



The Role of Paradiplomacy in Increasing Iran's National Power (A Case Study of Kermanshah Province and Iraqi Kurdistan)

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era of globalization, the concept of national power has expanded beyond traditional boundaries, encompassing various facets that contribute to a country's ability to achieve its goals. The emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a new power following the international anarchy and the Islamic Revolution has been acknowledged by global powers. To enhance its conventional indicators of national power, Iran has sought to adapt to the evolving definition of national power in the global community. Nuclear diplomacy, considered a vital component of national power, has driven Iran's efforts towards achieving its objectives. This article focuses on the significance of para-diplomacy as a new form of diplomacy in Iran's national power. The study explores how para-diplomacy can effectively contribute to Iran's medium and long-term goals, particularly in the post-JCPOA era, while promoting the realization of "resistance economy, action, and implementation" outlined in supra-national documents. The central question addressed is how para-diplomacy can empower Iran and advance its national interests within its foreign policy framework. To illustrate the practical application of para-diplomacy, the paradiplomatic capacity of Kermanshah province, located within Iran, is evaluated as a case study. The hypothesis presented suggests that by focusing on geographic, political, economic, and cultural commonalities through non-state actors, para-diplomacy can strengthen relationships on various dimensions. Moreover, it possesses the potential to reinforce the pursuit of national and international objectives. In this context, Kermanshah province exhibits favorable prospects in terms of geographical, social, and economic aspects for establishing para-diplomatic relations with Iraqi Kurdistan. Among the potential options, Sulaymaniyah province is considered a preferable choice due to the numerous similarities shared. Finally, this abstract highlights the evolving nature of national power in the globalized world, emphasizing the importance of para-diplomacy for Iran's national power production and the advancement of its national interests in foreign policy. The case study of Kermanshah province serves to demonstrate how para-diplomacy, through leveraging commonalities and engaging non-state actors, can contribute to enhancing relations and achieving goals in multiple dimensions.

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1. Introduction

The process of the nuclear activities dossier, which has been on the agenda of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past decade, contains numerous lessons and insights that can be analyzed from various perspectives. One of these perspectives is the position of the economic component in national power. Iran has achieved a desirable level of power in some aspects, such as the ability to maintain territorial integrity and sovereignty over the past 37 years (Sariolghalam :2011). Furthermore, its power projection has even extended beyond neighboring regions such as Iraq and reached the Suez Canal and Bab-el-Mandeb. However, Iran's reliance on extractive economy and structural dependence on oil revenues has led to severe international sanctions, which have significantly limited Iran's strategic foreign policy options, particularly during the years 2009-2013. The sharp decline in global oil prices has further exacerbated this situation. Due to structural and initial increases in targeted oil exports by some Arab countries, the price of oil has decreased from an average of \$109.45 in 2012 to \$27.62 in the first few months of 2016 (Statista,2023:26). This is while Iran's superior position in the surrounding environment has been targeted in strategic documents such as the 1404 Vision Document. The concept of "resistance economy" and "oil-free economy" in recent years is evidence of a future-oriented approach to economic power in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The statement that non-oil exports development cannot be considered a passing issue highlights the need to view this matter as a fundamental cultural foundation. Economically, our country is in a situation where it can improve its balance of payments through the help of exports. (Heydarpour and Biglari, 1998: 77). Achieving a resilient economy without oil requires greater cooperation from various formal and informal actors such as multinational corporations, provincial governments, and others, to enhance the country's national capacity to attain a non-oil economy.

Iran's border regions offer unique opportunities and characteristics in economic, political, and social aspects. Recognizing and leveraging these advantages is crucial for increasing the country's power. Effective border management encompasses political, economic, social, and infrastructural activities (Pishgahi Fard and Mirzadeh Koohshahi, 2011: 61-62). As a result, there has been a growing focus on border potential, leading to the emergence of formal and informal actors, including provinces, aiming to establish paradiplomatic relations beyond their borders. With extensive four-sided borders, Iran's management and establishment of various border relations such as railway, transit, shipping, and road transportation are of utmost importance. Viewing these spaces on a national scale provides valuable opportunities for gaining deeper insights into indigenous technical development indicators, cultural awareness, and marginal areas (Khaledi et al., 2012: 1). Given recent challenges in Iran's economic resources, addressing the unbalanced and inadequate nature of national power resources is a core scientific concern addressed in this article. The main question explored is how paradiplomacy can contribute to national power production and the advancement of national interests in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

To operationalize this question, the paradiplomatic capacity of Kermanshah province, one of the Iranian provinces, is being evaluated. The hypothesis being examined suggests that paradiplomacy, through the focus on geographic, political, economic, and cultural commonalities utilizing non-state actors, strengthens relations in different dimensions. Furthermore, it can enhance the pursuit of national and international goals. Using Kermanshah province as a case study, its geographical, social, and economic potential for establishing paradiplomatic relations with Iraqi Kurdistan is highlighted. Given various similarities, Sulaymaniyah province is regarded as a desirable option for paradiplomatic relations.

