

Investigating the Strategic Position and Public Diplomacy of Iran and the Ways to Spread the Persian Language

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Abstract

Language, as the most important means of communication among human beings, is essentially a reflection of all cultural aspects and the most important window of public diplomacy between countries. All cultural and ethnic manifestations are crystallized in language. For this reason, examining the status of languages in the world has always been of paramount importance, because any language can be considered as the best tool for a country's diplomatic, cultural, and scientific power. Public diplomacy is a novel approach in the foreign policy of countries that targets the people, especially elites, of other societies in foreign relations. The present study intends to explore the characteristics of the Persian language and its

position in the world in terms of language hierarchy, scale of language distribution, and number of speakers. We will also discuss strategies to expand the Persian language, including maximizing the strategic position of Iran in the world, utilizing possible capacities for teaching Persian at the international level through innovative approaches, and promoting Persian language education in countries where learning a second or foreign language is mandatory.

Keywords: Language hierarchy, language distribution, spread of Persian language, public diplomacy

Introduction

Language serves as the primary means of understanding and communication among individuals. Moreover, it plays a fundamental role in shaping scientific, cultural, social, political, and economic relations between countries and nations. As such, language plays a crucial role in communications between people and countries, enabling the exchange of information and knowledge. Additionally, language serves as an indicator of the culture and civilization of a society, and through having a common language, individuals can better communicate with each other and strengthen their relationships. Without a common language, it is difficult to maintain cultural continuity and pass on the culture to future generations. For this reason, language is, on the one hand, the creation of culture and on the other hand, its creator.

Persian is one of the great *lingua francas* of world history. Yet despite its recognition as a shared language across the Islamic world and beyond, its scope, impact, and

mechanisms remain underexplored (Green, 2019). Persian language and literature gradually became the official language of Iranians from the 3rd and 4th centuries of Hijri onwards, and it was called Dari, Parsi, and Farsi, and it was compared to Arabic and Pahlavi.

By the fifteenth century, having gained written form as a fashionable patois of the court poets of tenth-century Bukhara, Persian had become a language of governance or learning in a region that stretched from China to the Balkans, and from Siberia to southern India. As a *lingua franca* promoted by multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, and aided further by education and diplomacy, Persian reached the zenith of its geographical and social reach between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Then, from the early nineteenth century on, it was undermined by the rise of new imperial and vernacular languages. By around 1900, the language, which had once served to connect much of Eurasia, had retreated to Iran and neighboring pockets of Afghanistan and Central Asia, where it was refashioned into the national

languages of Farsi, Dari, and Tajiki. The period between 1400 and 1900, then, marks an era defined by the maximal expansion then rapid contraction of one of history's most important languages of global exchange (Green, 2019).

Although the Persian language is one of the main pillars of Iranian identity and after the constitutional revolution, it has been promoted and recognized as the national language of Iran, and it is officially common only in the countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In countries such as Iraq, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, a group of people also speak this language, and its influence on other languages such as Turkish, Hindi, Urdu, Armenian, Georgian, Swahili, and more, is undeniable.

The new global conditions have caused the governments to find more need to communicate with the social groups of the target countries, and for this reason, they target the relationship with the people of other countries, which is called "public diplomacy"; however, special attention has not been paid to understanding the nature, approaches

and strategies appropriate to the identity of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of public diplomacy with the aim of expanding the Persian language, and there is no complete study focusing on specific areas in this field.

De Swaan (2010) states that according to the theory of the world language system, multilingual links between language groups do not occur randomly, but on the contrary, these links form a very strong and efficient network that directly and indirectly connects seven billion inhabitants of the planet. This theory explains the relationships that exist between the world's languages and divides the world's languages into four levels in the form of a hierarchy. These four levels are peripheral languages, central languages, supercentral languages and hypercentral languages. Based on this division, Persian language is one of the central languages.

Considering the position of the Persian language in the language hierarchy on the one hand and the importance of public diplomacy on the other hand, this study is an attempt to take advantage of Iran's special position and turn it

into an opportunity to expand the Persian language and place it among the supercentral languages. To achieve widespread dissemination of the Persian language, it is also essential to establish Persian language programs, develop comprehensive teaching materials, and encourage language exchange programs and cultural events. By investing in these initiatives, the Persian language can reach a broader audience and continue to flourish worldwide and can be taught as a second or foreign language.

