Middle East Journal of Agriculture Research
Volume: 13 | Issue: 03| July – Sept.| 2024

EISSN: 2706-7955 ISSN: 2077-4605
DOI: 10.36632/mejar/2024.13.3.26
Journal homepage: www.curresweb.com
Pages: 505-543

Does International Agri-Food Marketing Contribute to Gastro-Diplomacy or Does Gastro-Diplomacy Contribute to International Agri-Food Marketing? The Case of Iran

Martin Hilmi

Governance Consultant, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome, Italy

Received: 13 June 2024 **Accepted:** 10 July 2024 **Published:** 15 July 2024

ABSTRACT

International trade has always been a main stay in diplomatic relations between countries and so much so that diplomacy and international trade go hand in hand. Over the past decades there has been a surge in international and global trade that has not been seen previously in history. In particular there has been a growth in international agri-food trade which has enabled populations around the world to taste and experience the global diversity of foods and related cultural characteristics. In this regard, international agri-food marketing has played a role as has gastro-diplomacy in enabling and facilitating such international agri-food trade. Within this background, the research, considers if international agri-food marketing contributes to gastro-diplomacy or if gastro-diplomacy contributes to international agri-food marketing. The research used as a case Iran and found that in terms of if international agri-food marketing contributes to gastro-diplomacy, the Iranian public sector, to a degree, does conduct and support the first step of international agri-food marketing, exporting, which may go some way to support Iranian gastro-diplomatic efforts. In terms of the Iranian domestic private sector enterprises, it was found that they do conduct international agri-food marketing, in varying degrees, and thus contribute to Iranian gastro-diplomacy to a greater degree than the public sector. Further Iranian private enterprises, for example restaurants and supermarkets, which operate in foreign countries have a 'pull effect' on Iranian international agri-food marketing and thus contribute to Iranian gastro-diplomacy to a greater degree than the public sector. In terms of if gastro-diplomacy contributes to international agri-food marketing, the research found that the Iranian public sector, via its foreign policy and cultural diplomacy, does directly and indirectly contribute to Iranian international agri-food marketing, but does not support such via a publicly-led gastro-diplomacy programme. The public sector's foreign policy and cultural diplomacy do support Iranian domestic private enterprises, directly and indirectly, in their international agri-food marketing, but such efforts are not specifically set on gastro-diplomacy. Citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in foreign countries, via private enterprises, do also support Iranian international agri-food marketing directly and indirectly.

Keywords: International trade, International marketing, International agri-food marketing, Trade diplomacy, Gastro-diplomacy

Introduction

Trade, and in particular international trade,[1] has been one of the 'sparks' that ignited diplomacy over the centuries (Berridge, 2015) as trade was a form of relations between early humanin beings (Pigman, 2016) which enabled goods to be exchanged, with the inherent cultural underpinnings of such

[1] International trade is basically 'the exchange of goods and services across national boundaries' (Seyoum, 2009).

Corresponding Author: Martin Hilmi, Governance Consultant, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome, Italy.
E-mail: martin.hilmi@fao.org

products and relations. These cultural trade exchanges would enable people to be uniquely identified and also be promoted in the eyes and especially minds of others. Historically, many societies, as per their trade, gained considerable pre-eminence from such an activity (Czinkota *et al*., 2023) and this not only in economic terms but also in image and reputation. Such has been further enhanced in recent times by the increase in international and global trade, which has derived from: improvements in information and communication technologies (ICTs); improvements in logistics and supply chain management; further and more intense research and development and related multiple budding of innovations; improvements in incomes levels in diverse nation states; the lowering of trade barriers and foreign investments; and increased competition (Albaum *et al*., 2016). As such the growth in international and global trade has created lasting linkages, relationships, interdependence, institutions, like the World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, enabled more products and services to be made available, improved product safety and quality, facilitated specialization, fostered good governance, enhanced peace, raised incomes, increased economic growth and heightened living standards (Czinkota *et al*., 2023).

One of the many components of trade and international trade is that of agriculture and food products. Indeed agri-food trade, over the past three decades has grown exponentially (FAO, 2023c) and estimates show that such trade is expected to grow even further over the next decade (OECD & FAO, 2023). Interestingly though, even if the share of the people employed in agriculture has declined, more jobs, and thus employment opportunities, have been created in the upstream and downstream of the agri-food system as well as in other related sectors (FAO, 2023c). In fact, the agri-food system is the world 's biggest employer, accounting for over a billion people who are provided with employment and livelihoods (FAO, 2023c). At the same time though, greenhouse gas emissions that derive from agriculture are expected to grow by 7.6 percent over the next decade and as such innovations are required that can be effectively implemented in terms of emissions mitigation as well as activities to support adaptation (OECD & FAO, 2023). In this regard, and at the agricultural production level, for example, 'mitigation and adaption solutions include large-scale and inclusive adoption of climate-smart and carbon neutral production processes and technologies' (OECD & FAO, 2023). Indeed, to support, climate smarting and employment, for example, in agri-food systems, what is required is 'a well-functioning, transparent, and rules-based multilateral trading system' (OECD & FAO, 2023). This, in turn, implies diplomacy, which enables, facilitates and fosters better relations among varying trading stakeholders, for example, nation states and private enterprises.

Tade diplomacy[2] thus becomes a main stay within the overall context of economic diplomacy.[3] But in turn such diplomacies do imply cultural diplomacy[4] and public diplomacy,[5] and in particular to agri-food trade: food diplomacy,[6] culinary diplomacy[7] and gastro-diplomacy.[8] One among the many objectives of such diplomacies is to foster competitive advantage for stakeholders, for example, which is provided also by image and reputation. Such image and reputation can be seen as a competitive reputation and image, what is commonly termed competitive identity (Anholt, 2007). Such a competitive identity at the country level is provided via: cultural exchanges, including exports; importantly branded exports; government policy decisions, including foreign policy; attracting foreign investments and talent; promoting tourism; and people of the country, including high profile leaders, for example (Anholt, 2007). Once a clear and concise competitive identity has been devised, for

[2] Trade diplomacy is the concerted attempt to manage trade, trade regimes and trade regime influences on markets both nationally, internationally and globally (Tussie, 2013).

[3] Economic diplomacy is basically the negotiations and decision making that affect economic relations internationally (Woolcock & Bayne, 2013).

[4] Cultural diplomacy is an attempt by an actor to make known particular cultural resources and assets to facilitate the management of the actor's international environment (Cull, 2009).

[5] Public diplomacy attempts to influence foreign publics, via communication, information and indirect engagement, for example, to facilitate nation state foreign policy and national objectives (Snow, 2009).

[6] Food diplomacy is basically set around food aid and relief (Rockower, 2020).

[7] Culinary diplomacy is food used in diplomatic settings and functions (Rockower, 2020).

[8] Gastro-diplomacy is basically a public sector led public diplomacy campaign which combines culinary and cultural diplomacy, with the intent of increasing nation image and reputation and is not simply a one-off culinary tasting event (Rockower, 2020).

example, in the case of a country, this can have lasting benefits, for example, in foreign trade, and can be instrumental in country marketing and branding, which can position the country positively in the minds of foreign publics. Indeed, public diplomacy contributes to this, in its role to cultivate and communicate a desired nation state image and reputation (Wang, 2005), as can cultural diplomacy via its fostering of a nation's cultural heritage, arts, language, and traditions to convey messages and thus build and showcase unique identity and values (Kelechi, 2024) and within this gastro-diplomacy that highlights unique and identifiable culturally-based tasting experiences that can also contribute to showcasing a country's identity and values. Indeed, and overall, economic, trade, public, cultural and gastro-diplomacy, along with country marketing and branding are all interconnected and intermingled in their efforts to create an image and reputation that can provide for a competitive identity and competitive advantage.

Within this background, the research considers if international agri-food marketing contributes to gastro-diplomacy or if gastro-diplomacy contributes to international agri-food marketing. This research is based on and within the research stream on gastro-diplomacy (see Hilmi, 2023) and is a continuation of such, still within the context of Iran as a case.

Aim and objectives of the research

The main aim of the research is to attempt to appraise, diagnose and ascertain, if international agri-food marketing contributes to gastro-diplomacy or if gastro-diplomacy contributes to international agri-food marketing. Within this, the research objectives are to: appraise and attempt to ascertain if international agri-food marketing can contribute to gastro-diplomacy within the Iranian context; and appraise and attempt to ascertain if gastro-diplomacy can contribute to international agri-food marketing within the Iranian context.

Methodology

Being in the same research stream of Hilmi (2023) and furthering such, this research took a similar research methodology in terms of being qualitative, abductive, systematic, exploratory and descriptive.[9] The research was based on literature, sources and secondary data and information and sources of primary data and information found within, for example, case studies. The research was conducted mainly in English, but also in Persian. The research was subdivided into four stages. The first stage of the research was exploratory in nature searching for and identifying key search terms. The second stage was and in-depth systematic exploratory and descriptive research, while the third stage was still an in-depth systematic research, which was descriptive but also based on a historical stance. However, a part of the third stage of the research was conducted in Persian.[10] The fourth, and last stage, of the research was devoted to another round of analysis of all the data and information found in the second and third stages of the research.

The first stage of the research[11] was an exploratory research with the aim of identifying key research terms, via a systematic review of literature using the following four online databases: Agris; BASE; Google Scholar; and ResearchGate. The key research terms identified were: agriculture Iran; Iranian agriculture; food Iran; Iranian food; economy Iran; Iranian economy; trade diplomacy; trade diplomacy Iran; Iranian trade diplomacy; agricultural trade diplomacy; food trade diplomacy; agri-food trade diplomacy; agro-food trade diplomacy; agricultural trade diplomacy Iran; Iranian agricultural trade diplomacy; food trade diplomacy Iran; Iranian food trade diplomacy; agri-food trade diplomacy Iran; Iranian agri-food trade diplomacy; agro-food trade diplomacy Iran; Iranian agro-food trade diplomacy; public diplomacy; public diplomacy Iran; Iranian public diplomacy; cultural diplomacy; cultural diplomacy Iran; Iranian cultural diplomacy; gastro-diplomacy; gastro-diplomacy Iran; Iranian gastro-diplomacy; nation marketing; nation branding; nation marketing Iran; Iranian nation marketing; nation

[9] The research followed, for example, much the same qualitative research and analytical methods stance as provided, by Tracy (2020); Lune & Berg (2017); Bryman (2012), etc.

[10] This was conducted by an in-country researcher (Amanda Malekazari [MSc.], psychologist, independent researcher).

[11] This first stage of the research was conducted between October-November 2023 and lasted about three weeks circa.

branding Iran; Iranian nation branding; exporting; international marketing; global marketing; agriculture exporting; food exporting; agri-food exporting; agro-food exporting; agricultural exporting Iran; Iranian agricultural exporting; food exporting Iran; Iranian food exporting; agri-food exporting Iran; Iranian agri-food exporting; agro-food exporting Iran; Iranian agro-food exporting; international agriculture marketing; international food marketing; international agri-food marketing; international agro-food marketing; International agriculture marketing Iran, Iranian International agriculture marketing; international food marketing Iran; Iranian international food marketing; international agri-food marketing Iran; Iranian international agri-food marketing; agro-food marketing Iran; Iranian agro-food marketing.

The second stage of the research[12] involved an in-depth systematic exploratory and descriptive research and review of literature and sources of secondary data and information, using the previously identified key search terms. It used five online databases: Agris; BASE; Google Scholar; RefSeek; and ResearchGate. This research process provided mainly books and journal articles. The publications were selected based on a number of criteria: who collected the data and information; when it was collected; how was it collected; what was collected; peer review process conducted; date of publication; identifiable authors; identifiable publisher; and references used. As the data and information was coming in it was analysed qualitatively via, coding, categorizing and theming (both deductively and inductively) and in an iterative manner and used as research quality criteria trustworthiness and credibility as per the qualitative stance in terms of reliability, validity and replicability. The findings from this stage of the research provided for guidance on the next stage of the research as it provided for more defined and specific: key research terms, subject matters to cover and overall research boundaries.
The third stage of the research[13] involved an in-depth systematic historical and descriptive research and review of literature and sources of secondary data and information, using a modified version of the previously identified key search terms as a result of the findings from stage two of the research. The research used seven online databases: Agricola; Agris; EBSCO; FAO Publications; JSTOR Business Collection; World Bank Research and Publications (Open Knowledge Repository): and WTO Publications. This research provided mainly books, journal articles and case studies and were selected using the same criteria as those provided in the second stage. The analysis was also conducted in the same way as per the second stage of the research. But the analysis also involved a comparative exercise where the findings were compared to the definitions of international marketing and gastro-diplomacy. However, in this third stage of the research, a descriptive research and review of literature and sources of secondary data and information was conducted in Persian by a researcher [14] in Iran. [15] The research provided mainly data and information from government websites, online articles and journal articles. As the data and information was coming in it was analysed qualitatively via, coding, categorizing and theming (both deductively and inductively) and in an iterative manner and used as research quality criteria trustworthiness and credibility as per the qualitative stance in terms of reliability, validity and replicability. The findings were then translated into English and provided in a summative form.
The fourth and last stage of the research[16] involved conducting another analysis of all the data and information found in the second and third stages of the research. It was conducted in a qualitative manner: coding, categorizing and theming (both deductively and inductively) and in an iterative manner and used as research quality criteria trustworthiness and credibility as per the qualitative stance in terms of reliability, validity and replicability. This fourth stage of the research was fundamentally a 'double analytical check' on the two analysis processes conducted and thus provided for another layer of validity and reliability on all the resulting data and information that emerged from the research.

Background

Trade diplomacy

International trade, according to Berridge (2015), was the precursor of diplomacy and was one of the enablers and facilitators of diplomacy over the centuries. Pigman (2016) in fact provides that trade

[12] The second stage of the research was conducted between December and January 2024 for about six weeks.
[13] This stage of the research was conducted between February and April 2024 for about circa nine weeks.
[14] Amanda Malekazari (MSc.), psychologist, independent researcher
[15] This in country research was conducted between March and May 2024 for about circa six weeks.
[16] This stage of the research was conducted in May 2024 for about circa two weeks.

was a primordial form of interaction among human societies and one of the earliest forms of relations between differing peoples. Trade enables two parties to access goods that they may not be able to produce locally (Wafullah, 2023) and such trade should make the two trading parties better off (Pigman, 2016). Such trade encounters also provided for a better understanding of the two parties' needs, the exchange and sharing of culture, and all in attempts to foster friendly and peaceful relations (Wafullah, 2023). Within this though there were not only relations, but negotiations, including dispute resolutions, and as such negotiations became essential (Pigman, 2016). Indeed, negotiations in trade concern who gets what and how, and inevitably provides for winners and losers, including claims for compensation (Tussie, 2013). All this gave rise to diplomacy in terms of trade missions, that also acted as missions for the exchange of messages, counsellor relations stations, etc., (Pigman, 2016). At the basis though of trade diplomacy lies the need to understand why international trade does, or should, take place (Pigman, 2016) and that effectively trade and diplomacy are inherently reliant on each other as they both enable each other, but at the same time are enablers and engines, for example, of economic growth and development (Pigman, 2020).

Trade diplomacy is the concerted attempt to manage trade, trade regimes and trade regime influences on markets both nationally, internationally and globally (Tussie, 2013). It is an important component of economic diplomacy which is the combination of diplomacy with economic instruments to attempt to support a nation state obtain its economic, political, and strategic objectives (Aburesidze *et al*., 2022). Woolcock & Bayne (2013) define economic diplomacy as being negotiations and decision making that affect economic relations internationally. This in practical terms means providing for at the government level,[17] for example: reconciling domestic economic policy objectives with international economic policy; political influence and exerting political influence; the usage of economic assets and relations; voluntary and binding relations; constituting international institutional arrangements; fostering agreements that may be bilateral and multilateral; facilitating trade exchanges and reducing market failures and costs, etc., (Woolcock & Bayne, 2013; van Bergeijk, 2009). In terms of institutional arrangements, there are many international economic organizations and regimes, such as for example G20 summits, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), etc., (Woolcock & Bayne, 2013). Further in terms of political influence, economic diplomacy can also foster sanctions which can be termed negative as they provide for boycotts, embargoes, capital sanctions and the freezing of a nation state's foreign assets (van Bergeijk, 2009). There are also positive sanctions, for example, such as aid and technology transfer (van Bergeijk, 2009). However negative sanctions are used the most in attempts to influence nation state behaviours (Aburesidze *et al*., 2022). This notwithstanding that the impacts of negative sanctions have mixed results (Aburesidze *et al*., 2022), but tend to reduce welfare in a sanctioned nation state (van Bergeijk, 2009), for example, as well as impact negatively on poverty and inequality.

In terms of trade diplomacy focused on agriculture and food, this has grown considerably over the past decades as agriculture and food is not set in the confines of domestic affairs (Chen, 2014). This is because of: the nation state domestic resource endowments, which results in specialization, the consequent natural interdependence which has grown within this context; the increasing globalization and related interconnectedness of global players and global agri-food markets that enable and facilitate nation states to increment domestic welfare, for example, via better managing matters related to food security. (Koo & Kennedy, 2005). As such agri-food trade has received special attention and treatment (Koo & Kennedy, 2005), but at the same time has made agricultural and food not only highly politically sensitive domestically, but also internationally (Grant, 2003). This politicalization of international agri-food trade has also affected nation states in terms of gastronomy as in fact differing cuisines from various countries have influenced and are influencing domestic markets of nation states and thus trade (Krebs, 2013). This gastronomic influence inevitably creates domestic social and cultural change within nations states. Thus, and fundamentally trade diplomacy effectively is about cultural trade and promoting a nation state's culture to another, what is also commonly englobed in the term public diplomacy.

[17] However, economic diplomacy, and its major component trade diplomacy, is no longer a state led affair only(Pigman, 2016), as such diplomacies are now also in the hands of the private sector, NGOs, citizens, community organizations, etc.

Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy, in the traditional sense, is diplomacy attempting to influence foreign publics, via communication, information and indirect engagement, for example, to facilitate nation state foreign policy and national objectives (Snow, 2009). As put by Berridge (2015) public diplomacy is to seek influence indirectly via ' appealing over the heads of those governments to the people with influence upon them.' Golan & Yang (2015) in terms of public diplomacy focus on the communication aspects of it: it deals primarily with managing communication between state and non-state actors to purse a nation's interests so as to also foster relationship cultivation. However, according to Snow (2020) and also Melissen (2005), public diplomacy has evolved and is not only a matter within the public sector, but is also in the hands of private citizens and groups[18], for example, and is more and more interacting with various fields, for example, such as marketing (nation branding) and cultural relations (cultural diplomacy). Public diplomacy is now also about fostering long term relationships with foreign audiences via listening (Cull, 2009), attempting to ascertain needs, understanding people, culture, searching for areas of commonalities, 'correcting' misunderstandings (Leonard 2002), and advocating, and encouraging educational visits and exchanges (Cull, 2009), for example. Further it also involves two-way communication systems, building trust and attempting to win 'hearts and minds' (Melissen, 2005). This has been further enhanced by the digitalization of public diplomacy (Manor, 2019) which enables new innovative communication strategies to be adopted and enhanced capabilities to engage and create lasting relations with audiences (Kelechi, 2024). Overall, thus public diplomacy is about building credibility and trust (Melissen, 2005) and is all about nation state image and reputation management in the eyes, minds and hearts of publics (Huijgh, 2016).

Seib (2013a) and el-Nawawy (2013) add that religion has a role to play also in public diplomacy, as via faith, it can be a good way to the heart. Indeed Seid (2013b) points to the matter that modernism and secularism may not seemingly 'go hand in hand.' The 'growth' of what may be termed 'religious fundamentalisms' is commonly a secularist perspective on religion, which assumed that with the rise of economic and political development in modernizing societies, for example, religion would be relegated to the private sphere of people's lives and thus lose ground, but as is evident this is not the case, as for example, the Iranian revolution (Loskota & Flory, 2013). Indeed, even though many see religious influence, on for example politics and public life, as growing, it has effectively always been there and has thus never really gone away(Loskota & Flory, 2013). In fact, Seib (2013b) provides that recognition by countries of the outreach capabilities of religion to general publics has to be considered and can be an effective 'tool' in public diplomacy and not only.

Inherent to public diplomacy is power (Snow, 2009). Power can be based on coercion, inducing behavioural changes and on attraction (Snow, 2009). Typically, hard power is based mainly on military and economic might, while soft power derives from attraction (Nye, 2004) and what is termed sticky power: the power of economic attraction (Hacking, 2005). Indeed, public diplomacy is considerably intermingled with soft power as it tries to attract (Snow, 2009). Nye (2004) provides that a nation state has three main resources of soft power: foreign policy, culture and political values. It seeks to attract more than coerce to obtain intended objectives (Nye, 2008), but this all requires 'hard dollars' (Schneider, 2006). Further a 'comparative advantage' in soft power, for example, by a country is based on: when ideas and culture are in unison with global norms; access to multiple communication and media channels; and a country's behavioural stance both domestically and internationally (Snow, 2009). However, soft power alone, seemingly, is not viable to achieve intended objectives as also hard power is required: this is what Nye (2008a) refers to as being a smart power strategy. Smart power according to Nye (2004) is knowing better how to balance and combine hard power, the capability of military and/or economic coercion power by a country with the soft power of a country which derives from the power to attract, via culture, policies, political ideals, for example. However, and still provided by Nye (2004) hard power remains prominent and crucial in the defence of a state not only to fend of other states, but also to guard against ill-intending non-state actors.

[18] People to people diplomacy is where people interact, in terms of communications, for public matters, more than private matters that can have influence on national and international political matters, including foreign policy (Ayhan, 2020).

Ohnesorge (2020) provides that culture is a main pillar of soft power, even though it is not easy to pin down clearly and concisely what the actual and real impacts of culture on other peoples are. Further, culture is far from an easy term to define in itself (Ohnesorge, 2020). What is of interest though, is that culture is not really under the purview of governments and is not really at the policy level, as culture is commonly based on society, societal actors and their institutions, for example, enterprises, schools, etc., that simply diffuse a culture via exchanges that can be commercial and non-commercial (Ohnesorge, 2020). This, though, in turn, can become an affordable set of cultural assets that can effectively extend the soft power of a nation state (Ohnesorge, 2020). Such use of culture as a soft power has, in fact, a long history of usage in foreign policy (Bound *et al*., 2007): culture is a means by which societies, among other matters, not only see themselves with, but identify with and thus make themselves somewhat unique to others, and thus such an identifier can be projected to others (Jacob, 2017). As such, within culture can lay a good deal of attraction which can be authentically marketed to others (Jacob, 2017) and thus be an important resource within foreign policy, diplomacy, and international marketing.

Cultural diplomacy

Within trade diplomacy and public diplomacy and its soft power, as per the above, inherently lays cultural diplomacy. On this matter, though, Melissen (2005) and (Goff, 2020) go as far as claiming that, in fact, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy have, to a degree, merged together as distinctive demarcation lines between the two have blurred. Schneider (2006) furthers this point when claiming that 'public diplomacy consists of all a nation does to explain itself to the world, and cultural diplomacy is the use of creative expression and exchanges of ideas, information, and people to increase mutual understanding.' This notwithstanding that cultural diplomacy, according to Bound *et al*., (2007) is not easily defined and Gienow-Hecht & Donfried (2010) adding that the term has in fact become more perplexing as per its evolution over time. However, Cull (2009) does define cultural diplomacy as an attempt by an actor to make known particular cultural resources and assets to facilitate the management of the actor's international environment and Wastnidge (2014) defines it as the attempt to enhance image, by creating appeal, via targeting not only foreign governments, but also publics, with national culture, arts, ideas and information.

According to Papaioannou, (2017), what seemingly has been seen to take prominence is cultural diplomacy, for in a multipolar world, cultural transmission plays a vital role in outlaying national values as well as a dialogue promoter between nation states and importantly can create a sense of shared community (Carbó-Catalan & Roig-Sanz, 2022). Cultural diplomacy enables and facilitates 'meeting points for exposition and explanation, for dialogue and debate' (Bound *et al*., 2007). Cultural diplomacy attempts to surpass and overcome cultural barriers, facilitate mutual understanding and ultimately build trust via fostering openness and intercultural dialogue (Saaida, 2023). Cultural diplomacy can be used flexibly, suits dialogues where relations may be tense and can provide to be an effective medium for mutual understanding (Papaioannou, 2017). In fact on this matter, cultural diplomacy is not only set in the public sector's foreign policy hands as it used to be (Bound *et al*., 2007), but can be and is exercised by non-state actors (Ang *et al*., 2016),[19]for example on a people to people basis, thus increasing cooperation and trust among people, which are two among the five main objectives of cultural diplomacy, the other three being identity, reputation building and facilitating mutual understanding (Papaioannou, 2017). Indeed, cultural diplomacy has the capacity to reach many people and is thus a viable 'medium' for nations that are attempting to influence 'over the heads' of governments (Bound *et al*., 2007). In fact, Schneider (2006) points to cultural diplomacy as being a two-way street, communicates, has a long-term orientation, can increase understanding, can open doors, and is effective if attuned to interests within targeted audiences. Further, von Maltzahn (2013) adds that it mobilizes

[19] In fact, on this matter, cultural diplomacy has changed considerably over the years and has broadened, to be far more inclusive of many people and far less elitist (Ang *et al.,* 2016). This point is further emphasized by von Maltzahn (2013) who claims the concept itself of cultural diplomacy in the past few years has placed a far and greater emphasis on civil society and non-state actors. Ang *et al.,* (2016) point to the matter that people to people cultural diplomacy is in fact cultural relations which is ideal based and practiced by non-state actors, which departs somewhat from interest- based cultural diplomacy that has nation state objectives behind it.

resources, creates institutions,[20] for example devoted to cultural exchanges and not only, and also co-opts and attracts people of another nation state and it goes beyond the current interests of governments that may go and come as per its innate broader set of interests. Indeed cultural diplomacy has become so people to people cultural diplomacy exchanges, fast moving and with profound effects, where effectively cultures are not only meeting, interacting and dialoguing, but are also morphing, and as such this particular type of cultural diplomacy is seemingly setting the pace and influencing not just public diplomacy of countries, but their inherent foreign policies (von Maltzahn, 2013; Bound *et al*., 2007).
Indeed, in many emerging nations, there is a growing interest to invest in cultural diplomacy in attempts to raise and increase not just country reputation and identity, but status on the global scene (Ang *et al*., 2016). Within this, the emergence of cultural diplomacy though, needs to tender with, the varying currents of emerging interests in such nations and thus making cultural diplomacy prone to attempt to accommodate such divergences, which can result in, inevitably, a divergent set of policies and practices that come under the cultural diplomacy umbrella, (Ang *et al*., 2016), for example as in attempting to reconcile tradition with modernity. Further cultural diplomacy has to tender with the mindset and perspectives of those involved (Gienow-Hecht, 2010) in the process of emergence, including the institutional settings, both formal and informal settings and inherent organizational structures.

Gastro-diplomacy

Inherent within cultural diplomacy is food and its related cuisine,[21] as food is an integral part of culture and not only. Montanari (2004) provides that food becomes culture, when it is produced, when it is prepared, when what food to eat is chosen, based on economic, nutritional, symbolic and taste preferences, and when it is eaten. Thus, cultural norms, tradition and ways of doing things, have a strong influence on food production and consumption, thus on knowledge, which inevitably affects food politics in terms of, for example, agricultural and food policies (Herring, 2015). Thus agri-food policies depend very much on 'ideas'[22] and not so much on the basic material questions of what to produce, how to produce, how much to produce, and how to distribute (Herring, 2015), but Paarlberg (2013) provides that both ideology and materialism have much the same weight. In fact, since the earliest of times, food and farming have been under the purview of public policies and thus foster considerable political activity (Paarlberg, 2013).

Colás *et al*., (2018) provide that political transformations and socioeconomic transformations of the modern era, for example, 'urbanization, industrialization, rationalization, commercialization, and democratization, have clearly impacted the production, preparation, and consumption of food.' Further, food has also a space dimension to it, that of distributing food, which has a social privilege attached to it: locally produced and consumed food versus imported foods consumed only by certain segments of a society (Montanari, 2004). In fact Waldfogel (2020) provides that the most popular traded cultural products is not just food, but cuisine, this providing food availability from distant lands, which usually is consumed by only defined sections of a society, thus food serving ' as a medium of difference and distinction of class and status, not only in terms of the obvious differentiation of wealth and poverty, but also, crucially, of cultural capital' (Colás *et al*., 2018).
Indeed, Civitello (2011) provides that humans have always set 'meanings' to food, for example, in terms of who can fish it, mill it, who sits at a table, what is served and the order of it being served, etc., and thus food is closely linked to identity (religious, ethnic, national). Montanari (2004) further adds that food and its cuisine is a way of fostering identity that is coupled with exchange: food can be an identifier of culture, but at the same time a cultural mediator that enables exchange as it is far easier to

[20] Interestingly on this point of institutions provided by and working for cultural diplomacy are not common in the Middle East, and seemingly, are the exception more than the norm, save for such countries as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar (von Maltzahn, 2013). But even in these cases much of the cultural diplomacy is state-led and state produced. However, and overall, Iran has been the sole pioneer in cultural diplomacy since the revolution of 1979, comparatively to other states in the region, involved actively in promoting its ideology and values (von Maltzahn, 2013).

[21] Cuisine refers to the use of various ingredients, a style in food preparation, awareness and people who are willing to experiment both on the supply and on the demand side of such (Civitello, 2011).

[22] Indeed, food can be an ideological tool (Parasecoli, 2022).

eat and taste food than understand a foreign language, for example. Cuisine, food ingredients and the ways of preparing food have a great degree of variation based on culture and geographic locality, but trade has enabled and facilitated change within these plethora of differing cuisines (Kerbs, 2013). However, food can be used also to gain political advantage as well as a resistance to foreign 'infiltrations' (Parasecoli, 2022).

Food thus takes on a political and nationalistic stance and can be termed, with such words as gastronativism (Parasecoli, 2022) and gastro- nationalism (Luša & Jakešević, 2017). Gastronativism is ' the ideological use of food in politics to advance ideas about who belongs to a community (in any way it may be defined) and who doesn't' (Parasecoli, 2022) and gastro-nationalism is a ' persistent effort to preserve a claim over specific types of food or drinks, specifically of one nation's flavours and tastes or culinary experiences, offering them at the same time, under that national etiquette, to the global market' (Luša & Jakešević, 2017). Also, Selim (2016) and Chapple-Sokol (2013) see food and cuisine as national identifiers that can develop influence and support the preservation of 'national culture.' In much the same line, Tettner & Kalyoncu, (2016) and Taher & Elshahed (2020) provide that food and cuisine have strong bindings that are rich in cultural heritage: producing ingredients, preparing food, and eating are strong unifiers, and are good at fostering and attempting to maintain social cohesion. Further Colás *et al*., (2018) provide that cuisine, seen also from a nationalistic stance, can be an integral part of nation building that brings, for example, people from various localities and ethnicities onto a common ground.

Reynolds (2012) also points to food as a political instrument as food is no different from any other power. Low (2021) on this point furthers the discourse and provides that 'sensory experiences and metaphors surrounding the consumption of food in the political arena of social life intertwine with and signify complex statecraft processes of power, cultural representation, political subjectivities and contestation.' Indeed, food can send strong and powerful political messages, pending on who consumes it, what is consumed, where it is consumed, and under what circumstances it is consumed (Low, 2015). Spence (2016) focusses on the power of food and how it can affect decision-making in diplomacy. However, national cuisine creation is an ongoing task, which is iterative, non-static and can be challenging (Parasecoli, 2022). Interestingly though, at its origins, cuisine was based more on geographic location[23] and only later became a national identifier (Colás *et al*., 2018). In terms of food and its connection to locality, Montanari (2004) further provides that food is not really defined by nature and its natural resources, but results from the culturally based processes that have tamed, transformed and reinterpreted nature.

Foods and related cuisines do in fact 'demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food: it is the institutionalized protection and promotion of certain food items as grounded in their place of production' (DeSoucey, (2010). In this view gastro-nationalism is used as a defensive tool (Ichijo, 2020) that combines the cultural, political, and economic resources and identities of a nation (DeSoucey, 2010). Also, Ranta (2015) provides that food is becoming synonymous with nationalism and many government policies, both nationally and more so in international settings, fostering not just national food and its production, but national cuisine. Ranta (2015) furthers this and considers the symbolics of food and the importance of such in terms of identity and Ayora-Diaz (2021) concurs in that food and especially taste are highly symbolic and related directly to identity. Zhang (2015) furthers food symbolism and includes attitudes, values, ideas and communication.

In terms of relations between nations, food and cuisine have always played a major role and within the modern era of nations states, such a role has become even more prominent in international diplomacy. Food and its cuisine has thus a diplomatic role to play, as it has done for millennia. In this regard, gastro-diplomacy is defined as a practice of 'sharing a state's cultural heritage through cuisine' (Solleh, 2015), while according to Pham (2013) it is a public sector effort that exports a national

[23] For example, in terms of Iran and Iraq as nation states, seemingly and on the surface, may seem very different, but there are many commonalities, and one of these resides in cuisine, emphasizing locational matters as per Montanari (2004). In terms of cuisine, both Iraq and Iran, have some striking similarities and evident common origins (Chehabi, 2012), and this was also 'tested' and 'tasted' by the author in 2010-2011 in Iran and 2017-2019 in Iraq. Thus, this going someway to support the case that locality does in fact have a strong influence on food styles, somewhat more than socially constructed nationalisms related to food and cuisine.

culinary heritage, within the realm of public diplomacy, in attempts to create good will towards a nation, enhance a nation's brand, foster trade and provide for relational cultural and personal interactions. Parasecoli (2022) adds to this and defines gastro-diplomacy as being designated 'global campaigns of soft diplomacy meant to increase the interest in a country's gastronomy and products in order to raise its profile, generate goodwill, and enjoy economic and commercial windfalls,' while Rockower (2020) considers it as a concerted 'public diplomacy campaign by a national government that combines culinary and cultural diplomacy—often backed up by monetary investment or other tangible resources—to raise its nation-brand status, and not simply an ad hoc or one-off culinary tasting event, via a holistic and educational approach that raises international awareness of a country's culinary and cultural heritage.' [24]

Much like public diplomacy and the inherent cultural diplomacy within, gastro-diplomacy attempts to win 'hearts and minds, ' but not via rational argumentations, for example, but more via indirect sensory interactive emotions and connections that are tangible (Rockower, 2020; Suntikul, 2017). Gastro-diplomacy efforts and initiatives, are usually directed by the public sector of nations, and attempt to provide for the following practices: enable and facilitate soft-loan financing for the setting up as well as the expansion of restaurants in foreign countries; enable and facilitate access to authentic ingredients for such restaurants; foster chef participation within cultural diplomacy and exchanges and institutionalize chefs in formal diplomatic processes and protocols; including cuisine in cultural diplomatic events; foster and enable educational programmes in cuisine; attempt to have the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) recognition of specific dishes or national cuisine as a whole as a national heritage; focus on interactions with national as well as international non-sate actors; and foster people to people diplomacy (Rockower, 2020).

Interestingly, the people-to-people diplomacy element of gastro-diplomacy is one of the major elements (Rockower, 2020). In fact, Zhang (2015) provides that there are numerous actors involved in gastro-diplomacy, apart from the public sector and its diplomats, and includes, for example, food companies, chefs, tourist companies, social media, television and public relations enterprises. Hilmi (2023) finds that in the case of Iran, it is the private sector, via citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy, which contributes the most to such national efforts, for example, with privately owned restaurants in foreign countries and the public sector has a minimal role in gastro-diplomacy. However in the case of Thailand, for example, the public sector plays a major role in gastro-diplomacy, with official public programmes (Rockower, 2012) and Malaysia is much the same (Debora *et al*., 2015) as is Taiwan (Lipscomb 2019), while the Republic of Korea, even though having a major public programme devoted to gastro-diplomacy, has also witnessed a budding and growing private sector intervention in gastro-diplomacy directly in foreign countries (Rockower, 2012).

Currently, gastro-diplomacy is primarily targeted at urban people that tend to share commonalities, for example in tastes, financial means, interests and across differing countries, as the expansion of globalization continues (Parasecoli, 2022). In fact, via this targeting, nation state branding as a 'tasting experience' is attempted that makes such a nation more tangible, potentially providing for uniqueness and fosters more awareness about the specific nation brand and hence the nation (Rockower, 2020).

