City Diplomacy and the Formation of Inter-City Relations around the Persian Gulf

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Abstract

Following the contemporary globalization process, cities have gained a strong presence in world politics, and by connecting to international urban networks, they play an effective role in the common interests of themselves and other urban actors. The current research aims to investigate the requirements of forming an international union of cities around the Persian Gulf by strengthening city diplomacy in the region with the benefit of a descriptive-analytical method. In this regard, the background of economic and social relations and the region's current situation have been investigated using reliable sources and articles. Finally, the model of city diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region has been presented. The research findings show that the cities of this region have moved in the direction of divergence despite the presence of many convergence factors, and the formation of an international urban union in the region will play an effective role in increasing convergence and greater peace in the region.

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1. Introduction

With the emergence of contemporary globalization, city leaders recognize that international engagement is becoming essential to addressing the urban dimensions of global challenges such as climate change, mass migration, pandemics and the spread of infectious diseases, financial instability, economic and social inequalities, industrial pollution, and health inequality (Kosovac and Pejic,2021; Parnel,2016; Bloomberg,2015). While localized policymaking might still be the predominant activity of municipal governments, it is undeniable that cities, big and small, now have to face a wider policy landscape of connections, markets, and peers that go beyond the local (Acuto and et al.,2017:16). The growing importance of cities and city diplomacy is testified to by the fact that many supra-national bodies are turning their attention to cities (Beall and Adam,2017:20). City diplomacy could be defined as the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage to represent themselves and their interests to one another. With such a definition, city diplomacy could be considered a form of decentralization of international relations management, choosing cities as the key actors (Plujim and Mellisen,2007:11). city diplomacy has been applied to many types of international action by local governments. Nevertheless, it has increasingly come to mean the involvement of local governments in peace-building (Musch and Sizoo,2009:3). According to Thonon, the main role and function of cities in city diplomacy includes establishing peace and security (Thonon,2006:67). National governments are no longer able to manage internationalized policy issues like climate change and transborder crime on their own (Plujim and Melissen,2007:8). Thus, according to the recent developments of the international system, the emergence of non-governmental actors has mushroomed (Ghourchi and Amani,2014:17) and without interacting with the world, local governments are unable to fulfill their legal responsibilities regarding education, health, economic development, transportation, environmental issues, and other areas (Fishbone,2015:13-14). Based on this, realizing such goals requires strengthening city diplomacy and local authorities' role in international arenas. The main necessity of city diplomacy is to achieve goals such as achieving sustainable world peace, urban growth and development, trying to solve vital human problems, preventing human rights violations, preventing

environmental destruction, taking advantage of successful experiences and achievements, and preventing conflicts. Various thinkers and experts have studied city diplomacy. Many researchers have pointed to the role of cities as new actors in the arena of international relations, which increasingly play a prominent role in the global political stage and lead to the decision of local authorities to intervene in global affairs (Kosovac and et al.,2021; Kosovac and Pejic,2021; Leffel,2018). In the studies conducted by some scholars to understand the scope and complexity of city diplomacy, the most important aspects of city diplomacy including peace and security, development, culture, economy, networks, and representation have been considered (Plujim and Melissen,2007; Amiri and et al.,2022). Some studies emphasize the point that urban managers in the role of new actors of cities can take the necessary measures as mediators of peace and help cities that are located in spaces and regions that are under political, social, and economic tension or are in a situation that can be controlled through mediation and exposed to peace (Klaus,2020; Leffel,2018; Musch and Sizoo,2009; Plujim and Melissen,2007). City diplomacy processes are very fragile and sensitive and can lead to peace or escalation of a conflict (Karimi and Hafeznia,2017:7). Various studies have pointed to sister-city relations of cities, which lead to the pursuit of city diplomacy relations and make cities establish city-to-city connections with each other through agreements within the framework of sister-city relations (Hongyuan and et al.,2021; Plujim and Melissen,2007). According to some researchers, cities in the transnational arena can establish network connections, have a great impact on the world scene, and provide solutions for many global problems. Urban networks have become a tool of national power and influence in a multipolar global space, accompanied by intense tensions, and provide cities with the ability to pursue collective goals efficiently. City authorities have made a great impact on the world scene and to advance the interests of cities, they are looking for transnational communication using networks (Hongyuan and et al.,2021; Kosovac et al., 2021; Kosovac and Pejic,2021; Santos,2020; Klaus,2020; Acuto and et al., 2017; Daroudi and Peimani,2013; Musch and Sizoo,2009; Plujim and Melissen,2007). Among other things scholars have noticed is the role of universities in different cities as a gateway for knowledge and international participation, which is very important and influential in city diplomacy and strengthens the linkage between cities. Universities provide the specialized

manpower needed by cities and hold international exhibitions, they lead to the presence and consultation of city managers and investors as well as other people in the lobbies of the summit and international exhibitions, which will lead to an increase in inter-city communication (Kosovac and Pejic,2021; Acuto and et al.,2017).

