

# The Islamic Republic of Iran's Cultural Diplomacy Action in India with the Application of Civilizational-Normative Principles

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## Original Research

Received:  
28 March 2025  
Revised:  
16 April 2025  
Accepted:  
12 June 2025  
Published online:  
5 July 2025

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## Abstract:

Cultural diplomacy in this world of modern nation-states, is one of the practical tools for developing diplomatic relations through the lens of culture, art, and civilization-building components. Iran and India, as two states with common racial, historical, civilizational, and identity roots, have not achieved an appropriate level of relationship in the last few centuries. This applied research, using a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) and documentary studies, seeks to find the main question of the researcher: is there a connection between the civilizational-normative foundations and the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in India? What components and tools are available to implement this relationship? The research hypothesis is that there is a relational interaction between civilizational-normative foundations and cultural diplomacy and that Iran also possesses tools and components such as several thousand-year-old shared relationships and identity, civilizational similarities in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa with the burnt city of Zabol, a common social structure (four social classes), and recent components such as Persian language and literature, common scientific, literary, and cultural figures, architecture, Muslim society, and the Persian and Iranian diaspora in India. This research has analyzed the subject from the perspective of constructivism theory.

**Keywords:** Cultural diplomacy; Civilizational; Normative; Cultural relations; India

## Introduction

The application of culture in the structure of foreign policy of governments has acquired a new identity and meaning under the title of cultural diplomacy in the last few decades, and this is one of the achievements of globalization since the 1970s, which began with economics and transferred to culture and politics. The actors of cultural diplomacy are trying to influence the public opinion of nations in addition to governments by using civilizational, artistic and cultural, religious, and other elements such as language, literature, norms, and values, and the emergence of this activism in international relations makes sense under the theory of structuralism. Structuralists try to find a mutual and common understanding between the domestic culture and norms of a country and the international culture and norms, and under that understanding, develop their relations through their cultural diplomacy.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the branches of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy has two branches: media diplo-

macy and cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy addresses the general public in addition to the elite society, while media diplomacy focuses on the general public. One of the advantages of cultural diplomacy is being present in the target society without conflict and political sensitivities, and the goal of cultural diplomacy is to gain prestige and credibility in the international arena and influence the target society, which is sometimes formed by creating new scientific and cultural institutions with the aim of intersubjective understanding. Considering its cultural identity, the Islamic Republic of Iran chose the policy of negative balance and joined the non-alignment from the beginning of its foreign policy activity, as India was one of the founders. Iran-India relations have had many ups and downs due to domestic policies and the conditions of the international system; Iranian cultural agents have continued their activities throughout this period.

## Background

In the article titled “The Place of Cultural Diplomacy in Indian Foreign Policy: Sources and Future Prospects,” (Saifi and Ellepour, 2019) explored the concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power, as well as their roles in international relations and began their discussion with the question of what place cultural diplomacy has had in New Delhi’s foreign policy in the post-Cold War environment. The authors further examined various components of Indian cultural diplomacy, including Nehruism-a political culture grounded in moral pacifism in foreign policy-Indian popular culture, proactive diplomatic efforts, and the incorporation of art through film, music, sports, and literature. Notably, the authors did not differentiate between the principles and components of cultural diplomacy, nor did they address the main topic of the research.

Smith (2019) in an article titled *Transatlantic Cultural Relations, Soft Power, and the Role of US Cultural Diplomacy in Europe*; published in the *European Journal of Foreign Affairs*, defines cultural diplomacy and the relationship between cultural and public diplomacy from the perspective of soft power; while listing the difference between cultural diplomacy, which is a governmental category, and cultural relations carried out by the private sector, he analyzes US cultural diplomacy. He believes that US cultural exports have had a major impact on the behavior and norms of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Finally, Smith believes that the future of US cultural diplomacy will be pursued more by the private sector. However, he does not address the civilizational-normative foundations and their impact on cultural diplomacy.

In the article titled “Components of Cultural Diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” (Ghorbani Golshanabad and Mohammadi, 2017) explore the various components of Iran’s cultural diplomacy and determine which of these components holds greater significance. They identify these components across four axes: value-insight, method-program, institutional-organizational, and activism-brokerage. However, the findings and components discussed are rather general, lacking reference to specific, objective elements that can be tested. Additionally, there is no direct mention of a hypothesis being tested in this research.

Zamorano (2016), in his article titled “Reframing Cultural Diplomacy: The Instrumentalization of Culture under the Soft Power Theory,” argues that there is no consensus on the definition of cultural diplomacy. He asserts that cultural diplomacy is a facet of soft power, enabling states to achieve hegemony through persuasion and attraction rather than coercion. Zamorano defines cultural diplomacy and analyzes it within the framework of soft power. He views cultural diplomacy as a tool for attaining symbolic power and concludes that it is closely linked to the spread of neo-colonialism and propaganda. Furthermore, he notes that developments in post-industrial globalization, such as advancements in technology and the liberalization of trade, have compelled governments to present themselves as cultural brands. However, it is important to clarify that this article does not address the main topic of the researcher in the current study.

