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The Iranian diaspora and nonviolent civil resistance: connections and challenges

Research on diasporas began by focusing on the Jewish diaspora to then broaden the spectrum to include many different groups of people living outside of their countries of origin. Amongst the most modern ones we find the Iranian diaspora, whose formation can be directly related to the Islamic Revolution. Scholarship in this field has increasingly been focusing on the potential role of these liminal actors in supporting the continuation of conflicts or the construction of peace in their home-countries. The concept of nonviolent civil resistance, belonging to the field of Resistance Studies (RS), has recently started establishing connections with diasporas. This body of research is aimed at seeing the ways in which diasporic actors can contribute to nonviolent civil resistance movements in their countries of origin towards democratic freedom. Within RS, Iran has been an important case study, in fact, various scholars have regarded the Islamic Revolution, as well as other historical events or social movements in Iran, as examples of civil resistance. That being said, critical scholarship within RS -to some extent poststructuralist and postcolonial- considers the literature on civil resistance as Eurocentric and gender neutral. Overmore, within Diaspora Studies an increasing amount of research has been taking into consideration power relations' dynamics linked to elements such as gender, race, class and culture, pivotal factors within postcolonial feminism. This paper will thus bring together two fields of studies by placing specific attention on the Iranian diaspora's efforts in supporting socio-political change in Iran and it will do so, more specifically, by exploring the ways in which contextual and identity-related elements play a part in the shaping of their role as supporters of civil resistance struggles. The paper will also advance some very initial conclusions from semi-structured interviews with Iranian diaspora members living in the Spanish state.