In the framework of the role of transnational actors in world politics, the dominant approach in urban management is to connect cities to international urban networks, to take advantage of the benefits of globalization, which, by strengthening city diplomacy as one of the most important tools of urban management, the ground for the entry of different cities of the world into transnational arenas is provided (Amiri and et al.,2022:136). So far, many international organizations have been formed at different regional and global levels. Each of these organizations has various functions and instead of dealing with a specific case, they pay attention to many common issues. The Persian Gulf also has provided a good opportunity for the cities of this region to connect to an international urban union and, accordingly, to share the successful experiences of the members. The Persian Gulf is located along the Oman Sea and includes Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, and Oman. The region faces issues such as internal differences between the region's countries, cultural differences, environmental pollution, etc., which require comprehensive cooperation between the region's cities by city authorities and local officials. Forming a cooperative city network such as the "International Union of Network of Cities around the Persian Gulf" will greatly impact the convergence of cities in the region and help the members achieve successful experiences. Considering the necessity of the subject and the lack of studies on the formation of the international union of cities around the Persian Gulf, the current research seeks to investigate the role of city diplomacy and forming a union of urban partners in the region to expand synergy between cities. The Persian Gulf, with its connection to the Strait of Hormuz, which is considered the world's vital energy artery, and the Oman Sea and the Indian Ocean, its proximity to the sea and land borders of the crisis-prone region of Southwest Asia, and its proximity to the Caucasus, is considered one of the most geostrategic regions in the world in terms of regional and international military policies (Chamankar,2009:14) and the main communication route that can establish and facilitate trade and transportation between the countries of the Persian

Gulf basin with other parts of the world. Forming the union of the network of cities around the Persian Gulf requires strong city diplomacy, which will lead to the durability of the union and the realization of its goals. The current research seeks to answer how forming the international union of cities around the Persian Gulf can lead to convergence and improvement of regional relations. In this context, we examine how city diplomacy has enhanced regional cooperation. Moreover, some of the most important international urban assemblies and organizations will be studied and discussed at the regional levels. We will also examine the situation of the Persian Gulf, opportunities and issues of the region, social and economic relations in the region, and the region's cities from the point of view of sister-city relations, and their international relations in different fields.

2 .Methodology

This article has used library sources and existing documents to examine the relationship between Persian Gulf cities in regional dimensions, benefiting from the descriptive-analytical method. In this context, the necessary information to examine the sister-city relations of the region's cities, the historical past of the relations and the cultural affinity between countries, international relations with other countries, the facilities, and the current situation of the region and its various issues have been collected by library method. Also, with the help of Arc GIS software, the study area and the geographical location of the Persian Gulf are introduced.

3 .Theoretical Farmwork

3-1.City Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation

Regions play a role as new actors in the international system and influence decision-making processes in international politics from the bottom up. New regionalism effectively strengthens intra-regional relations, increases inter-regional interactions, and promotes interactions with global institutions (Dehshiri and Rezaei Jafari,2014:197). Hettne considers new regionalism a multidimensional process of regional integration in economic, political, social, and cultural fields (Hettne,1994). New regionalism emphasizes the liberalization of intra-regional trade in services and intellectual property, the free movement of capital and labor, and the coordination of regulatory regimes (Busch and Milner,1994:265). New regionalism has played a very important role in reducing the risk of confrontations between members and

achieving regional security against peripheral threats, and it also emphasizes the strength of common values through the overlap of national identities of regional members which has increased the need to expand diplomatic interactions.