## Theoretical foundations

### Constructivism; Culture-oriented activism

Constructivism emerged in the field of international relations in the early 1990s. This theory posits that culture plays a fundamental role alongside various political, security, and economic dimensions. Proponents of constructivism seek to identify commonalities between domestic and international norms, asserting that: a) the interactions of states are influenced by both values and material interests; and b) the interests of states can vary significantly depending on different environmental contexts, which in turn can shape and influence state behavior (Simbar and Moghimi, 2015). Constructivism is often viewed as a theory positioned between realism and liberalism (Filipec, 2020). Structuralist theorists argue that international relations are social constructs, emphasizing the importance of mental constructs such as norms and culture (Agha Mohammadi, 2011; Ahmadi et al., 2024). Constructivists focus on non-material factors, including norms, ideas, knowledge, and culture, and highlight the significance of collective or intersubjective ideas and understandings of social life within international relations (Jung, 2019). Structuralists believe that mental-ideological structures and norms are as crucial as objective and material structures. This framework includes the idea that identity plays a key role in shaping interests and actions; it also posits that agents and structures are mutually constitutive (Price and Reus-Smit, 2008).

Furthermore, alongside the agency component-referring to the beliefs and ideas of actors-structuralists identify the structure of the international system as another significant factor influencing the actions of foreign policymakers and their interactions (Heydari and Ghorbani Sheikh neshin, 2014). Social constructivists assert that agents and structures shape each other, noting that “agents are linked to structures, but they can also change them by acting on the structural environment in which they operate” (Lombardo, 2016). To grasp the agent-structure interaction, the concept of structuration is employed, which introduces the idea of dialectical action. Consequently, in considering the role of structure, we must also account for identity (Adami and Moradi, 2017). In essence, from a constructivist viewpoint, conflicts often center around ideas, values, discourses, identities, and ultimately, perceptions (Filipec, 2020).

### Diplomacy

The realization of a country’s foreign policy heavily relies on various tools, with diplomacy being one of the most crucial. Diplomacy can be defined as the process through which representatives of states work to advance relations between their nations (Haghighi, 2007). It encompasses a range of processes and measures aimed at peacefully resolving international disputes to promote the interests of the country involved. Another definition suggests that diplomacy serves as a tool for foreign policymakers to pursue peace rather than resorting to war. The implication is that the end of diplomacy coincides with the onset of war, although some argue that diplomatic efforts can continue even during a conflict (Ashuri, 2015). Ultimately, diplomacy is an art that involves persuading and engaging with the policies of

the host government to further one's national objectives. By fostering friendships, a diplomat lays the groundwork for peacefully addressing challenges and establishing cooperative relations based on mutual interests (Dabiri, 2005; Reshadat Jo and Abbas Rashidi, 2012). Diplomacy is often described as both an art and a science focused on managing foreign policy. It involves the use of political strategies in the international arena to peacefully resolve disputes between nations. In the past, diplomacy tended to be secretive and restricted, but modern diplomacy is generally more transparent (Ghavam, 2009). The primary aim of diplomacy is to foster relationships between countries and promote global peace. It seeks to establish connections founded on respect and friendship among states, preventing the emergence of international conflicts and misunderstandings. When conflicts do arise, diplomacy aims to resolve them in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, where nations can negotiate equitable solutions. It is important to note that, within the realm of diplomacy, a diplomat's goal is to maximize their country's national interests.

### Cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a model of interaction between people and cultures that takes many forms and is coordinated by state organizations as a form of direct cultural communication between countries. It can therefore be interpreted as the mobilization of soft power assets to achieve forms of international exchange (Smith, 2019). However, there is often no clear definition of how this concept is used, or what exactly it includes. Why and how it is important? Or how it works. Much of this uncertainty arises from the confusion of cultural diplomacy, as it is fundamentally a state-based and interest-based practice, and is different from cultural relations, which tend to be guided by ideals rather than interests and are mainly carried out by non-state actors. Therefore, given the current complexities between transnational cultural communication and cultural performance within nations, this phenomenon should be one of the important concerns of the field of culture. However, little attention has been paid to cultural diplomacy as a key component of the cultural landscape of contemporary foreign policy (Anga et al., 2015). Cultural diplomacy is a model of interaction between people and cultures that takes various forms and is coordinated by state organizations to facilitate direct cultural communication between countries. It can be understood as the mobilization of soft power assets to promote international exchange (Smith, 2019). However, the concept often lacks a clear definition, leading to questions about its significance, how it operates, and what it precisely entails. Much of the ambiguity surrounding cultural diplomacy arises from its foundation in state interests, distinguishing it from cultural relations, which are typically motivated by ideals and primarily conducted by non-state actors. Considering the complexities of transnational cultural communication and cultural expression within nations today, cultural diplomacy should be recognized as an important aspect of the field of culture. Despite its relevance to the cultural dimension of contemporary foreign policy, it has attracted relatively little attention (Anga et al., 2015).

