the socio-cultural realm. Most of them define their primary goal as promoting a sense of coherence and solidarity among the Egyptian Americans. Preserving the Egyptian cultural traditions and passing them to younger generations through a variety of cultural activities are underlined by these diaspora organizations as fundamental for the preservation of Egyptian identity in the diaspora.¹⁵ Such organizations highlight the importance of developing mutual understanding and closer interactions between the American public and Egyptian Americans. In this respect encouraging the integration of the diaspora with the host soci-

13 Anna Di Bartolomeo, TamiraceFakhouryand Delphine Perrin "Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) Migration Profile: Egypt" April 2010, p.2, http://www.carim.org/public/migrationprofiles/MP_Egypt_EN.pdf (Accessed on 13 May 2012), "A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages" IOM, July 2010 p.18.

14 "A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages" IOM, July 2010 p.26.

15 (<http://aeamisr.org/bylaws/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012), <http://www.eacaonline.org/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012), <http://www.seamyegypt.com/content/about-us>(Accessed on 28 May 2012).

ety is set as a major goal.¹⁶ This goal has gained more urgency after the events of 9/11 because; promoting a better representation of Muslims in the West against an increased sense of Islamophobia has become more necessary than ever.

Most of the Egyptian diaspora organizations have limited goals directed towards homeland domestic affairs. Two main organizations, the Alliance for the Egyptian American (AEA) and the Society of Egyptian Americans focus on engaging in homeland politics.¹⁷ The AEA's primary goal is to strive "to promote true democracy, equity, social justice, cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and sustainable development in Egypt, and to update Egyptian Americans on the state of democratic reforms, human rights, social justice, and balanced development in Egypt." The AEA also underlines the importance of informing the relevant host state institutions such as the Congress, the federal agencies, the mass media and non-state organizations about the AEA's stance on issues of concern with the goal of affecting US policies towards Egypt.¹⁸

The Egyptian diaspora organizations' limited scope of activity in the homeland's domestic politics can largely be explained by the lack of political opportunity structures in the homeland. I have already underlined that homelands are central in shaping the diasporic activity along with the existing political opportunity structures in the host state. The Mubarak regime definitely did not encourage such diasporic political activity, despite welcoming the economic contributions of Egyptians abroad through remittances. Indeed, President Mubarak wanted to control all diasporic influence on the homeland through an umbrella diaspora organization called "The National Union of Egyptians Abroad" which was largely under his control.¹⁹ Most of the Egyptians abroad were apolitical during the Mubarak regime largely due to the fear of

16 (<http://www.easafe.org> (Accessed 28 May 2012), <http://www.eaous.com/def/aboutus.aspx> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

17 <http://aeamisr.org/bylaws/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012), <http://www.seamyegypt.com/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

18 <http://aeamisr.org/bylaws/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

19 Baraulina, Michael Bommers, TanjaEl-Cherkeh, Heike Daumeand Florin Vadean "Egyptian, Afghan, and Serbian diaspora communities in Germany: How do they contribute to their country of origin?" *HWWI Research Paper* 2007, p.42, http://www.hwwi.org/uploads/tx_wilpubdb/HWWI_Research_Paper_3-5_e_2.pdf (Accessed on 12 April 2012).

government reprisals.²⁰ Shain argues that homeland governments hold an advantage over the diaspora through defining the standards for loyal and disloyal behavior. According to Shain, it is this influence that often leads the members of diasporic communities to refrain from criticizing the homeland regimes because of fear of being thought of as traitors.²¹ Homeland governments also have the power to discredit, deter and silence the opposition through reprisal mechanisms such as retraction of citizenship, restriction of homeland visits, confiscation of property or persecution of relatives in the homeland.²²

Despite the general political inactivity of the Egyptian Americans during the Mubarak rule, the Coptic Egyptian American diaspora was quite active in demanding equal rights and promoting the human rights for Copts in Egypt, including religious freedom and pushing for a fair representation of the Copts in government institutions. Coptic Egyptians in the US have also organized through a variety of diaspora organizations such as the American Coptic Association, the US Copts Association, the American Coptic Union and the Coptic Assembly of America. These organizations have been striving to put pressure on the US through their lobbying efforts.²³ Brinkerhoff and Brainard argue that Coptic lobbying activity in the US has been successful in pushing the Mubarak regime to reform some of its policies towards the Copts in the homeland.²⁴ The dependency of Egypt on US aid explains to a large extent the Mubarak regime's willingness to carry out partial reforms on Coptic rights as a result of the US pressure. However, there were limits to the Egyptian Coptic diaspora's influence on US policy; as Zaki underlines, US was not always eager to jeopardize its relations with a strategic ally in the Middle East for the sake of Copts.²⁵

20 Omar Ashour, "El Baradei and the Mobilization of the Egyptian Diaspora" *The International Center for the Study of Radicalization*, <http://icsr.info/blog/ElBaradei-and-the-Mobilisation-of-the-Egyptian-Diaspora> (Accessed on 30 May 2012).

21 Shain Cohen, "Multicultural Foreign Policy" *Foreign Policy*, V.100 Fall 1995, p.825.

22 *Ibid.*, p.826.

23 Youssef N. Zaki *Coptic Political Activism in the diaspora, the U.S., and the Egyptian Polity* (The George Washington University: Imes Capstone Paper Series, 2010) pp. 7-8, <http://www.gwu.edu/~imes/research/2010Capstones/Zaki.pdf> (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

24 Jennifer Brinkerhoff "Digital Diasporas And Governance In Semi-Authoritarian States: The Case Of The Egyptian Copts" *Public Administration and Development* Vol.25, 2005, p.200, Lori Brainard and Jennifer Brinkerhoff "Digital Diasporas and Human Rights: Strengthening National Governments" *The George Washington Center for the Study of Globalization (GWCSG) Occasional Paper Series*, October 17 2003, p.7.

25 Youssef N.Zaki *Coptic Political Activism in the diaspora, the U.S and the Egyptian Polity*, p.17.

As the Coptic case discussed above suggests, the success of the diaspora in influencing homeland domestic politics is greatly influenced by the host state. Indeed host states determine to a great extent the ability of the diaspora to be active, the very organizational capacity of the diaspora depends on the host state regime. Usually in liberal, democratic host states, a variety of interest groups, including ethnic groups, have more leverage to organize actively unlike the non-democratic regimes that are suspicious of any civil society activity.²⁶ In some liberal, democratic countries that allows for multi-cultural foreign policies, diasporas have great leverage in exerting their influence as ethnic lobbying groups to influence the foreign policy of the host states vis-a-vis their homelands.²⁷ The low levels of Egyptian diaspora activity in the Arab countries (only 8% of the diaspora are members of various diaspora organizations) compared to much higher levels of such activity in the Western countries (40.5% of the diaspora are affiliated with diaspora organizations) is a good indicator of the impact of the host state's political opportunity structures.²⁸

The Egyptian American Diaspora during the Egyptian Revolution

During the demonstrations of January 2011 in Egypt which started a series of changes that eventually toppled the Mubarak regime, diaspora members residing in the US were following the events with great hope and anxiety about the country's future. This was a time when Egyptian Americans were looking for means to show their solidarity and support for their co-ethnics in the homeland for a peaceful regime change. For the first time they were also hopeful about having the chance to partake in shaping their homeland's future together with their brothers and sisters in Egypt.²⁹

While the Tahrir square protests were ongoing, Egyptian Americans used a variety of methods to show their support for the protestors. They

26 Shain and Barth, "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", p.464.

27 *Ibid*, p.453.

28 "A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages" IOM, July 2010 p.34.

29 "Egyptian Diasporas dreams of returns filled with hopes and fears" *The National*, 6 February 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/egyptian-diasporas-dreams-of-returns-filled-with-hopes-and-fears> (Accessed on 24 April 2012, Kevin Douglas Grant "Egyptian American alliance to advise US leaders on new Egypt: new group wants to help America help Egypt" *Global Post*, 25 January 2012, <http://mobile.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/egypt/120124/egyptian-american-revolution-advice> (Accessed on 22 May 2012).

organized rallies in different parts of the US to protest the Mubarak regime and the regime's violent clashes with protestors as well as raising awareness about the protestors' rightful need for a regime change. The Egyptian diaspora was also successful in using social media in order to share the information they gathered directly from their friends and relatives in Egypt. According to Zahere Harb, the diaspora's support "was crucial in communicating their fellow citizens' messages to the rest of the world."³⁰ This crucial period in the homeland's history was celebrated in the newly opened social media accounts. The goal of many such Facebook pages was to update the diaspora on events in the homeland and to create solidarity and promote support for demonstrators in the homeland.³¹

One major goal of the Egyptian American diaspora during this period was to inform the American public and mass media in order to gain their support for the Egyptian revolution. To this end, the American Egyptian diaspora attempted to draw parallels between the contemporary Egyptian revolution and the American revolution of 1776³² in order to get US public support. The American public was asked for their support for the Egyptian people who demanded governance by the people and for the people just like Americans did some two hundred years ago.³³ The Egyptian American diaspora also tried to reassure the American public that most of the protestors demanding change were well educated, diverse and pragmatic youth who had no goal of establishing a theocratic state and that the new regime would agree with the American values of life, liberty and justice.³⁴

Finally the diaspora included in its lobbying efforts the need for the US government to change its pro-Mubarak policy and to not ignore the demands of the protestors for a peaceful regime change. His-

30 Zahere Harb "Arab Revolutions and the Social Media Effect" *M/C - A Journal of Media and Culture* Vol.14, No.2, 2011, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/364> (Accessed on 13 April 2012).

31 <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Egyptian-diaspora-in-support-of-demonstrators-in-Egypt-Jan-25-beyond/12497972423712> (Accessed on 1 June 2012), <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Society-of-Egyptian-Americans-SEA-/126934304823> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

32 Indeed even the name of the relevant facebook page "Until Egypt is Free: 2011 is Egypt's 1776" is reflective of this attempt.

33 <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Egyptian-diaspora-in-support-of-demonstrators-in-Egypt-Jan-25-beyond/124979724237127> (Accessed on 1 June 2012), <http://www.facebook.com/Egypt1776> (Accessed on 25 May 2012).

34 <http://www.facebook.com/Egypt1776> (Accessed on 25 May 2012).

torically diaspora groups strived to affect US policies towards their homelands through lobbying efforts. Shain argues that “the openness of the American political system to ethnic politics has allowed many newly organized diasporas to acquire a meaningful voice in US foreign policy, especially on issues concerning countries of origin or symbolic homelands.”³⁵ During the earlier phase of the revolution, the US position was not very supportive of the revolution. Thus diaspora carried out a broad campaign aiming to affect the US policy. In an open letter addressed to the President Obama, the diaspora organization “The Alliance for Egyptian Americans” expressed their frustration and concern with regard to the US government’s position earlier during the revolution.³⁶ Egyptian Americans also underlined that supporting people’s demands for a regime change would best serve US national interests as people content with their governments in the Middle East would greatly contribute to the region’s peace and stability.³⁷ This is an attempt by the Egyptian diaspora to justify their cause in terms of American national interests. Diaspora groups in the US need to press hard for policy change particularly in cases where the homeland governments are strategic partners of the US.³⁸ Shain also argues that diasporas in the US can serve as the marketers of American values in their homelands which in turn push American policy makers “to adhere to America’s neo-Wilsonian values of promoting democracy and openness around the globe, even when such policies seem to obstruct ad hoc strategic interests.”³⁹

Egyptian Americans in the Aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution

The Egyptian revolution and the toppling of the Mubarak regime led to a sense of pride, victory and hopefulness among the Egyptians of the homeland. American Egyptians shared the same feelings. This meant a lot for the diaspora since this critical period in the homeland’s politics presented a historical opportunity to be more closely engaged with

35 Shain Cohen, “Multicultural Foreign Policy” p.812.

36 <http://aeamir.org/> (Accessed on 25 May 2012), <http://aeamir.org/alliance-news/press-release-the-alliance-supports-the-demands-of-the-egyptian-people/> (Accessed on 25 May 2012).

37 <http://www.facebook.com/notes/until-egypt-is-free-2011-is-egypts-1776/talking-points-for-media-friends-government-officials/106553116087019> (Accessed on 25 May 2012).

38 Shain Cohen, “Multicultural Foreign Policy” p.813, pp. 828-829.

39 Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad: Diasporas in the US and their Homelands*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.x.

homeland affairs. For the first time they may have the chance to contribute to Egypt's future. Egyptian Americans started looking for new ways of engagement in helping the homeland in its transition and for its sustainable development.

In the aftermath of the revolution, Egyptians in the US felt that it was their responsibility to help Egypt overcome the many challenges ahead in its political transition and economic recovery. Being aware that establishing a true democracy and promoting sustainable development would mean hard work and commitment, the diaspora expressed its readiness to play a critical role in transition.⁴⁰ Coupled with the feeling of being left out because of their inability to participate in Tahrir square, Egyptian Americans are looked for new ways to be involved in their homeland's future to make up for that.⁴¹ In order to help the homeland overcome the challenges of transition, Egyptian Americans established a variety of goals mainly in the economic and political realm. Diaspora members perceived contributing to the economic development of Egypt was a major step to this end. Indeed, Egyptian Americans are already contributing almost \$2 billion annually but new investment initiatives and job-creating projects are still urgently needed in the homeland.⁴² In the political realm, the diaspora encourage projects designed to strengthen civil society, to increase political participation, to endorse voter education as well as to promote good governance, increased government transparency and accountability and rule of law.