Modern diplomacy has its roots in the Peace of Westphalia, with the establishment of permanent missions that reside in the capital of a foreign country. This agreement, which means the historical turn of international relations and the transition from feudalism to independent governments (Gross,1948:28), recognized the territorial state system in international politics in 1648 with the formation of the Treaty of Westphalia and territorial governments, as the basis of the modern government system, had defined borders (Ray,1998:120). However, the foundations of diplomacy were established long before 1648 in periods when nation-states as they are now known did not yet exist and cities pioneered foreign policy institutions. Therefore, diplomacy existed before states existed. For example, in ancient Greece, city governments such as Athens and Macedonia regularly appointed ambassadors to represent the city in negotiations. Later, during the Renaissance, the first powerful Italian cities such as Venice and Milan were the first to establish permanent diplomatic missions abroad and create an organized diplomacy system (Nicolson,2001:6-33). Nation-states have long practiced diplomatic functions such as facilitating communication, negotiating agreements, gathering information, preventing conflicts, and participating in international society. Cities are now using similar tactics, mirroring and engaging with state-level diplomacy and tackling issues such as local infrastructure needs or bottom-up approaches to peacekeeping (Acuto and et al.,2018:3). But for cities, the most important avenue for addressing global challenges has not been through unilateral action or bilateral relationship building, but rather via the development of robust and widespread networks. While cities have long sought transnational connections to advance their interests, it was only in the early twenty-first century that there was an explosion of city networks and diplomacy. Mayors have increasingly been seizing and expanding their agency using networks to promote city-level solutions to global challenges (Klaus,2020:2). With the expansion of networks that have been formed using communication technology, it has become possible for cities to enter the space of currents in connection with networks and gain a place for themselves in the global

economy within the network (Sadeghi and et al.,2019:111). Today, many urban networks around the world bring together local authorities at different global and regional levels in line with multilateral cooperation.

3-2.Global Experiences of City Diplomacy in the Field of Urban-Regional Network Formation

During recent decades, one of the most important actions that the municipalities of the world's cities have paid attention to is the issue of improving the status of their cities through strengthening city diplomacy by joining international urban organizations and assemblies. To transform into urban diplomatic measures, city diplomacy must pass through the filter of practical methods carried out through specialized institutions and organizations. In the following, some of the most important organizations and institutions active in the field of city diplomacy at the regional level along with the most important goals and working areas, number of members, and headquarters of the organizations have been investigated.

Network of the Mediterranean cities

MedCities was established in 1991 in Barcelona when 16 cities initially formed a network to support environmental protection from a local perspective. In 2015, the network became a fully independent organization and now brings together 73 local authorities from all shores of the Mediterranean basin. The transformation of MedCities into a legal association has increased its operational capacity and enhanced its ability to promote urban sustainable development in the region. MedCities helps empower Mediterranean local governments to achieve their strategic priorities, believing them to play a vital role in improving the lives of citizens. It is a Mediterranean voice for local authorities and builds their capacity to meet the challenges of local governance sustainably. The organization has started working to support cities in dealing with urban environmental problems and currently, it has expanded its activities in the field of sustainable development, climate issues, and urban development, and it works in line with increasing the ability to produce and transfer knowledge in urban issues between cities. For this purpose, this organization has established three knowledge transfer centers in the cities of Malaga (Spain), Al-Fiha (Lebanon), and Sfax (Tunisia), and membership is preferred for cities with more than fifty thousand people located on the Mediterranean coast and the countries of Jordan and Portugal with the aim is

to promote free activities.

The mission of the organization is to become the voice of different Mediterranean cities to increase their decisive role in the area. The association impulses a democratic quality and it provides support to MedCities member city councils so they can boost their competencies and resources to advance in the contemporary challenges of urban governance (reduction of inequality, gender equality, safety, and coexistence), and give support to local governments on the management of new challenges in urban governance. The vision is to be a Mediterranean political stakeholder of reference in the supra-municipal and international agenda, acting as a voice for local authorities. MedCities seeks to establish a collaboration space between cities to carry out and evaluate urban projects of mutual interest, good practices, and knowledge management. MedCities is managed and represented by a Board of Directors made up of 7 to 9 members: one President, five to seven members, and the Secretary-General. A Vice-president and a Treasurer are designated. All the posts forming the Board of Directors are unremunerated. These are appointed and revoked by the Extraordinary General Meeting and their mandate lasts for four years. The Board of Directors meets as often as is determined by its President and at the initiative or request of three members (Medcities.org,2023).

3-3.Union of the Baltic Cities

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is a network of about 100 cities in the Baltic Sea Region with member cities from 10 member countries including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden which was founded in 1991 in Gdańsk. UBC is a voluntary, proactive network mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities. The aims of the UBC are to:

- Promote cooperation and exchange of experiences between cities in the BSR to advance and deliver sustainable urban solutions and quality of life, and to bring added value for them;
- Promote cities as drivers for smart, sustainable, green, and resource-efficient growth;
- Advance cities as inclusive, diverse, creative, democratic, and safe hubs, where active citizenship, gender equality, and participatory policy-making are promoted and
- Advocate for the common interests of cities and their citizens, act on

their behalf, and further the interests of the BSR.