Nation marketing and branding

Trade diplomacy, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and gastro-diplomacy are distinctive, but are interwoven among themselves, and share, for example, common objectives, of supporting a nation in the eyes and especially the minds of domestic and foreign populations. Indeed, such diplomacies have as one of their multiple objectives that of marketing a nation and branding it. In fact, one of the major goals, for example, of public diplomacy is that of cultivating and communicating an image and reputation that fosters a common playing field and understanding between people and nations (Wang, 2005). However, nation marketing and branding is not just an outcome of trade, public, cultural and gastro-diplomacies, but yet another component of such diplomacies. Indeed, public diplomacy is

[24] Rockower (2020), points to the fact that gastro-diplomacy is not food or culinary diplomacy, as food diplomacy is basically set around food aid and relief, while culinary diplomacy is food usage in diplomatic settings and functions. Luša & Jakešević (2017) in much the same manner point to culinary diplomacy as having a target audience of diplomats, while gastro-diplomacy is intended for wider-bound target audiences.

important in nation marketing and branding (Kelechi, 2024) and vice versa. Interestingly, nation marketing and branding is nothing new: well prior to the coining of the term nation branding, for example, many were already involved in making the connection between, for example: culture, products, country, image and reputation (Viktorin *et al*., 2018). However, it has only been more recently that the role of marketing in international relations, policy making, economic development and social development has been more fully recognised (Anholt, 2007). Indeed branding, which is a core element of marketing, has been, for example, applied to international relations, with the objective of making the nation easily recognizable, not only by other governments, but also by investors, consumers, traders, etc., (Parasecoli, 2022).

Dinnie (2016) defines nation branding as 'the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences.' In another definition, Aronczyk (2013) provides that nation branding is ' the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sector interests to communicate national priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes.' Indeed, nation branding represents a 'deliberate, collective effort by multiple constituencies to generate a viable representation of a geographical-political-economic-social entity' (Viktorin *et al*., 2018). In fact, many differing stakeholders contribute to nation branding, be they public, private and from the non-profit sectors who together amalgamate 'practices, policies, values, and aspirations designed to attract internal and external audiences' (Viktorin *et al*., 2018). In particular, the main intent by the public sector, for example, is not only to influence, but to gain legitimacy and authority both nationally and internationally (Aronczyk, 2013) which enables and facilitates, for example, 'administering citizens, collecting taxes, drawing borders, inviting investment, soliciting tourists, and attending international conventions, etc,' (Viktorin *et al*., 2018). This having an underlying intent to have both a proactive and reactive strategy, in terms of, for example, enhancing and/or repairing a nation's image and reputation, to manage impressions of a nation, to create favour and goodwill and to win friends, etc., (Aronczyk, 2013). As such a nation brand is mainly politically significant both domestically and internationally (Browning, 2023).

Brands are provided to give some form of uniqueness: moving commodities to becoming unique (Ermann & Hermanik, 2018). Branding derives from marketing and provides for a competitive edge, based on its differentiation possibilities, its name and importantly its significance (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Usually, but not always, brands have an origin to them, that is commonly geographic, and in the brand's formation and process, it resembles to a good degree the formation of ethnic or national groups (Ermann & Hermanik, 2018). In fact, Pike (2018) provides that brands can be inherently geographical: they have spatial attributes; provide for spatial differentiation; and provide origin. This is what Pike (2018) refers to as origination: it is a way of 'understanding and explaining the geographical associations constructed by brand and branding actors related in spatial circuits – producers, circulators, consumers and regulators – in their attempts to construct and stabilise meaning and value in spatial and temporal market contexts.' Further, brands portray an image and reputation that can be country, region and city based and enables such to be competitive in the globe (Ermann & Hermanik, 2018). In fact, ' brands shape geographical and historical imaginations, food, cities, countries and holiday destinations, for example, as they replace complicated or unpleasant associations with other, simpler, more positive associations, which, in turn, emphasise specific items, actors and/or events in space and time' (Ermann & Hermanik, 2018). Indeed, nation brands attempt to 'embrace both the past heritage and present living culture' (Dinne, 2016). In fact, nation branding prevalently rests on culture, its many components and facets and its deep roots within a nation. According to Dinnie (2016), culture is the real authenticator and the truest. Ermann & Hermanik, (2018) and Kaefer (2020) add also the social, traditional, people, business, place and tourism elements to the cultural element in nation branding. Another way of considering a nation's branding is provided by Kaefer (2020), in terms of a 'value platform' which represents a nation's unique identity, beliefs, and intents and how these are nurtured to bring value to the nation brand representation.

However, a nation already has an image that is being perceived by people, with or without branding (Hakala *et al*., 2013; Fan, 2006).[25] A nation's image can be understood as: 'the sum of beliefs

[25] As such a 'place' can acquire an image and reputation that can be built, managed and refurbished when required (Ermann & Hermanik, 2018)

and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place' (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). A nation 's image 'results from its geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features' (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Further a nation brand is not tangible and does not only represent one single image of a country as such a brand represents: 'a place geographically; natural resources; local products; people; history; culture; language; economy; politics; social institutions; infrastructure; and famous people' for example (Fan, 2006). A nation brand thus attempts to represent an overall image of a nation, but at the same time portrays multiple images of the nation as an image can be perceived differently by different people (Fan, 2006). Kilduff & Núñez Tabales (2017) indeed point to this fact that a nation's brand is constructed in the minds of people.

Further, places do not only have an image, but also a reputation. Reputation can be negative or positive and can be rich and complex, but reputation is not static (Anholt, 2007). Reputation is a strong 'influencer' on people's perceptions of a country and it can have a measurable impact and role in economic, political and cultural development. Indeed, in the global system, nations to develop economically, have gone past national and global public policy, and have had to adopt nation marketing and branding so as to attempt to obtain a competitive advantage (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). In fact, in this realm, Anholt (2007) refers to a competitive identity which is the 'mixing' of public diplomacy, with brand management: it is basically public diplomacy and brand management that underlie competitive identity (Anholt, 2007). But the first target of competitive identity is domestic, where positive nationalism is fostered among the populace, regardless of internal divisions (Anholt, 2007). Hence once national governments have a clear and believable competitive identity that is domestic, it delineates in a far clearer manner what the nation stands for and where it is going, and thus can manage far better its international competitive identity (Anholt, 2007). Indeed, and still according to Anholt (2007) reputation, deliberately or accidentally, is based around six elements: tourism promotion; export brands; policy decisions; inward investment promotion; cultural exchanges; and the people of the nation themselves. These six elements effectively can be also major contributors to economic development (Anholt, 2007). Importantly though nation marketing and branding need an integrated strategic approach: strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and adaptation so as to enable and facilitate the effective aligning of 'messaging, actions, and policies across government agencies, diplomatic missions, and other stakeholders' (Kelechi, 2024).

International agri-food marketing

Products and brands which have a good degree of recognition in terms of 'country of origin' tend to facilitate international trade as consumers associate the products and brands with an image and reputation of a nation (Nes, 2018). More in specific when product attributes are in line with country image and reputation (Nes, 2018) this tends to increase the likelihood of international trade as it affects buyer behaviour from a cognitive, normative and affective standpoint (Nes, 2018). Indeed, nation marketing and branding, trade diplomacy, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and gastro-diplomacy do foster, facilitate and enable trade and thus also economic development (Nirwandy & Awang, 2014), this though not only via, for example tourism, but also via (marketing) agricultural and food products (Lipscomb, 2019).

International trade, in agricultural and food products, [26] for example, enables food to go from areas that are in food surplus of the world to areas of the world that are in food deficit and thus international agri-food trade represents a very important trade (WTO, 2023b). In fact, and further, international agri-food trade is also concerned with nutrition, food safety and quality, food security, food variety,

[26] Food in international trade is referred to as agricultural products which have been somewhat or fully processed (manufactured) into food products (prepared foods), which are usually branded (Padberg, 1997). Agricultural products are those products which have not been processed or are minimally processed and are usually, but not always unbranded, are marketed in bulk and are typically referred to as commodities (Padberg, 1997). However, and interestingly Hirst & Tresidder (2016) provide that 'commodities are no longer solely defined by their function or use, or by their market price, but rather by what they signify to both the consumer and his or her peers.'

composition of diets and other economic and social variables as, for example, market structures, agricultural productivity and agricultural output composition (FAO, 2022b; FAO & WTO, 2017). However, agri-food products are not the only facilitators of international trade as cuisine can also be an enabler in international trade (Waldfogel, 2020).

International trade in agri-food products has grown rapidly, this notwithstanding that most of the food consumed is provided and traded in countries where it was produced (Khols & Uhl, 2015; Paarlberg,2013). Agricultural products are traded internationally as a result of international specialization and has seen a large increase in such trade since the 1970s (Ahrens, 1997) and a further major and rapid expansion of agri-food trade has been ongoing since the early 2000s (FAO, 2022b). In 2022, for example, agricultural products represented '10 percent of all merchandise exported' (WTO,2023a). However, processed agricultural products, in other words food products are now traded more than agricultural products (Albisu, 1997). For 2023, the WTO (2024a) reported that food products trade was up by 1 percent and had grown 12 percent in 2022. In terms of the 'the monetary value of global food exports, it multiplied by 4.4 in nominal terms between 2000 and 2021, from USD 380 billion in 2000 to USD 1.66 trillion in 2021' (FAO, 2023d). Further, the 'global value added generated by agriculture, forestry and fishing combined, grew by 84 percent in real terms between 2000 and 2021, reaching USD 3.7 trillion in 2021' (FAO, 2023d).

Agri-food trade at the international level is set on three different levels: exporting, international marketing and global marketing.[27] Exporting is simply selling and sending goods to another country (Delaney, 2016; Albaum *et al*., 2016). Exporting is relatively less risk and commitment-oriented than international marketing and global marketing, and as such, for example, many private companies opt for this (Seyoum, 2009) as well as public sector organizations. Exporting is usually seen as the first step in the international marketing process. International marketing is the multinational process of strategizing, planning, and implementing via the conception, pricing, promotion, distribution and branding of goods and services to meet the needs and wants of consumers in foreign markets (Czinkota *et al*., 2023; Ghauri & Cateora; 2022; Doole *et al*., 2019; Albaum *et al*., 2016; Baack *et al*., 2012).[28] This is most often provided by private companies, commonly large enterprises, but also by small and medium enterprises. However, some public organizations also provide for the international marketing of agri-food products. International marketing involves ascertaining the needs and wants of customers internationally; finding ways to satisfy such needs and wants with products; segmenting and targeting international markets; positioning the product in the consumer's mind; using the price, promotion, distribution and product mix for providing products at a profit; and orienting the organization involved in international marketing to internationalization (Doole *et al*., 2019; Baack *et al*., 2019)). The international marketing process is commonly provided by careful planning which includes: 'situation analysis and forecast; strategic international marketing planning; the international marketing mix; implementing; and control of international activities' (Berndt *et al*., 2023).Global marketing involves considering the world as one market and as such committing all resources and competencies, and coordinating all marketing activities in this merit (Green & Keegan, 2020; Alon *et al*., 2017; Dutta, 2016). Global marketing is most often practiced by large private sector enterprises. The three typologies of international agri-food trade effectively represent three general orientations: polycentric where each nation is considered as unique; region-centric a world composed of regions; and geo-centric where the world is seen as one, but with local adaptations, 'think global, act local' (Hollensen, 2020).

Increasingly international agri-food trade occurs via bilateral trade agreements and regional agreements: countries from the same region, regionalization, and most countries concentrate on a limited number of products from a limited number of trading partners (FAO, 2022b; FAO, 2015). Most international agri-food trade is conducted by private enterprises, intra-enterprise trade (business to business marketing) as per the expansion of global value chains (FAO, 2015) and also directly and indirectly by the public sector, that may foster such international agri-food trade, via export promotion

[27] Sometimes though, the terms exporting, international marketing and global marketing are used interchangeably (McAuley, 2001).

[28] Cherunilam (2016) points out that international marketing can also be considered in home-domestic markets as, for example, in some countries, the availability of international products is so high, that effectively domestic markets are internationalized. Thus, private companies, for example, from a specific nation, are effectively marketing their products in domestic markets, but in reality, the enterprise's marketing is international.

organizations, for example, but there are also cases where international trade in agri-food products is conducted by centralized trading monopolies, such as for example, specialized government agencies and farmer groups who are provided with monopoly rights (Khols & Uhl, 2015). International trade in agri-food products is risky as internationally there are, for example, a lack of common laws for transactions (Grath, 2016). In this regard, and usually, trade conventions and practices are referred too, in attempts to reduce trade risks, as per, for example, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) (Grath, 2016). Further, international agri-food trade can be fostered via free trade or can be hampered via protectionism: government policies vary between the two extremes of completely free trade on the one side and protectionism on the other side (Khols & Uhl, 2015). Indeed, protectionism goes against free trade, using numerous measures, such as for example tariffs on imports, most favoured nation status, and bilateral trade agreements (Khols & Uhl, 2015). Free trade areas, common markets along with custom unions are examples of attempts at freer trade in agri-food products (Khols & Uhl, 2015). The reality though of international agri-food trade is that there are constellations of tariffs, quotas and non-tariff barriers, designed to protect domestic markets from foreign products (Ghauri & Cateora, 2022). Indeed, the WTO (2024b) also provides that agri-food markets remain not only highly protected, but also highly distorted. This is because, in part, there is no world food organization that has a centralized governance system and as such and in full, national governments are the main players in agri-food trade (Paarlberg, 2013). However, in an attempt to cater for this situation, the World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, has as one of its mandates to reduce trade distortions (Paarlberg, 2013) and the WTO has been effective, to a degree, in reducing such barriers (Ghauri & Cateora, 2022) as in the past two decades, tariffs have been reduced via global and regional trade agreements, and has thus given more opportunities for the increase and growth of international agri-food trade (FAO & WTO, 2017).[29] A further contributor to this growth and expansion has been, for example, the expansion and further harmonization of food standards by differing nation states as such a process provides for a commonly agreed upon understanding on different aspects of food for stakeholders, such as for example, consumers, farmers, private enterprises and governments, and as such standards enable trade to take place (FAO & WTO, 2017). In fact, standards go hand in hand with trade facilitation as they attempt to ensure safer and more nutritious food in larger quantities (FAO & WTO, 2017). This in turn provides for more consumer confidence in terms of food safety, quality and authenticity and also reduces trade costs (FAO & WTO, 2017). Indeed, the marketing of agri-food products that are harmonized in terms of food safety and quality are important for both developed and developing countries alike (Canavari *et al*., 2009). For example, in developing countries, local agri-food products which can be considered as speciality products may gain international market ground and thus contribute to economic development, while in developed economies increased purchasing power and consumer sophistication in terms of food preferences is effectively facilitating 'the emergence of meaningful and actionable market segments, thus increasing the need for products that are differentiated on the basis of their unique sensory, cultural, functional, ethical, and other characteristics' (Canavari *et al*., 2009).

However, trade barriers are somewhat difficult to eradicate, as for example they can be perceived as protecting local farmers, food and gastronomic traditions (Paarlberg, 2013). As Parasecoli (2022) points out, international trade, for some, can represent an 'invasion' of foreign agri-food products into domestic markets and this over the past decade has been 'amplified by the worldwide resurgence of populism and nationalism.' [30] In other words, international agri-food trade can be seen as an assault on domestic culture and not only. In terms of culture, for example Czinkota *et al*., (2023) point out that it

[29] The WTO has a 'set of rules for multilateral trade and is a forum to resolve disputes and negotiate new rules'(FAO & WTO, 2017). The WTO provides an organized and agreed upon setting for nation state governments to attempt to resolve trade disagreements via the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) (Paarlberg, 2013). In fact, WTO agreements are set to attempt to create standards that are fundamental for international trade and harmonize trade based on international standards (FAO & WTO, 2017). In the case of agri-food trade, for example, and in specific in terms of food safety and quality, the 'WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and WTO's Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) rely on Codex standards by setting these out as the benchmark for harmonization '(FAO & WTO, 2017).

[30] This even though for decades now 'economists have been pointing out that tariffs and trade wars are ultimately detrimental' (Parasecoli, 2022).

provides an individual with an 'anchoring point—an identity—as well as codes of conduct as it's an integrated system of learned behaviour patterns that are distinguishing characteristics of the members of any given society.' Culture includes 'everything that a group thinks, says, does, and makes—its customs, language, material artifacts, and shared systems of attitudes and feelings' (Czinkota *et al*., 2023). Indeed, on the surface, many nation states may share cultural similarities, but ' there are many differences, hidden below the surface' (FAO, 1997). In terms of food in particular, for example, culture is transmitted via 'the experience of tasting, smelling, touching, seeing, and even hearing food' (Forest & Murphy, 2013). Indeed, experiencing food can have positive influences, for example, in food sharing, food storytelling, and food symbolism, which are cultural enhancers as well as having positive influences on human emotions, such as for example, nostalgia, comfort, and pleasure (Batat, 2019). In fact, food is not just nourishment as it is also experience (Addis & Holbrook, 2019). Further, food can also play a role in 'well-being (physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual), and how this in turn affects overall satisfaction, well-being, and quality of life' (Frentz, 2019).

Findings

The Iranian context

Over the past two decades Iran has faced numerous challenges in the economic, political, social, natural environment and climate fields (Azadi *et al*., 2022). In specific, and according to the World Bank (2023b), over the past decade, the economy has missed out on economic growth. The economy has faced, for example, the removal of food subsidies and on defined food staples, inflation has been estimated to have reached 300 percent in 2022 (DFAT, 2023). This has all been aggravated by policies that have provided for moderate reforms and then followed by policies of conservatism that have undone reform periods and efforts (Casarano *et al*., 2023). This consequently providing for instability and increasing economic risks. However, this instability is nothing new as Iranian society seems to be in a constant state of flux and disillusionment (Gohardani & Tizro, 2019). Indeed, social and economic development in Iran has been peppered by, for example, instability, waves of violence and institutional restructuring (Gohardani & Tizro, 2019) that according to Azadi *et al*., (2022) can all be traced back to the root cause of a lack of effective governance. Interestingly though, the World Bank (2023b) provides that since 1979 Iran has achieved a good deal of progress in poverty reduction, but in the period between 2011 to 2020 poverty increased by 28.1 percent and the level of deprivation did much the same. Azadi (2021) estimates that circa half of the Iranian population do actually live in poverty. Poverty is mainly found in rural areas and concentrated in southeast and northwest regions of the country (World Bank, 2023b). Inequality is persistent and growing and found mainly in rural areas[31] (World Bank, 2023c). Such increasing poverty and inequality has also been compounded by encroaching climate change (World Bank, 2023b).

