

## Qualitative Meta-analysis of Researches on Urban Diplomacy in Iran

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### Extended Abstract

#### 1. Introduction

Nation states have long practiced diplomatic functions such as facilitating communication, negotiating agreements, gathering information, preventing conflicts, and taking part in international society. Cities are now using similar tactics, mirroring and engaging with state-level diplomacy and tackling issues such as local infrastructure needs or bottom-up approaches to peacekeeping. Cities are increasingly capturing the attention of major international actors such as UN agencies, EU and World Bank, now regularly featuring in high-level talks such as the negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Cities are increasingly held responsible for dealing with city-level issues that have global implications such as pollution, health, safety, climate change, migration, and economic well-being. In response, cities are formalizing city-to-city cooperation on the international stage and developing networks and partnerships to develop solutions to these challenges. Today there are at least 200 city networks connecting local authorities across borders and continents, and the political-economic clout of cities is growing. All of these new roles for cities and local governments have developed within the context of the concept and literature of urban diplomacy. Urban diplomacy is a tool for maximizing the benefits of state and non-state actors within the space of flows by placing cities as the practical arena of national and global interactions.

Urban diplomacy has been introduced and expanded in Iranian urban research literature for nearly a decade. Initial examination of these studies shows that many of them replicate some sort of uniform literature, and this uniformity and repetition has led to a lack of creativity and little help to advance the field. In addition, research is still not too much, and it is important to read through the appropriate set of studies and to combine their features to help guide future research while finding potential inconsistencies. Therefore, this article, by gathering and reviewing the researches on the subject of urban diplomacy in Iran, attempts to extract the characteristics of the work done by qualitative meta-analysis approach and to describe the situation and provide a proper formulation of these studies.

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## 2. Review of Literature

City diplomacy is generally understood as a form of subnational diplomacy. It is an interplay between “diplomatic and urban practice”<sup>2</sup> that seeks to impact the international environment in a way that benefits the safety, security, and prosperity of local citizens and advances their global interest and identity. As subnational actors, cities can also help to promote a nation’s international image and interest.<sup>3</sup> City diplomacy is achieved through cities’ engagement with other “glocal” actors and embodies a wide range of practices, including “facilitating communication, negotiating agreements, gathering information, preventing conflicts, and taking part in international society.”<sup>4</sup> The phenomenon is nothing new; what is new is that the nature and scope of city diplomacy have deepened and broadened. Wang and Amiri (2019) Have identified five key functions of city diplomacy as it is currently understood and practiced based on goals and organization in USA cities: Economic Development; Diplomatic Representation and Protocol; Global Policy Collaboration and Action; Community Engagement and Civic Empowerment; and Hosting Special International Events. Among these five general functions, Economic Development and Diplomatic Representation and Protocol are broadly pursued across cities, while the strength of the rest varies based on the local and political context in each city. Therefore, the capacity of urban diplomacy for Iranian cities is also enormous, which should be realized in an appropriate way. This article attempts to study and analyze all the research on urban diplomacy in Iran.

## 3. Method

The present study was carried out using scientific databases including: Humanities Comprehensive Portal, Noor Specialized Journals Database (Noormags), Iranian Publications Database (Magiran), Iranian Institute of Information Science and Technology (IranDoc), and Academic Jihad Scientific Information Database (SID). In total, 32 studies including books, articles, dissertations and theses were identified. Of these, 10 were related to theses and dissertations, which were excluded from the qualitative analysis process due to difficulty in accessing them, with the dissertation usually published in paper form. The analysis of the status quo using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis are based on Norman Blaikie's three questions.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The results show that the focus of the research has been in the form of two research papers and theses. 52% of the research has been done in the fields of political geography, political science and international relations. 71.9% of the research methods were descriptive-analytical. Qualitative analysis of research based on Blaikie's segmentation also shows that the researches with the 'why' question are the largest among the researched studies that have explored the why of urban diplomacy and its effects. Then there is the "what" research, which is more concerned with defining urban diplomacy and describing its features, dimensions,

and indicators. And finally, research on the "how" question that has more seriously addressed how to change the existing practice of urban diplomacy.

## 5. Conclusion

The proposals in this paper to change existing practices to implement or enhance urban diplomacy are discussed in two general respects: defining a roadmap for urban diplomacy and providing its legal and institutional infrastructure at the national level, along with measures that At the local level, such as: establishing a specific organizational structure for municipal diplomacy in municipalities, formulating appropriate vision and strategies in line with national roadmaps and specific local conditions for urban diplomacy, prioritizing actions to achieve formulated goals and vision, serious support for members city council of activists of urban diplomacy in municipalities, continuous and useful use of diplomacy and international relations experts in municipalities, active and purposeful presence of municipal representatives in programs related to international NGOs.

**Keywords:** Globalization, City Diplomacy, Meta-analysis, Iran, Qualitative research

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