The understanding of culture and diplomacy has evolved significantly over time, reflecting the changing conditions of the societies that use these concepts. In contemporary society, culture is no longer narrowly defined as high art, just as diplomacy is no longer seen as an exclusive dialogue among a select group of elite individuals (Luke and Kersel, 2016; Cooper et al., 2013). Cultural diplomacy refers to the efforts of a state to communicate its national culture to foreign audiences to foster an understanding of its national ideals and institutions. This is part of a broader strategy aimed at garnering support for political and economic objectives. In international relations, soft power relies on public and cultural diplomacy to establish credibility (Bell and Anne Kennan, 2022). The concept of soft power involves using culture as a practical tool of influence, highlighting the state's central role in cultural diplomacy. Through cultural diplomacy, the state manages cultural security and promotes internal cohesion (Thussu, 2018; Hartig, 2016; Gil, 2015). Instead of merely focusing on the projection of soft power within cultural diplomacy policies and practices, it is beneficial to adopt an understanding of culture and communication based on contemporary cultural theory. This perspective views culture as an ongoing, relational, and communicative process, emphasizing the social co-production of meaning. Such an understanding supports dialogue-oriented and participatory approaches to cultural diplomacy (Zaharna et al., 2013). Cultural diplomacy falls within the realm of foreign policy analysis (FPA), which sees culture as a dynamic force and a significant factor in power struggles (Becard and Menechelli Filho, 2019). Patricia Goff asserts that cultural diplomacy operates independently from government policies. She views cultural diplomacy as a tool to counteract the negative perceptions created by high-level government decisions. Goff believes its primary role is to bridge differences and foster mutual understanding. As a result, cultural diplomacy can present a narrative about a country that differs from the official stance of its politicians (Goff, 2013; Luke and Kersel, 2016). Researchers in international branding recognize that national and international brands are developed over time. Consequently, the characteristics that contribute to the formation of a national brand also play a role in the components of soft power and cultural diplomacy (Cull, 2022). A national brand can be defined by the overall perceptions of a nation held by international stakeholders. These perceptions may include elements such as people, place, culture, language, religion, history, food, and fashion (Dubinsky, 2022).

Cultural diplomacy is an important tool for establishing effective communication and maintaining international relations. It helps promote a country's national brand in response to evolving global conditions. Consequently, creating a favorable international environment is essential for a nation's survival and prosperity. By enhancing a country's cultural presence and fostering relationships with governments, cultural diplomacy can contribute to both security and economic development (Bajenaru, 2022). The globalization of a country's brand can be observed across social, political, economic, and cultural contexts (Baylis et al., 2017; Alkatheeri and Khan, 2019). As a result, the defini-

tion of cultural diplomacy varies significantly among the different countries that employ it (Luke and Kersel, 2016). Despite its increasing importance in recent years, there is still no consensus on its definition. Cultural diplomacy is often described in terms of power: the ability to persuade and attract others, enabling a state to establish dominance without resorting to coercive methods (Zamorano, 2016). Currently, cultural diplomacy is marked by the emergence of numerous intervening actors at various scales and levels, alongside the growing significance of transnational organizations. Beyond just nation-states, business professionals, artists, migrants, and diasporas also engage in this complex landscape. Their interactions are typically guided by official definitions of culture and are facilitated by state institutions and agents that promote a specific set of artistic and cultural goods and activities aligning with state cultural policies and national identity. In summary, cultural diplomacy can be defined as a combination of government policies aimed at promoting international culture, functioning as a comprehensive strategy (Topic and Sciortino, 2012; Zamorano, 2016). The post-Cold War world has seen a shift in the rhetoric surrounding cultural diplomacy, often incorporating an economic dimension as states compete for markets, investments, and attention within the framework of neoliberal globalization. Additionally, there has been a diversification of cultural diplomacy strategies; various actors adapt their approaches to cultural foreign policy based on their perceived status in a multipolar world. Despite the ongoing enthusiasm for cultural diplomacy in policymaking circles and the significant scholarly attention it has garnered in the twenty-first century, evaluating the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy remains a challenge (Luke and Kersel, 2016).

### History of Iran-India relations

The bilateral relations between Iran and India have deep historical roots, marked by significant cultural and civilizational commonalities, though they have always been somewhat complex. These complexities have intensified in recent times due to the influence of third countries. Traditionally, these relations thrived until the onset of colonialism in Asia, which led to the exploitation of Indian resources and weakened ties. However, after India's independence, relations between the two countries were revitalized (Emsaki, 2014). Iran and India officially met for the first time in 1947 during a meeting of Asian-African countries in New Delhi, which laid the groundwork for diplomatic relations that formally began in 1950. During the Cold War, India's alignment with the Eastern bloc created a structural mismatch in identity-building, making Iran less inclined to strengthen ties, leading Iran to be less inclined to strengthen ties. Iran's membership in the Baghdad Pact, later known as CENTO, further strained relations, inciting significant displeasure in India. Additionally, the strengthening of Iran-Pakistan ties, coupled with Iran's unequivocal support for Pakistan during its conflict with India, deepened the divide. The presence of Iran and Pakistan in the Western bloc, contrasted with India's sympathy towards the Eastern bloc, contributed to the ongoing challenges in forming stable relations between

Iran and India (Ahmadi et al., 2023).

## Research method

This research utilized a mixed-method approach to gather detailed and comprehensive information. First, a quantitative survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire. Following this, qualitative in-depth interviews were performed to gain deeper insights. Additionally, a documentary analysis was carried out to collect relevant information.

### Statistical population

In the survey section of this study, the statistical population consists of students from the University of Delhi, specifically those in the Persian Language Department, as well as Indian students studying in Iran. For the qualitative interview section, the population includes key informants such as Iranian cultural counselors in India and university professors who have experience in Iran's cultural diplomacy.