The Iranian economy,[32] and its development since the 1979 revolution, has inherently had to adapt to the context of the international and global economic system, mainly because of its energy resources, crude oil and petroleum exports,[33] for example (Morady, 2020). This has thus created over the decades that domestic organizations and institutions have been modelled on more liberal and free market principles (Morady, 2020), but with strong moderating social economic aspects derived from Islam. This, in fact, did provide for a 'third way' for the economy that was not liberal or social: it was focusing on economic restructuring, sharing more widely the benefits of economic development and poverty alleviation, but at the same time having to compromise with growing liberal economic globalization (Morady, 2020). For example, the public sector provided protection for traditional trading classes, but at the same time was promoting the development of and further growth of the middle class (Morady,

[31] Pahlavani *et al*., (2021), for example, provide that financial sanctions have increased income inequality.

[32] Iran's economy runs on some dominant industries which are 'hydrocarbon, agriculture and services, along with state-owned manufacturing and financial services industries' (DFAT, 2023).

[33] Alaedini (2018) on this provides that the economic cycles of Iran have been inherently linked to revenue levels derived from oil: for example, during oil booms, public investment increases and the private sector is provided with subsidized credit. However, the Iranian economy being inherently linked to oil booms and busts has provided for considerable fluctuations, which have been demonstrated amply in the country's GDP (Alaedini, 2018).

2020). Overall, the search was effectively for national economic autonomy, increasing self-sufficiency, and 'resisting' the encroachment of liberal-based globalization (Morady, 2020).
However, such resistance, as mentioned previously, had to compromise with the necessity of oil exports, as Iran's economy has still a critical dependency on oil exports, and thus drives much of Iran's political economy (DFAT, 2023). The main beneficiaries of such oil exports are rich merchants, industrialists, religious elites and the army (Morady, 2020). Indeed, Iran's political economy is characterized by the interminglement and interplay between 'domestic social forces, religious organizations, geopolitical and global powers and international oil companies' (Morady, 2020). Effectively, as a result, the underlying and fundamental character of the Iranian economy has not changed over the past 100 years, but has been 'shifted', to a limited degree, by Islamic behavioural codes (Morady, 2020).

In this regard, Iran's economy remains mainly public, with fully owned state enterprises and conspicuous state participation in other typologies of enterprises and the rest of the economy, the minor part, being run by the private[34] and cooperative enterprises, but with a good part of the entire economy, an estimated 37.7 percent of GDP, being within the realm of the informal economy (BTI, 2024). The informal economy and related exports, according to Casarano *et al*., (2023), is a mitigation strategy to stave off economic hardships. According to BTI (2024) economic hardships derive from 'mismanagement, nepotism, corruption, brain drain and capital flight.' However, sanctions, and in particular USA sanctions have had particularly negative impacts on the Iranian economy also (BTI, 2024). Since Iran relies on circa 67.2 percent for its crude oil and petroleum exports, this makes it vulnerable and as such there is a public sector strategic objective for export diversification (BTI 2024). As per the above though, and interestingly, Iran has managed to keep a rather moderate economic growth for the time period 2022 and 2023, even though facing challenges, and has seen a considerable expansion in non-oil based industries (World Bank, 2023a). Indeed, Iran is well experienced in being adaptive and resilient to economic hardships (Casarano *et al*., 2023). In fact, Iran has managed to create what may be termed a 'resilience economy' (Ferro *et al*., 2023). Interestingly, according to Kirkham (2022) nation states that are targeted by sanctions tend to become: more inward looking and self-reliant, become less democratic and tend to antagonise more with the West. In fact, in the long run, sanctioned nation states 'have managed to adjust to external pressures, develop internal self-protection mechanisms, mobilise domestic resources and remodel income and wealth distribution and have maintained their foreign policy stance ' (Kirkham, 2022).

However, Iran's export trade, over the past decade, has been under considerable pressures, not just because of the sanctions, but also because of, for example, oil price fluctuations and the nation's trade policies[35] (World Bank, 2023a). But Iranian exports have seen a move away from Europe towards Asia and an increasing concentration in export trade with China, Iraq, UAE, Türkiye and India, all representing circa 71 percent of total exports (World Bank, 2023a). Overall Iran sends about 90 percent of its exports to 15 countries, making it more vulnerable (World Bank, 2023a). Interestingly, Ghaffary Fard *et al*., (2023) in terms of looking at the effects of sanctions on Iran in the period 2001 to 2020 also find that Iran's international trade has changed its patterns in attempts to circumvent sanctions. Dijazi (2018) also considered sanctions, but in the period between 2000 to 2014 and also found a move away from EU and OECD countries to countries in the Middle East and North African region and East Asia. Further also Haidar (2017) considers sanctions between 2006 and 2011 and finds that Iran's international trade was 'deflected' to non-sanctioning countries, with considerable support from Iranian diplomacy.

Iranian foreign policy

Seeing the sanctions over the decades, the vulnerability of relying mostly on oil exports and the more recent export concentration to mainly 15 countries, Iranian diplomacy, at state level, has provided for considerable support in terms of foreign trade. The main actors in Iranian foreign policy are the Iranian constitution, the supreme leader, the Guardian Council, the president, the ministry of foreign

[34] BTI (2024) provides that it is effectively the marginalized private sector that creates most employment opportunities.
[35] Interestingly in terms of foreign trade policies, Eltejaei & Pourbagher (2014), for the period 1959 to 2011, find that overall such policies have been mainly inward looking.

affairs, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the Supreme National Security Council, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards (Osiewicz, 2021). The process of foreign policy formulation is overall complex, seeing the number of players involved and their roles, it is opaque, mystifying, perplexing and divergent and from such a process it does not emerge who actually 'makes' Iran's foreign policy (Kazemzadeh, 2020). However, all ultimate decisions rest with the supreme leader (Kazemzadeh, 2020). Further, Iran's foreign policy as a result of such a structure appears also to be ambiguous, procrastinating, dissimulating, manipulative, crises oriented, contradictory, belligerent and hostile, for example, and is a mix of ideology and religion (the practice of spiritual pragmatism), based on perceptions, long term interests and factionalism. However, its main focus is on the immediate region of the Middle East and also on attempting to mitigate, if not eliminate, the sanctions regime (Katzman, 2016; Ramazani, 2013; Bar, 2004)

In attempts to demystify Iran's foreign policy, according to Katzman (2021); Osiewicz (2021); Mousavian & Chitsazian (2020); Juneau & Razavi (2013); Monshipouri (2013); Roshandel (2013); and Bar (2004), it is based on Iranian cultural norms (national character); isolationism (neither East nor West); domestic factionalism (multiple power centres); power within the international scene; a mixture of defensive and offensive postures; religion versus pragmatism; nationalism and Islamism intertwined; geopolitical interests; a sense of insecurity; victimization; antagonism to the West; Iranian public opinion; exclusivism as per perceived Persian superiority; conspiracy based; individualistic; and mistrustful.

Iranian culture has a good degree of influence on Iranian foreign policy as Osiewicz (2021) points out that matters are never tendered too directly, but indirectly and veiled, showing though respect for interlocutors, but still attempting to assert their cultural superiority, with clear undertones of Shi'ism, which decisions are subordinated too, however, still at the same time being pragmatic. In terms of the multiple power centres that contrive in foreign policy, there is commonly not a consensus on implementation, for example (Monshipouri, 2013). There is consensus on 'exporting Islam' but how it is implemented, for example, in the case of using soft power, there is little consensus (Monshipouri, 2013). However, such factionalism in recent years has considerably polarised making delineation of foreign policy somewhat exasperating (Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020). With regard to insecurity and victimization this derived mainly from a historical trend of the 19th and 20th century as per Iran's history with foreign powers (Roshandel, 2013) and still somewhat, and interestingly, survives as a foreign policy undercurrent to date.

As per power, Iran fundamentally, as per Juneau (2013), is a model of resistance power towards the USA and the West in the Middle East, but its appeal to such a model within the Middle East holds only in some cases, as per the prevalent Sunni Muslim populations found within, and even in minority Shia communities found within not all agree to Iran's stance and Iran's religious political ideology. This resistance stance, seems also to derive from the Iranian perspective of seeing the world as being bi-polar, composed of the oppressors and the oppressed (Roshandel, 2013). Interestingly, Iran uses its power sources, for example, ideological, economic, military, political, etc., alternatively pending on the context and situation (Katzman, 2016; Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020). In terms of its isolationistic stance, foreign policy supports directly and indirectly, for example, in the Middle East region, groups that are non-state actors, but harbour within nation states, like Hezbollah in Lebanon (Juneau & Razavi, 2013). With other countries beyond the Middle East, Iran also keeps an isolationist policy, even though, via reciprocal convenience (pragmatism) it may support one country, for example China, but it in turn also does very much the same to Iran (Juneau & Razavi, 2013).

Marschall (2003) and Juneau & Razavi (2013) delineate six stages in Iranian foreign policy since the 1979 revolution:

- Stage 1: From 1979 to 1983 the main foreign policy stances were independence, isolationistic, neither East nor West, anti- imperialist, highly ideological, the exporting of the revolution, and calls for Muslim unity;
- Stage 2: In parallel to the first stage, but until 1984, foreign policy was still isolationist, but pragmatism started to emerge;
- Stage 3: From 1984 until 1989 was marked by a slow but more pronounced growth of pragmatism;

- Stage 4: From 1989 to 1997 was marked by national interests somewhat over religious ideology, including attempts for reproachment with, for example, Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Russia and European nation states;
- Stage 5: From 1997 onwards under Khatami, a little and soft rapprochement stance with the EU and the USA was sought, coexistence between national interest and religious ideology, what Ramazani (2013) defines as 'spiritual pragmatism,' peaceful coexistence with the West and most importantly 'dialogue among civilizations';
- Stage 6: From mid-2000s onwards, 'neoconservative' foreign policy under Ahmadi-Nejad, which fostered still challenging the West, but seeking closer ties with other emerging powers, such as for example, Brazil, India and China, but overall foreign policy kept its isolationist stance.

In the various stages of Iran's foreign policy, since the revolution of 1979, Iran has kept, however an overall isolationist stance, but has also reduced its ideological stance since the passing of Khomeini in 1989 (Juneau & Razavi, 2013). Indeed, during the Khomeini era, foreign policy was highly ideological, the exporting of the revolution, and calls for Muslim unity, for example, but still isolationist (neither East nor West), and was anti-imperialist (Juneau & Razavi, 2013). During the second republic period, under Rafsanjani, ideology was reduced considerably, and foreign policy took a far more pragmatic stance, and attempted reproachment with, for example Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Russia and European nation states, but the impacts were modest, leaving Iran still much in its isolationist stance (Juneau & Razavi, 2013). In the Khatami era, far more efforts were provided for not just as peaceful coexistence, but more reproachment with other nation states, in the foreign policy drive of the 'dialogue among civilizations'(Juneau & Razavi, 2013). This did reduce tensions, but Khatami still remained fundamentally weary of the West and the new foreign policy drive had considerable opposition on this stance from domestic conservatives (Juneau & Razavi, 2013). With the failure of the reformist foreign policy, it opened the way for a far more 'neoconservative' foreign policy under Ahmadi-Nejad in the mid-2000s which fostered still challenging the West, but seeking closer ties with other emerging powers, such as for example, Brazil, India and China, but overall foreign policy still kept its isolationist stance (Juneau & Razavi, 2013).

In terms of Iran's relations with the West, these are a mixture of antagonism, fear, but also admiration (Bar, 2004). Iran's relations prior to the revolution with the USA were fundamentally of cooperation, but after the revolution they have been antagonistic, only with brief pauses during the Khatami period, the Afghanistan and Iraq invasion by the USA and their failures, and the period leading up to the nuclear deal and during its implementation, until the Trump era, after which tensions have remained still high (Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020). With the EU, relations are bilateral, mainly with the big EU players of Germany, Italy and France and the former EU member the UK (Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020). Thus, a common EU policy towards Iran is found only on certain themes (Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020). Historically Iran relations with the EU, in the 1980s were of détente, with occasional crises emerging, but after 1989 more normal diplomatic relations were sought and relations got closer, with in particular the EU seeking a 'critical dialogue' from Iran and Iran seeking know-how and financing, but in 2002 and 2003 relations deteriorated as per Iran's nuclear programme, only to re-surface and quasi normalize with the nuclear deal (Abdolmohammadi & Cama, 2020).

In terms of Iranian foreign policy towards non-western nation states, more recent developments have been on taking a stronger accent on averting Western sanctions, and in specific those from the USA, via also active collaboration with third countries (El-Kasem, 2022). For example, in 2023, the Iranian president visited three countries in Latin America, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, which like Iran, face all USA sanctions (Ahmed, 2023). Such an approach has focused overall on Iranian foreign policy creating far more close ties with regional countries, including attempts at rapprochement with Saudi Arabia, and fostering an east policy to collaborate more with China, India and Russia as well as with the global south (El-Kasem, 2022). For example, in 2019 Iran signed the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Abniki *et al*., 2020) and in 20202 joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] and was invited to join BRICS (Zaccara, 2024) and Iranian presidential visits were made in 2023 to African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe (Ahmed, 2023). In terms of foreign trade diplomacy this has been given a top priority position in Iranian foreign policy and, for example this has fostered further

trade agreements with Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Pakistan, Iraq, Türkiye, Qatar, and Oman (El-Kasem, 2022). In this regard, MFAIRI (2024) provides that in terms of economic and trade diplomacy there is a focused priority on the deepening and strengthening of cooperation with Iran's neighbours, regional countries, Asian nations, and more in general with other nation states in the global south.

However, and overall, recent developments have not changed drastically the main and underlying themes of Iranian foreign policy (El-Kasem, 2022), but have placed accents on defined areas, such as for example, more collaboration with countries in the east and south, and foreign trade. As provided by Zaccara (2024) no new path has been forged, but significant progress has been made by building on the foundations of Iranian foreign policy 'thereby repositioning Iran's global standing and proactively engaging at the regional level.'

Iranian public diplomacy: Cultural diplomacy

The identity of a country commonly can determine a country's behaviour on the international scene, but identity is not fixed and static, it is a 'work in progress' matter as it is usually change oriented as per the passage of time and thus flexible (Majidi & Shojaee, 2021). However, and as pointed out by Feizi & Talebi (2012) as per the numerous changes that have occurred in the 20th century, Iran has not found an easy road in portraying its identity. Under the current regime, and in phases overtime, according to Anderson (2019), Iran's identity in the Middle East is prevalently seen as being Muslim Shia and anti-imperialist, but pragmatic in central Asia, for example. Moreover, since the 1979 revolution, the West and North America have non-positive public opinions of Iran and have in fact facilitated a form of media-bias, and also Iran-phobia (Sadeghi & Hajimineh, 2018). Interestingly though, and according to Keddie (2002), in the West many see Iran on two opposing, if not contradictory, views: on the one side Iran is seen as a land of millennial culture, and on the other side as being full of extremist religious fanatics.

Ahadi (2013), in terms of Iranian public diplomacy, claims that the main three aims of its public diplomacy are to ensure its independence, resistance and provide an Islamic-Iranian model, but all focused on its immediate region. There is no formal institution within Iran that is devoted specifically to public diplomacy, even though some do (Ahadi, 2013). But Iran did constitute in 1995 the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) focused primarily on cultural diplomacy. The main objective of ICRO was to coordinate cultural diplomacy at state-level[36] (Wastnidge, 2014). The organization was affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, is ultimately guided by the supreme leader, who appoints members to ICRO's ruling council and is independent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wastnidge, 2014).

The main operational objectives of ICRO are to showcase and promote the Islamic revolution ideas and values, shared Islamic values and enhance relations with Muslim countries (Wastnidge, 2014). Other cultural resources used are mainly based on Persian past civilizations, media and education (Ahadi, 2013). Cultural representatives are nominated to embassies in various countries, but respond only to ICRO, and pending on local contexts, and attempting to find areas of commonalities, organize cultural activities accordingly, which can, for example, involve such matters as religious, art and Persian language events (Wastnidge, 2014). Rad (2010) further provides that ICRO also delves into cultural diplomacy, via, for example, music, film, Persian calligraphy, painting, literature, Quran events, books on Shiism, Iranian studies and Persian language teaching. According to Maréchal (2022) ICRO's activities are mainly in cultural weeks and exhibitions, contests and religious events. The organization also has a publishing house and has offices in some European countries, but its main focus is on countries within Iran's immediate region (Wastnidge, 2014). The organization has ten state offices world-wide, one of these being in London, UK (Maréchal, 2022). Within Europe, ICRO targets the following countries, some to a greater degree than others: Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Russia, Serbia and Spain (Maréchal, 2022).

Culture does have a long history in Iran's diplomacy and such a trend was also taken up even after the 1979 revolution (Wastnidge, 2014). But Iran, like many other matters related to the country, in terms

[36] As Ahadi (2013) claims this meaning that effectively public diplomacy in Iran is cultural diplomacy. Such a stance, as still claimed by Ahadi (2013) also means that cultural diplomacy poses less apparent challenges on the international scene and hence is a viable resource for soft power.

of its culture has to tender with three cultures: Iranian, Islamic and Western (Holliday, 2011). As such, the three cultures do tend to have deep rooted contestations and contradictions, for example between traditionalism, as found within Islam, and modernism, as found within, inevitably, Western influences. But this at the same time being a 'reminding force' for upkeeping national identity, in what is considered as 'authentic' and 'legitimate' in the national identity discourse (Holliday, 2011) and what is not. Further, the monotheistic religion, Shia Islam, has also been amalgamated into nationalism and national identity to become a unifying factor in terms of Iranian cultural identity (Holliday, 2011). This also 'mixed in' to the pre-Islamic Iranian history of Persia, with its imperial past, also considered as a unifier and clear cultural identifier (Holliday, 2011). Indeed, Iranian culture demonstrates many sides to it and varying emphases, this much in line with its nationalist stance, where its linguistic, territorial, ethnic, and religious factors are also emphasized in varying degrees (Kashani-Sabet, 2002). This though all making cultural diplomacy, much like Irian society, being in a prevalently dynamic and constant flux, that never seems to settle down (Gohardani & Tizro, 2019). This in turn, though, creating an undercurrent, of constant contestations to any one direction that is taken.

