The presentation seeks to reconstruct diplomats’ work in Western embassies before, during, and after the eighteen days of the revolt that ousted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. By their own accounts, diplomats often lacked an in-depth understanding of the society they were living in. Very few actively monitored local social media. As a consequence, many were ill-prepared to appreciate a situation in which popular demonstrations became an important political force capable of overthrowing Mubarak’s regime. This analysis unravels what being a diplomat posted abroad actually consists of in practice and provides insights on the interactions between diplomats and non-state actors.

JÉRÉMIE CORNUT is a visiting scholar at the University of Southern California. His fields of research are diplomatic studies and IR theory. His current research is funded by a post-doctoral fellowship from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC, 2014-2016). He was a postdoctoral fellow at McGill from 2012 to 2014. He obtained his PhD in political science from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris).