Rethinking Rogue Statehood: 
*Iran and the Arab Spring*

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Overview

• Introduction – Question
• Case Background
• Existing Approaches
• Argument
  – Iran's *rogueness* as a lens
• Implications
Introduction

• *Question 1*: what has been Iran’s policy toward the Arab uprisings?

• *Question 2*: how does Iran's position in the international system shape its understanding of the Arab uprisings?
Background

• **Phase 1** – initial support, optimism (spring 2011)
• **Phase 2** – Syria escalation – first silence, then recriminations (summer – autumn 2011)
• **Phase 3** – favor multilateralism (summer 2012)
• **Phase 4** – regional dynamic leads to support for Assad regime (autumn 2012 - present)
Iran-Syria relations

- Longest-standing Arab ally (1979)
- Access to Levant and Israeli-Palestinian arena
- Conduit to Hezbollah
- Interest in preventing regime change in Syria
Statements of Political Actors

- Initial optimism / support
  - Khamenei (Feb. 2011) (March 2011)

- Syrian unrest as turning point: silence followed by recrimination:
  - Khamenei (Aug. 2011)

- Regional strategy:
  - Velayati (Jan. 2012); Jalili (Sept. 2012); Aref (June 2013); Sulemani (March 2014)
Existing Literature

• 2009 election; Green Movement
  – Similarities:
    • Technology and mobilization
    • Began as reform movements; after violent state repression shifted to calls for regime change
    • Individual figures: Khaled Saeed (Egypt); Neda Agha-Soltan (Iran)
    • Context of long-standing regimes: Iran (30 years)
The Argument

• Break / *rupture* in pattern of relation (1979)
• Three eras in Iranian political history:
  – Iran as colony: *extraction*
  – Iran as client: *dependence*
  – Iran as rogue: *exclusion*
• International hierarchy as structured relational inequality
• Rogue v. 'family of nations'
Significance / Implications

Dispositional – who 'they' are / what 'they' do
  • Dueck (2006); Klare (1995); Litwak (2000)

Structural – international system
  • Hoyt (2010); Chomsky (2000); Derrida (2005)

My intervention, not to jettison the concept -
  – Relational approach:
    • asymmetric relations of power (hegemon-rogue) and Iranian political ideology
    • position within international hierarchy – Duvall and Barnett (2005)
Thank you!

متشكرم