Egyptian Americans established a variety of organizations in the aftermath of the revolution as an aim to contribute to the political transition and economic development of the homeland. One such organization is the "Tahrir Square Foundation," which aims to work both in the economic and political realm. The foundation views economic recovery and job creation as critical elements for Egypt's long-term stability and

40 "Chicago Egyptians celebrate Mubarak's Resignation" *CBS News*, 12 February 2012, <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2011/02/12/chicago-egyptians-celebrate-mubaraks-resignation/> (Accessed on 23 May 2012), "Egyptian Diaspora launch the Tahrir Square Foundation as a non-government organization dedicated to development in Post-Mubarak Egypt" *Business Wire*, 3 August 2011, <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110803006797/en/Egyptian-Diaspora-Launch-Tahrir-Square-Foundation-Non-Government> (Accessed on 22 May 2012).

41 Jason Stern "When Egyptian Americans vote" *Foreign Policy*, 11 November 2011, http://mid-east.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/11/when_egyptian_americans_vote, (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

42 "Egyptians Americans, activists join forces ahead of upcoming elections" *Voice of America News*, 27 October 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/egyptians-americans-activists-join-forces-ahead-of-upcoming-elections-132800538/173298.html> (Accessed 28.05.2012).

therefore aims “to work with multi-lateral government agencies, the private sector and NGOs to promote favorable trade relations, vocational training, and the development of entrepreneurship and small to mid-size enterprises.⁴³” The Foundation also intends to direct diaspora funding and resources for the developmental causes at home.⁴⁴ In the political realm the foundation aims to increase civil society participation as well as voter education.⁴⁵ Another organization that was founded by the diaspora after the revolution is “the Egyptian-American Rule of Law Association (EARLA),” which aims to promote the rule of law in post-revolutionary Egypt. EARLA underlines the importance of government accountability and transparency. The organization supports working with Egyptian partners and provides legal training and expert advice on open and transparent governance.⁴⁶

The “Ad Hoc Coalition to Defend the Egyptian Revolution” is another post-revolutionary diaspora organization that views the Egyptian revolution as a still evolving one. Therefore the organization underlines the importance of diaspora members in the US to support the ongoing political transition and to create awareness among the US public about the US policies that have been so far detrimental in the region for the prospects of democratic development.⁴⁷ “Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN)”, despite being an Arab-American diaspora organization and not only an Egyptian one, was established in order to support reforms and push for sustainable democracies at home. The organization believes that if all diaspora organizations of the Arab world are united in their efforts to support the revolutions and lobby for democratic reforms at home, this will eventually create a stronger impact on the homelands compared to conducting such activities solo.⁴⁸

Finally, another Egyptian American organization the “American Egyptian Strategic Alliance (AESAs)” is launched in the post-revolution pe-

43 www.thetahrirfoundation.org (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

44 “Egyptian Diaspora get involved in Tahrir Square Foundation” *The Daily News Egypt*, 28 July 2011, <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/egyptian-diaspora-get-involved-in-tahrir-square-foundation.html> (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

45 www.thetahrirfoundation.org (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

46 <http://www.earla.org/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

47 <http://www.defendegyptianrevolution.org/category/statements/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012), <http://www.defendegyptianrevolution.org/about-us/> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

48 Khaled A. Beydoun “A teaching moment for Arab-Americans?” *Aljazeera*, 19 March 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/03/2011315105241897722.html> (Accessed on 21 May 2012).

riod as a goal “to assist US policymakers in developing a new engagement model with Post-Mubarak Egypt and to help US policy makers to promote and assist in building a secure and stable Egypt.”⁴⁹ AESA President Kais Menoufy believes that Egyptian Americans can play a very key role in shaping, advising and influencing US-Egypt relations since the members of the AESA has a “deep knowledge on the language, political landscape, religious diversity, economic needs and social nuances of Egypt which fill a current policy void in Washington while advising and educating US government officials and decision makers.”⁵⁰ The creation and work of this organization is an important attempt by the diaspora to affect host state policies towards the homeland in a very critical transition period.