A review of the subject reveals the novelty of paradiplomacy, as no encyclopedia entry exists on the topic. Few Persian articles have explored paradiplomacy, including "Paradiplomacy in the era of globalization: a case study of urban paradiplomacy" by Mohammadreza Deshiri (2013), which emphasizes how municipalities can strengthen central diplomacy by engaging with other units. Additionally, the book "Paradiplomacy in Action" by Francisco Aldeca and Michelle Keating (2013) explores the economic dimensions of paradiplomacy through chapters dedicated to the relations of countries such as the United States, the European Union, Canada, and Australia. Another resource, "Theory and Practice in Paradiplomacy" by Alexander S. Kazentso (2015), aims to analyze the concept of paradiplomacy and its effective factors. Considering the existing knowledge gap regarding paradiplomacy in Iran, this article aims to elucidate the concept of paradiplomacy and examine its

foundations, capacities, and requirements for the Islamic Republic. Moreover, it strives to provide a case study and applied research within the foreign policy context of the Islamic Republic.

2. The theoretical framework of paradiplomacy

One of the characteristics of the contemporary era is extensive changes, the complexity of the concept of power, and ways to increase it. In this context, "diplomacy" has transformed into the thoughtful brain of national power (Maleki, 2007: 49) in a way that has been combined with dozens of prefixes and suffixes. For example, one can refer to cases such as energy diplomacy, coercion diplomacy, scientific diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, techno-diplomacy, modern public diplomacy (Poorhasan, 2011), and environmental diplomacy (Barston, 2014), which indicate the expansion and development of this concept to keep up with the changes in the international arena. The creation of the term "paradiplomacy" is also analyzable from this perspective. The prefix "para" has different meanings, and when combined with other words, it imposes a different meaning on them. Therefore, by adding this prefix to the word diplomacy, a new meaning has been attributed to the term diplomacy.

Paradiplomacy was initially introduced into the international system through the British Dominions (Canada, South Africa, and Australia), and the term "paradiplomacy" was first coined by Canadian scholar Panayiotis Soldatos in the 1980s. The rise and prominence of paradiplomacy in academic and political circles, particularly in foreign policy, is owed to the phenomenon of globalization, which has led to the emergence of new actors in the international arena (Kuznetsov, 2015: 27-26).

The concept of paradiplomacy has been defined using various terms, including formal diplomacy, regional diplomacy, micro-diplomacy, multi-layered diplomacy, post-diplomacy, and others. The most comprehensive definition, perhaps, is provided by (Grydehoj 2013: 23), who sees paradiplomacy as a transnational institutional activity that involves foreign political entities. However, the revival and development of the concept of paradiplomacy is attributed to Duchacek, who used the term in his article "The International Face" to introduce formal diplomacy at the global and regional levels. Alexander Kuznetsov's theory suggests that paradiplomacy refers to the ability of formal, local, regional, and transnational entities to act as international actors. Kuznetsov argues that new actors seek to establish connections with other units outside their national borders, which can be achieved through individuals (ministers), institutions such as provinces and municipalities, and sometimes through actors such as multinational corporations (Kuznetsov, 2015: 25). Paradiplomacy can be pursued in two ways: parallel to the goals of the central government or in contrast to the goals of the government, seeking political independence and separatism. The expansion of new units, especially in the field of regional trade, has blurred the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, leading to a division of responsibilities between the government and local units. The role-playing of formal identities leads to an increase in national power, as their participation is aimed at pursuing specific international interests (Lecours, 2008: 11-12). The government grants a series of powers to formal governments in accordance with the constitution, which serves to deepen the diplomacy of the central government.

Paradiplomacy has consequences such as solving common and public problems, including communication, environmental, economic, job shortages, population, cultural prevalence, and so on. On the other hand, it has a significant impact on achieving democratic goals and is a positive trend for democracy. From this perspective, it can be defined at three levels:

1. In the economic sphere, the formal governments aim to develop international relations to attract foreign investment, international companies to the region, and gain new markets for exports. For example, the US and Australian governments pursue their economic interests through paradiplomacy.

2. The second level of paradiplomacy involves cultural, educational, technical, technological, and other dimensions. This level is broader and more extensive. The European Union Parliament's meetings for cooperation between North and South or Canada's cooperation with countries such as Senegal, Lebanon, and Vietnam are examples of the second layer of paradiplomacy.

3. The third level includes political interests and concerns. In this layer, paradiplomacy is inclined towards the apparent characteristics of the identity, ethics, and distinct behavioral traits of formal governments and central government projects at the international level. Here, formal governments seek to develop certain relationships based on their national identity, norms, and national values (Kuznetsov, 2010: 108).

One of the important issues regarding paradiplomacy is the combination of formal and informal elements. Robert Kaiser presents different types of paradiplomacy in this regard: 1) Cross-border regional paradiplomacy, which includes formal and informal communications between neighboring regions across national borders. 2) Extra-regional paradiplomacy, which involves cooperation with regions in foreign countries. 3) Global paradiplomacy, which includes political-functional relations with foreign central governments, international organizations, private sector, and other groups (Kaiser, 2003: 17-19). Paradiplomacy means that in addition to the official diplomacy of the government, cities can also have a parallel and complementary diplomacy, which can be a diplomacy of exchange, discussions related to tourism, discussions related to business cooperation, and from the perspective of sisterhood, interaction between cities can take place. These interactions that exist with sister cities can be important and can provide a platform for economic development, attracting foreign investment, and even marketing tourism.