Prior to the 1979 revolution, cultural diplomacy was based on Iran's considerable pre-Islamic history, but such cultural diplomacy was more imaged in the West's construct view of Iran, refurbished within Iran and simply 'exported' again (Wastnidge, 2014). Cultural diplomacy, at the state level, is mainly at the official level (top-down) (Wastnidge, 2014) as its organization and decisions making is in the hands of the president, but all final decisions remain in the hands of the supreme leader (Wastnidge, 2014). However, Iran's cultural diplomacy has shown to be flexible, agile and adaptable to local circumstances (Wastnidge, 2023). Its cultural diplomacy though, much like its foreign policy, is focused and is fostered mainly in countries and within communities which have shared religious interests, but also strategic objectives (Wastnidge, 2023).

Since the revolution the government, domestically and also internationally, has attempted to keep a tight control over culture, so as to attempt to create a cultural hegemony, in terms of what is acceptable and what is not (Sreberny, 2013). The state also keeps a firm control over state television (IRIB) which is also engaged in various radio and television channels that transmit also abroad and holds further publishing and film interests (Sreberny, 2013). Fathollah-Nejad (2017) also provides that in Iran, cultural space is being constantly negotiated and renegotiated within the confines of restrictive and repressive state directed cultural policy. However, for all this control, there is a nascent and growing culture which runs parallel to state sponsored culture and is mainly found online, for example on blogs, social media, etc, (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010).

Iranian gastro-diplomacy[37]

As per above, ICRO is the main public entity that is in charge of cultural diplomacy. Interestingly though, ICRO does provide information on Iranian gastronomy, food and cuisine, but this provided for mainly tourists visiting Iran (ICRO, 2024). However, ICRO (2024) does not set for foreign countries concrete publicly based and financed gastro-diplomatic strategies and programmes, as those, for example, provided by Thailand in terms of 'Thailand: Kitchen of the World' programme or that of the Republic of Korea gastro-diplomatic programme called 'Korean Cuisine to the World' (see Rockower, 2012) or that of Malaysia called the 'Malaysia Kitchen for the World' (see Debora *et al*., 2015). This in full consideration that Iran has a long history of gastronomic tradition and a diversity of foods, as for example, it has 2500 types of food, 109 types of beverages, and various breads and sweets, which stem from cultural, ethnic, and geographical diversity (Sepehr Parsian, 2023).

In terms of gastro-diplomacy from the Iranian public sector, this seems far more related to culinary diplomacy,[38] where Iranian gastronomy is fostered more within diplomatic events at Iranian embassies in foreign countries, for example (Hilmi, 2023). Indeed Hilmi (2023) provides evidence of this in such

[37] This section is based, in part, on the research conducted previously by Hilmi (2023).

[38] Rockower (2020) provides that there are differences between gastro-diplomacy, culinary diplomacy and food diplomacy: gastro-diplomacy is basically a public sector led public diplomacy campaign which combines culinary and cultural diplomacy, with the intent of increasing nation image and reputation and is not simply a one-off culinary tasting event, while culinary diplomacy is food usage in diplomatic settings and functions, and food diplomacy is basically set around food aid and relief.

countries, for example, as Indonesia, the Philippines, the Netherlands and Malaysia. Even though, some of the cases provide that there are overlaps between culinary diplomacy and gastro-diplomacy, but the major overall focus is on culinary diplomacy. However, Akbari (2023) provides that Iran has been organizing food festivals within country, inviting foreign diplomats, chefs, and journalists from differing countries, but also provides that Iran has sent Iranian culinary experts and chefs to foreign countries to participate in events, such as, for example, the Malaysian's World Food Festival, Thailand's International Culinary Cup and France's Pastry Cup. Still Akbari (2023) provides that Iran has supported start-up restaurants and cultural centres in other countries, for example, in England. Further Evand (2024) provides that the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs is aiming to promote food diplomacy, via, creating a food diplomacy committee, which will identify and employ chefs who are knowledgeable and proficient in Iranian cuisine and food culture, as well as being fluent in one foreign language.

Interestingly, and comparatively though, to the public sector gastro-diplomatic efforts, Hilmi (2023) finds that in terms of Iranian gastro-diplomacy this is provided mainly by citizen and people to people diplomacy, where, for example in foreign countries, such as Austria, Canada, the USA and the UK, Iranian immigrants, via private initiatives, such as for example, restaurants, supermarkets, online cuisine courses, etc., provide for gastro-diplomacy. In terms of Canada, for example, Eligasht (2023), provides that Iranian restaurants hold special appeal as they attract many people by offering a variety of authentic Iranian dishes and the unique interior design, which are in harmony with Iranian culture. Thus, it seems that in terms of the Iranian public sector, in specific Iranian foreign policy and related public and cultural diplomacy, the efforts in gastro-diplomacy are minimal as such a diplomatic activity is left to embassies, the cultural attaché within (Hilmi, 2023), sending chefs to international food festivals (Akbari, 2023) and the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs setting up a food diplomacy committee (Evand, 2024). This minimality should be seen in comparison to gastro-diplomatic programmes set up by the governments of Thailand and Malaysia, for example, but also comparatively to what Iranian private citizens have done in foreign countries in terms of gastro-diplomacy. Thus, and seemingly, and to a good degree, Iranian gastro-diplomacy is provided by the private sector, in other words citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy.

Iranian agri-food sector: exports and international marketing

Related to Iran's stance on gastro-diplomacy is Iran's agriculture sector, which like the economy, is mainly publicly supported via government policies and subsidies (Ghahremanzadeh *et al*., 2020). The main government policy objective has been focused over the past decades on agricultural self-sufficiency (Azadi *et al*., 2022). The agri-food sector is composed mainly around unprofitable small-scale farms, that commonly work collectively, but have to face numerous challenges in agricultural marketing, as per the differing distribution options prior to arriving at retail markets (MFAD, 2017). In regard to food processing, according to DD (2022), there are circa 11,200 units, of which 56 percent are small-scale. At the retail level there are many micro, small, medium and large-scale food outlets, ranging from individual street food hawkers, to family run street food vending enterprises, to small food stores to large supermarkets to bazars to supermarket chains[39] and to online supermarkets (Hilmi, 2024).

Azadi *et al*., (2022) consider the agricultural sector from 1960 to 2019 and found that the growth in agricultural production went from less than 10 million metric tons to over 100 million metric tons.[40] In terms of the agricultural share of the Iranian economy it represents 13.1 percent of GDP (TTCIMA, 2023). The World Bank (2023a) provides that in the recent period 2022-2023 the agri-food sector demonstrated a moderate growth of 1.1 percent. However, the sector does face numerous challenges, one of the main ones being water shortages, for example (World Bank, 2023a). Other challenges as pointed out by Najafabadi (2011) are: the lack of market information; lack of standards and grading;

[39] Interestingly though, large supermarkets and their chains, represent only about 10 to 15 percent of consumer preference in where to buy food (Vira, 2024).

[40] However, there is evidence that also provides that as per the lack of comprehensive trade policies in Iran's agricultural sector this has resulted in unstable growth (Alizade *et al*., 2023)

numerous middlemen; price volatility; lack of adequate storage and transport facilities; difficulty in accessing finance; and literacy.

As provided previously, Iran depends to a good degree on its oil and energy exports, and relying on such, along with other limited amounts of exports, provides for instability, for example, in export earnings and not only (Kashefi *et al*., 2019). Export diversification promotion policies were first initialized in 1998 within the realm of the third national development plan and more concretely within the fourth development plan with the 'National Strategy for the Promotion of Non-Oil Exports' provided in 2012 (ITSR, 2024). However, there was and is a lack of an integrated and comprehensive plan with a focus on long term objectives with regard to trade policies and as a result this has led to ad-hoc short-term policies and instability (ITSR, 2024). Institutions set up to foster and promote exports are, for example, the Ministry of Commerce affiliated Trade Promotion Organization, which is in charge of promoting non-oil exports in Iran, provides commercial attaches in different countries and opens trade centres also in different countries and financing, for example, which is provided by the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (TPOI, 2024). Other initiatives are, for example, the Iran Export Capabilities Exhibition (Iran Expo), an annual trade fair that provides a platform for promoting to the global market many Iranian enterprises (IranExpo, 2024a). Another example is the Iran Agrofood trade fair which is supported by: the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture-Jihad; Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mine & Trade; Iran Food and Beverage Importers Association (FBIA); Iran Food Machinery Manufacturers Association (IFMMA). and Iran Organic Association (Iran Agrofood, 2024).

As such, and over the past 25 years or so , there have been concrete attempts at export diversification (Zolanvari Shirazy & Farajzadeh, 2023) and in this regard, Iranian export diversification is composed generally of five categories: 'mineral fuels; chemical and plastic products; agricultural and food processing industry products; other mineral and industrial products; and other products' (Ghahremanzadeh *et al*.. 2020). In terms of agri-food exports in specific, this, has over the past years, received increasing attention via targeted policies, but such agri-food exports have shown considerable fluctuations (Zolanvari Shirazy & Farajzadeh, 2023). Agri-food exports represent 17.7 percent of the total of non-oil exports, and Iran is the number one producer of saffron, caviar, barberry and pomegranates, the number two global producer of pistachios and the number three global producer of dates, apricots, quinces, unshelled walnuts and natural honey (TCCIMA, 2023).

Iran exports 23.7 million tonnes of agricultural products, worth USD 10.9 billion: in export volume being represented by crops 60.4 percent; horticulture 27.9 percent; livestock and poultry 9.6 percent; and fisheries 1.8 percent (TCCIMA, 2023). Within such export categories, the major export commodities, still by volume are: watermelon, tomatoes, potatoes, apples, onions and dates (TCCIMA, 2023). Export value though rests on the following commodities: pistachio, dates, tomatoes, powdered milk and saffron, with Iran being the first global exporter of saffron, the second global exporter in pistachio, the third global exporter of concentrated yoghurt, and the fourth global exporter of cucumbers and gherkin, anise, badian, fennel and coriander (TCCIMA, 2023). The intended target markets for Iranian agri-food exports have been countries that have growing populations, increasing incomes and are not hindered by sanction challenges[41] for Iran (Zolanvari Shirazy & Farajzadeh, 2023). According to the Ketab-Marja Information Institute (2023), in the period 2021 to 2022 the main 10 agricultural export destinations have been: China, Iraq, Türkiye, UAE, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Indonesia and Russia; and in terms of world regions these have been in order: Asia, Europe, Africa, America and Oceania. In specific to agricultural exports in particular, short cases are provided in Box 1 on four export commodities: dates, pistachio, raisins and saffron.

[41] Dizaji *et al*., (2018) considered the effect of sanctions on bilateral trade in the period 2000-2014 and found that between Iran and other MENA countries, interestingly 'economic sanctions did not have a significant impact on the agricultural products trade for Iran,' however, 'multilateral and stronger sanctions by the United States, Europe and the UN had an inhibitory and crippling impact on the economy of Iran.'

Box 1: Short cases on dates, pistachio, raisins and saffron exports

Dates

Iran has a long history of date production over many centuries with numerous date varieties. Iran is one of the major date suppliers to other countries globally, commonly ranking between second and third place. It has shown an average annual growth rate in exports of 6 percent between 2018 and 2022. In 2022 Iran was the largest global exporter by weight, with an export volume of 339,000 tons and an export value of USD 289 million. The main destination countries for Iranian dates are India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Türkiye and Kazakhstan. Some of the challenges to the Iranian dates export sector are: postharvest handling; limited processing; limited value adding; limited branding and marketing.
Source: (IranExpo, 2024b).

Pistachio

Iranian pistachios are world renown with its selection of varieties. Iran is the second largest pistachio exporter after the USA and before Türkiye, all three countries accounting for 90 percent of the global pistachio trade. Iran in 2020 exported pistachios to 77 different countries. The main destination exporting countries are Russia, Iraq, Pakistan, China and Kazakhstan. Germany has also seen an increase in Irian pistachio imports in 2022. Between 2018 and 2022 Iranian average annual growth rate in pistachio exports was 7 percent. Some of the challenges to the Iranian pistachio export sector are: water scarcity; harvests every second year; limited research and development; storage capacity; processing infrastructure; a focus on bulk export; limited marketing.
Source: (IranExpo, 2024c)

Raisins

Iran provides for a good number of raisin varieties as per the over 200 grape verities that are grown in country. Iran in 2022 produced circa 200,000 tons of which circa 108,000 tons destined for export. Iran is among the top three global exporters of raisin per value and per weight. The main exporting destination countries are Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye and Russia, with remarkable imports also coming from India and the UK. Between 2018 and 2022, Iranian average annual growth rate in raisin exports was 4 percent. Some of the challenges to the Iranian raisin export sector are: traditional farming methods; agricultural production fluctuations; limits in processing and storage; limited branding and marketing.
Source: (IranExpo, 2024d)

Saffron

Iran's saffron has a distinguished global position that has a long history. It has a good deal of versatility beyond food, in terms of, for example, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Saffron is provided in various grades, each grade having its own specificities in terms of flavour and potency. Iran is the number one dominant global producer in saffron with 450 tons produced in 2023, which was 430 tons in 2019. Iran has a global export volume for saffron of 60 percent, worth in 2022, USD 335 million. Some of the main target export destinations are the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Spain and China. Some of the challenges to the Iranian saffron export sector are: traditional farming methods; water shortages; climate change; limits in processing technology; risk of adulteration; limited branding and marketing.
Source: (IranExpo, 2024e)

However, and as per the above, the main focus of exports has been mainly on agricultural commodities and in bulk. This focus has left out, to a fair degree, processed food product exports which are an important part of the Iranian agri-food economy, for example, as it provides for employment, and

in terms of exports, represents 22 percent of value added in non-oil exports and is also a good earner of foreign exchange[42] (Ghahremanzadeh *et al*., 2020). In fact, Kashefi *et al*., (2019) point further to the fact that processed products are more stable and less vulnerable in earnings compared to the more volatile and unstable commodity export earnings.

Discussion

Over the decades, since the 1979 revolution, Iran as a country and as per its economy has developed a considerable resiliency as per the challenges faced, both domestically and internationally. This can be seen quite clearly, in Iran's export trade, which has moved away from the West, for example, to Asia. This resilience over the decades has also provided for the growth of the informal economy and deflection mechanisms, where for example, agri-food exports are sent to India, and such are reexported to other countries which do not sanction India. In fact, and on this point Haidar (2017) considers sanctions between 2006 and 2011 and finds that Iran's international trade was 'deflected' to non-sanctioning countries, with considerable support from Iranian diplomacy. The sanctions regime against Iran, within its varying degrees of increasing and decreasing pressures over the decades, has made Iran, seemingly, somewhat vulnerable, as it sends circa 71 percent of all its exports to China, Iraq, UAE, Türkiye and India and has about 90 percent of all its exports focused on 15 countries (World Bank, 2023a). The Ketab-Marja Information Institute (2023), in the period 2021 to 2022, provides that the main 10 agricultural commodity export destinations have been: China, Iraq, Türkiye, UAE, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Oman, Indonesia and Russia. Iran's position in terms of exporting is much in line with that provided by Kirkham (2022) in that nation states which are sanction targeted tend to become: more inward looking and self-reliant, tend to antagonise more with the West and in the long run, sanctioned nation states 'have managed to adjust to external pressures, develop internal self-protection mechanisms, mobilise domestic resources and remodel income and wealth distribution and maintain their foreign policy stance. '

In terms of international agri-food marketing by Iran's public sector, the focus is mainly towards supporting agricultural exports. For example, the Ministry of Commerce affiliated Trade Promotion Organization, is in charge of promoting non-oil exports in Iran, provides commercial attaches in different countries and opens trade centres also in different countries and financing. The public sector also further contributes to trade fairs, for example, Iran Agrofood trade fair, which also supports Iranian private agri-food enterprises in their exports. The majority of agri-food exports are in fact agricultural commodities, commonly sold in bulk, and are not branded. In fact, in the case on pistachio, for example, what emerges is that there is a preference for bulk exports of the commodity (IranExpo, 2024c). This, however, does not mean that private companies who export pistachio do not market and brand their products, but commonly exports are most often done in bulk. Interestingly, and in all the four cases covered in Box 1 on dates, pistachio, raisins and saffron, the major challenges to such have all a common theme in terms of international agri-food marketing: limited marketing and branding. This notwithstanding that Iran is the number one global producer and exporter of saffron, the number two global producer and exporter of pistachios and the number three global producer of dates (TCCIMA, 2023).

As per the above, the Iranian public sector does support mainly agricultural commodity exports, which may go some way to support Iranian gastro-diplomacy . For example, ingredients required for Iranian gastronomy may be found in foreign countries, and thus enhance the authenticity of Iranian cuisine. But the public sector focusing mainly and directly on agricultural commodities exports does not provide for value-added products that are marketed internationally. Value -added products, as per FAO (2015), make international marketing of agri-food products less vulnerable, as per, for example, their differentiation, in terms of processing and branding. In this regard, Kashefi *et al*., (2019) point to such matters as value added products reduce the variability of export earnings, provides for more stability, and appropriate marketing strategies are important in international agri-food marketing in increasing the foreign trade balance. Further Kashefi *et al*., (2019) also provide that 'policymakers should focus on developing marketing consulting services for agricultural exporters, in collaboration with related organizations like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, and

[42] Ghahremanzadeh *et al.,* (2020) provide that the 'government does not consider the food processing industry as a strategic sector for development' (Ghahremanzadeh *et al.,* 2020).

the Ministry of Economy and establishing an export holding company and marketing consulting firm in partnership with the private sector.' Overall, thus, the public sector is involved mainly in exports, which is the first step in international marketing and thus may go some way, to a degree, to support gastro-diplomacy.

This finding is interesting, as in Hilmi (2023) the role of the Iranian public sector in gastro-diplomacy was found to be minimal. This not only compared to other countries such as Thailand and Malaysia, for example, with their full scale publicly-led gastro-diplomacy programmes, but also compared to the Iranian private sector operating in foreign countries, via for example, Iranian restaurants and supermarkets, that provide for citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy initiatives (Hilmi, 2023). Thus, in terms of the public sector, it can be provided that in fact it does conduct the first step of international agri-food marketing, exporting, which may go some way to support Iranian gastro-diplomatic efforts.