The UBC and its Member Cities work in close cooperation with other partners and participate actively in implementing regional strategies, notably the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region EUSBSR. The member cities carry out the backbone of UBC`s practical, goal-oriented work through active cooperation in the thematic UBC Commissions. UBC has 8 working Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Learning Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities. The Commissions share best practices and tools and provide a network of experts for consultation and cooperation. Old and new member cities are encouraged to contact the commissions and join their activities. UBC commissions are encouraged to seek partnerships with other stakeholders and participate actively in implementing regional development strategies, especially the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Union of the Baltic Cities' core organization consists of the Presidium, the Executive Board, and the Secretariat (UBC.net,2023).

4 .Research Findings

The Persian Gulf −a small part of the vast expanse of water that used to be the Persian Sea in ancient times− is 24 to 30 degrees and 30 minutes north latitude and 48 to 56 degrees and 25 minutes east longitude from the Greenwich Meridian with an area of about 2374 degrees. It is 805 km long (from the Strait of Hormuz to the last point of its advance on the west side) and becomes the third largest bay in the world after the Gulf of Mexico and the Hudson Bay. The Persian Gulf is known as the warmest water area in the world and has a dry and semi-tropical climate. Its widest part is 180 miles, and its deepest point is 93 meters, 15 kilometers away from Big Tunb, and its deepest part in the west is between 10 and 30 meters. The low depth of the Pars Sea has caused land to move into the sea regularly (Persian Gulf Studies Center,2023). Since the past decades, the Persian Gulf has undoubtedly been one of the most important and sensitive regions of the world in terms of geopolitics and geostrategic calculations, and it has been prominent as a commercial highway (Hafeznia and Faraji,2014:86). It plays a vital role in the energy supply, especially is the source of a large part of the world's oil (Garlic and Havlova,2020:83). Moreover, the Strait of Hormuz −the crescent-shaped passage− which connects the Persian Gulf to

the Sea of Oman, and its convenient commercial location, has made it important as a commercial center or east-west communication highway, is one of the reasons for the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf (Rabiei and Sadeghi,2014:446-447). Figure (1), shows the location of the Persian Gulf and its surrounding cities.

Figure (1): Cities of The Persian Gulf.

The Persian Gulf –as one of the subsystems of Southwest Asia– has always been a distinct region with its own identity, and its ports had a social mix composed of many ethnicities, such as Arabs, Persians, Indians, Baluch, Africans, and smaller subgroups. Although there was a Sunni majority in the Arabian Peninsula and a Shi'a one on the Iranian Plateau, the Persian Gulf was religiously mixed. Before the modern era, peoples of the region shared a maritime culture based on pearling, fishing, and long-distance trade, and were part of an interlinked system that included agricultural villages and oases that sustained the caravan trade. This all changed in the twentieth century with the onset of oil revenues that accrued to ruling dynasties, and,

along with British protection, led to a less consultative and more autocratic style of rule (Potter,2017:2-4). In the Persian Gulf region, due to the existence of different ethnic groups and different religious sects, there are conflicts and differences between its countries. Most of the Persian Gulf region is inhabited by Arabs and in some other areas by Kurds and Persians, including the two Shi'a and Sunni religious groups and their historical geopolitical rivalries. The existence of some ethnic and linguistic groups in the Persian Gulf that are not specific to one country (such as the Kurds in Iraq), causes a lack of national unity in this country and intensifies internal and external government gaps. The countries of the Persian Gulf region are multi-ethnic and multi-identity; they always face conflicts and challenges from internal groups (Sazmand and Ramezani,2021:97-98). Internal differences between countries in the region are one of the most important factors of insecurity in the region. These differences are evident both in the relations between Iran and the Arabs and in the internal relations of the Arabs and lead to damage to the countries of the region in two ways. First, it destroys the grounds of cooperation and convergence among the countries of the region and causes distance between the countries and their positions towards each other, secondly, it causes the presence of powerful countries to establish security and fill the power vacuum in this region (Akhbari and Ghahremani,2011:57 & 60).