The participation of formal identities in the international arena does not mean that autonomous entities can pursue policies independent of the broader constitutional framework of which they are a part, without regard for the territorial integrity of the existing state. This requires a commitment from both parties to maintain the territorial integrity of the existing government. For example, in the mid-1990s, the German state of Bavaria established an extensive foreign network in 22 countries, including China, India, Japan, the United States, South Africa, and Brazil, to facilitate easier communication between domestic industries and those located in these countries (McMillan, 2008: 227-253).

Considering that foreign relations are part of the jurisdiction of the central government, the participation of formal identities in the international arena is not problematic as long as the central government has the authority and control over the entire path of autonomous participation in the international arena. Autonomous entities have limited capacity to strengthen their policies in the international arena because the fundamental authority to make independent decisions in foreign policy lies within the framework of the constitutional law of countries in the jurisdiction of the central government (Dehshiri, 2013: 17). By recognizing and upholding central government authority in foreign relations, countries can better navigate the complexities of the international arena, exert greater influence, and safeguard their national interests while benefiting from the potential contributions of autonomous entities.

3. The triple abilities of Kermanshah Province and the establishment of Paradiplomatic Relations

One of the security and cost-related challenges facing the Islamic Republic of Iran is the marginalization of some residents of border regions. The reduction of national resources and neglect of border areas have exacerbated ethnic divides and provided a platform for regional rivals to intensify ethnic tensions. Paradiplomacy, through various means, can reduce this vulnerability in other peripheral areas of the country. While some analysts consider having multiple neighbors as a cost and security burden, leading to increased military spending and resource allocation from non-military to military sectors, a development-oriented foreign policy and paradiplomacy-centered approach can turn costs into opportunities. Having multiple neighbors with different ethnicities, languages, and religions provides a basis for enhancing national power.

The capacities highlighted by the examination of the relationship between Kermanshah province and a section of Iraq can be extended to other regions of the country. Paradiplomacy not only empowers border provinces and enhances regional capabilities, but also provides a favorable ground for the success of the Islamic Republic of Iran's paradiplomacy, given the unequal levels of development of neighboring areas. The underdevelopment of regions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the northern neighbors of the Islamic Republic of Iran, further amplifies the significance of this matter. Therefore, by examining the paradiplomatic capacities of Kermanshah province, it can serve as a model for other regions with potential for transformation.

3.1 Geographical Capacities

Kermanshah province, located in western Iran, is the eighteenth largest province in terms of area, covering approximately 45.1% of the country's total land area (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 1-2). It shares borders with Kurdistan province to the north, Lorestan and Ilam

provinces to the south, Hamedan province to the east, and Iraq to the west. The province is characterized by mountain ranges such as the White Mountains, Bisotun, Shahou, Ravansar, Paveh, and Bamouk, running from north to south along the Iran-Iraq border, as well as the significant Nawa Mountains in the west (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 1-2).

Besides its mountains, Kermanshah province also encompasses fertile plains and is traversed by several important rivers, including the Qareh Su, Marg River, Razavar, Jamishan, Gamasayab, Sirvan (including the Zemkan, Halvan or Alvand, and Kongir River), Dinur, and Gawharud (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 66-60). The province shares a significant portion of Iran's western border with Iraq, established following the 1907 Treaty of Algeciras and subsequent protocols (Heydarifar and Rezaei, 2014: 38). The borders of Kermanshah province run from the 36th main border marker on the Taleh Ab River to the 2.83 subsidiary border marker on the Takht-e-Huraman Mountains, covering a distance of 346 kilometers along the 1,336-kilometer-long Iran-Iraq border (Heydarifar and Rezaei, 2014: 38). These borders can be divided into two categories: river borders spanning 5.117 kilometers and land borders stretching 5.228 kilometers within the province (Ezzati and Mirzaei Pour, 2011: 21). Specifically, Kermanshah province shares a 346-kilometer border with Iraq, with 196 kilometers located within the federal region of Iraqi Kurdistan and the remaining 150 kilometers shared with the central government of Iraq. One of the regions within the province, Khan-Lili near Qasr-e Shirin, has a shared border of 185 kilometers with Iraq, including 5.75 kilometers of river borders (Heydarifar and Rezaei, 2014: 35-36).

The cities of Sarpol-e Zahab, Javanrud, and Paveh share borders with Iraq, measuring 50 kilometers, 445 kilometers, and 70 kilometers, respectively (Ezzati and Mirzaei Pour, 2011: 25-27). Additionally, the Kengir and Alvand rivers are among the important rivers that extend into Iraq. Considering the aforementioned characteristics, it can be concluded that Kermanshah province is the most important province in terms of geographical location for establishing multilateral relations with Iraq. Therefore, utilizing this potential to enhance diplomatic capacity is of great importance.