### Sample size

Our statistical population consists of 266 individuals. To determine an appropriate sample size for this project, we will apply Cochran's formula. In this case,  $N$  represents the statistical population,  $t^2 = 3.84$ ,  $S = 2.2$ , and  $d = 0.25$ . We will use these values to calculate the required sample size.

$$n = \frac{Nt^2S^2}{Nd^2 + t^2S^2}$$

$$n = \frac{266 \times 3.84 \times (2.2)^2}{266 \times (0.25)^2 + 3.84 \times (2.2)^2} = 158$$

The required population size for the project is 158 people. To ensure reliability, a random sampling method was employed, resulting in the distribution of 200 questionnaires. Out of these, 171 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher. In the qualitative interview section, key experts with experience in India's cultural diplomacy sector were interviewed. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached, with a minimum of ten interviews conducted during this phase.

### Validity and reliability

The validity of narratives and items generally depends on how the concepts being studied are presented. In this study, we utilized hypothetical validity to assess the accuracy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was initially tested by sending it to expert professors. After making necessary revisions to improve the reliability, we distributed a limited number of questionnaires (30) for a pre-test within the statistical population. Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of the items. It is important to note that after analyzing the initial test results, some items were modified and adjusted accordingly.

### The findings of the Cronbach's alpha measure in the following table include:

After collecting the questionnaires, coding, and compiling the data, analysis was performed using SPSS17 software on the existing hypotheses, and the findings were extracted into

two inferential and descriptive narratives. In the inferential narrative, which is the main focus of the research, the relationship between two variables in two-dimensional indices and the significant relationship between them were analyzed with the measures of the chi-square and gamma correlation coefficients. In the descriptive narratives, frequency tables, and percentages were analyzed.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

| Items                        | Civilizational-normative foundations | Cultural diplomacy |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Cronbach's alpha coefficient | 76.8                                 | 92.4               |

## Main Concepts of the research:

### Cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is a part of foreign policy in which governments seek to structure their cultural assets to achieve foreign policy goals, and today it includes any action that leads to purposeful cultural cooperation between governments and nations or nations with nations. Cultural diplomacy, in its discursive development due to its subordination to public diplomacy, has been advocated in the last two decades as a more citizen-centered model of diplomacy, whose audience is not only elites but also diverse national and global populations, and is increasingly understood as a transnational process that can be implemented not only by governments and their organizations, but also by civil society or private sector stakeholders. The goal of cultural diplomacy is to support foreign policy and strengthen domestic cohesion to advance domestic and national goals in the international dimension. Therefore, in this regard, it is necessary to mention the contribution of state identity in cultural diplomacy. Because the scope of cultural diplomacy can be defined as a national image or in pursuit of domestic goals. Therefore, states, private actors, goals, activities, and audiences can be called the main elements of cultural diplomacy.

### Civilizational-normative foundations

By examining different civilizations, we conclude that among influential identity societies, Iranian civilization has a complex process of influence and transformation. Over the centuries, Iranians have made great contributions to the world in terms of material and spiritual values, and for this reason, they are proud of having made a major contribution to the construction of global civilization; a civilization whose one end is China and the other is the Anatolian Plateau, and this civilizational structure is an important component of Iranian identity and one of the important el Having common civilizational components creates harmony and cultural connection. Iran, as one of the oldest civilizations in the world, has been in contact with other civilizational areas. This civilizational area, due to its location at the crossroads of civilizations, has connected Western and Eastern civilizations, an example of which is the Silk Road. In this civilizational connection, elements such as the Persian language and Nowruz have served as connecting

links. Iranians also played an unparalleled role in the growth and development of Islamic civilization (Salehi Amiri and Mohammadi, 2010). Ements of their soft power (Hersij and Taviserkani, 2010; Ahmadi Dehka, 2018).

## Operational definitions

### Dependent variable

In this study, cultural diplomacy is considered the dependent variable, and the basis for measuring our cultural diplomacy is the civilizational-normative basis, the indicators of which are listed in the table and are measured.

### Independent variables:

Age: This refers to the time interval between birth and the present. This variable is recorded numerically and is related to a question in the questionnaire (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Educational level: In this section, ordinal variables are the basis of the analysis. It is necessary to explain, that because the statistical population is students, the variables are applied at the undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral levels (Table 2, Fig. 2).

Field of study: In this study, the respondent is required to indicate his or her field of study (Table 3, Fig. 3).

## Research findings

### Descriptive statistics

According to the table and Chart above, the largest age group is between 29 and 32 years old and 25 to 27 years old, at 30% and 27%, respectively, and the smallest age group is 37 years old and above, at 12%.

According to the table above, the highest educational group is Bachelor's and Doctoral (Ph.d.), 44% and 34%, respectively, and the lowest is Postdoctoral, 6%.

According to the table and Chart above, the largest study fields are Persian Language and Literature and Urdu Language and Literature, with 67% and 16%, respectively, and the smallest group of study fields is Political Science and Computer Engineering, with 2%.

### The abundance of common civilizational-normative foundations

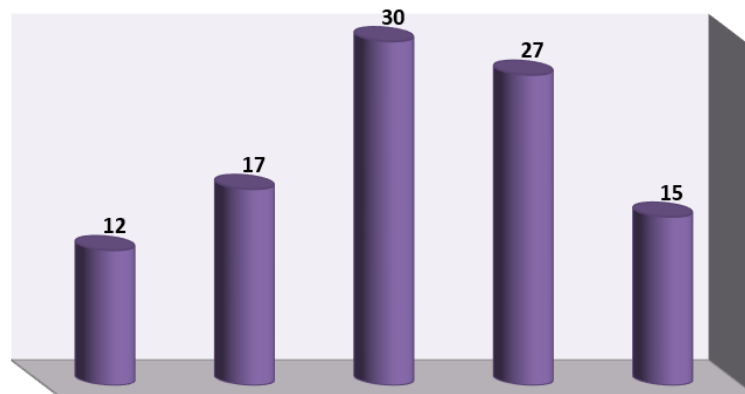
According to the Table 4, Figure 4, 34% of the respondents are highly inclined, 38% are moderately inclined, and 28% are inclined toward the common cultural and normative foundations between the two countries. The data shows that the statistical community welcomes these foundations and should use this capacity.

### The abundance of cultural diplomacy

According to the Table 5, Figure 5, 35% of respondents highly, 33% moderately, and 32% slightly welcome cultural diplomacy between the two countries. The data shows that the statistical community believes Iran can use cultural diplomacy to advance its goals.

**Table 1.** Age groups

|                             | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Between 21 and 24 years old | 25        | 14.6    | 14.6          | 14.6               |
| Between 25 and 28 years old | 46        | 26.9    | 26.9          | 41.5               |
| Between 29 and 32 years old | 51        | 29.8    | 29.8          | 71.3               |
| Between 33 -36 years old    | 29        | 17.0    | 17.0          | 88.3               |
| 37 years and above          | 20        | 11.7    | 11.7          | 100.0              |
| Total                       | 171       | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Figure 1.** Age group chart.

### Findings of civilized-normative foundation

According to the Table 6 and the gamma test, the following results have been obtained:

There is no relationship between age groups and common civilizational-normative foundations. The intensity of the

relationship is  $-0.114$ , which indicates a low and inverse relationship intensity. The significance level is  $0.194$ , greater than  $0.05$ , meaning there is no statistical relationship between age groups and common civilizational-normative foundations.

**Table 2.** Educational level

|                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Bachelor        | 73        | 42.7    | 44.0          |                    |
| Master's Degree | 27        | 15.8    | 16.3          |                    |
| Ph.D.           | 56        | 32.7    | 33.7          |                    |
| Postdoctoral    | 10        | 5.8     | 6.0           |                    |
| Total           | 166       | 97.1    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing         | 5         | 2.9     |               |                    |
| Total           | 171       | 100.0   |               |                    |

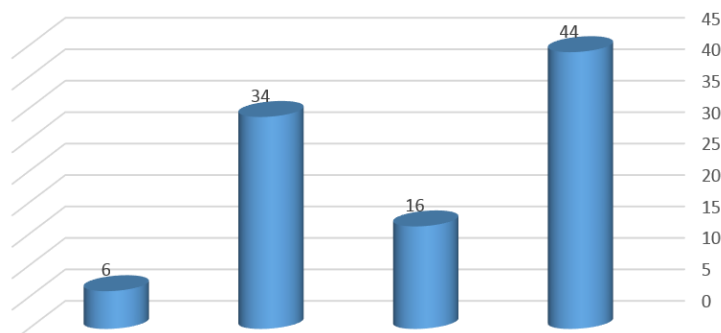
**Figure 2.** Educational level.

Table 3. Field of study

|         |                                 | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative percent |
|---------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Item's  | Political Science               | 3         | 1.8     | 1.9           | 1.9                |
|         | Computer Engineering            | 3         | 1.8     | 1.9           | 3.9                |
|         | Public administration           | 10        | 5.8     | 6.5           | 10.3               |
|         | Persian language and literature | 104       | 60.8    | 67.1          | 77.4               |
|         | History                         | 6         | 3.5     | 3.9           | 81.3               |
|         | Urdu language and literature    | 24        | 14.0    | 15.5          | 96.8               |
|         | Foreign language                | 5         | 2.9     | 3.2           | 100.0              |
| Total   |                                 | 155       | 90.6    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing | Missing                         | 16        | 9.4     |               |                    |
| Total   |                                 | 171       | 100.0   |               |                    |

Filed Of Study

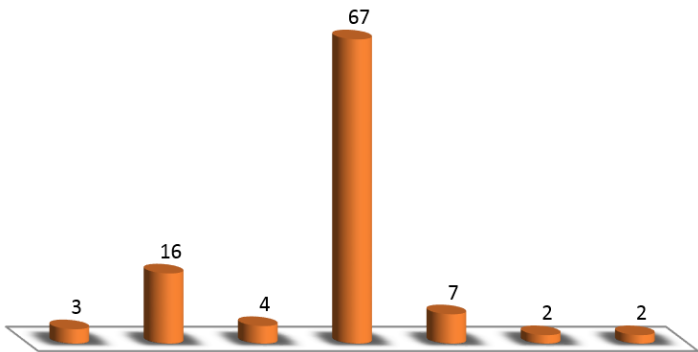


Figure 3. Field of study.