In terms of domestic private companies in Iran that export and also market branded commodities and not only, processed food products, this may also go some way to support Iranian gastro-diplomacy. But also, here private companies face limitations. For example, in a case on saffron, Kashefi *et al*., (2019) researched 14 private enterprises that engaged in exporting and found that the 'proper use of various marketing strategies can improve the export performance of saffron.' As in fact by 'applying appropriate marketing strategies in different markets, export performance could be enhanced' (Kashefi *et al*., 2019). Thus, private companies in Iran do, to a degree, support Iranian gastro-diplomacy via their exporting and international marketing activities. But exporting is only the first step in international marketing and thus does not, seemingly, provide for a major support of international agri-food marketing to gastro-diplomacy. Hence, the domestic private sector, seemingly does support somewhat more Iran's gastro-diplomacy as it also conducts international agri-food marketing to a fuller-scale then does the public sector, which focuses only on exporting mainly.

However though, another element in international agri-food marketing is the 'pull effect' for Iranian agri-food products as provided by private enterprises that operate in foreign countries, via, for example Iranian restaurants and supermarkets (Hilmi, 2023). Such enterprises 'create' a demand for Iranian agri-food products, and thus the export of such from Iran and thus may also contribute to increasing Iranian international agri-food marketing that may derive from the private and/or the public sector marketing efforts and activities.

Overall, it seems that, in terms of international agri-food marketing contributing to gastro-diplomacy, the Iranian public sector has a role, via its exporting efforts, which is not an international agri-food marketing activity to a full per se, but still can contribute. Domestic private companies, however, tend to have more of a role, by degree, in international agri-food marketing and its contribution to gastro-diplomacy, comparatively to the Iranian public sector. Thus, seemingly, domestic private enterprises contributing more to gastro-diplomacy. In terms of Iranian private enterprises in foreign countries, for example, Iranian restaurants and supermarkets, these tend to have a pull effect on Iranian international agri-food marketing and its contribution to gastro-diplomacy. Hence, and seemingly, it is the domestic private enterprises and the foreign based Iranian private enterprises that contribute more to gastro-diplomacy comparatively to the Iranian public sector. This, even though, that from this research, what emerges, is that the Iranian public sector has more of a role, via its support to agricultural exporting to gastro-diplomacy, then previously found in Hilmi (2023). Thus, and overall, from the case of Iran, the contribution of international agri-food marketing to gastro-diplomacy, is there, but somewhat limited, this limitation mainly coming from the public sector.

In terms of gastro-diplomacy supporting international agri-food marketing, in the case of Iran, Hilmi (2023) found that public sector efforts in gastro-diplomacy in general were somewhat limited. In fact, it was found that the Iran public sector provided more for culinary diplomacy, where Iranian gastronomy is fostered more within diplomatic events at Iranian embassies in foreign countries, as evidence of this was found in such countries, for example, as Indonesia, the Philippines, the Netherlands and Malaysia (Hilmi, 2023). But some of the cases did provide for overlaps between culinary diplomacy and gastro-diplomacy, but the major overall outcome from the cases was culinary diplomacy. Interestingly though, Akbari (2023) provides that Iran is sending chefs to international food festivals and the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs is setting up a food diplomacy committee (Evand, 2024). But overall, such efforts are minimal compared to full scale publicly-led gastro-diplomatic programmes from other countries. Thus, it seems that Iranian public sector gastro-diplomacy does not

support international agri-food marketing as there is an absence of such a public-led gastro-diplomatic programme, that can be comparable to those, for example, which derive from Thailand and the Republic of Korea (Hilmi, 2023).

However, and interestingly, Iranian foreign diplomacy and policy does seem to support, to a degree, Iranian international agri-food marketing. Haidar (2017), for example, provides that Iran's international trade was 'deflected' to non-sanctioning countries, with considerable support from Iranian diplomacy. This derives from its foreign policy mainly, which, over the years has been instrumental in gaining trade deals with countries, for example, India and China, which have become major export destinations for Iranian agricultural products. For example, Iranian foreign policy has sought collaboration with third countries (El-Kasem, 2022), such as, for example, in 2019 Iran signing the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) (Abniki *et al*., 2020) and in 20202 joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] and was invited to join BRICS (Zaccara, 2024). Further, in terms of foreign trade diplomacy this has been given a top priority position in Iranian foreign policy and, for example this has fostered further trade agreements with Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Pakistan, Iraq, Türkiye, Qatar, and Oman (El-Kasem, 2022). In this regard, MFAIRI (2024) provides that in terms of economic and trade diplomacy there is a focused priority on the deepening and strengthening of cooperation with Iran's neighbours, regional countries, Asian nations, and more in general with other nation states in the global south. Thus, all such Iranian foreign policy efforts do support agricultural exports, and thus, to a degree, support Iranian international agri-food marketing.

Much the same can be provided for Iranian public-led cultural diplomacy even though indirectly, compared to Iranian foreign policy, in supporting Iranian international agri-food marketing. As provided previously Iranian cultural diplomacy is implemented by ICRO, which mainly fosters, in foreign countries, the Islamic revolution ideas and values, shared Islamic values and enhance relations with Muslim countries (Wastnidge, 2014), but also further provides for example, music, film, Persian calligraphy, painting, literature, Quran events, books on Shiism, Iranian studies and Persian language teaching (Rad, 2010). Interestingly, Iran's cultural diplomacy has shown to be flexible, agile and adaptable to local circumstances (Wastnidge, 2023), but its cultural diplomacy though, much like its foreign policy, is focused and is fostered mainly in countries and within communities which have shared religious interests, but also strategic objectives (Wastnidge, 2023). Thus, it seems that the public-led cultural diplomacy indirectly supports Iranian international agri-food marketing.

Iranian foreign policy and cultural diplomacy efforts also provide support to Iranian domestic private enterprises that are involved in international agri-food marketing in its various degrees. This, for example, is provided not only by the support of the public sector in setting up trade fairs, but also in obtaining bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. Clearly such public support efforts of foreign policy and cultural diplomacy are not gastro-diplomacy per se, but thus do support the Iranian domestic private sector in their international agri-food marketing.

In terms of the citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy, Hilmi (2023) portrays, in various cases, that Iranian restaurants, supermarkets, and associations, for example, in foreign countries do provide for the fostering of Iranian gastronomy and culture and thus also potentially contributing directly to Iranian international agri-food marketing, via the 'pull effect.' In fact, such citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy is effectively public diplomacy that seeks to support, Iran, in general, 'over the heads of foreign governments.' More in specific, Ahadi (2013) claims that public diplomacy in Iran is cultural diplomacy. Such a stance, as still claimed by Ahadi (2013), also means that cultural diplomacy poses less apparent challenges on the international scene and hence is a viable resource for soft power.

Overall, in terms of Iran, the public sector gastro-diplomatic efforts are somewhat minimal and hence and consequently may seemingly support minimally Iranian international agri-food marketing. However, and interestingly, Iranian foreign policy and diplomacy, seems to support far more Iranian international agri-food marketing with its vested policies in supporting agricultural exports. But, agricultural exports, need to be considered as the first step in international agri-food marketing, thus the support provided by public-led Iranian foreign policy is there, but not too a fuller scale Much the same can be provided in terms of Iranian public diplomacy, which is in reality cultural diplomacy, as it raises awareness and knowledge, for example, about music, film and Persian language, and thus indirectly promotes Iranian gastronomy and thus also Iranian international agri-food marketing. Even though such cultural activities are important, their contribution can be seen as a minimal contribution. These public

sector efforts do also support Iranian domestic private sector enterprises, both directly and indirectly, but clearly foreign policy and cultural diplomacy are not gastro-diplomacy, even though there are similarities and overlaps. However, in terms of the citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy, this contributes also far more to Iranian international agri-food marketing and its first step of exporting, via Iranian enterprises, such as Iranian restaurants and supermarkets, for example, located in foreign countries, via their 'pull effect.' Thus, comparatively with the public sector, it seems that citizen and people to people gastro- diplomacy and cultural diplomacy contribute more to Iranian agri-food marketing, then does the public sector in terms of its cultural diplomacy and quasi-inexistent gastro-diplomacy. However, the public sector, via Iranian foreign policy does contribute , to a degree, to Iranian international agri-food marketing.

Conclusions

From the findings in terms of if international agri-food marketing contributes to gastro-diplomacy within the Iranian context what can be concluded is that the Iranian public sector, to a degree, does conduct and support the first step of international agri-food marketing, exporting, which may go some way to support Iranian gastro-diplomatic efforts. But Iran does not have a public-led gastro-diplomacy programme, for example, like those provided by the public sectors of Thailand and Malaysia, but does conduct mainly culinary diplomacy at embassy level in foreign countries, with some minor overlaps of gastro-diplomacy. In terms of the Iranian domestic private sector enterprises, it can be concluded that it does conduct international agri-food marketing, in varying degrees, and thus contributes to Iranian gastro-diplomacy to a greater degree than the public sector. Further Iranian private enterprises, for example restaurants and supermarkets, that operate in foreign countries have a 'pull effect' on Iranian international agri-food marketing and thus contribute to Iranian gastro-diplomacy to a greater degree than the public sector. Overall, it can be concluded that the Iranian public sector has a role, but the Iranian domestic private sector has more of a role and Iranian private enterprises in foreign markets have a greater facilitation role in fostering Iranian international agri-food marketing. Thus, it is the domestic private enterprises and the foreign based Iranian private enterprises that contribute more to gastro-diplomacy comparatively to the Iranian public sector.

From the findings in terms of if gastro-diplomacy contributes to international agri-food marketing, what can be concluded is that the Iranian public sector gastro-diplomacy does not support, to any major degree, international agri-food marketing, as simply there is an absence of such a public-led gastro-diplomatic programme within Iran. However, and interestingly, the Iranian public sector foreign policy and diplomacy does support, to a degree, Iranian international agri-food marketing. Thus, Iranian foreign policy does support agricultural exports, and being the first step in Iranian international agri-food marketing, does support such, to a degree. In terms of public sector Iranian cultural diplomacy, this indirectly supports Iranian international agri-food marketing. In terms of gastro-diplomacy supporting Iranian domestic private sector enterprises in their international agri-food marketing efforts, there is minimal support provided as Iran does not have a public-led gastro-diplomacy programme, but such private enterprises are supported directly and indirectly by the public sector's foreign policy and cultural diplomacy. In terms of citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in foreign countries seem to support Iranian international agri-food marketing. The private sector seems to have more of a role comparatively to the public sector. Thus, and overall, it can be concluded that the Iranian public sector, via its foreign policy and cultural diplomacy, does directly and indirectly contribute to Iranian international agri-food marketing and citizen and people to people gastro-diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in foreign countries do also support Iranian international agri-food marketing.

From the above conclusions what emerges is that mostly it is the Iranian private sector enterprises, both domestic and those operating directly from foreign countries that contribute more to Iranian international agri-food marketing and to gastro-diplomacy. However, the Iranian public sector does have a role, in terms of contributing to agri-food exports, with its various institutions, for example, and with its foreign policy and cultural diplomacy and thus does support international agri-food marketing and consequently, to a degree, gastro-diplomacy.

In terms of further research, this should be extended to considering the role of the Iranian public sector in terms of gastro-diplomacy, but via its foreign policy and cultural diplomacy. Further, research

should also consider the role of Iranian domestic private enterprises and their role in international agri-food marketing and its contribution to Iranian gastro-diplomacy. Moreover, further research should be conducted on Iranian private sector enterprises and entrepreneurship in foreign countries and how these contribute to Iranian international agri-food marketing and gastro-diplomacy.

References

Abdolmohammadi, P. and G. Cama, 2020. *Contemporary domestic and foreign policies of Iran*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland

Abniki, F., N. Pourrostami, and T. Asadi, 2020. Bilateral trade potentials in Iran-Russia relations: a case study of food trade. Journal of World Sociopolitical Studies, 4(4): 665-706.

Aburesidze, G., I. Paliani-Dittrich, J. Grasis, E. Alaverdov, and N. Linde, 2022. Economic diplomacy and international trade from the WTO Perspective, *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Eğitim Dergisi – USBED*, 4(6): 11-22.

Addis, M. and M.B. Holbrook, 2019. From food services to food experiences: eating, wellbeing, and marketing, *In* Batat, W. (Ed). 2019. *Food and experiential marketing: pleasure, wellbeing, and consumption*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Ahadi, A., 2013. Public diplomacy in the Middle East: a comparative analysis of the U.S. and Iran, *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs*, 4(1): 105-128

Ahmed, O., 2023. Iran's diplomatic drive: Raisi's focus on the Global South, Middle East Monitor, [online] available at https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230714-irans-diplomatic-drive-raisis-focus-on-the-global-south/ (accessed 19/05/2022)

Ahrens, H., 1997. International trade in agricultural commodities, *In* Padberg, D.I., Ritson, C. and Albisu, L.M. (Eds). 1997. *Agro-food marketing*, CAB International, New York, NY, USA.

Aichner, T., 2013. Country-of-origin marketing: a list of typical strategies with examples., Journal of Brand Management, 1-13

Akbari, A., 2023. Possibilities of culinary diplomacy in Iran, Iran Daily, [online] available at https://newspaper.irandaily.ir/7381/7/4771 (accessed 25/05/2024)

Albala, K., 2013. Culinary history, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Alaedini, P. (Ed)., 2022.*Social policy in Iran*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Alaedini, P., 2018. Toward a capability approach to development and industrialization in Iran: an introduction, *In* Alaedini, P. and Razavi, M.R. (Eds). 2018. *Industrial, trade, and employment policies in Iran: towards a new agenda*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland

Alaedini, P. and M.R. Razavi, (Eds). 2018. *Industrial, trade, and employment policies in Iran: towards a new agenda*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland

Alaedini, P., 2022. Social policy in Iran: an introduction, *In* Alaedini, P. (Ed).2022. *Social policy in Iran*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA

Albala, K. (Ed)., 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK

Albaum, G., E. Duerr, and A. Josiassen, 2016. *International marketing and export management*, 8th edition, Pearson, Harlow, UK

Albisu, L.M., 1997. International marketing in the midst of competition and partnership, *In* Padberg, D.I., Ritson, C. and Albisu, L.M. (Eds). 1997. *Agro-food marketing*, CAB International, New York, NY, USA.

Alizade, T., R.S. Bostonabad, and N. Keshavarz, 2023. The potential of Iran's agricultural exports: evidence from a Stochastic Frontier Gravity Model, *Iranian Economic Review*, (In Persian).

Alkon, A.H., 2013. Food justice: an overview, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Alon, I., E. Jaffe, C. Prange, and D. Vianelli, 2017. *Global marketing: contemporary theory, practice, and cases,* 2nd edition, Routledge, Abingdon, UK .

Amanat, A., 2012. Introduction: Iranian identity boundaries: a historical overview, *In* Amanat, A. and Vejdani, F. (Eds). 2012. *Iran facing others: identity boundaries in a historical perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA .

Amanat, A. and F. Vejdani, (Eds). 2012. *Iran facing others: identity boundaries in a historical perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA.

Amuzegar, J., 2014. *The Islamic Republic of Iran: reflections on an emerging economy*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Anderson, K., 2015. Food price and trade policy biases: inefficient, inequitable, yet not inevitable, *In* Herring, R.J. (Ed). 2015. *The Oxford handbook of food, politics and society*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA .

Anderson, L., 2019. Iran's new cultural nationalism: Iranian cultural diplomacy in Tajikistan, *Central Asian Affairs,* 6, 1): 21-46.

Ang, I., Y.R. Isar, and P. Mar, 2016. Cultural diplomacy beyond the national interest? *In* Ang, I., Isar, Y.R. and Mar, P. (Eds). 2016. *Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?* Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Ang, I., Y.R. Isar, and P. Mar, (Eds). 2016. *Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?* Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Anholt, S., 2007. *Competitive identity: the new brand management for nations, cities and regions*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Anholt, S., 2004. Nation brands and the value of provenance, *In* Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R. (Eds). 2004. *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*, 2nd edition, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, UK.

Aronczyk, M., 2013. *Branding the nation: the global business of national identity*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA

Ayhan, K.J., 2020. A typology of people to people diplomacy, [online] available at https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/typology-people-people-diplomacy (accessed 25/05/2024).

Ayora-Diaz, S.I., 2021. Introduction: the cultural politics of taste in global perspective, *In* Ayora-Diaz, S.I. (Ed). 2021. *The cultural politics of food, taste, and identity: a global perspective*, Bloomsbury Academic, London.

Ayora-Diaz, S.I. (Ed)., 2021. *The cultural politics of food, taste, and identity: a global perspective*, Bloomsbury Academic, London.

Azadi, P., 2021. *Governance deadlock and economic crisis in Iran*, Stanford Iran 2040 project, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA.

Azadi, P., M.B. Mesgaran, and M. Mirramezani, 2022. *The struggle for development in Iran: the evolution of governance, economy, and society*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, USA.

Baack, D.W., B. Czarnecka, and D. Baack, 2012. *International marketing*, 2nd edition, SAGE, London

Bade, D.L., 2015. *Export/import procedures and documentation*, 5th edition, American Management Association, New York, NY, USA.

Bar, S., 2004. *Iran: cultural values, self images and negotiation* behavior, Institute for Policy and Strategy, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy.

Batat, W., 2019. Introduction to the experiential pleasure of food: how does pleasure advance consumer wellbeing and promote healthy eating behaviors? *In* Batat, W. (Ed). 2019. *Food and experiential marketing: pleasure, wellbeing, and consumption*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Batat, W. (Ed)., 2019. *Food and experiential marketing: pleasure, wellbeing, and consumption*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Bennett, O. (Ed)., 2019. *Cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations: volume I*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Berndt, R., C.F. Altobelli, and M. Sander, 2023. *International marketing management*, Springer Gabler, Berlin.

Berridge, G.R., 2015. *Diplomacy: theory and practice*, 5th edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA.

Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI)., 2024. *Country report: Iran*, Gütersloh, Germany.

Bostanabad, R.S. and M.S. Kamroudi, 2020. Factors affecting the growth of Iran's agricultural sector: applying the Bayesian model averaging approach, *Iranian Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development Research*, 51(3): 451-467 (In Persian).

Bound, K., R. Briggs, J. Holden, and S. Jones, 2007. *Cultural diplomacy*, DEMOS, London.

Brodowsky, G.H. and C.P. Schuster, (Eds)., 2020. *Handbook on cross-cultural marketing*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Browning, C.S., 2023. *Nation branding and international politics*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, Canada.

Bryman, A., 2012. *Social research methods*, 4th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Burton, D., 2009. *Cross-cultural marketing: theory, practice and relevance*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Burton, D., 2003. Multicultural marketing, *In* Rugimbana, R. and Nwankwo, S. (Eds). 2003. *Cross-cultural marketing*, Thomson, London.

Canavari, M., N. Cantore, A. Castellini, E. Pignatti, and R. Spadoni, 2009. Editorial, *In* Canavari, M., Cantore, N., Castellini, A., Pignatti, E. and Spadoni, R. (Ed). 2009. *International marketing and trade of quality food products*, Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Canavari, M., N. Cantore, A. Castellini, E. Pignatti, and R. Spadoni, (Ed). 2009. *International marketing and trade of quality food products*, Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen, The Netherlands

Carbó-Catalan, E. and D. Roig-Sanz, 2022. Swinging between culture and politics: novel interdisciplinary perspectives, *In* Carbó-Catalan, E. and Roig-Sanz, D. (Eds). 2022. *Culture and soft power: bridging cultural relations, intellectual cooperation, and cultural diplomacy*, Walter De Gruyter GmbH, Berlin.

Carbó-Catalan, E. and D. Roig-Sanz, (Eds). 2022. *Culture and soft power: bridging cultural relations, intellectual cooperation, and cultural diplomacy*, Walter De Gruyter GmbH, Berlin.

Cardwell, M.N., M.R. Grossman, and C.P. Rodgers, (Eds). 2003. *Agriculture and international trade: law, policy, and the WTO*, CABI Publishing, Wallingford, UK.

Casarano, A., B. Kovács, and E. Zebrauskaite, 2023. *Iran: regional nightmare and international concern*, Center for Global Affairs and Strategic Studies, University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

Chapple-Sokol, S., 2013. Culinary diplomacy: breaking bread to win hearts and minds, *The Hague Journal of* Diplomacy, 8: 161-183

Chehabi, H.E., 2012. Iran and Iraq: intersocietal linkages and secular nationalisms, *In* Amanat, A. and Vejdani, F. (Eds). 2012. *Iran facing others: identity boundaries in a historical perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA.

Chen, Y., 2014. *Trade, food security, and human rights: the rules for international trade in agricultural products and the evolving world food crisis*, Ashgate publishing, Farnham, UK.

Cherunilam, F., 2016. *International marketing (texts and cases)*, 15th edition, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai

Chitty, N., L. Ji, G.D. Rawnsley, and C. Hayden, (Eds). 2017. *The Routledge handbook of soft power*, Routledge, London.

Civitello, A., 2011. *Cuisine and culture: a history of food and people*, 3rd edition, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, NJ, USA.

Colás, A., J. Edwards, J. Levi, and S. Zubaida, 2018. *Food, politics and society: social theory and the modern food system*, University of California Press, Oakland, CA, USA .

Constantinou, C.M., P. Kerr, and P. Sharp, (Eds).2016. *The SAGE handbook of diplomacy*, SAGE, London.

Cooper, A.E., J. Heine, and R. Thakur, (Eds). 2013. *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Cull, N.J. 2009. *Public diplomacy: lessons from the past*, Figueroa Press, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Czinkota, M.R., I.A. Ronkainen, and A.P. Cui, 2023. *International marketing*, 11th edition, Cengage, Boston, MA, USA.

Debora, G., C. Ongkowidjojo, and M.A.S. Hikam, 2015. Enhancing competitive identity in global competition: a comparative study of gastrodiplomacy in Malaysia and South Korea, *Journal Universitas Paramadina*, 12(1): 1319-1347.

Delaney, L.J., 2016. *Exporting: the definitive guide to selling abroad profitably*, 2nd edition, Apress, New York, NY, USA.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). 2023. *DFAT country information report Iran*, Australian Government

DeSoucey, M., 2010. Gastronationalism: food traditions and authenticity politics in the European Union, *American Sociological Review*, 75(3): 432–455

Dijazi, S.F., 2018. Economic diplomacy in Iran: reorientation of trade to reduce vulnerability, *In* van Bergeijk, P.A.G. and Moons, S.J.V. (Eds). 2018. *Research handbook on economic diplomacy*, Edward Elgar,

Dinnie, K., 2016. *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA .

Dirks, R. and G. Hunter, 2013. The anthropology of food, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK

Dizaji, S.F., F. Jariani, and R. Najarzadeh, 2018. Impact of sanctions on bilateral trade of agricultural products between Iran and MENA region and the EU countries, Agricultural Economics, 12(2): 69-90

Doole, I., R. Lowe, and A. Kenyon, 2019. *International marketing strategy: analysis, development and implementation*, 8th edition, Cengage, Andover, UK .

Due Diligence (DD). 2022. *Food industry in Iran*, European Union

Due Diligence (DD). 2021. *Agricultural and agri-food industry in Iran*, European Union.

Dutta, G., 2016. *Global marketing*, Pearson, Chennai, India

Eligasht., 2024. Iranian restaurants in Canada, [online], Available at https://www.eligasht.com/Blog/travelguide (accessed 16/05/2024)

El-Kasem, M.H.A., 2022. *Iran's foreign policy compass amid international conflict*, Rasanah, International Institute for Iranian Studies.

El-Nawawy, M., 2013. Muslims' online faith diplomacy, *In* Seib, P.2013. *Religion and public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Eltejaei, E. and Z. Pourbagher, 2014. A survey on the direction of Iran's foreign trade policy, *Quarterly Journal of Fiscal and Economic Policies*, 2 (7): 109-134 (In Persian).

Ermann, E. and K.J. Hermanik, 2018. Introduction: branding the nation, the place, the product, *In* Ermann, E. and Hermanik, K.J. (Eds). 2018. *Branding the nation, the place, the product*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA .

Ermann, E. and K.J. Hermanik, (Eds). 2018. *Branding the nation, the place, the product*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Evand, 2024. A culinary ambassador in the Food Diplomacy Committee, [online] Available at: https://evand.com/events/ 9255317 (Accessed 16/05/2024) (In Persian)

Fan, Y., 2006. Branding the nation: what is being branded? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12 (1): 5–14

Fathollah-Nejad, A., 2017. Cultural and academic relations between Iran and the West after the nuclear deal: policy recommendations, Brookings, [online] available at https://www.brookings.edu/articles/cultural-and-academic-relations-between-iran-and-the-west-after-the-nuclear-deal-policy-recommendations/ (accessed 19/05/2024).

Feizi, H. and B. Talebi, 2012. *Iran's soft power borne of necessity and complexity if its multi-dimensional audience*, SURFACE

Ferro, C., P. Rosenberg, and D. Salama, 2023. *Islamic Republic of Iran: political risk report*, Centre of Global Affairs and Strategic Studies, University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2023a. *Food Outlook – Biannual report on global food markets*, Food Outlook, November 2023, Rome

FAO. 2023b. *Food Outlook – Biannual report on global food markets*, Rome

FAO. 2023c. *The state of food and agriculture 2023 – revealing the true cost of food to transform agrifood systems*, Rome

FAO. 2023d. *World food and agriculture – statistical yearbook 2023*, Rome

FAO. 2022a. *World food and agriculture – statistical yearbook 2022*, Rome

FAO. 2022b. *The state of agricultural commodity markets 2022*: t*he geography of food and agricultural trade: policy approaches for sustainable development*, Rome

FAO.2015. *The state of agricultural commodity markets: trade and food security achieving a better balance between national priorities and the collective good*, Rome

FAO.1997. *Global agricultural marketing management*, Rome

FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*, *urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural–urban continuum*., FAO, Rome

FAO and WTO.2017. *Trade and food standards*, Rome

Forest, B.M. and D. Murphy, 2013. Food and the senses, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK

Frentz, F., 2019. *The pursuit of food well-being: the mechanisms behind consumers' food well-being, and their relevance for food retailing and marketing*, Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden, Germany

Ghaffary, F., S.M. Kazimi, and J. Nabizadeh, 2023. The effect of economic sanctions on the composition of Iran's trading partners, *Journal of Economic Policies and Research*, 1 (4): 160-191 (In Persian)

Ghahremanzadeh, M., M. Sassi, A. Javadi, O. Javanbakht, and B. Hayati, 2020. Economy-wide impact of food processing industry exports in Iran, *Economía Agraria y Recursos Naturales*, 20(1): 129-146

Ghauri, P.N. and P. Cateora, 2022. *International marketing*, 5th edition, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY, USA

Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E., 2010. What are we searching for? Culture, diplomacy, agents and the state, *In* Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E. and Donfried, M.C. (Eds). 2010. *Searching for a cultural diplomacy*, Berghahn, New York, NY, USA.

Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E. and M.C. Donfried, 2010. The model of cultural diplomacy: power, distance and the promise of civil society, *In* Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E. and Donfried, M.C. (Eds). 2010. *Searching for a cultural diplomacy*, Berghahn, New York, NY, USA.

Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E. and M.C. Donfried, (Eds). 2010. *Searching for a cultural diplomacy*, Berghahn, New York, NY, USA

Goff, P.M., 2020. Cultural diplomacy, *In* Snow, N. and Cull, N.J. (Eds). 2020. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA

Gohardani, F. and Z. Tizro, 2019. *The political economy of Iran: development, revolution and political violence*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland

Golan, G.J., 2015. An integrated approach to public diplomacy, *In* Golan, G.J., Yang, S.U. and Kinsey, D.F. (Eds). 2015. *International public relations and public diplomacy: communication and engagement*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, NY, USA

Golan, G.J. and S.U. Yang, 2015. Introduction: the integrated public diplomacy perspective, *In* Golan, G.J., Yang, S.U. and Kinsey, D.F. (Eds). 2015. *International public relations and public diplomacy: communication and engagement*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, NY, USA

Golan, G.J., S.U. Yang, and D.F. Kinsey, (Eds). 2015. *International public relations and public diplomacy: communication and engagement*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, NY, USA

Grant, W., 2003. The politics of international trade, *In* Cardwell, M.N., Grossman, M.R. and Rodgers, C.P. (Eds).2003. *Agriculture and international trade: law, policy, and the WTO*, CABI Publishing, Wallingford, UK

Grath, A., 2016. *The handbook of international trade and finance: the complete guide for international sales, finance, shipping and administration*, Kogan Page, London

Green, M.C. and W.J. Keegan, 2020. *Global marketing*, 10th edition, Pearson, Harlow, UK

Haidar, J.I., 2017. *Sanctions and export deflection: evidence from Iran*, MPRA Paper No. 111937, Munich, Germany

Hakala, U., A. Lemmetyinen, and S.P. Kantola, 2013. Country image as a nation-branding tool, Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 31(5)538-556

Henrikson, A.K., 2006. *What can public diplomacy achieve?* Discussion papers in diplomacy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael

Herbig, P.A., 1998. *Handbook of cross-cultural marketing*, The International Business Press, Binghampton, NY, USA

Herring, R.J., 2015. How is food political? Market, state and knowledge, *In* Herring, R.J. (Ed). 2015. *The Oxford handbook of food, politics and society*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA

Herring, R.J. (Ed). 2015. *The Oxford handbook of food, politics and society*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, USA

Hilmi, 2024. What are the entrepreneurial marketing characteristics and practices of street food vendors in Tehran, Iran? *Middle East Journal of Agriculture Research*, 13(02): 244-268

Hilmi, M., 2023. Gastro-diplomacy or food diplomacy: a case study, *Middle East Journal of Agriculture Research*, 12(4): 747-771

Hirst, C. and R. Tresidder, 2016. *Marketing in tourism, hospitality, events and food: a critical approach*, 2nd edition, Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Oxford, UK

Hocking, B., 2005. Rethinking the new public diplomacy, *In* Melissen, J. (Ed). 2005. *The new public diplomacy: soft power in international relations*, Palgrave McMillan, Basingstoke, England

Holliday, S.J., 2011. *Defining Iran: politics of resistance*, Ashgate, Farnham, England
Hollensen, S., 2020. *Global marketing*, 8th edition, Pearson, Harlow, UK
Huijgh, E., 2016. Public diplomacy, *In* Constantinou, C.M., Kerr, P. and Sharp, P.(Eds).2016. *The SAGE handbook of diplomacy*, SAGE, London
Ichijo, A., 2020. Food and nationalism: gastronationalism revisited*, Nationalities Papers*, pp.1–9
Institute for Trade Studies and Research (ITSR). 2024. Formulation of Iran's trade policy document, first phase: modifying import regulations (tariff and non-tariff instruments) and its institutional structure, [online] available at https://itsr.ir/en/article/301/formulation-of-iran%E2%80%99s-trade-policy-document-first-phase-modifying-import-regulations-tariff-and-non-tariff-instruments-and-its-institutional-structure (accessed 11/05/2024)
International Monetary Fund (IMF).2024. Islamic Republic of Iran, [online] available at https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/IRN (accessed 27/04/2024)
Iran Agrofood, 2024. The 31st International Exhibition of Food, Food Technology and Agriculture in Tehran, [online], available at https://agrofood-irantradefair.ir/ (accessed 28/04/2024)
IranExpo. 2024a. 6th export potential exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [online] available at https://iranexpofair.com/ (accessed 28/04/2024)
IranExpo. 2024b. Beyond potential: the realities and future of Iran's date industry, [online] available at https://iranexpofair.com/img/dwn/290376Iran's%20date%20Industry-%20Iran%20Expo%20Fair%202024 .pdf (accessed 12/05/2024)
IranExpo. 2024c. Beyond potential: the realities and future of Iran's pistachio industry, [online] available at https://iranexpofair.com/img/dwn/818552Pistachio-Iran%20Expo%20Fair%20Report.pdf (accessed 12/05/2024)
IranExpo. 2024d. Beyond potential: the realities and future of Iran's raisin industry, [online] available at https://iranexpofair.com/img/dwn/765153Raisin-Iran%20Expo%20Fair%20Report-Digital%20Version.pdf (accessed 12/05/2024)
IranExpo. 2024e. Beyond potential: the realities and future of Iran's saffron industry, [online] available at .https://iranexpofair.com/img/dwn/130160Food%20Industry(Saffron)-IranExpoFair%202024.pdf (accessed 12/05/2024)
Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO). 2023. Iranian food, [online] available at https://en.icro.ir/Iranian-Food (accessed 25/05/2024)
Jacob, J.U.U., 2017. Cultural approaches to soft power, *In* Chitty, N., Ji, L., Rawnsley, G.D. and Hayden, C. (Eds). 2017. *The Routledge handbook of soft power*, Routledge, London
Juneau, T., 2013. Iran rising but unstable power, unfulfilled potential, *In* Juneau, T. and Razavi, S. (Eds). 2013. *Iranian foreign policy since 2001: alone in the world*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.
Juneau, T. and S. Razavi, 2013. Introduction: alone in the world, *In* Juneau, T. and Razavi, S. (Eds). 2013. *Iranian foreign policy since 2001: alone in the world*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.
Juneau, T. and S. Razavi, (Eds). 2013. *Iranian foreign policy since 2001: alone in the world*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.
Kaefer, F., 2020. Country branding: a practitioner perspective, *In* Snow, N. and Cull, N.J. (Eds). 2020. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.
Kashani-Sabet, F., 2002. The evolving polemic of Iranian nationalism, *In* Keddie, N.R. and Matthee, R. (Eds). 2002. *Iran and the surrounding world: interactions in culture and cultural politics*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, USA.
Kashefi, M., H. Mohammadi, and L. Abolhasani, 2019. Effect of marketing strategies on export performance of agricultural products: the case of saffron in Iran, J. Agr. Sci. Tech, 21(4)): 785-798.
Katzman, K., 2021. *Iran's foreign and defense policies*, Congressional Research Service Report.
Katzman, K., 2016. Iranian foreign policy, *In* Beck, L. (Ed). 2016. *Iranian foreign policy: context, regional analysis and U.S. interests*, NOVA, New York, NY, USA.
Kaynak, E. (Ed). 1999. *Cross-National and Cross-Cultural Issues in Food Marketing*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.
Kazemzadeh, M., 2020. *Iran's foreign policy: elite factionalism, ideology, the nuclear weapons program, and the United States*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.
Keddie, N.R., 2002. Introduction, *In* Keddie, N.R. and Marthee, R. (Eds). 2002. *Iran and the surrounding world: interactions in culture and cultural politics*, University of Washington Press, London.

Keddie, N.R. and R. Marthee, (Eds). 2002. *Iran and the surrounding world: interactions in culture and cultural politics*, University of Washington Press, London.
Kelechi, W.2024. Public diplomacy and nation branding, *Journal of Public Relations*, 3(1): 40 – 51
Ketab-Marja Information Institute. 2023. *Iran reference book: export directory 2023-2024*, Tehran
Khols, R.L. and J.N. Uhl, 2015. *Marketing of agricultural products*, 9th edition, Pearson.
Kilduff, K. and J.M. Núñez Tabales, 2017. Country Branding and its effect on the consumer in the global market, *Cuadernos de Gestión,* 17(1): 83-104.
Kirkham, K., 2022. *The political economy of sanctions: resilience and transformation in Russia and Iran*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland.
Koo, W.W. and P.L. Kennedy, 2005. *International trade and agriculture*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK.
Kotler, P. and D. Gertner, 2002. Country as brand, product, and beyond: A place marketing and brand management perspective, *Journal of Brand Management,* 9, 4-5): 249-261.
Koul, A.K., 2018. *Guide to the WTO and GATT: economics, laws and politics*, Springer Nature, Singapore.
Krebs, J., 2013. *Food: a very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
Kravec, N.G., 2011. Should public diplomacy be privatized? *In* Rugh, W.A. (Ed). 2011. *The practice of public diplomacy: confronting challenges abroad*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.
Leonard, M., 2002. *Public diplomacy*, The Foreign Policy Centre, London.
Lien, M.E., 2004. The politics of food: an introduction, *In* Lien, M.E. and Nerlich, B. (Eds). 2004. *The politics of food*, Berg Publishers.
Lien, M.E. and B. Nerlich, (Eds). 2004. *The politics of food*, Berg Publishers,
Lipscomb, A., 2019. Culinary relations: gastrodiplomacy in Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea, *The Yale review of international studies*, 17-39.
Long, L.M., 2013. Folklore, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.
Loskota, B. and R. Flory, 2013. Why religion still matters in the world, *In* Seib, P.(Ed).2013. *Religion and public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.
Low, K.E.Y., 2021. Gastropolitical encounters and the political life of sensation, *The Sociological Review*, 69(1)): 190–205.
Lune, H. and B.L. Berg, 2017. *Qualitative research methods for social sciences*, 9th edition, Pearson, Harlow, UK.
Luša, D. and R. Jakešević, 2017. The role of food in diplomacy: communication and 'winning hearts and minds' through food, *Media Studies*, 8 (16): 99-119.
Majidi, M.R. and M.K. Shojaee, 2021. The Islamic Republic of Iran's cultural diplomacy and the constructed image of Iran in Central Asia, *Journal of Iran and Central Eurasia Studies,* 4(1): 33-51.
Mankhomwa, E., J.M. Chilembwe, and V.R. Mweiwa, 2020. The relationship of food, tourism, destination branding and marketing, *In* Sharma, A., Pulido-Fernández, J.I. and Hassan, A. (Eds). 2020. *Sustainable destination branding and marketing strategies for tourism development*, CABI, Wallingford, UK.
Manor, I., 2019. *The digitization of public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, Cham, Switzerland.
Maréchal, E., 2022. *The Islamic Republic of Iran's soft power: an analysis of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization's activities*, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy.
Marinov, M.A. and A. Sanayei, 2007. Marketing in Iran, *In* Marinov, M.A. (Ed). 2007. *Marketing in the emerging markets of Islamic countries*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, UK.
Marinov, M.A. (Ed). 2007. *Marketing in the emerging markets of Islamic countries*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, UK.
Marschall, C., 2003. *Iran's Persian gulf policy: from Khomeini to Khatami*, Routledge Curzon, London
Mashayekhi, M., 2018. Iran's trade policies: connecting to markets, *In* Alaedini, P. and Razavi, M.R. (Eds). 2018. *Industrial, trade, and employment policies in Iran: towards a new agenda*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland.
Masoumi, S. and Z. Shi, 2022. *Iranian culture*, Publisher: Amazon ISBN: 979-8367833553
McAuley, A., 2001. *International marketing: consuming globally, thinking locally*, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, England.

McIntosh, W.A., 2013. The sociology of food, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Melissen, J., 2005. The new public diplomacy: between theory and practice*, In* Melissen, J. (Ed). 2005. *The new public diplomacy: soft power in international relations*, Palgrave McMillan, Basingstoke, England.

Melissen, J. (Ed)., 2005. *The new public diplomacy: soft power in international relations*, Palgrave McMillan, Basingstoke, England.

Ministry of Commerce Iran, 2009. *The memorandum of the foreign trade regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Tehran.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFAD). 2017. *The agriculture and food market in Iran: Opportunities and challenges for Danish companies*, The Royal Danish Embassy in Tehran, Tehran

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Iran (MFAIRI). 2024. Boosting economic cooperation with Global South nations among Iran priorities, [online] available at https://en-economic.mfa.ir/en/news/45675-%E2%80%98Boosting-economic-cooperation-with-Global-South-nations-among-Iran-priorities%E2%80%99.html (accessed 19/05/2024).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Iran. 2023. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamic Republic of Iran, [online] available at https://en.mfa.ir/ (accessed 18/05/2024).

Mohades, E., 2024. Iranian chamber of commerce reports worsening economic conditions, [online] available at https://iranfocus.com/economy/51167-iranian-chamber-of-commerce-reports-worsening-economic-conditions/ (accessed 12/05/2024).

Moilanen, T. and S. Rainisto, 2009. *How to brand nations, cities and destinations: a planning book for place branding*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Moons, S. and R. de Boer, 2014. *Economic diplomacy, product characteristics and the Level of development*, SSRN.

Monshipouri, M., 2013. Iran's foreign policy and Islamic ideology, *In* Juneau, T. and Razavi, S. (Eds). 2013. *Iranian foreign policy since 2001: alone in the world*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Montanari, M., 2004. *Food is culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY, USA.

Morady, F., 2020. *Contemporary Iran: politics, economy, religion*, Bristol University Press, Bristol, UK

Morgan, N., A. Pritchard, and R. Pride, 2004. Introduction, *In* Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R. (Eds). 2004. *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition*, 2nd

Mousavian, S.H. and M.R. Chitsazian, 2020. Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East: a grand strategy, *Middle East Policy*, 27(3): 99- 114

Najafabadi, M.O., 2011. Agricultural marketing challenges and barriers in Iran, *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(35): 13580-13581.

Nes, E.B., 2018. The role of country images in international marketing, In Ingenhoff, D., White, C., Buhmann, A. and Kiousis, S. (Eds). 2018. *Bridging disciplinary perspectives of country image reputation, brand, and identity*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Nirwandy, N. and A.A. Awang, 2014. Conceptualizing public diplomacy social convention culinary: engaging gastro diplomacy warfare for economic branding, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 130: 325 – 332.

Nye, J.S., 2008a. *The powers to lead*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK

Nye, J.S., 2008b. Public diplomacy and soft power, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616): 94-109.

Nye, J.S., 2004. *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, Public Affairs, New York, NY, USA.

Ohnesorge, H.W., 2020. *Soft power: the sources of attraction in international relations*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland

Olins, W., 2002. Opinion piece: branding the nation—the historical context, *Brand Management*, 9, No-4.5): 241-248.

OECD and FAO. 2023. *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032*, OECD, Paris

Osiewicz, P., 2021. *Foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran: between ideology and pragmatism*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Paarlberg, R., 2013. *Food politics: what everybody needs to know*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Padberg, D.I., 1997. The global context of agri-food marketing, *In* Padberg, D.I., Ritson, C. and Albisu, L.M. (Eds). 1997. *Agro-food marketing*, CAB International, New York, NY, USA.

Padberg, D.I., C. Ritson, and L.M. Albisu, (Eds). 1997. *Agro-food marketing*, CAB International, New York, NY, USA.

Pahlavani, M., S. Heydarian, and S.H. Mirjalili, 2021. The impact of financial sanctions on income inequality in Iran: The TVP-FAVAR model, *The Journal of Economic Policy*, 13(25): 213-239 (In Persian).

Papadopoulos, N. and M. Cleveland, 2021. Introduction: the 'country' vs. 'place' and 'marketing' vs. 'branding' conundrum, *In* Papadopoulos, N. and Cleveland, M. (Eds).2021. *Marketing countries, places, and place-associated brands: identity and image*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Papadopoulos, N. and M. Cleveland, (Eds).2021. *Marketing countries, places, and place-associated brands: identity and image*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Papaioannou, K., 2017. Cultural diplomacy in international relations. International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences, 3(9): 942-944.

Parasecoli, F., 2022. *Gastronativism: food, identity, politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, Ny, USA

Pham, M.J.A., 2013. Food as communication: a case study of South Korea's gastrodiplomacy. Journal of International Service, 22(1): 1-22.

Pigman, G.A., 2020. *Negotiating our economic future: trade, technology and diplomacy*, McGill-Queen's University Press.

Pigman, G.A., 2016. *Trade diplomacy transformed: why trade matters for global prosperity*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, UK

Pike, A., 2018. Orgination: the geographics of brands and branding, *In* Ermann, E. and Hermanik, K.J. (Eds). 2018. *Branding the nation, the place, the product*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA .

Pike, S., 2016. *Destination marketing: essentials*, 2nd edition, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Pistikou, V., A. Masouras, and M. Komodromos, (Eds). 2021. *Handbook of research on future policies and strategies for nation branding*, IGI Global, Hershey, PA, USA.

Prime, N., 2003. Cultural value, *In* Rugimbana, R. and Nwankwo, S. (Eds). 2003. *Cross-cultural marketing*, Thomson, London

Rad, J., 2010. Iran's cultural diplomacy and its cultural centres, [online] available at https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/iran%E2%80%99s-cultural-diplomacy-and-its-cultural-centers (18/05/2023).

Ramazani, R.K., 2013. *Independence without freedom*, University of Virginia Press, London.

Ranta, R., 2015. Food and nationalism: from Foie Gras to Hummus. World Policy Journal, 32(3): 33-40.

Reynolds, C., 2012. *Diplomatic gastronomy: the convivial nature of the power of prestige, cultural diplomacy and soft power*, University of South Australia.

Rhodes, V.J. and J.L. Dauve, 1998. *The agricultural marketing system*, 5th edition, Holcomb Hathaway, Scottsdale, AR, USA.

Rockower, P., 2020. A guide to gastrodiplomacy, *In* Snow, N. and Cull, N.J. (Eds). 2020. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Rockower, P., 2014. The state of gastrodiplomacy, *public diplomacy magazine*, 11: 13-16

Rockower, P., 2012. Recipes for gastrodiplomacy, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 8(3): 235–246

Roshandel, J., 2013. Iran: foreign policy strategic thinking in the twenty first century, *In* Juneau, T. and Razavi, S. (Eds). 2013. *Iranian foreign policy since 2001: alone in the world*, Routledge, Abingdon, England.

Rugh, W.A., 2011. Conclusion: field experiences and best practices, *In* Rugh, W.A. (Ed). 2011. *The practice of public diplomacy: confronting challenges abroad*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Rugh, W.A. (Ed)., 2011. *The practice of public diplomacy: confronting challenges abroad*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Rugimbana, R. and S. Nwankwo, (Eds)., 2003. *Cross-cultural marketing*, Thomson, London.

Saaida, M.B.E., 2023. The role of culture and identity in international relations. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 4(1): 49-57.

Sadeghi, S.M.M. and R. Hajimineh, 2019. The role of Iran's soft power in confronting Iranophobia, *MGIMO Review of International Relations*, 12(4)): 216-238, (In Persian).

Sadeghi, S.M.M. and R. Hajimineh, 2018. Explaining Iranian cultural diplomacy towards Iran phobia, *Intercultural Studies Quarterly*, 13(36): 123-149, (In Persian).

Samiee, S. and B.R. Chabowski, 2020. The country image literature: intellectual basis and future research directions, *In* Brodowsky, G.H. and Schuster, C.P. (Eds).2020. *Handbook on cross-cultural marketing*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Schaffner, D.J., W.R. Schroder, and M.D. Earle, 1998. *Food marketing: an international perspective*, McGraw-Hill, Boston, MA, USA .

Schanbacher, W.D., 2010. *The politics of food: the global conflict between food security and food sovereignty*, Praeger, Santa Barabara, CA, USA.

Schneider, C.P., 2006. Cultural diplomacy: hard to define, but you'd know it if you saw it. Brown Journal of World Affairs, 13(1):191-203.

Seib, P., 2013a. Introduction, *In* Seib, P.2013. *Religion and public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Seib, P., 2013b. Conclusion: The future of religion and public diplomacy, *In* Seib, P.2013. *Religion and public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Seib, P.(Ed)., 2013. *Religion and public diplomacy*, Palgrave McMillan, New York, NY, USA.

Selim, L., 2016. Food is not only culture, it's diplomacy, [online video] available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eyROTdBUs4 (accessed 14/04/2024).

Sepehr Parsian. 2023. Food diplomacy is an excellent opportunity for flourishing, [online] Available at: https://sepehrparsian.com/ (Accessed: 16/05/2024) (In Persian).

Seyoum, B., 2009. *Export-import theory, practices and procedures*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA

Shabanzade, M., M. Bastani, and M. Kavosi, 2014. *Investigating the relationship between exports and food price growth in Iran*, The 9th Biennial Conference of Agricultural Economy of Iran (In Persian).

Sharma, A., J.I. Pulido-Fernández, and A. Hassan, (Eds). 2020. *Sustainable destination branding and marketing strategies for tourism development*, CABI, Wallingford, UK.

Snow, N., 2020. Rethinking public diplomacy in the 2020s, *In* Snow, N. and Cull, N.J. (Eds). 2020. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Snow, N. and N.J. Cull, (Eds). 2020. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Snow, N., 2009. Rethinking public diplomacy, *In* Snow, N. and Taylor, P.M. (Eds). 2009. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA.

Snow, N. and P.M. Taylor, (Eds). 2009. *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA

Solleh, F.M., 2015. Gastrodiplomacy as a soft power tool to enhance nation brand. Journal of Media and Information Warfare, 7, pp.161-199

Souri, D., 2022. Poverty and macroeconomic policies in Iran: a microsimulation study, *In* Alaedini, P. (Ed).2022. *Social policy in Iran*, Routledge, New York, NY, USA

Spence, C., 2016. Gastrodiplomacy: assessing the role of food in decision-making, *Flavour*, 5(4): 1-16

Sreberny, A., 2013. Thirty-plus years of the Iranian revolution: culture in contestation, *In* Sreberny, A. and Torfeh, M. (Eds). 2013. *Cultural revolution in Iran: contemporary popular culture in the Islamic Republic*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Sreberny, A. and M. Torfeh, (Eds). 2013. *Cultural revolution in Iran: contemporary popular culture in the Islamic Republic*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Sreberny, A. and G. Khiabany, 2010. *Blogistan: the internet and politics in Iran*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Suntikul, W., 2017. Gastrodiplomacy in tourism. Current Issues in Tourism, pp.1-19

Tahan, E., M. Filsaraee, and S.F.M. Zadeh, 2015. Food products and culinary culture as tools for tourism management in Iran, International Conference on Management and Economics in the 21st Century (In Persian)

Taher, A. and H. Elshahed, 2020. The shortest way to a nation's heart: culinary diplomacy patterns among Egyptians. Cultural and Religious Studies, 8(9): 498-509

Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA).2023. *Iran agriculture sector guide*, 2nd edition, Tehran

Tettner, S. and B. Kalyoncu, 2016. Gastrodiplomacy 2.0: culinary tourism beyond nationalism. Journal of Tourism Research, 6(2): 47-55

Tracy, S.J., 2020. *Qualitative research methods: collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*, 2nd edition, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, USA.

Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI). 2024. Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, [online] available at https://archive.ph/20121227213223/http://en.tpo.ir/ (accessed 27/04/2024).

Tussie, D., 2013. Trade diplomacy, *In* Cooper, A.E., Heine, J. and Thakur, R. (Eds). 2013. *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).2024a. *Trade and development report: update April 2024*, Geneva.

UNCTAD. 2024b.*Global trade: update March 2024*, Geneva.

UNCTAD. 2024c. *Trade and development report 2023*, Geneva.

Valenze, D., 2013. The cultural history of food, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

van Bergeijk, P.A.G., 2009. *Economic diplomacy and the geography of international trade*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK.

Viktorin, C., J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht, A. Estner, and M.K. Will, 2018. Beyond marketing and diplomacy: Exploring the historical origins of nation branding, *In* Viktorin, C., Gienow-Hecht, J.C.E., Estner, A. and Will, M.K. (Eds). 2018. *Nation branding in modern history*, Berghahn, New York, NY, USA.

Viktorin, C., J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht, A. Estner, and M.K. Will, (Eds). 2018. *Nation branding in modern history*, Berghahn, New York, NY, USA

Vira. 2024. Iran's largest food chain stores: a comprehensive guide, [online] available at https://www.virasmart.co/en/irans-largest-food-chain-stores-a-comprehensive-guide/ (accessed 11/05/2024).

von Maltzahn, N., 2013. *The Syria-Iran axis: cultural diplomacy and international relations in the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Wafullah, N.T., 2023. *Agricultural trade and marketing*, Delve Publishing, Burlington, ON, Canada

Waldfogel, J., 2020. Dining out as cultural trade, *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 44): 309–338.

Wang, J., 2005. Localising public diplomacy: the role of sub-national actors in nation branding. Place Branding, 2(1): 32–42.

Wang, Y. and A. Pizam, (Eds). 2011. *Destination management and marketing: theories and applications*, CABI, Wallingford, UK.

Warnaby, G. and D. Medway, 2021. Conceptions of place: from streets and neighbourhoods to towns, cities, nations, and beyond, *In* Papadopoulos, N. and Cleveland, M. (Eds).2021. *Marketing countries, places, and place-associated brands: identity and image*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK .

Wastnidge, E., 2020. *Iran's Shia diplomacy: religious identity and foreign policy in the Islamic republic*, The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University

Wastnidge, E., 2014. The modalities of Iranian soft power: from cultural diplomacy to soft war, *Politics*, 35 (3-4):1- 14.

Wells, L.T. and A.G. Wint, 2000. *Marketing a country: promotion as a tool for attracting foreign investment*, The International Finance Corporation, World Bank, Washington D.C.

Williams-Forson, P. and J. Walker, 2013. Food and race: an overview, *In* Albala, K. (Ed). 2013. *Routledge international handbook on food studies*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK.

Woolcock, S. and N.Bayne, 2013. Economic diplomacy, *In* Cooper, A.E., Heine, J. and Thakur, R. (Eds). 2013. *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

World Bank. 2023a. *Iran economic monitor: moderate growth and economic uncertainty*, Washington D.C.

World Bank.2023b. *Iran poverty diagnostic*, Report No. 185679, Washington D.C.

World Bank. 2023c. *Iran, Islamic Republic*, Washington D.C.

World Bank. 2018. *Iran economic monitor: weathering economic challenges*, Washington D.C.

World Trade Organization (WTO). 2024a. *Global trade outlook and statistics 2024*, Geneva

WTO.2024b. Food and agriculture: 13th ministerial meeting briefing note, [online] available at https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/mc13_e/briefing_notes_e/agriculture_e.htm (accessed 27/04/2024)

WTO.2023a. *World trade statistical review 2023*, Geneva
WTO. 2023b. *Insights from WTO trade dialogues on food and agri-food business day*, Geneva
WTO.2023c. *Trade profiles 2023: Iran*, Geneva
Yueh, L., 2020. *Economic diplomacy in the 21st Century: principles and challenges*, LSE Ideas, London
Zaccara, L., 2024. Raisi's foreign policy: revitalizing Iran's international position with a non-strategy, Middle East Council of Global Affairs, [online] available at https://mecouncil.org/publication_chapters/raisis-foreign-policy-revitalizing-irans-international-position-with-a-non-strategy/ (accessed 19/05/2024).
Zhang, J., 2015. The foods of the worlds: mapping and comparing contemporary gastrodiplomacy campaigns, International. Journal of Communication: 568–591.
Zolanvari Shirazy, S., and Z. Farajzadeh, 2023. Determinants of agricultural export and trade balance in Iran. Journal of Agricultural Economics and Development, 36(4): 413-429.
Zonooz, B.H., 2018. Trade policy, foreign exchange regime, and industrial development in Iran, *In* Alaedini, P. and Razavi, M.R. (Eds). 2018. *Industrial, trade, and employment policies in Iran: towards a new agenda*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland.
Zou, S. and F.H. (Eds). 2011. *International marketing: emerging markets*, Emerald, Bingley, UK