3.2 Economic Capacity

Kermanshah province, with its diverse natural features, fertile soil, abundant water resources, and suitable vegetation cover, extends over a landscape of plains and mountains and has access to mineral resources and important communication routes; particularly with Iraq. The region's economy relies heavily on the exploitation of natural resources. In order to develop the economy of Kermanshah, it is necessary to first examine its capabilities and capacities, which include agriculture, animal husbandry, scientific, health and medical (medical tourism), industry, pilgrimage to the holy shrines, tourism, and others. Therefore, assessing these capacities is essential in determining the level of the province's diplomatic capacity. In this regard, the various capabilities and potentials of the province are examined below.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector plays a prominent role in the economic landscape of Kermanshah province, thanks to its favorable indigenous conditions. With its abundant water and soil resources, Kermanshah is considered one of the most suitable regions for agriculture in the country. The province is a major center for the production of crops such as barley, sugar beet, wheat, legumes like chickpeas and beans, and horticultural products such as apples, grapes, tomatoes, and so on. Kermanshah is also one of the main centers for the production of legumes in the country (Barzegaran, 1998: 72). Another capacity of the province is the production of various types of horticultural products, some of which are listed in the table below, indicating the cultivated area of some of the horticultural products that have had the highest exports:

Table 1. Production of horticultural products in the agricultural year of 1392 (i.e., 2013-2014) (in thousands of tons).

Production Quantity	Cultivated Area (Hectares)	Product Name
11.310	598	Malang apple
38.869	2584	Seed Apple
109.881	1040	Grape

Source: Kermanshah province Agricultural Jihad (i.e., strive) Organization.

Chickpeas

Chickpeas are one of the most important legumes in the country, and the Kermanshah plain and its neighboring areas are among the most suitable regions for agriculture and the production of grains and legumes in the country. The transportability and resistance to damage, pressure, pests, and diseases, as well as the product's employment potential, are noteworthy (Gharehbaghdoost and Kabraei, 1998: 360-377). For example, during the agricultural years of 2014-2015, the cultivated area of chickpeas in Kermanshah province (both irrigated and rainfed) was 130,000 hectares, and the production was 39,000 tons (Kermanshah Agricultural Jihad Organization).

Coriander

Coriander is also one of the products that has received attention from farmers in recent years due to the creation of markets beyond the borders, resulting in income for the country's economy and the region (Barzegaran, 1998: 74).

Sugar beet

Processing industries play a special role in the development of regions and increasing the coefficient of interdependence between different sectors. The sugar industry is a processing industry, and Kermanshah province has suitable lands for sugar beet cultivation, to the extent that it has been able to export its surplus consumption at times. The most important of these factories are the Bistoon and Islam-Abad sugar factories in the province. The by-products of sugar beet production, such as pulp and molasses, are used in the production of industrial alcohol, yeast, vinegar, ink, and even automobile fuel and many other chemical substances, making Kermanshah one of the important provinces in the country (Ghobadi, 1998: 402).

Olive

Olive is another crop that can be cultivated in the province and, according to the Deputy of Commerce of the province, can be exported both domestically and internationally, especially to Iraq, in processed form. He stated that about three thousand tons of olives are produced in the province in some years (www.irantejarat.com).

Date

Another agricultural capability of the province is date cultivation, which is only possible in the Qasr-e Shirin region of Kermanshah province and even the northwest region of the country due to its special climatic conditions (Kermanshah Agricultural Jihad Organization).

Potentiality of Saffron cultivation

Saffron is the most valuable agricultural product in Iran and the world, and is considered a strategic crop in terms of profitability and currency generation. Currently, Iran is the largest producer of saffron, accounting for 92% of the world's saffron production with 247 tons produced in 2011. Studies have shown that the Kermanshah province also has the necessary potential for saffron cultivation. According to climatic estimates, suitable conditions for saffron cultivation exist in cities such as Ravansar and surrounding areas of Kengavar in Kermanshah province. (Mojarrad and Ghaffari-Zadeh, 2013: 88-99).

b.Livestock farming and aquaculture

Livestock farming in Kermanshah province takes place in three forms: stationary, semi-nomadic, and nomadic (tribal). The province also has numerous and extensive feedlot units, such as lamb feedlots, broiler farms, and the like. Kermanshah province is an important producer of milk and dairy products, particularly cheese, with the establishment of the Manizan and Gharb cheese factories, which are the most modern cheese factories in the region, leading to an increase in the economic capacity of the province. It is evident that over the past 20 years, Iran has been one of the major importers of dairy products, while currently one of the largest and most modern fully automated factories in the country is located in Kermanshah province, which has contributed to the economic prosperity of the province and the country, particularly in reducing the number of dairy imports from abroad (Babakhani, 1998: 244). Currently, these factories are producing several types of cheese that are compatible with Iranian tastes

and are capable of producing various types of soft cheeses that are in demand both domestically and for export. Other capacities of the province in the field of beekeeping and aquaculture are also noteworthy. Given the abundant water resources in Kermanshah province, it is one of the suitable and developable areas for aquaculture in the country (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 240). For example, in 2013, there were 476 fish farming workshops with a total area of 4,774 hectares and a production of 14,423 tons (Governorate, 2014: 287).

3.3 Industry

The development of any country's economy requires industrial growth and development. In other words, industrialization is a necessary condition for development. Given that international relations are one of the main features of the industrial sector, the special characteristics of Kermanshah province, such as its border with Iraqi Kurdistan, can make it a prominent industrial hub. In Kermanshah province, given the abundant potential in agriculture, the establishment of factories related to agriculture is necessary. One of these factories is the Qandbishtoon sugar factory, which has led to the growth of agriculture and increased employment in the province. The cement factory located in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains is also one of the two major cement production units in the western region of the country, which has had a significant impact on the economic development of the region. Other industrial units include the Kashmir wool weaving factory, the West textile factory, the wool washing and spinning factory, the production of various types of wire and cable, dyeing factories, pipe and nylon production, livestock and poultry feed, and so on. In terms of handicrafts and small-scale factories such as carpet weaving, embroidery, herbal gums, and the like, this province has potential for further development (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 245-250). For example, in 2013, 256 licenses were issued for the establishment of industrial workshops, and the amount of investment in these workshops in 2013 was 794,797 million rials (Governorate, 2014: 318). Another example is the approximately few units producing macaroni in the province, which statistics show that between 1993 and 1998, about \$77 million in foreign exchange earnings from macaroni exports entered the country, of which approximately 6.1% belonged to Kermanshah province (Heydarpour and Biglari, 1998: 94).

Mines

The presence of various mines in Kermanshah province has increased its potential. One of the valuable resources is the presence of important oil and gas reserves, making Kermanshah one of the few western provinces of the country with oil and gas reserves. This potential has led to the establishment of petrochemical factories throughout the province. One of the most important areas is the oil-rich region located in the southwest of the Zagros Mountains and on the border between Iran and Iraq. The Zagros highlands in the central and northwestern parts of the province have the potential for mineral resources for industrial, decorative and building stones, while the Sanandaj and Sirjan zones are suitable for mainly industrial metallic minerals, building and decorative stones. Other mines in the province include oil, feldspar, talc, marl, and iron (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 245-290). Based on the results of the 2012 active mines survey, there were 144 active mines employing a total of 1,418 people. The value of mineral production was over 391 billion rials, with decorative stones and natural solid bitumen having the highest annual production value of 112.4 and 104.9 billion rials, respectively (Governorate, 2014: 290-291).

Commerce and Transportation

The characteristic of the 21st century is global commerce and trade. Commerce is like a string that connects the production and consumption beads and turns them into a usable whole. The Silk Road passing through this region, as well as the communication route between Al-Nahrain (Baghdad) and Central Asia, has in the past had a desirable performance in terms of export trade, especially with the measures taken to build the Karbala highway to the holy shrines. If necessary measures are taken, it is possible to give extensive dimensions to the commercial and economic development of the province and create the groundwork for the expansion and development of other industries in the province, including tourism and all aspects of cultural and commercial tourism (Najafi, 1998: 92). Another important factor is the existence of freight terminals, in this regard, the Karbala terminal on the Kermanshah-Qasr-e Shirin axis plays an important role in the entry and exit of pilgrims from Iraq to

Iran or vice versa. The communication network of Kermanshah province, given its service role due to its location in the center of the activities of Ilam, Kurdistan, Lorestan, and Hamadan provinces, as well as the communication axis of Tehran, Baghdad, and the extension of the Azerbaijan and Khuzestan axis, is of special importance (Armed Forces Geographical Organization, 2002: 294-306). One of the most important advantages of the province is the existence of customs and markets in Parviz Khan, Nowsud, Khasravi, Sheikh Saleh, Salas Babajani, Paveh, and Ravansar. According to an interview conducted by the authors with Ali AsgharBahmanipour, the director of product market regulation and agricultural institutions, the majority of the province's and the country's export items, especially in the agricultural sector, are from various markets such as Sumar, Parviz Khan, Khasravi, Shushmir, Sheikh Saleh, and Salas Babajani to Iraq, especially to the Iraqi region (Bahmani Pour,2016).

In the following table, the weight and value of exports from the customs of the province to this country are expressed:

Table 2. weight and value of exports from the customs of Kermanshah to Iraq

Value in US Dollars	Value in Iranian Rials	Weight (kg)	Name
37373208	9933626046723	1582691330	Kermanshah
121164609	3229358112978	937200153	Khosravi
471738508	12537699341838	1441601676	Parviz Khan
512257	13419247598	909139	Paveh
14554136	389025637740	23413447	Shushmi Bazaar
43276182	1152426307003	82326386	Parviz Khan Bazaar
	4068142		Total weight (in tons)
	1/024/977/779		Total value in US dollars.

Source: Customs Administration of Kermanshah Province.

Among these, Parviz Khan Border Market is the most important commercial border of the two sides and has a significant importance in the country's overall trade, as evidenced by the share of this market in the total exports of the country according to the Customs Statistics of the

Table 3. weight and value of exports from Parviz Khan to Iraq (2014)

Dollar Value	Rial Value	Weight (kg)	Customs	Year
43/286/172	1/152/426/307/003	82/326/386	Parviz Khan Bazaar	2014

Source: The Customs Administration of Iran.

Tourism and Travel

The development of the tourism industry is considered an economic activity that creates new job opportunities and ultimately leads to a significant boost in the renovation and improvement of the economic and social structures of a region. Kermanshah province, with its beautiful nature, pleasant recreational areas, historical significance, and cultural heritage, including a collection of ancient artifacts, a treasure trove of various customs and traditions with people from diverse cultures, has the potential for developing the tourism industry. Through the development of tourism and tourist infrastructure, the province can increase its potential and contribute to the country's growth. Some of the country's tourist attractions include Tagh-e Bostan, Bisotun, Sarab-e Niloufar, Anahita Temple, Gourdkhaneh, various mosques, and more. Especially with the establishment of political, cultural, and religious relations with Iraqi Kurdistan, this province can play an important role in commercial tourism activities and become one of the world's tourist hubs.

Scientific, Health, and Pharmaceutical

One of the most important factors in development is skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which according to UNESCO reports, higher education is one of the most important sources of human resources. Higher education centers in Kermanshah province include Razi University, Medical Sciences University, Industrial University, Islamic Azad University, Payame Noor University, Quranic Sciences University, Technical College for Girls, and Technical College for Boys, which are engaged in attracting and educating domestic and foreign students at the provincial level. Among the most important hospitals in western Iran, Imam Reza Hospital with its radiotherapy equipment and experienced nuclear medical

staff is located in Kermanshah, and the treatment of heart diseases in Imam Ali (AS) Hospital has made this province a hub for medical treatment in western Iran. Therefore, the province's medical capabilities are highly attractive for medical tourism. According to interviews with Saadollah Dehchraghi, the head of hospital affairs, and Khodarahmi, the head of public affairs at the International Council of Medical Sciences University, measures are being taken at the hospital and university levels to establish a center for medical tourism in the province (Dehcheraqi, 2016; Khodarahmi, 2016).

Another educational center is the Industrial University, which is engaged in various fields of engineering and has carried out various projects, such as the construction of chemical machinery and similar projects. In this province, the existence of organizations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governor's Office is also important in terms of their capacity to establish diplomatic relations based on the mentioned capacities.

4. Iraq

Iraq, as a part of the ancient Iranian empire, has been the cradle of ancient civilizations. Today, it has an area of approximately 437,000 square kilometers and a population of around 30 million people. About 97% of the population are followers of Islam, among whom 65% are Shia, 32% are Sunni, and 3% are Christians and other religions. Iraq is a country with diverse ethnicities, and its inhabitants include Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Gorani, Laks, Assyrians, Mandaean, and others (Sharifi et al., 2008: 19-23). In terms of economy, it has industries such as oil, petrochemicals, textiles, and construction materials, and its major exports are oil, live animals, and other raw materials. Additionally, major imports to this region include food, medicine, and industrial goods, which are mainly supplied by major exporting countries such as Syria, Turkey, the United States, Jordan, and Iran (Tahmasebi, 2010: 46). Given that a significant portion of the most essential needs are met by agricultural production, Iraq's agricultural production is not sufficient for domestic consumption. Moreover, considering that Iraq has been engaged in internal and international conflicts for many years, it is natural that its development in various dimensions has been hindered. Therefore, it relies on trade with other countries to meet its industrial and commodity needs. In this regard, Iran, due to its proximity, has a suitable position, and its exports to Iraq in various items are as follows:

Table 4. Iran-Iraq Trade Relations from 1387 (i.e., 2008) to the first half of 1393 (i.e., 2014) (in million dollars)

First half of 2014 (i.e., 2014)	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	Year
7302	5949	6249	5149	4439	4109	2762	Export
37	68	83	121	43	60	67	Import
2693	+5581	+6166	+5028	+4396	4049	+2695	Trade balance

Source: (I. R. Iran-Iraq Trade Relations, 2014: 1-2).

Table 5. Main Iranian Export Items to Iraq in 1392 (Million USD)

Total value (in US dollars)	Name of Goods
596	Other Portland Cement (excluding white)
325	Tiles or Ceramics
151	Liquefied Butane
139	Yogurt
138	Ice Cream and other Frozen Beverages
116	Household Appliances
108	Tomato Paste
107	Various Types of Cheese

Source: (I.R. Iran-Iraq Trade Relations, 2014: 1-2).

Considering the shared border between Kermanshah Province and Iraq, some of the province's products are exported to this country as follows:

Table 6. The most important exported products of Kermanshah Province to Iraq in the year 1393 (2014):

Export Volume (in tons)	Type of Products
103.509	Apple
216.299	Tomato

1148	Chickpea
81	Grapes

Source: Kermanshah Province Agricultural Jihad (i.e., strive) Organization.

5. The Characteristics of Iraqi Kurdistan and the Potential for Establishing Para diplomatic Relations with Kermanshah Province

Iraqi Kurdistan is one of the most important regions in terms of its economy. When the southern and central cities of Iraq were embroiled in civil war and stagnation, Kurdistan was the only region that experienced relative stability and a certain level of development (Nataly, 2010: xix). As the "Heartland" of the Middle East, Iraqi Kurdistan is the meeting point and link between the Turkish, Persian, Arab (Sami), and Kurdish peoples in terms of geopolitics (Bojmehrani and Pour Islami, 2014: 88). The region is composed of the provinces of Erbil (Hawler), Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok, as well as parts of the provinces of Mosul, Diyala, and Salah al-Din, with a population of approximately 5 million people and an area of 40,000 square kilometers (Ahmadipour and Mobarakshahi, 2014: 36). In terms of ethnicity, language, and religion, the Kurds of Kurdistan are as follows:

Gorani: A Kurdish dialect spoken in a small region called Badra in the Arab province of Iraq. Its speakers have adopted the Ja'fari Shia denomination and share linguistic and religious affiliations with the Kurds of Ilam and Kermanshah in Iran's southern Kurdistan region.

Sorani Kurds: all of whom follow the Shafi'i denomination and are Sunni Muslims. They reside in the cities of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq and in the Oraman region of Kermanshah province in Iran (Paveh, Javanroud, Ravansar, and Salas-e Babajani). They share the Sorani dialect and Shafi'i denomination with the Kurds of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq.

Kermanshahi: the most important Kurdish dialect, spoken by over fifty percent of the Kurdish population worldwide. Almost all Kurds in northern Iraq, Kurdish-speaking areas of Turkey, and Kurds in the Quchan and northern Khorasan regions of Iran speak this dialect. In terms of religion, most are followers of the Shafi'i denomination, while some follow the Hanafi denomination, Ja'fari Shia denomination, or other Shia sects such as the Alawites (Azimi and Chelongar, 2012: 83-91). The cultural elements of Kurdistan have many similarities with those of Kermanshah province in Iran, including linguistic kinship, customs, and celebrations such as the Iranian New Year, which is also celebrated as the main festival in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Undoubtedly, the religious affiliations and beliefs of Iraq, especially Kurdistan and Sulaymaniyah, have brought them closer to Kermanshah province. People from these two regions have always held religious ceremonies, Islamic festivals, and the birth and martyrdom of Imams in traditional and religious ceremonies, just like each other, which has established a suitable relationship between the two regions and even the two governments. In recent years, the living standards of the people of Iraq have undergone significant changes following the end of the war, turning the country into a large market for domestic and foreign products (Ahmadipour and Mobarakshahi, 2014: 38-40).

This region is rich in vast oil and natural gas resources (currently being exploited), as well as important mineral resources such as coal, iron, and copper. However, due to the difficult conditions that they have faced after the war, they are not capable of carrying out certain productions and industrial activities alone, and have various political and economic relations with different countries, especially their neighbors such as Iran and Turkey. The economic relations between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan clearly date back to the years of the Kurdish struggle against the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, during which most of the needs of Kurdistan, especially Sulaymaniyah, were met through the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that year, the total activity of exchanges between the two sides reached \$100 million. The large number of cultural sites, political and trade organizations, and mass media are important features of Sulaymaniyah. Additionally, the presence of various terminals in this region is very important. The number of customs terminals in Iraq is high, with 19 customs centers operating only in the Sulaymaniyah province. In the city of Penjwin, two customs units similar to the border markets of the Kurdistan province in Iran, Bashmaq and Siranband, are active (Sharifi et al., 2008: 33). Sulaymaniyah is of great importance due to its location on the transit routes. This province has a strong economic link with Iran and is considered an important economic center in Iraqi Kurdistan. The existence of two international airports in Sulaymaniyah, which operate more than 5 foreign flights daily, has made economic relations easier. Among the seven border points between Iran and Kurdistan, named Khasrawi, Bashmaq, Parviz

Khan, Nowsud, Baneh, Qasim Rash, and Haj Omran, the Parviz Khan area has more activity due to its proximity to the Sulaymaniyah province, and most of its trade is with the cities of Kalar, Sulaymaniyah, Mosul, Khanaqin, and Kirkuk. After the fall of Saddam, due to the needs of the Kurdish people in Iraq, this market became more prosperous, with daily border transactions reaching \$300,000. The proximity to important economic centers in Iraq makes the price of goods suitable. In 2012, \$2,431,000 worth of goods were exported from Iran to northern Iraq, particularly the Sulaymaniyah province, and in the same year, the total activity of Iranian border markets to this region reached over \$4 billion, not including fuel products. The most important goods exported from the Iranian border to this region, especially the Sulaymaniyah province, are bulk cement, fuel, passenger cars, bagged cement, plastics, machine-made carpets, textiles, fibers, metal products, industrial wood, travel bags, and agricultural products (Bahmanabadi, 2014: 157-155). In this regard, the similarities in climate with the Kermanshah province have led to an increase in economic relations and have resulted in a deep sisterhood bond between these two provinces. To further clarify this matter, some of the features of this market are mentioned as:

The similarity of most commodities in the market of this province with those in the market of Kermanshah province and the lack of significant price differences in the markets of Iranian border cities such as Kermanshah are due to the predominantly dry agricultural lands. Products such as tomatoes, potatoes, and eggs are among the goods that are mainly imported from Iran, especially Kermanshah (The achievement of the commercial travels of Alborz province to Kurdistan-Iraq, 7).

