

**Article Type: Research paper****Iraq's Science Diplomacy: Limitations, Challenges, and Prospects*****Ahmad Fayyaz¹, Hossein Rafi², Ali Akbar Jafari³**

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Science diplomacy has emerged in recent years as one of the important instruments in international relations, and many countries have sought to use their scientific and academic capacities to strengthen their international standing, expand international cooperation, and achieve development goals. In this context, science and technology are no longer limited to educational and research domains; rather, they have become an important component of countries' soft power and a significant tool of foreign policy. Countries that are able to expand their interactions through scientific networks, academic collaborations, knowledge exchange, and participation in international research projects are more likely to enhance their position in the international system. Nevertheless, the realization and effective use of science diplomacy in some countries

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face numerous challenges and limitations that hinder the optimal use of this capacity. Within this framework, the main problem of this study is to examine the status of science diplomacy in Iraq and to identify the most significant limitations and obstacles that hinder its realization. Due to its geopolitical position, historical and cultural background, and its considerable need for scientific development and the reconstruction of educational infrastructures, Iraq possesses significant potential for benefiting from science diplomacy. However, the political, economic, and institutional conditions of the country have made the utilization of these capacities considerably difficult. Therefore, the central question of this research is: why has the realization and effective use of science diplomacy in Iraq been confronted with fundamental challenges and limitations?

Method: This study adopts a qualitative approach and is conducted through the analysis of secondary data. The required data were collected from various reliable sources, including reports of international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank, scientific articles published in reputable journals, and official documents related to Iraq's scientific and educational policies. After the data were collected, qualitative content analysis was employed to examine and analyze the information. In this process, the data were coded and the main themes and patterns related to the status of science diplomacy in Iraq were extracted. The use of credible sources and systematic analysis made it possible to provide a relatively comprehensive picture of the current situation and the main challenges in this field.

Theory: This study examines the transformation of emerging forms of international diplomacy that are developing in response to complex contemporary global challenges—ranging from infectious diseases and environmental degradation to cybercrime and the impacts of new technologies—where science and technology play a central role. The growing dependence of international decision-making on specialized knowledge has highlighted the need for systematic use of scientific advice. However, within the structure of the United Nations there has not been a coherent and centralized mechanism for receiving scientific recommendations, which has led to proposals for creating platforms capable of building global consensus on scientific issues. At the same time, the expansion of the internet, big data, and communication technologies has trans-

formed the environment in which diplomacy operates by reducing costs and increasing the capacity and speed of information exchange. These developments have gradually shifted diplomacy from a purely state-centered model toward a more networked and people-oriented form, in which non-state actors, companies, online platforms, and global public opinion play an increasingly important role. The study then relies on the theoretical framework of public diplomacy and the concept of soft power to explain the technologies and mechanisms of modern diplomacy. Public diplomacy, as an instrument of soft power, is based on mobilizing and guiding foreign public opinion in line with national interests, and its main mechanism is attraction and persuasion. According to Joseph Nye, attractive culture, political values, and legitimate policies constitute the most important sources of this power. Within this framework, the technologies of public diplomacy function as tools for shaping and managing public attitudes and preferences, enabling states to pursue their national interests through the support of foreign publics. In this sense, public diplomacy in the digital age not only continues the traditions of foreign policy but also represents a more complex and effective form of international influence through the use of modern communication technologies.

Findings: The findings indicate that the development and realization of science diplomacy in Iraq face a number of structural and institutional obstacles. One of the most significant barriers is the weakness of scientific and research infrastructures. Over the past decades, Iraq's scientific system has been heavily affected by wars, political crises, and economic difficulties. As a result, many universities and research centers lack adequate facilities, equipment, and scientific capacity. This infrastructural weakness has reduced the ability of Iraqi scientific institutions to actively participate in international scientific collaborations and has created a major barrier to the development of science diplomacy. Another important factor is political instability and fluctuating security conditions in Iraq. Political stability is considered one of the essential prerequisites for scientific development and the expansion of international cooperation. In a context where the political system is affected by instability, internal tensions, or security crises, long-term planning in the fields of science and technology becomes difficult, and many scientific collaborations may face disruption. Polit-

ical instability can also negatively influence decision-making processes related to scientific policy and hinder the implementation of development programs in this sector. Financial constraints and limited funding also represent another major obstacle to the development of science diplomacy in Iraq. Scientific and technological development, as well as the expansion of international scientific cooperation, require significant investment in higher education, research activities, laboratory infrastructure, and academic exchange programs. When sufficient financial resources are not allocated to these sectors, the capacity for strengthening scientific institutions and participating effectively in international scientific networks is reduced. Consequently, financial limitations can directly affect the level of international scientific engagement and the country's ability to benefit from science diplomacy. Moreover, the absence of coherent policy-making and a clear strategic framework in the field of science diplomacy is another major challenge. The development of science diplomacy requires long-term planning, coordination among various scientific and governmental institutions, and the definition of clear objectives within the framework of scientific foreign policy. Without such an approach, scientific and international activities may occur in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner and may fail to produce sustainable and effective outcomes. Therefore, the lack of a coherent policy framework can prevent the formation of an efficient system for utilizing scientific capacities in international relations.

In conclusion, the development of science diplomacy in Iraq requires serious attention to institutional reforms and the strengthening of the country's scientific capacities. In this context, improving research infrastructures, increasing financial support for universities and research institutions, establishing political and security stability, and formulating coherent policies in the fields of science and technology are among the key measures that can facilitate the expansion of international scientific cooperation. In this regard, strengthening science diplomacy also requires Iraq to increase research funding and invest more in strategic sectors. In addition, creating appropriate incentives and supportive policies to attract and encourage the return of scientific elites living abroad is essential. Expanding scientific and research cooperation at the regional level is also an important step toward enhancing Iraq's scientific engagement. The implemen-

tation of these measures can strengthen the country's scientific capacities and provide a suitable foundation for the effective use of science diplomacy. If these conditions are achieved, science diplomacy can become an effective instrument for enhancing Iraq's scientific and international standing and for accelerating the country's development process.

Key words: Science diplomacy, Iraq, International Cooperation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this research study.