The region that has had and still has the highest geopolitical and geostrategic position from the point of view of different countries is the Persian Gulf region. The density of oil-rich countries with tense situations and internal weakness, reliance on foreign powers, geopolitical proximity to Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as major differences in the political-economic structure of the Persian Gulf are the distinguishing features of this region compared to other regions of the Middle East. The Persian Gulf has been the focus of many powers due to the discovery and release of oil, the existence of vast energy reserves, as well as developments in the political, economic, and security systems in the region (Hersij and et al.,2014:13-14). In general, the Persian Gulf is considered a geopolitical region from the point of view of natural and human characteristics, in such a way that the sea area of the Persian Gulf is a common border between the surrounding countries. On the other hand, the countries of the region depend on this gulf from an economic point of view, and in a way, it can be said that it is part of

the common interests of the countries that surround this gulf, and their economy is based on energy export (Dehghaniyan and et al.,2022:97). Considering the global sensitivity and the growing importance of the Middle East region and the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the equations of global security, the Persian Gulf has been placed in the heartland of the 21st century, so that it is considered the meeting place of the interests of major global actors, and the outcome of these interests is the perspective of the future of security and will form cooperation in this field (Imam Jumazadeh and Toisarkani,2008:36). In this region, there is a large volume of economic resources available in the world, which increases the geopolitical importance of the region (Postinchi,2008:135). The presence of extensive markets in the region along with the opportunity to invest in oil and gas projects in the Persian Gulf will make any other actor eager to be active and dynamic in the region in the age of globalization (Hoagland,2005:195). The existence of an atmosphere of mistrust between countries and unwillingness to regional agreements has destroyed the field of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the governments and economic units of the region. For this reason, some of the countries in the region resorted to the great extra-regional powers to achieve their goals, and interests, and also ensure their security. As a result of this policy, the tension in the relations of the regional governments with each other, the increase in the atmosphere of mistrust, and the interference of foreign agents became widespread (Farajollahi,2009 4).

The existence of instability in the Persian Gulf shows that the countries of this region have always moved in the direction of divergence despite the presence of many convergence factors, and as a result, this important region has become an unstable part of the Middle East (Nami,2016:48). The presence of abundant oil and gas resources in the Persian Gulf has led to an increase in tension in the disputes between the countries of the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the border disputes of the Persian Gulf countries have many complications due to ethnic, linguistic, and racial differences (Karimipour,2002:12) and have created many obstacles in the way of cooperative competition and regional integration. One of the elements that shape the foreign policy of any country is the geopolitical codes of that country, which is the operational agenda of a country's foreign policy beyond its borders that evaluates geographical locations (Taylor,1994:26) and operates at three levels: global, regional, and local. Although Iran does

not have global codes, it has regional and local codes. Iran has extensive friendly relations with the countries of Iraq, Oman, and Qatar in the Persian Gulf basin. Also, although until recently, Iran's relations with the countries of Saudi Arabia and the UAE were tense, now this tension has turned into friendly relations to some extent. Relations between Iran and Kuwait are also relatively friendly. On the other hand, the relations between Iran and Bahrain were hostile state in the past, but currently, these two countries are in a stagnant state. However, these two countries do not want to worsen the existing situation and go towards tense relations. The region's cities also move under the geopolitical codes and outside of these codes they cannot establish diplomatic relations with each other. Therefore, it is necessary to move the relations between the countries of the Persian Gulf basin towards friendship and intimacy so that better relations can take place at the urban scale as well. In this regard, according to the discussion of geopolitical codes, Iran's foreign policy should try to establish relations with the neighboring countries, especially the Persian Gulf basin, in the form of extensive official diplomacy, in which the countries of the region should be defined in the framework of the concept of a friend for Iran, and in this way, public diplomacy that city diplomacy is a part of it, can establish extensive connections between the cities of the Persian Gulf basin. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was formed as an international regional organization in 1981 consisting of 6 Arab countries of the Persian Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates) to deal with political, economic, security, socio-cultural challenges (Shokri and Akbarian,2016:162). For convergence with Iranian cities, establishing an international urban union and forming bilateral and multilateral agreements are very important. Forming such a union provides an effective space for playing the role of cities, institutions, and urban organizations of the region in the international arena and gives the region's cities the possibility to improve their economic, political, technological, cultural, and infrastructural status, and gain enough power, influence, and credibility to carry out extensive activities. Holding joint meetings and summits provides the necessary opportunities and conditions for exchanging knowledge and experience to flourish and use more of the capacities of the cities in the region and provide this opportunity for the members to gain experience, share their successes, and make the necessary plans and policies to improve

the conditions of the cities, the quality of life of the citizens, and realize peace in the region.