Public Diplomacy

The bitter experiences of the first half of the 20th century and the era of world wars led to a shift from closed and hidden diplomacy to open diplomacy. However, the evolution of diplomacy is not limited, and major changes in the structure of the international system have led to a revision and transformation of the role of diplomacy in world politics.

Public diplomacy in a conventional meaning is defined by the USC Center on Public Diplomacy as "means by which a sovereign country communicates with publics in

other countries aimed at informing and influencing audiences overseas for the purpose of promoting the national interest and advancing its foreign policy goals" (USC Center for Public Diplomacy, n.d.). Academic exchange programs, cultural events, language courses, television, radio broadcasting services, etc. are put in the agenda to reinforce "the "sending" country's image or reputation as a way to shape the wider policy environment in the "receiving" country" (USC Center for Public Diplomacy, n.d.). The goal of public diplomacy is to use communication methods to spread a country's successes among communities, minimize possible failures, and explain government and societal changes to others to create a positive image and desire for the country.

Influencing public opinion is a critical and essential element of power; Joseph Nye (2004) discusses the role of soft power and defines it as the ability of a state to shape the preferences of others through the attractiveness of an actor's culture or values (Nye, 2004). The dynamics of power have

changed during the 21st century: it has become diffused, and the digital revolution has made it possible for citizens to come together and shape influential groups within and beyond countries. In this situation, soft power is significantly essential to the shaping of the outcomes (McClory & Harvey, 2016).

The power of attraction, which is at the center of soft power, relies heavily on the ideas presented through a country's public diplomacy. If a country's culture and ideology are attractive, other countries will be more likely to follow its ideas. Similarly, if a country can establish international norms that are compatible with its society, it is less likely to be forced to change these norms within itself. These norms help to establish the identity, role, and interests of the agent.

In the age of information and technology, public diplomacy is at the heart of foreign policy (Melissen, 2005): a "new public diplomacy" (NPD) is therefore raised, which is mostly linked to communications and media. The new public

diplomacy “can be characterized as a blurring of traditional distinctions between international and domestic information activities, between public and traditional diplomacy, and between cultural diplomacy, marketing and news management” (Vickers, 2004, p. 191). The interactivity between the states and non-state actors, along with media framing and information management are therefore among the major characteristics of the new public diplomacy (Gilboa, 2006). Public diplomacy's ability to achieve a higher level of success compared to traditional diplomacy lies in gaining trust in public opinion. Transparency and honesty are essential factors in building trust, and creating credibility helps to maintain this trust. To increase credibility with foreign audiences, governments try to publish correct information carefully.

Success in using public diplomacy depends on many factors, including the closeness of a country's values and cultures to global norms and standards, understanding, like-mindedness, and consensus on the values and norms to

be transferred to foreign audiences, and access to multiple and effective means of communication to penetrate borders.

Utilizing public diplomacy strategies can be instrumental in advancing the use and instruction of the Persian language on a global scale. Iran has developed a strong public diplomacy apparatus, comprising various entities that oversee initiatives related to information dissemination, educational endeavors, and cultural exchanges. Through the application of public diplomacy, Iran can highlight the significance and advantages of learning Persian, garnering interest and backing from international audiences. Furthermore, public diplomacy can play a role in shaping positive perceptions of Iran and its culture, rendering the teaching and adoption of the Persian language more appealing. The promotion of the Persian language can be aligned with Iran's foreign policy goals, as public diplomacy is recognized as a tool of soft power in the pursuit of national interests. By emphasizing the rich historical and cultural heritage associated with the Persian language, public

diplomacy can contribute to its broader global adoption and instruction.

The Persian language has been promoted through other public diplomacy initiatives too. For example, Iran's public diplomacy institutions, such as the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the Iran Cultural Center, have organized Persian language courses and cultural events in different countries to promote the language and foster cultural exchange. Additionally, Iran has established Persian language departments in universities abroad, such as the Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, which has collaborated with universities in other countries to offer Persian language and literature programs. Furthermore, initiatives like the Persian Language Day, celebrated on the International Mother Language Day, have been used to raise awareness about the importance of the Persian language and its rich literary heritage. These efforts demonstrate how public diplomacy initiatives have been utilized to promote the Persian language and its cultural significance on a global scale.

Looking at the history of public diplomacy and the institutions and methods used to pursue this purpose, two main strategies or methods can be identified: the educational strategy (elite diplomacy) and the media strategy, which usually target different levels of audiences.

Educational Strategy (Elite Diplomacy)

The primary target group in public diplomacy is the elites of other countries. By influencing them, we can hope that they will become promoters and ambassadors for the intentions of our country. Many foreign policy analysts agree that decision-making scientific centers are important think-tanks for strategic and practical parts of foreign policy. Educational exchanges and hosting foreign elites have long been profitable investments in foreign policy. This educational strategy, also known as cultural diplomacy, involves establishing and developing relationships with foreign elites through culture, art, and education. It is an effective process in which a nation's culture is presented to the world through

knowledge, ideas, information, and art to strengthen mutual understanding.

Cultural diplomacy targets not only supporters but also opponents and can be applied more to countries that have a negative image of the country of origin. The government should consider this exchange as a priority for investment to expand the Persian language. Although it may take some time to see results, participating in youth and elite exchange projects can have a greater impact on future societies.

After the Islamic Revolution, Iran has made considerable efforts to attract elites from the Islamic world in line with its security and national interests. Iranian universities accept students from many countries of the Islamic world; some of these students study at Imam Khomeini International University in Qazvin. After completing Persian language courses, they are divided among different universities based on their fields of study. Some institutions also collaborate with universities to attract and accept

students from other countries in the region. For example, the Iranian Studies Foundation collaborates with Shahid Beheshti University to accept students for the master's degree in Iranian Studies. Iran has also effectively managed to draw in and involve prominent figures from the Islamic world. Notably, institutions like al-Mustafa International University (MIU), Ahl-ul-bayt World Assembly (ABWA), and Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) have played a significant role in establishing connections with elites, authorities, academics, and the general populace in countries like Afghanistan and Malaysia. Through their public diplomacy initiatives, Iran has garnered support and empathy in the Muslim world, leading to a close bond with the country. These instances illustrate Iran's success in captivating and involving influential individuals from the Islamic world through a range of diplomatic and institutional endeavors.

Media Strategy

The target audience for this strategy is the general public who craves entertainment. In many powerful countries, a

significant portion of public diplomacy is dedicated to this strategy, which involves using the media as a tool to achieve goals and promote national interests. This approach, often referred to as media diplomacy, highlights the role of media in foreign policy and diplomatic relations between countries. By providing and clarifying information and increasing diverse inputs to foreign policy decision-making systems and diplomacy, the media strengthen open diplomacy.

The media plays a crucial role in public diplomacy initiatives for language promotion. It can be used to disseminate information about a country's language, culture, and values to an international audience. Through various media channels such as television, radio, newspapers, and the internet, countries can showcase their language and cultural heritage, promote language learning programs, and highlight the importance of language education. Additionally, the media can be utilized to create and distribute language learning materials, organize language-related events, and facilitate cultural exchange programs, all of which contribute to the

promotion and preservation of a country's language. Overall, the media serves as a powerful tool for public diplomacy efforts aimed at language promotion by reaching a wide and diverse audience and shaping perceptions about a country's linguistic and cultural identity.

Iran has not overlooked the importance of media diplomacy in public diplomacy within the Islamic world. Perhaps its most significant step was launching Al-Alam TV channel in February 2011, coinciding with the American and British invasion of Iraq. Al-Alam is an Arabic-language news television channel serving the Middle East. According to official announcements, it aims to rapidly and transparently disseminate political events and developments in the world and the region, examine historical roots of Muslim issues and ways to resolve them, enhance unity regarding the common cultural identity, ideals, and interests of the people of the region, and adopt an active media policy against the one-sided flow of Western news imperialism. As Arabic is the language of the Islamic world, Al-Alam serves as a bridge between Iran

and the Islamic world. However, evaluating the exact effectiveness of this network is challenging. Nevertheless, signs of Al-Alam's impact on Iran's public diplomacy rivals in the Islamic world are palpable.

Undoubtedly, the methods, scope, and effectiveness of these two strategies are not identical. Education prepares minds for more and newer events, while the media confuses them with advertisements. Therefore, public diplomacy based on education is more sustainable than one relying on media tools. However, media diplomacy has more potential to influence audiences at lower levels of society since messages disseminated to the masses are mostly emotion-based and convincing audiences does not require much intellectual effort. Although there are differences between these strategies, holding both simultaneously is possible. Powerful and successful players in public diplomacy use both methods concurrently. Therefore, Iran can also use a planned approach and define precise goals for both strategies to expand the use of the Persian language as much as possible.

The Hierarchy of Languages

De Swaan's language classification divides languages into four groups. The first group consists of peripheral languages, which are used in limited geographical areas such as a country or parts of it. Peripheral languages like Finnish are not generally learned as a second language unless one intends to relocate to that region.

The second group is made up of central languages, which are the main language of each country. People who speak local languages must also learn the central language to live there. Italian is an example of a central language spoken in Italy by Italians who speak different regional languages. Persian is also classified as one of the central languages.

The third group comprises supercentral languages used for certain purposes in several countries. French is the official language of several African countries, including Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Supercentral languages like French, German, and Spanish are often taught as foreign languages in other countries.

English is the only hypercentral language and is used for almost every purpose in almost every country. It has become a Lingua Franca used to communicate not just with native speakers but mainly with non-native speakers.

Based on the latest data published by Ethnologue, a reliable encyclopedia researching different languages and providing related statistical data, Persian ranks twenty-fifth globally in terms of the number of native speakers with about 57 million speakers. Despite this, some languages like Bengali, which have more native speakers, do not fall under the hypercentral language category. This suggests that Iran can leverage its position to gain a higher ranking and expand the use of the Persian language globally.

The importance of expanding the Persian language in different countries

Persian is recognized as one of the important languages of the Middle East and Central Asia; Therefore, the development and teaching of Persian as one of the important languages of the world can help strengthen cultural and

economic relationships between countries, as well as promote peace and friendship in the world.

After examining the importance of public diplomacy, it should be noted that a common language is one of the ways to communicate and establish relations. Iran has 5,440 kilometers of land borders and 2,440 kilometers of sea borders in the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Sea of Oman. Sixteen provinces of Iran have land borders and/or air borders with neighboring countries, which can provide a unique opportunity for the expansion of the Persian language in our country, Iran. Among the most important results of the expansion of the Persian language are:

Strengthening scientific, cultural, social, political, and economic relations between Iran and other countries

Strengthening scientific, cultural, social, political, and economic relations between Iran and other countries can have numerous benefits. By improving these relationships, Iran can:

- Collaborate with other nations on scientific research, leading to advancements in various fields
- Share its rich culture with the world, while also learning about other cultures
- Foster positive social interactions between Iranians and people from other countries, thus promoting mutual understanding and respect
- Improve diplomatic relations by establishing open communication channels and promoting cooperation
- Boost its economy through increased trade and investment opportunities with other nations.

Language is the most important tool for communication and connection between nations, cultures, and different civilizations of humanity, and learning a new language means getting acquainted with a different culture and another world. Familiarity with a foreign language gives the opportunity to get to know the customs, characteristics, common points, and even shared cultural and spiritual

heritage of languages and peoples who live in different lands. Alongside Persian-speaking countries, there are now Persian-speaking minorities living in many regions of the world. Persian has been spoken in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Bahrain, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and a very small part of China since ancient times and has also spread to other countries in recent centuries due to immigration.

One of the countries neighboring Iran and with a long history of deep relationships and historic, cultural, and literary ties with Iran is Pakistan. Pakistan shares a border of nearly one thousand kilometers with Iran, and in addition, over 200 million people with a common culture and religion live in this country. The Persian language enjoys a high status in Pakistan. Pakistan, which has been considered to be an important part of the Indian subcontinent, has had a vast field of Persian language and literature for over a thousand years, nurturing thousands of poets and writers in this language. There are many reasons why learning Persian is

essential and necessary for a certain percentage of people in Pakistan today; firstly, Urdu is the vernacular language of the Pakistani people. Although English has been recognized as an official language in this country due to the long and colonial presence of England, the national language of Pakistan is Urdu. The national identity of Pakistan is inseparable from Urdu, and this language has an indissoluble bond with Persian, with almost sixty percent of Urdu words being of Persian origin. In this sense, the relationship between Urdu and Persian is similar to the relationship between Persian and Arabic. Persian can be considered as the mother of Urdu, just as some connoisseurs in Pakistan call Urdu the beautiful daughter of Persian. Just as knowledge of Arabic is essential to master Persian language and literature, it is also necessary to know Persian to master Urdu language and literature. However, with the penetration and prevalence of the English language, the number of English words and phrases in Urdu is increasing day by day. To preserve the Urdu language against the increasing influence of the English language, we

can first use the Urdu language itself and then seek help from the Persian language. The second reason why attention to the Persian language is necessary in Pakistan is the abundance of Persian books and manuscripts in this country. These manuscripts, written over hundreds of years by the hands of the ancestors of the people of the Indian subcontinent, contain the history, culture, literature, religious teachings, beliefs, feelings, and emotions of the Pakistani people. The high number of Persian manuscripts in the Indian subcontinent and the wide range of topics covered by them can be estimated from the lists compiled by manuscript scholars and book lovers in recent decades. The high number of Persian manuscripts in universities, libraries, and national museums of India and Pakistan, as well as in the libraries of two centers for Persian language research in Islamabad and Delhi, attest to this claim. These manuscripts are not brought from other places to the Indian subcontinent but have mostly been written in that land itself. Persian manuscripts are considered an important part of the cultural heritage of both

India and Pakistan. The truth is that Indians and Pakistanis have no choice but to master Persian language to understand a part of their own past. In terms of Persian-language historiography on the Indian subcontinent, there are articles and research papers that indicate that in some periods and regarding some dynasties and eras, there is no other book or source available in any other language except Persian. The third reason why attention to Persian language is essential in Pakistan is the existence of a group of people in this country who speak Persian. Currently, people living on the border areas of Pakistan, tribal and Himalayan regions, and Kashmir speak Persian. Authentic Muslim families in Punjab, Sindh, and Lucknow speak Persian at home and consider it a symbol of family lineage and nobility. Muslim doctors throughout northern India and Pakistan write their prescriptions in Persian. Inscriptions in mosques, monuments, and Muslim graves today are still written in Persian. Therefore, teaching Persian language in Pakistan can help strengthen relations between the two countries and expand the Persian language.

Another country that can be considered as a great asset for the expansion of the Persian language is India. India is the second most populous country in the world, seventh largest in terms of area, and the most populous democracy in the world. It shares borders with Pakistan to the west, China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north, and Bangladesh and Myanmar to the east. Indian culture is a diverse combination of customs, languages, religions, philosophies, architecture, cuisine, music, cinema, martial arts, and dance. Indian culture has flourished on the Indian subcontinent and has a history dating back thousands of years. India is a unique panorama that has attracted different languages, cultures and religions. Although India is twice the size of our country in terms of area and more than fifteen times our population, and its ethnic, regional, cultural and linguistic diversity far exceeds Iran, it has important similarities with Iran. Both countries have a rich and ancient culture and civilization, and their race and language date back to a common root in the distant past. The longstanding cultural, economic, and political relations

between the two countries, which began before Islam and continue to this day, and the permanent migration of Iranian intellectuals, religious figures, cultural figures, artists, and politicians to India throughout history, testify that despite all the differences, they share a common heritage.

Education has been a top priority for the Indian government since independence from Britain, and the establishment of the National Council for Education, Research and Training as an autonomous organization in 1961 gave it a more organized form. The history of national education and training documents in India dates back to 1968, when one of the most important provisions of the document was compulsory education up to the age of fourteen and the necessity of implementing the three-language formula (meaning learning English, Hindi and the official language of the state). However, in 2020 a new version of this document was published that had significant differences with previous versions. This new document, whose keyword is fair and universal education, consists of 27

chapters divided into four sections: 1. General Education, 2. Higher Education, 3. Other Key Areas of Focus, and 4. Implementation. This new document pays special attention to the Persian language, which is considered one of the ten classical languages of India, and allows it to be taught as an elective alongside Hindi and English in the last four years of high school, providing a unique opportunity for the expansion of the Persian language in India. By making good use of this opportunity through planning and coordination, Persian language training programs for teachers and student enrichment can be organized in collaboration with language learning centers in Iran, as well as international seminars and facilities related to common cultural, literary, and historical issues between Iran and China.

China is another country that can be viewed as an important asset for the expansion of the Persian language and the strengthening of bilateral relations. Iran and China have had extensive communications in various fields, including literature, from the distant past until now. In the fourth

century, different aspects of Chinese culture and civilization were mentioned in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, and descriptions of Chinese culture and civilization continued in Persian literature until the eighth century. The Department of Persian Language and Literature at Shanghai University is a leading center for developing language and literature talent and Iranian studies, which began its work in the bachelor's degree program in 1977 and launched the master's degree program in 2002 and the doctoral program in 2018. The Iranology Room of this department was established in 2012 by the Iranian Consulate General in Shanghai. In addition, the Beijing International Studies University was founded in 1964, with Persian language and literature established in 2016 to meet social needs, and the field continues to operate under the supervision of the School of Oriental Studies. Therefore, providing refresher courses for teachers and student enrichment programs through Persian language learning centers in Iran, as well as collaborating on international seminars and facilities related to common cultural, literary,

and historical issues between Iran and China can contribute to the expansion of the Persian language in China.

Access to Iran's rich cultural and historical resources can benefit a larger audience

The expansion of Persian language learning in Iran's border regions can increase Iran's soft power. This is because through the Persian language, the Islamic Republic of Iran's message can be easily delivered to these audiences while also helping better internalize Iranian culture among people in other countries. Moreover, Persian language could serve as a diplomacy tool for Iranian officials with other countries. In fact, with Iran's relations with other countries growing in political, cultural, educational, and economic fields, and with a better understanding of how other countries perceive Iran, the future of the Persian language in other countries will become clearer and better than before, enabling a greater number of people to access Iran's rich cultural and historical resources.

The expansion of Islamic-Iranian culture and civilization

The expansion of Islamic-Iranian culture and civilization can be achieved through various means. One such means could be promoting cultural and artistic events that showcase the rich history and heritage of Iran and its Islamic identity. Additionally, educational programs that teach the Arabic language and Islamic studies can help further promote Islamic-Iranian culture.

Given the link between the Persian language and Islamic culture, someone who becomes familiar with the outer layers of the Persian language is inclined to delve into its inner layers. The inner layers of the Persian language are also full of Islamic teachings and Quranic teachings. Moreover, the treasure trove of classic Persian literature, which contains many cultural, social, political, and even economic themes, is now considered a manifestation of Iran's soft power. Iranian traditions and historical customs are also an expression of this soft power. Learning about Iranian ceremonies and events such as Norooz demonstrates the

extraordinary influence of Iranian culture on other communities. Persian language and literature are a mirror that reflects the entire national identity of Iran. Literature and Persian language, especially Persian poetry, are the essential and stable element of Iranian culture. A review of this literature shows what kind of lessons it has provided for others and other cultures. It should be noted that in many countries around the world, long before any official or unofficial entity associated with Iran translated and introduced works of Persian literature, many of these works were translated independently by intellectuals and elites of those societies, works such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Saadi's *Bustan* and *Gulistan*, Hafez's *Divan*, Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, Shams Tabrizi's *Ghazals*, Mowlavi's *Mathnavi*, etc., some of which were translated into European languages many centuries ago. The beauty of the Persian language and the brilliance of Persian culture attract the attention of every student who learns Persian.

Today, not only in the United Nations but also at the peak of the era of modernism, postmodernism, and magical realism, the language of Rumi, Nizami, Attar, and others is gradually better understood, and the contemporary world more than ever realizes its need for this repository of spirituality and identity. Iranian poetry, which reflects the insight and perspective of Iranian society, is full of hopes and aspirations that all seek an ideal and utopian world where justice, fairness, equality, brotherhood, equality, and spirituality are the main characteristics. Therefore, Persian language and literature should be considered a source of soft power and public diplomacy for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and extensive efforts should be made to expand and deepen it at the regional and global levels.

Another issue in this regard is religious democracy. Religious democracy refers to a balance between divine sovereignty and the people's right to determine their destiny, which can be seen in the legal-political structure of Iran and in institutions such as the Constitution and the thoughts of

leaders and realities of Iranian society after the Islamic Revolution. In fact, religious democracy is one of the political and religious values of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is considered a new idea in the world of politics and can be defined as a relative and competitive advantage of Iran compared to Western liberal democratic values and can be considered as a tool for expanding the Persian language.