Recently, despite the challenges posed by transportation and quarantine issues, there has been a significant potential for economic growth and investment opportunities. According to Daryoush Panahi, the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in Kermanshah province, a commercial agreement was signed between Kermanshah and some Iraqi provinces, including Duhok and Sulaymaniyah, in early November 2015. The agreement aimed to address issues related to transportation, customs procedures, and arbitration for merchants. Kermanshah province, due to its cultural and geographical proximity to Sulaymaniyah, can further enhance its trade relations with Iraq and even Arab regions by leveraging these advantages. For instance, during a visit by a trade delegation from Dhi Qar province in Iraq to Kermanshah, Abdul Razaq Zahiri, the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Dhi Qar, expressed his province's interest in expanding commercial relations and mentioned that the Iraqi government had allocated four million dollars to support industrialists and traders in this regard. He and other participants, particularly from Sulaymaniyah province, also noted that in previous years, goods and industries imported from Iran had been very suitable and cost-effective for them. In this regard, Kavehfi, the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Kermanshah, stated that half of Iraq's exports pass through Kermanshah's borders, and numerous exhibitions have been held in the region to introduce the province's capabilities in agriculture, industry, and tourism. One example of these activities is the establishment of knowledge-based companies. In an exclusive interview with Somayeh Karami, an expert at Kabir Sharq Knowledge-Based Company, she stated that the company has been cultivating watermelon, cucumber, and okra seeds from various regions of Iran, including Kermanshah, in Duhok province, Iraq since 2002. If supported and certain restrictions are lifted, companies like this could potentially cultivate many Iranian seeds, including those from Kermanshah, in the region, especially in Sulaymaniyah province, and increase the export and import of these products.

In recent years, the connection with Kermanshah province with Iraq has increased due to the cultural affinity with the Kurds. Passersby are amazed by the large number of Iranian companies and individuals in the major cities of Iraqi Kurdistan, indicating the commercial and trade capabilities of the two regions. Cooperative Company 1821 is one such example, which, according to Fozieh Miladi, the CEO of the company, has good trade relations with Sulaymaniyah province. She stated that, due to the higher quality of Iranian thread compared to other imports to Sulaymaniyah, many traders have a greater tendency towards Iranian clothing. The most important exports of the province to Iraq are tiles, cement, and dairy products. According to interviews with officials of West Cement Factory and Manizan Company, they export a significant amount of their annual production to the region based on various requests, as the Kurdistan region of Iraq is weak in the industrial and construction sectors and lacks industrial knowledge and facilities. West Cement and Manizan dairy products are well-known brands in Iraqi Kurdistan. Furthermore, in an exclusive interview with the Public Relations Secretary of the Kermanshah Cooperative Chamber, they stated that, based on the achievement of the trade delegation's trip to Sulaymaniyah province in 2015, the highest requests were related to industrial, electrical, and packaging matters. (Ahmadi, 2016).

Given Kermanshah's favorable geographical position with this country and the existence of suitable cultural and economic potentials, especially in the agricultural and industrial sectors, it is possible to establish very good relations with Kurdistan. However, due to the lack of practical application of science by the people of Kurdistan and the electricity problems in this region, and on the other hand, Kermanshah's capabilities in the field of industry, electricity, and gas, large-scale plans can be implemented in this regard in the Iraqi region. In an interview conducted by the authors with the Deputy Economic Governor of Sulaymaniyah province, he stated that they have higher expectations and need more help to establish relations with Kermanshah province. Additionally, according to the official in charge of cultural affairs at the Iranian consulate, they consider visitors' tendency to continue their studies in Iran, especially in Kermanshah province, as a movement for regional development.

On the other hand, according to the observations made by the authors in this region, most people are engaged in administrative and market activities rather than productive activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry. Additionally, the lack of industrial production factories in this region is a barrier to establishing economic relations. Therefore, Kermanshah and Sulaymaniyah provinces have the potential to establish paradiplomatic relations. The potential areas of cooperation with Iraqi Kurdistan include mining projects, oil, gas, petrochemicals, medical affairs, tourism, industry and electricity, trade and agriculture, culture, and science, such as the establishment of comprehensive religious schools and seminaries like Jami' al-Mustafa or Imam Shafi'i.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to assess paradiplomacy as one of the new components of diplomacy in enhancing the national power of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Iraq. As a result of recent developments, the inadequacy of the government's monopoly in achieving the goals and responsibilities of modern diplomacy in the field of national interests and power has become apparent. This rule applies even more to the Islamic Republic of Iran due to the greater international and regional limitations imposed on it compared to other countries, and reliance on oil revenues exacerbates these limitations. The common feature of modern diplomacy is the breaking of the central government's monopoly on diplomacy and the entry of new actors into this field. In this article, the province of Kermanshah bordering Iraqi Kurdistan was examined, and the findings obtained from the hypothetical processing of the hypothesis confirm the following points.

1. The utilization of paradiplomacy to enhance the national power of the Islamic Republic of Iran is an undeniable reality. Paradiplomacy will be highly effective in achieving medium and long-term goals in supra-national documents during the post-JCPOA era and the realization of the resistance economy.
2. The internal functional legitimacy of the political system and the continued regional role-playing of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on multiple military, diplomatic, and economic foundations. In the national power of the country, economic and military capabilities are complementary, and even historical experiences have confirmed the prerequisite of the economic component over the military component.
3. The use of para-diplomacy, after achieving a relative level of security in the Islamic Republic of Iran, requires a transition from security-oriented foreign policy to development-oriented foreign policy. Para-diplomacy has numerous advantages in transforming the country's capacities into national power by delegating authority to formal national units such as governorates, including in poverty reduction in regions such as Kermanshah province, adopting a development-oriented approach, and linking destinies together, as well as regional development and reducing both internal and regional vulnerabilities, one of which is Iran's vulnerability due to underdevelopment in peripheral areas.

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