4-1.Sister-City Relations

One of the ways to strengthen city diplomacy is sister-city relations. These relations are based on a friendly and purposeful relationship based on the exchange of information, and experiences, and the development of cultural, economic, technical, and urban relations between one city and another city outside the borders of a country (Ghourchi and Kaviyanirad,2017:60). The bilateral relations between the cities take place as a result of the similarities and commonalities between the two cities, and sister-city relations are one of these types of city diplomacy that is common in the world (Jamalinejad, 2014:32). This type of international cooperation provides the necessary capacity for the participation of cities, which leads to the development of the cities involved. Among the activities in which friendly and adopted sister cities participate, it is possible to exchange knowledge, expand investment and tourism industry in cities, implement joint projects in the matter of urban development, and improve the standard of living and cooperation in the field of increasing understanding, cohesion, and expansion of technical and managerial abilities in countries (Ghasemi and Abdullahi,2016:6). The existence of sister-city relations between the cities of the countries around the Persian Gulf plays an important role in improving the relations between the members. Some of the cities in the countries around the Persian Gulf have sister-city relations, and among them, some are located on the edge of the Persian Gulf. In the meantime, it is necessary for the region's cities that do not have sister-city relations, taking into account their similarities and cultural affinity, to enjoy sister-city relations. Figure (2) shows some sister-city relations between the cities of countries around the Persian Gulf.
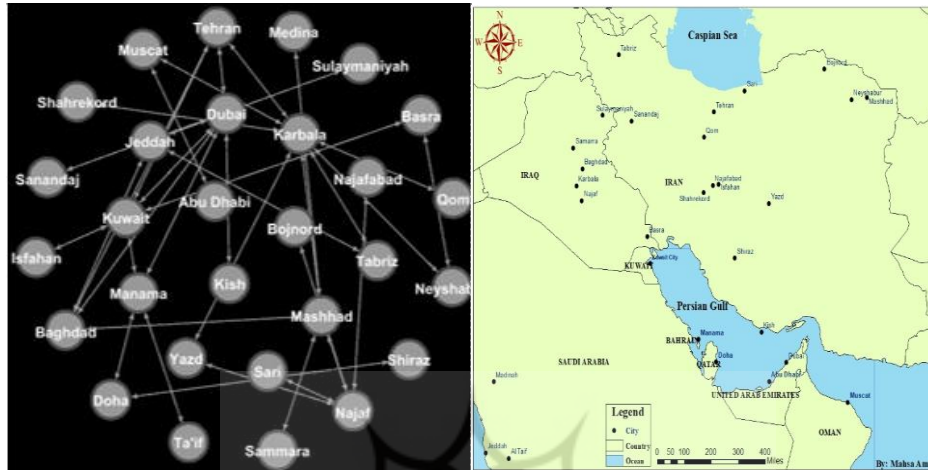
Figure (2): Sister-City Relations between the Cities of Countries around the Persian Gulf

4-2.International Airports

The presence of international airports in the region's cities along with sea, rail, and road connections can create a new chapter of relations between cities. Some of the cities around the Persian Gulf have international airports, and various and regular flights between the cities of the Persian Gulf countries will provide the possibility of extensive transportation of passengers and goods. Figure (3) shows the location of international airports in the region's cities.
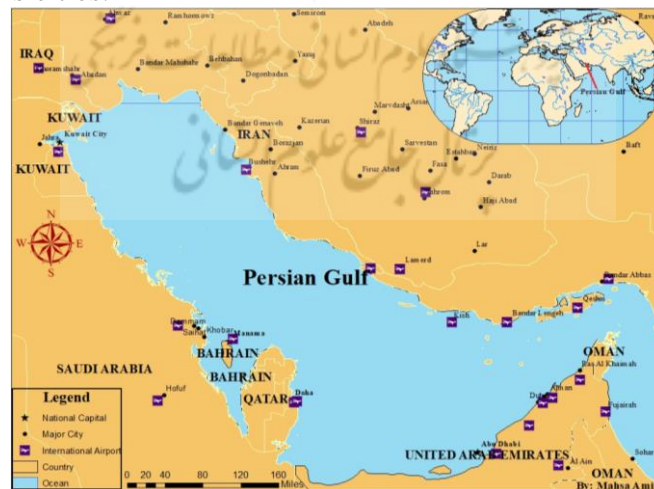
Figure(3): International Airports in the Cities around the Persian Gulf