While Egyptians in the US have actively sought to engage in homeland related affairs in the post-revolution period, the homeland government and society are not always welcoming such involvement. The interim government led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) feels mistrust and retains tight control over foreign NGOs, including diaspora organizations working in Egypt. Under such conditions, Egyptian Americans face many challenges while finding partners to work and to operate with in Egypt. Similar feelings of mistrust and resentment against the diaspora are also felt among the homeland society. Egyptian American efforts in the post-revolution period are viewed by many homeland Egyptians as jumping on the band wagon. The President of the EARLA Sahar Aziz argues that among the homeland Egyptians “there is some antagonism to the diaspora community and people are saying, you weren’t here before the revolution and it’s disingenuous for you to come back after revolution.”⁵¹ Egyptian Americans on the other hand, wishes to be accepted as part of the Egyptian community despite living abroad⁵² and claim that they are not less Egyptian

49 http://americanegyptiansa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69&Itemid=466 (Accessed on 28 May 2012)

50 http://americanegyptiansa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=54(Accessed on 28 May 2012), Kevin Douglas Grant “Egyptian American alliance to advise US leaders on new Egypt: new group wants to help America help Egypt” *Global Post*, 25 January 2012, <http://mobile.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/egypt/120124/egyptian-american-revolution-advice> (Accessed on 22 May 2012).

51 Carmel Delshad “Unwanted: NGOs in post-revolution Egypt” *World Policy Blog*, 1 November 2011, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2011/11/01/unwanted-ngos-post-revolution-egypt> (Accessed on 11 May 2012).

52 “Egyptian Diaspora get involved in Tahrir Square Foundation” *The Daily News Egypt*, 28 July 2011, <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/egyptian-diaspora-get-involved-in-tahrir-square-foundation.html> (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

than people living in Egypt.⁵³ Part of the reason for the resentment against Egyptian American involvement is the fact that such efforts are viewed as foreign and serving the interests of the diaspora's host state, the US rather than those of the homeland.⁵⁴

American Egyptians are also becoming more frustrated with the political developments in the homeland after the revolution. The initial hope and euphoria seems to have left its place to a more realistic and critical view on the limits of change in the Egyptian political landscape. Particularly the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' (SCAF) post-revolutionary policies against civilians created a great resentment within the diaspora.⁵⁵ There is one group among Egyptian Americans that feels perhaps a more grave disappointment about the unfolding of the events in the post-revolution Egypt and that is the Coptic Egyptians. While initially Coptic diaspora retained high hopes for a democratic Egypt where Copts would have equal rights with the majority,⁵⁶ later developments created a great sense of despair. The increasing polarization of Egyptian society, attacks against Copts and the SCAF's unwillingness or inability to prevent such attacks and even SCAF's harsh response against Coptic demonstrators all contributed to the growing sense of hopelessness among Coptic diaspora in the US. The group continues its pre-revolutionary efforts of lobbying the US government for a democratic and pluralistic Egypt where the rights of Coptic minority are protected.⁵⁷

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- 53 "Egyptians Americans, activists join forces ahead of upcoming elections" *Voice of America News*, 27 October 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/egyptians-americans-activists-join-forces-ahead-of-upcoming-elections-132800538/173298.html> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).
- 54 Jason Stern "When Egyptian Americans vote" *Foreign Policy*, 11 November 2011, http://mid-east.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/11/when_egyptian_americans_vote, (Accessed on 15 May 2012), "Egyptians Americans, activists join forces ahead of upcoming elections" *Voice of America News*, 27 October 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/egyptians-americans-activists-join-forces-ahead-of-upcoming-elections-132800538/173298.html> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).
- 55 <http://www.defendegyptianrevolution.org/2011/12/26/statement-to-our-sisters-in-egypt> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).
- 56 Chicago Egyptians celebrate Mubarak's Resignation" *CBS News*, 12 February 2012, <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2011/02/12/chicago-egyptians-celebrate-mubaraks-resignation/> (Accessed on 23 May 2012).
- 57 Dina Samir "Copts in the diaspora: physically distant but emotionally close" *El Ahrām*, 17 October 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/24343/Egypt/Politics-/Copts-in-the-diaspora-Physically-distant-but-emoti.aspx> (Accessed on 23 May 2012), "Egyptian Christian Diaspora in the USA writes an open letter to Hillary Clinton" *Lebanon Post*, November 10 2011, <http://cedarnews.net/diaspora-in-usa-writes-an-open-letter-to-hillary-clinton> (Accessed on 13 April 2012).