Table 4. The abundance of common civilizational-normative foundations.

|         |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative percent |
|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Item's  | Low      | 45        | 26.3    | 27.8          | 27.8               |
|         | Moderate | 62        | 36.3    | 38.3          | 66.0               |
|         | High     | 55        | 32.2    | 34.0          | 100.0              |
|         | Total    | 162       | 94.7    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing | Missing  | 9         | 5.3     |               |                    |
| Total   |          | 171       | 100.0   |               |                    |

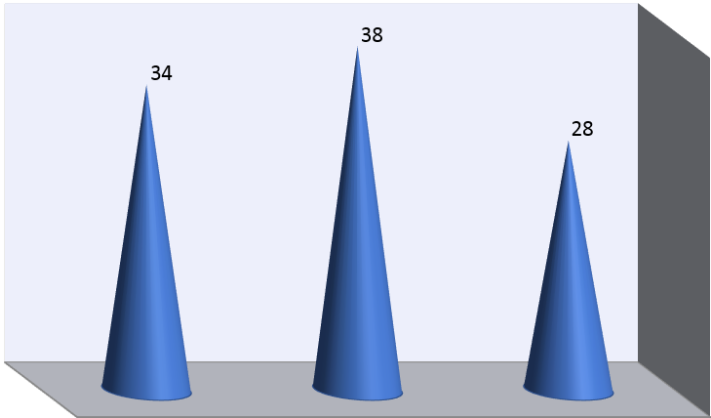
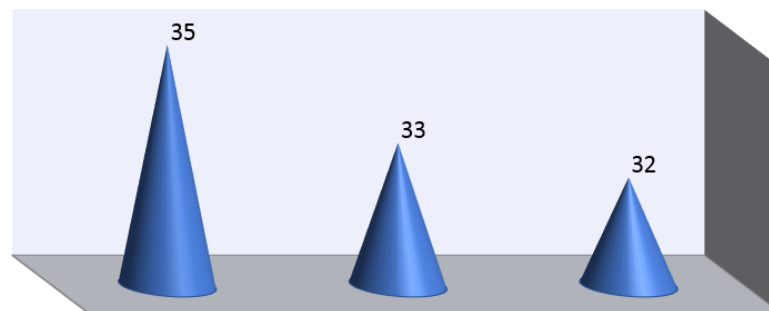


Figure 4. The abundance of common civilizational-normative foundations.

**Table 5.** Frequency of cultural diplomacy.

|         |          | Cultural diplomacy |         |               |                    |
|---------|----------|--------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|         |          | Frequency          | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative percent |
| Item's  | Low      | 47                 | 27.5    | 32.2          | 32.2               |
|         | Moderate | 48                 | 28.1    | 32.9          | 65.1               |
|         | High     | 51                 | 29.8    | 34.9          | 100.0              |
|         | Total    | 146                | 85.4    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing | Missing  | 25                 | 14.6    |               |                    |
| Total   |          | 171                | 100.0   |               |                    |

**Figure 5.** Frequency of cultural diplomacy.**Table 6.** The relationship between age category & civilized-normative foundation.

| Gamma correlation |                          |                                |                   |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Age category      |                          |                                |                   |
| -0.114            | Value                    | Civilized-Normative Foundation | Gamma correlation |
| 0.194             | Approximate significance |                                |                   |
| 162               | Total                    |                                |                   |

**There seems to be a relationship between educational level and a tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations.**

According to the two-dimensional Table 7, respondents with a bachelor's degree have the highest tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations, and respondents with a master's degree have the lowest tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations.

The test findings of the gamma-phi correlation coefficient between the variables are a number equal to  $p = -0.273$ ; and the correlation intensity of the findings is moderate and inverse. The obtained validity is equal to  $p = 0.040$ . Therefore, considering the findings of the validity level which is smaller than 0.05, we conclude that there is a statistical relationship between the level of education and common civilizational-normative foundations (Table 8).

**It seems that there is a relationship between the field of study and the tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations.**

According to the two-dimensional Table 9, the fields of computer engineering, public administration, and Persian literature have the least tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations, and the fields of

political science and Urdu literature have the most tendency towards common civilizational-normative foundations.

There is a relationship between the field of study and the common civilizational-normative foundations, according to the Chi-square test, whose significance level is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, meaning that there is a statistically significant relationship between the field of study and the common civilizational-normative foundations (Table 10).

**Cultural diplomacy**

According to the Table 11 and the gamma test, the following results have been obtained: There is no relationship between age groups and cultural diplomacy, the intensity of the relationship is 0.030, which indicates the intensity of the lack of a direct relationship, and the significance level is 0.756, which is greater than 0.05, meaning there is no statistical relationship between age groups and cultural diplomacy.

**It seems that there is a relationship between educational level and inclination towards cultural diplomacy.**

According to the two-dimensional Table 12, respondents with a bachelor's degree have the highest tendency toward cultural diplomacy, and respondents with a master's degree

**Table 7.** Education dependent & civilized-normative foundation.

| Education dependent & civilized-normative foundation |                      |                                |          |        |        |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
|                                                      |                      | Civilized-normative foundation |          |        | Total  |
|                                                      |                      | Low                            | Moderate | High   |        |
| Education dependent                                  | Bachelor             | 47.2%                          | 19.4%    | 33.3%  | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Master's Degree      | 15.2%                          | 45.5%    | 39.4%  | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Ph.D. & Postdoctoral | 11.3%                          | 62.3%    | 26.4%  | 100.0% |
| Total                                                | 28.5%                | 39.2%                          | 32.3%    | 100.0% |        |

**Table 8.** Education dependent & civilized-normative foundation.

| Age category |                          |                                |                   |  |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| -0.272       | Value                    |                                |                   |  |
| 0.14         | Approximate significance | Civilized-Normative Foundation | Gamma correlation |  |
| 0.158        | Total                    |                                |                   |  |

have the lowest tendency toward cultural diplomacy. The test findings of the gamma-phi correlation coefficient between the variables are equal to  $p = 0.320$ , and the strength of the correlation findings is medium and direct. The obtained validity is equal to  $p = 0.006$ . Therefore, considering the findings of the validity level, which is smaller than 0.05, we conclude that there is a statistical relationship between the level of education and cultural diplomacy (Table 13).

