



Type Of Article (Review Article)

The Capacity And Role Of Women's Diplomacy In The Foreign Policy Of The Islamic Republic Of Iran; With An Emphasis On Cultural Diplomacy

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Article Einfo

Received: 2024/01/30
Accepted: 2024/11/29
PP: 48-56.

Keywords:

Foreign Policy
Diplomacy
Cultural Diplomacy
Islamic Republic Of Iran
Women's Diplomacy

Abstract

Foreign policy is one of the most elevated domains of public life in contemporary societies, bearing the responsibility for producing and maintaining national security. Diplomacy, as the main instrument of foreign policy, not only secures national interests but also, through various means including cultural diplomacy, contributes to fostering constructive interactions among nations. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, strategic documents such as the 20-Year Vision Plan, the General Policies of Development Plans, and the Second Step of the Revolution Statement have emphasized the importance of foreign policy and the role of diplomacy without gender discrimination between men and women. In this regard, women, owing to their historical interest and competence in social and political arenas, can play an effective role in advancing foreign policy objectives through cultural diplomacy. This study, using a descriptive-analytical approach and library-based data collection, examines the capacities and role of women in the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. By analyzing existing documents and experiences, the study demonstrates that strengthening women's diplomacy, particularly in its cultural dimension, can enhance the country's international image and increase its soft power.

Citation: Alavinia, Nasrin. Zareie, Tayyebeh. (2025). The Capacity And Role Of Women's Diplomacy In The Foreign Policy Of The Islamic Republic Of Iran; With An Emphasis On Cultural Diplomacy. *Journal Of Socio-Cultural Changes*, 22(2; Ser. 86): 48-56.

DOI:

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Foreign policy is one of the most critical and contested areas of policymaking, playing a vital role in ensuring national security, preserving territorial integrity, and fostering economic and cultural development. Achieving these objectives cannot rely solely on military means; diplomacy, as its most important tool, holds a key position in promoting peace and enhancing a country's international standing. Despite the significance of this domain, the untapped potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy have been less studied from a scientific and realistic perspective. Women, constituting half of the country's population and possessing a history of political interest and participation, represent one of these valuable capacities. They can play a significant role in strengthening diplomacy, particularly in its cultural dimension. The innovative perspective of the Islamic Republic toward women's diplomacy, emphasized in its supreme documents, the viewpoints of Imam Khomeini (may his soul rest in peace) and the Supreme Leader, public opinion, and the country's cultural capacities, has created a foundation to utilize women's capabilities to enhance cultural diplomacy and improve Iran's international position. This research aims to identify and elucidate these potentials, emphasizing the strategic necessity of focusing on women's roles in foreign policy, especially from a cultural standpoint.

Methodology

This study is classified as applied research in terms of its objective and adopts a descriptive-analytical approach regarding the nature and method of data collection. The research systematically reviews theoretical literature and existing experiences in the field of diplomacy and foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with particular emphasis on the role and capacities of women in cultural diplomacy. The primary focus of the study is on content analysis of the system's supreme documents, the views of Imam Khomeini (may his soul rest in peace) and the Supreme Leader, as well as key actions and events related to women's diplomacy in recent decades. Data were collected through a library-based method, drawing on sources such as books, scholarly articles, analytical reports, official documents, and relevant databases. The collected data were then categorized and analyzed using qualitative content analysis and interpretive methods to identify and explain the actual and potential capacities of women's diplomacy in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, with a particular focus on the cultural dimension. Accordingly, the research findings are based on data interpretation and logical inference derived from evidence and documented sources.

ResultsAnd Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that diplomacy, as one of the key pillars of foreign policy, has undergone numerous transformations throughout history—from its traditional forms to the multidimensional practices of today. Particularly in the third millennium, the role of women in the form of cultural and public diplomacy has become more prominent. A review of the experiences of selected countries such as the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia demonstrates that targeted policymaking and leveraging women's capacities within diplomatic institutions can enhance soft power influence, international legitimacy, and reduce political costs. Meanwhile, the current status of the Islamic Republic of Iran in utilizing women in diplomatic arenas, especially in cultural diplomacy, falls short of the country's potential and requires greater attention, specialized training, and coherent strategic planning. Furthermore, analysis of the Supreme Leader's perspectives and the country's supreme documents reveals that cultural diplomacy and the utilization of human capacities, including women, aligned with principles of dignity, wisdom, and expediency, can play a decisive role in achieving the Islamic Revolution's global objectives. Overall, women's diplomacy—particularly in the cultural dimension—is a significant yet underutilized capacity within the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It has the potential to enhance the country's international image, strengthen soft power, and improve interactions with other nations' peoples and elites. Global developments and other countries' experiences show that focusing on cultural and public diplomacy, especially through the participation of women, increases the legitimacy and acceptance of foreign policy while reducing political costs. Therefore, it is recommended that, through targeted policymaking, the development of educational programs, and the training of specialized human resources, women's participation in both formal and informal diplomatic fields—especially in cultural and public domains—be expanded. This will allow the country to fully benefit from this large human capacity and achieve the overarching goals of the system within the framework of dignity, wisdom, and expediency.