Discussion and Conclusion

Public diplomacy plays a significant role in expanding the Persian language by serving as a bridge for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Through public diplomacy initiatives, such as cultural events, language courses, and academic collaborations, the Persian language can reach a wider audience, fostering interest and appreciation for its rich linguistic and cultural heritage. Furthermore, public diplomacy efforts can facilitate the establishment of language learning programs, the translation of Persian literature, and the promotion of Persian arts and traditions, all of which

contribute to the expansion and preservation of the language. By engaging with international audiences through public diplomacy, the Persian language can transcend borders, creating opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and enhancing global linguistic diversity. Therefore, public diplomacy plays a crucial role in expanding the reach and influence of the Persian language on a global scale.

Establishing strategic councils and spreading the Persian language in different parts of the world holds significant value for several reasons. Firstly, strategic councils can serve as platforms for fostering diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties between countries where Persian is promoted and spoken. These councils can facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas, ultimately strengthening relationships and promoting mutual understanding.

Moreover, promoting Persian language education can open up opportunities for cultural exchange, academic collaboration, and economic partnerships. Proficiency in

Persian can enhance intercultural communication and create opportunities for trade, tourism, and academic exchange, ultimately contributing to global interconnectedness and mutual benefit.

Overall, establishing strategic councils and spreading the Persian language can serve as a means of promoting cross-cultural understanding, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering international cooperation and collaboration.

Based on the issues raised, the expansion of the Persian language through political and cultural interactions in different countries is debatable. At present, the Persian language is considered the best tool for public, cultural, and scientific diplomacy of Iran outside the country, and is part of Iran's soft power. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the education and development of the Persian language.

While Iran's public diplomacy targets all Islamic nations, it has more focus on specific geographic areas including the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Arab countries, as well as Central Asia, the Caucasus, and

post-Soviet independent republics. It can be argued that the "Iran Vision 1404" plan, which aims at reaching the first place in economic, scientific, and technological positions in the southwestern Asian region by 1404, has played a role in the growth and expansion of Iran's public diplomacy in the two axes of the Middle East and Central Asia. However, given the presence of two strong competitors, Arabic and Turkish, in Western Asia, special investment is needed for the development of the Persian language in three regions: A) the cultural zone of the Persian language, B) Latin American countries, and C) Southeast Asia and China. In addition, as mentioned in the article, special practical planning is needed to expand the Persian language in neighboring countries such as Pakistan due to its extensive border with Iran, and investing in a country like India due to its high population can be an important step towards expanding the Persian language.

Some researchers believe that culture is the foundation of all social actions, including politics, and the majority of intellectuals also speak about the interaction

between culture and politics, seeing these two fields as having mutual influence. Therefore, it can be said that language expansion provides a platform for political activities. Language is one of the most important elements used by government and non-governmental actors, which has a significant impact on countries with the same language, and politics can pave the way for this important cultural field. Therefore, as mentioned in relation to cultural diplomacy, developing and pursuing relationships with foreign elite experts, especially taking advantage of Persian-speaking elites residing in other countries, can be a very influential factor in expanding the Persian language and culture.

On the other hand, using media diplomacy, whose audience is the general public, can play a key role in expanding the Persian language. In addition, producing content in Persian with specific goals, the hidden aim of which is to expand the Persian language, can be very important. Creating an incentive for learning Persian through rich content, producing prominent Iranian films and music

with educational purposes, consolidating existing positions of the Persian language in the world, and purposeful expansion of Persian teaching alongside teaching languages other than English in schools, especially those that are part of Central languages, can be considered a significant step in expanding the Persian language. Because Central languages help us communicate with more parts of the world, and this in turn helps Persian become centralized.

In conclusion, it is necessary to hold numerous strategic councils to examine the status of the Persian language in different parts of the world, write identification documents and strategic papers with consultation from ambassadors and advisors, and place more emphasis on them in order to achieve the goal of expanding the Persian language. This work can currently be done with the help of organizations such as the Saadi Foundation at a faster pace.

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