4-3.Consulates

Consulates can play an important role in relations between members, especially by issuing visas and attracting tourists, facilitating the entry of investors and entrepreneurs in the region, and holding sports events and joint exhibitions. Consular officers are diplomatic representatives in the host country who perform various levels of duties for the sending country, such as handling the problems of their nationals in the host country and issuing visas and business permits needed by businessmen. Many cities in the region host consulates from countries around the Persian Gulf and play an important role in regional relations. With the formation of new consulates in other main region's cities, an important step can be taken to improve relations between cities. Table (1) shows the embassies and consulates in the cities of countries around the Persian Gulf (EmbassyWorldwide,2023).

Table (1): Embassies and Consulates of the Cities of Countries around the Persian Gulf

COUNTRY	EMBASSY	CONSULATE	COUNTRY	EMBASSY	CONSULATE
Iran	Baghdad, Kuwait Muscat, Riyadh, Doha, Abu Dhabi	Dubai – UAE Sulaymaniyah – IQ Erbil – IQ	Iraq	Kuwait, Riyadh, Tehran, Muscat, Manama, Doha, Abu Dhabi	Ahvaz – IR Kermanshah – IR Jeddah – SA Dubai - UAE
Bahrain	Muscat, Riyadh, Baghdad, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi	Najaf – IQ	Kuwait	Tehran, Muscat, Riyadh, Manama, Baghdad, Doha, Abu Dhabi	Erbil – IQ Jeddah – SA Dubai – UAE
Qatar	Tehran, Muscat, Riyadh, Manama, Baghdad, Doha, Kuwait	Jeddah – SA	Saudi Arabia	Tehran, Muscat, Manama, Kuwait, Doha, Abu Dhabi	Dubai – UAE
United Arab Emirates	Tehran, Muscat, Riyadh, Manama, Baghdad, Kuwait	Jeddah – SA	Oman	Tehran, Riyadh, Manama, Kuwait, Doha, Abu Dhabi	Jeddah – SA

The connection of the cities around the Persian Gulf in an international city network will seek the participation and cooperation of the cities in different fields with each other, as well as their all-round discussions to gain new opportunities. The region's cities have many capacities and potentials in the field of tourism, which can create strong links in network cities to establish tourist relations. The sister-city relations between some members, the

presence of consulates in some cities, the availability of international airports, and sea connections between these cities can lead to the strengthening of relations between cities. The launch and expansion of international flights between the cities around the Persian Gulf and the formation of consulates of neighboring countries in the main cities of the network to issue visas and facilitate the entry of tourists and businessmen are among the measures that led to the increase of interactions between the cities around the Persian Gulf by strengthening city diplomacy in the region.

5. Analysis

The city diplomacy of the Persian Gulf region can be studied in two forms: bilateral relations in the form of sister-city relations between the cities of the Persian Gulf countries and multilateral relations with the membership of the region's cities in global and regional international organizations. Active actors in the field of international urban management are mayors, city councils, urban associations, local authorities, etc., who play a role in representing the interests of their cities and sharing successful urban experiences with other urban actors in the transnational arena. At the regional level, it is possible to help improve the relations between cities at the international level by forming a network of cities around the Persian Gulf. Membership in the union can include the main members of the union consisting of cities in the region and supervisory members from other cities outside the region to benefit from their successful experiences and achievements. In this context, it is very important to choose one of the cities around the Persian Gulf as the main headquarters of the union to hold various meetings. In this way and by holding rotating conferences in each of the member cities of the union, the issues and problems of the region are considered and investigated, and then the level of cultural, social, economic, etc. interactions in cities expands, which leads to the reduction of challenges and disputes in the region. In this context, it should be considered that the selected headquarters has a suitable situation from the point of view of natural and human geographical division. The cooperation of the members takes place in the form of various issues that can be investigated and addressed by holding biennial meetings and conferences in the main cities of the region. Strengthening city diplomacy in the Persian Gulf region in the form of an international union can lead to the expansion of the activities of urban authorities and local officials to help prevent conflicts and establish