**There seems to be a relationship between the academic field and an inclination toward cultural diplomacy.**

According to the two-dimensional Table 14, the fields of computer engineering, political science, and Persian literature have the highest tendency towards cultural diplomacy, and the field of foreign languages has the lowest tendency. There is a relationship between the field of study and cultural diplomacy, according to the Chi-square test, whose significance level is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, meaning that there is a statistical relationship between the field of study and cultural diplomacy (Table 15).

**The findings of the research in the section on interviews with elites emphasize the following:**

**Table 9.** Education dependent & civilized-normative foundation.

| Education dependent & civilized-normative foundation |                                 |                                |          |        |        |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
|                                                      |                                 | Civilized-normative foundation |          |        | Total  |
|                                                      |                                 | Low                            | Moderate | High   |        |
| Education dependent                                  | Political science               |                                |          | 100.0% | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Computer engineering            | 100.0%                         |          |        | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Public administration           | 30.0%                          | 70.0%    |        | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Persian language and literature | 36.0%                          | 36.0%    | 28.0%  | 100.0% |
|                                                      | History                         |                                | 100.0%   |        | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Urdu language and literature    | 12.5%                          | 16.7%    | 70.8%  | 100.0% |
|                                                      | Foreign language                |                                | 100.0%   |        | 100.0% |
| Total                                                |                                 | 29.8%                          | 38.4%    | 31.8%  | 100.0% |

**Table 10.** Relationship between academic field and civilizational-normative foundations.

| Chi-Square tests             |                     |    |                         |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-------------------------|
|                              | Value               | Df | Asymptotic significance |
| Chi-Square                   | 55.686 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | 0.000                   |
| Likelihood ratio             | 60.816              | 12 | 0.000                   |
| Linear-by-Linear association | 3.934               | 1  | 0.047                   |
| N of valid cases             | 151                 |    |                         |

**Table 11.** Relationship between age groups and cultural diplomacy.

| Gamma correlation |                          |                    |                   |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Age category      | Value                    |                    |                   |
| .30               |                          |                    |                   |
| .756              | Approximate significance | Cultural diplomacy | Gamma correlation |
| 146               | Total                    |                    |                   |

**Table 12.** Table of educational levels and cultural diplomacy.

| Educational levels and cultural diplomacy |                      |                    |          |       |        |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|-------|--------|
|                                           |                      | Cultural diplomacy |          |       | Total  |
|                                           |                      | Low                | Moderate | High  |        |
| Education dependent                       | Bachelor             | 28.8%              | 136%     | 57.6% | 100.0% |
|                                           | Master's Degree      | 42.4%              | 27.3%    | 30.3% | 100.0% |
|                                           | Ph.D. & Postdoctoral | 23.3%              | 69.8%    | 7.0%  | 100.0% |
| Total                                     |                      | 30.3%              | 33.8%    | 35.9% | 100.0% |

**Table 13.** Relationship between educational level and cultural diplomacy.

| Educational levels |                          |                    |                              |       |  |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------|--|
| 320                | Value                    |                    |                              |       |  |
| 0.006              | Approximate Significance | Cultural Diplomacy | <b>Gamma Correlation</b> 142 | Total |  |

civilizational-normative foundations, including economic interactions, the connection and interaction between the fields of culture and literature, the translation movement, the use of Indian capacities in the globalization of Persian literature, Islamic and even Shiite culture and civilization, the use of historical past capacities and historical interactions, civilizational and cultural aspects, the discussion of the economy of culture, the discussion of handicrafts and the field of tourism, the use of the capacities of the Mustafa community, the use of the capacities of the Muslim population of India, the use of the capacities of civilizational

relations of several thousand years, the use of the social capacities of the Indian Persian diaspora and the Indian Iranian diaspora, the use of the capacities of immigrants, the use of the civilizational capacities of Zoroastrians and Persians, the use of the capacities of the Nowruz celebration and the use of the capacities of racial discussion, the use of the capacities of cultural tools, the use of the capacities of the Indian people's perspectives, the use of the capacities of the Sanskrit language, and introducing the new Indian generation to Iranian culture, history, and civilization.

**Table 14.** Field of study and cultural diplomacy.

| Field of study and cultural diplomacy |                                 |                    |          |        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------|--------|
|                                       |                                 | Cultural diplomacy |          |        |
|                                       |                                 | Low                | Moderate | High   |
| Field of study                        | Political science               |                    |          | 100.0% |
|                                       | Computer engineering            |                    |          | 100.0% |
|                                       | Public administration           |                    | 100.0%   |        |
|                                       | Persian language and literature | 29.9%              | 30.9%    | 39.2%  |
|                                       | History                         |                    | 100.0%   |        |
|                                       | Urdu language and literature    | 27.5%              | 33.3%    | 29.2%  |
|                                       | Foreign language                | 100.0%             |          |        |
| Total                                 |                                 | Total              | 31.9%    | 37.0%  |

**Table 15.** Relationship between academic field and cultural diplomacy.

|                              | Chi-Square tests    |    |                         |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-------------------------|
|                              | Value               | Df | Asymptotic significance |
| Chi-Square tests             | 35.026 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | 0.000                   |
| Likelihood ratio             | 38.259              | 12 | 0.000                   |
| Linear-by-Linear association | 13.188              | 1  | 0.000                   |
| N of valid cases             | 138                 |    |                         |

## Conclusion

The present study deals with the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in India by applying civilizational-normative principles. Cultural diplomacy has faced tremendous changes in the last two decades and has moved from a state-centered action to new techniques and propositions. Therefore, cultural diplomacy, with the active presence of non-state actors, in addition to cultural relations, also benefits from cultural interactions of the private sector, and branding has perhaps become the main priority of the actors in this field.

In this study, a mixed method was used to obtain more detailed and in-depth information. First, a quantitative survey method with a questionnaire technique was used, and then a qualitative in-depth interview method was used. Of course, a documentary method was also used to collect information. The survey findings show that 34% of respondents are highly inclined, 38% moderately inclined, and 28% slightly inclined to common civilizational and normative foundations between the two countries. The data has shown that the statistical community welcomes the common civilizational and normative foundations between the two countries and this capacity should be used. In cultural diplomacy, 35% of respondents are highly inclined, 33% moderately inclined, and 32% slightly inclined. The data has shown that the statistical community believes that Iran can use cultural diplomacy better to advance its goals. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by possessing specific identity and structural characteristics in foreign policy and great cultural and civilizational characteristics, can play an active role in cultural diplomacy.

The cultural commonalities of Iran and India as two regional powers in West and South Asia can be analyzed under the constructivist theory. Constructivists use components such as identity, interests, structure, and agency for their level of analysis, and by eliminating the boundary between reality and value on the one hand and constructing an objective reality on the other (subject and object), they present a new analysis of international relations. Unlike neoliberals who explain material factors in the relationship between states, constructivists also consider cultural and semantic components and believe in the role of these components in the international system. Iran and India, as two countries with a relationship spanning several millennia and having many common components from ancient times to the present, can create relations beyond the current level. After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, relations between Iran and India have often been unstable under the influence of

the international system and the domestic policies of the two countries, and these unstable relations have certainly affected our cultural diplomacy. If we were to provide a brief definition of cultural diplomacy, then undoubtedly, indexing could be the most important goal of cultural diplomacy.

If we want to provide a brief definition of cultural diplomacy, then undoubtedly, the most important goal of cultural diplomacy can be to create a profile. The audience of cultural diplomacy is the general public and the elite society, and consequently, the cultural agent must present an image appropriate to the identity and cultural components of his country to the audience and introduce his country to the world as a cultural brand. Because culture is one of the few areas that faces less resistance in the target society and does not have the challenges of other areas. Therefore, the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran can use civilizational-normative foundations to advance its relations with India.

Regarding the research hypothesis, it is important to note that the Islamic Republic of Iran has several tools to make an impact as an active player in the field of Indian cultural diplomacy, such as Persian language departments in various Indian universities, common civilizational capacities such as the similarities between the burnt city of Zabol and Mohenjo-Daro and the gardens of Kashmir, cultural and artistic tools such as cinema and painting, scientific exchanges, common literary and cultural figures such as Bidel, Saeb and Abu Rayhan, the Muslim and Shiite community, the Persian diaspora (Homi Jahangir Baba, the “father of Indian atomic science”) and the Iranians in India, which have been neglected or not properly used. Therefore, considering the governmental and non-governmental capacities, the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in India, the Cultural Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran (the Cultural House of the Islamic Republic of Iran in New Delhi and Mumbai), the Scientific Counselor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the branch of the Mustafa and the World Society, the Forum for the Proximity of Religions, the Saadi Foundation (Persian Language Research Center) in Delhi, and non-governmental institutions such as the Noor Microfilm Institute, the Bidel Foundation of Dehlavi, the Foundation Persian-Indian; which can be used as a driving force for the cultural diplomacy tools of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, considering the set of unique foundations, components, and tools, agents must make greater efforts to utilize the restrictive-normative foundations in the cultural diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Suggestions and solutions

- According to the research findings, in the field of cultural exchange, social networks and mass media such as satellite television networks can be a good tool for cultural diplomats to establish effective communication with the public opinion of the target society to identify culture, art, literature, and other components.
- The media, along with cultural diplomacy, is one of the key tools for exercising soft power in international actions in the direction of national interests and goals of countries. For this reason, modern social networks need to be strengthened by the Iranian Cultural Counselor in India, which unfortunately has not been very successful in this regard.
- Holding scientific conferences and cultural and civilizational seminars with common topics.
- Islamic Iran can interact with cultural elements as components of soft power, whose effect in the target country is much deeper than other elements such as economic, political, military, etc., following the type of culture and civilization of India and making its cultural diplomacy field more active. Dialogue between religions and civilizations, Persian language and literature, Iranian culture and civilization can be used, such as Nowruz.
- Diaspora is one of the great capacities of Iran in India, which has been neglected by cultural agents due to a lack of religious commonality, which requires more attention.

### Authors contributions

Authors have contributed equally in preparing and writing the manuscript.

### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

### Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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