A major venue for directly engaging in homeland politics is the voting rights for diaspora groups. Not being able to vote was viewed by the Egyptian diaspora as forming a major obstacle on the way towards direct political participation. Even before the revolution Egyptian diaspora communities were complaining about their inability to vote and demanded a change in the election law to allow them to vote in homeland elections.⁵⁸ The Egyptian revolution provided a great opportunity for diaspora communities to press for demands to vote. Many Egyptian diaspora communities, particularly those in the US were active towards organizing campaigns in this direction.⁵⁹ The hard work of diaspora Egyptians bore fruit, and the Egyptian High Elections Commission gave the right to vote for Egyptians abroad. This decision was celebrated among Egyptian Americans since the voting right meant that “they too are Egyptians and they too will help chart Egypt’s new course.”⁶⁰

The Egyptian diaspora had the chance to use the newly acquired right to vote during the November 2011 parliamentary elections and May 2012 presidential elections (during the first round). Despite the fervent campaign for voting rights, only around 20,000 out of the 120,000 voting age Egyptian Americans registered for the parliamentary elections.⁶¹ There are many reasons for this low voter turnout such as the limited time for registration and requiring the possession of national ID cards (many diaspora members do not travel often to homeland and therefore never received ID cards) as a prerequisite for voting.⁶² Despite all these problems and frustrating results of both elections⁶³, Eyp-

58 “A Study on the Dynamics of the Egyptian Diaspora: Strengthening Development Linkages” IOM, July 2010 p.50, Omar Ashour, “El Baradei and the Mobilization of the Egyptian Diaspora” *The International Center for the Study of Radicalization*, <http://icrs.info/blog/ElBaradei-and-the-Mobilisation-of-the-Egyptian-Diaspora> (Accessed on 30 May 2012).

59 <http://www.facebook.com/Right2vote> (Accessed on 25 May 2012), Jason Stern “When Egyptian Americans vote” *Foreign Policy*, 11 November 2011, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/11/when_egyptian_americans_vote, (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

60 Jason Stern “When Egyptian Americans vote” *Foreign Policy*, 11 November 2011, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/11/when_egyptian_americans_vote, (Accessed on 15 May 2012).

61 Carmel Delshad, “No Shows: Why Egyptian Americans are failing to vote?” *World Policy Blog*, 7 December 2011, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2011/12/07/no-shows-why-egyptian-americans-are-failing-to-vote> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

62 “Egyptian Americans demand to vote with their passports” *El Ahram*, 29 March 2012 <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/7/37971/Egypt/Presidential-elections-/Egyptian-Americans-demand-to-vote-with-their-passp.aspx> (Accessed on 28 May 2012).

63 Great majority of the Egyptian diaspora in the US tend to support more liberal and secular parties and candidates, therefore the victory of conservative and Islamist parties created such sense of frustration.

tian Americans being able to vote was a major step towards engaging closely in homeland politics. The road that Egyptian Americans took to be more closely involved in homeland affairs in the post-revolutionary period is a shaky one yet they are resilient to continue their efforts.

Conclusion

Contemporary diasporas are active actors in their efforts to engage in homeland affairs which are largely constrained by the homeland and host state political opportunity structures. Egyptian Americans are one such diaspora group that struggles to engage in their homeland's future and affect the host state US' policies in this course. The Egyptian Revolution of the 2011 is a milestone in this endeavor. Before the revolution under Mubarak regime, there was no room for such outside, diasporic involvement. Thus the revolution presented a great opportunity for the Egyptians in the US. Now the time has come for them to be recognized as true Egyptians who are committed to work for the homeland's well-being. Egyptian Americans supported the demonstrators in Tahrir square with great fervor, organized rallies, worked towards gaining the support of American public and lobbied US government to change its pro-Mubarak policy and to support the demands for people's rule by the people. The ousting of Mubarak from power meant victory and hope not only for those in the homeland but also for Egyptian Americans. After this historical turning point, they started working with greater commitment in order to help with the homeland's economic development and political transition. New diaspora organizations were established for this purpose. Egyptian Americans also demanded voting rights representing a more direct participation in homeland politics and later gained this right. However, things have not been as smooth as the diaspora imagined since there are still many obstacles limiting their engagement in homeland politics mostly caused by a sense of suspicion and resentment by the homeland transition government and society. Despite all these impediments, Egyptian Americans seemed to be dedicated to assist their brethren in the homeland in their struggle to establish a democratic, pluralistic Egypt with a sustainable economic development.

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