peace in the region. The effort to be in a peaceful situation in the region is of great importance and will lead to the expansion of the members' activities in various fields such as commercial, tourism, environmental, etc. The diplomatic activities of the cities in the region are also a basis for forming international cooperation opportunities, especially in the direction of achieving sustainable development among the members. In this regard, especially the cities that are facing natural hazards, can help each other and in case of any problem, they can provide and send humanitarian aid. In the meantime, a part of providing cities' budget can be done through international relations, in the field of local food festivals and local cultural communication, which will attract urban tourists and city managers of the region that attract some of the city's lack of funds from international fields. The strengthening of city diplomacy will result in the presence of foreign investors in urban projects, in such a way that by removing the obstacles to attract foreign investment, economic development, and prosperity will be provided, as well as social welfare and employment in urban projects. Figure (4) shows the City Diplomacy Model of the Network of Cities around the Persian Gulf.
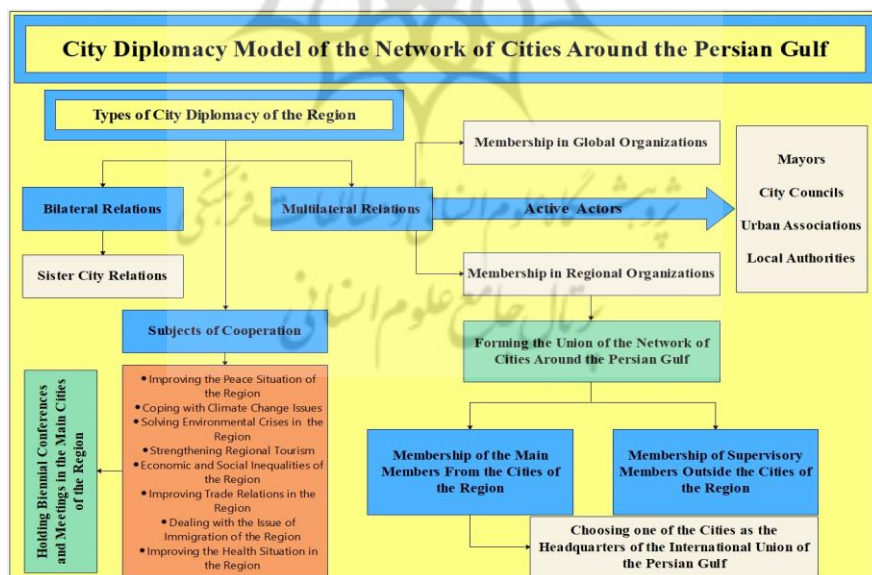

Figure (4): City Diplomacy Model of the Network of Cities around the Persian Gulf

6. Conclusion

Today, international organizations are trying to increase the strength of the connection between cities in the field of urban management, and in this regard, city managers are trying to get more opportunities to be present in transnational arenas to represent the interests of their cities and apply successful urban experiences within the framework of network processes by using the strategy of city diplomacy. The Persian Gulf region has close cultural and ethnic affinities, and from the past until now, there have been very complex economic relations between the northern cities of the region and the cities of the southern countries of the Persian Gulf. Also, there are many socio-cultural relations between the north and the south of the region. As a result, forming an international union consisting of the cities of the Persian Gulf, which, like the international union of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, will strengthen the connections between cities in the form of a union by using city diplomacy is very necessary. To expand these relations, one of these countries in the region must propose the formation of an international union with other countries, and one of the cities around the Persian Gulf, especially the northern cities, which have a long historical past, should be chosen as the headquarters and the base of the urban network. The secretariat of this urban network can be one of the northern cities of the region and hold biennial meetings and conferences in other cities of the region on a rotational basis. These summits should put various issues and topics including peace, climate change, migration, good urban governance, trade exchanges, pandemics, air pollution, health, etc. on the agenda and follow up and raise one of these issues in one of the region's cities every two years. The presence of actors and urban officials of the cities around the Persian Gulf in various meetings and providing conditions for creating dialogue activities among the members will result in the consultation of urban officials in dealing with various dimensions of city diplomacy in the region and the development of diplomatic interactions. Also, when the summits are held, they can sign memorandums and contracts in the framework of city diplomacy so that they can cooperate. Some activities are also carried out at present, for example, many patients from the Persian Gulf region come to Shiraz for medical and health services, for agricultural issues, the northern cities of the Persian Gulf are used, and the fields of technology import are from the South cities is done. Finally, these

relations should be expanded within the framework of a cooperative urban network and a wide convergence would occur and this convergence would lead to more peace and tranquility in the region and prevent conflicts. In addition to the membership of the active members, which consists of the cities around the Persian Gulf, the International Union can also include the membership of observer and affiliate members in its agenda to benefit from successful experiences while, in cooperation with various universities, it will benefit from specialized human resources and take necessary measures to solve the issues and problems of the region.

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