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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the Winter 2019 edition of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, we reflected on the structural transformations the world has witnessed in the last one hundred years. The global trends examined—the changing nature of diplomacy, shifting alliances, and the emergence of new technologies and modes of communication—have implications at the local level and are themselves motivated by municipal, national, and regional factors. Indeed, it is impossible to comprehend fully the structural changes in the international system absent an understanding of these local drivers. Therefore, in our Summer 2019 edition, we examine how global change emerges from local developments by assessing a number of activist movements and their impact on international affairs.

Activism takes many forms—as do the approaches of individuals and groups that lead activist movements around the world. Activism may be an avenue for altering local power balances, as seen in opposition movements' efforts to upset the status quo. Alternatively, activism may serve as a mode of advocacy for peaceful political change. Relationships built and ideas propagated at the local level have great implications for national and international interactions, as local movements interact with and shape relations, beliefs, and ideas on the international stage. This edition features articles from academics, political and military leaders, and activists who have taken a deep dive into the local dynamics of international change.

The edition opens with a focus on two recent revolutions and their historical roots. **MOHAMMED ELNAIEM**, a doctoral student at the University of Cambridge, describes the fall of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 as a multi-layered struggle arising out of grassroots activism and coordination between armed and civilian opposition groups. **ROUBEN SHOUGARIAN**, the first Armenian Ambassador to the United States, reflects on the 2018 Armenian revolution and the role of youth activism in bringing about tangible social change in his native country.

Building on the theme of revolution, the edition then turns to an examination of activism through opposition politics in distinct places and time periods. **SUSAN BANKI**, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Sydney, and two grassroots activists from Bhutan, **BHAKTA GHIMIRE** and **HARI KHANAL**, explore the tactics employed by the Bhutanese Nepali refugee community in the 1990s to try to alter the Bhutanese government's policies. *The Fletcher Forum* also sits down with **LEONID VOLKOV**, who served as Campaign Manager and Chief of Staff for Alexei Navalny and is a Russian opposition leader in his own right, to discuss strategies, challenges, and lessons learned by the opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin. In both of these cases—grassroots activism by Bhutanese Nepali refugees and the Russian political opposition—local activists employed media as a tool to expand

the reach of their messages. This provides the context for an interview with **SHERIF MANSOUR**, the Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator at Committee to Protect Journalists and a graduate of the Fletcher School, who explains the critical role that journalists play in contributing to activist movements around the world.

The next section turns to analyze particular activist groups and local communities, seeking to understand how they organize and engage in politics. **CARLYN RODGERS**, a PhD student at the Centre of Latin American Studies at the University of Cambridge, investigates the phenomenon of “NGOization of resistance,” a process by which social movements and activists become co-opted by NGOs in the search for legitimacy. She explores the impact of NGOs in the specific context of pro-Black activism in Brazil. Next, **JARED ABBOTT**, a PhD Candidate in Political Science at Harvard University, and **MICHAEL MCCARTHY**, an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at George Washington University and Research Fellow at American University, draw on recent polling data to analyze grassroots defense of the Maduro regime in Venezuela. This section concludes with an interview with **JAKE SULLIVAN**, former National Security Advisor to Vice President Joe Biden and Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, who reflects on political activism in the United States in the wake of the 2016 presidential election.

While grassroots activism often leads to positive societal change, it can also contribute to threatening trends. **ALEX NTUNG**, a PhD researcher at the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent, explores the relationship between local conflict dynamics and national politics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically how national-level actors manipulate complex local issues. **ANDREA DEW**, the Maritime Irregular Warfare Forces Chair at the U.S. Naval War College and a graduate of the Fletcher School, explains how influencers manipulate identity, reality, and perceptions to incite violence and spread radical messages.

The edition concludes with an interview with **ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN**, former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who shares his reflections on a life of public service and highlights the importance of the local in personal and professional development.

Too often, students of international relations rely upon a structural lens alone, without consideration of local affairs. At Fletcher, however, we are eager to explore the complex interactions between local dynamics and the many opportunities and challenges present on the global stage today. As I conclude my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of *The Forum*, I hope our readership will also seek to dive deeper into drivers of international affairs at the local level. Thank you to *The Forum* staff for their dedication and hard work over the past year. Thank you to Bowen Peard for his tireless leadership of our print team—none of this would have been possible without his collaboration. I also want to thank Latifah Azlan, Courtney Hulse, and Matt Weinmann for their amazing dedication to *The Forum*. I am incredibly proud of what our team has accomplished this year. Finally, thank you to the readers of *The Forum*. We hope you find this edition as illuminating as we do.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF