

Media Diplomacy in the Cultural Convergence of the Nowruz Region

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Abstract: *Nowruz is considered the greatest ancient ritual in the countries of Southwestern Asia and some other parts of the world, and it is referred to as the Civilization of Nowruz. In this civilization, modernity, combating ignorance, moderation, truthfulness, greenery, and separation from ugliness are distinctive elements. This research seeks to answer the question of how it is possible to enable cultural convergence among the countries of the Nowruz sphere by applying a proper media strategy. The findings of the study, conducted with an analytical-descriptive approach, indicate the unparalleled power of Nowruz as an intercultural and convergent platform among these societies, whereby national or transnational media can consider Nowruz as an important cultural agenda in their diplomacy. The findings indicate that despite differences in geography, politics, and elites of the countries within the Nowruz civilization sphere, convergence is possible through the establishment of a Nowruz-based media union, the policy-making of dialogue-oriented macro and transnational media based on Nowruz dialogues, and the production of visual content, especially films and animations, regarding the historicity, culture, and discourse of Nowruz in the member countries of this sphere, which plays an undeniable and effective role..*

Keywords : *Nowruz, Convergence, Modernity, Dialogue, Media Union, Moderation*

INTRODUCTION

Nowruz is one of the ancient rituals and customs that is celebrated with the beginning of the New Year in the Nowruz civilization sphere. This historical and cultural day coincides with the first day of Farvardin in each solar year. On this day, when the sun enters the sign of Aries and the spring season begins, a new day of the new year also starts, and this celebration has been held for at least 5,000 years in Iran and other regions of the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia (Zamani-Farahani, 2015).

The original form of this word was “nōk rūz” or “nōg rūz” (Shabani, 2000: 1). Among all the days of celebration and festivity maintained by nations throughout the world, which have preserved their social status and significance from ancient times to the present, Nowruz is considered one of the most important (Sazmand, 2018: 90). One of the most cited narratives about the founding of Nowruz is found in the Shahnameh. After Jamshid established civilization and ruled over the flourishing kingdom, he

decided to celebrate his achievements, built a throne adorned with jewels that ascended to the sky, and declared that day the “New Day” (nō rūz) (Preston, 2026).

The Nowruz ritual is considered one of the oldest remaining celebrations from ancient times in our civilization, and it is honored and celebrated not only in Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan, but also in other countries around the world, including Central Asia, the Caucasus, Iraq, Turkey, the countries of the Persian Gulf, Pakistan, the Balkans, and the Indian subcontinent (Mechael, 2003). Moreover, in at least nine countries—Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (located in Southwest Asia), Azerbaijan (Western Asia), and Albania (Southern Europe)—Nowruz is a public holiday under the same name (Basiri & Mousavi Noghli, 2015: 77).

Meanwhile, in the above-mentioned political systems, there are different orientations, with intellectual elites of various tendencies present in this sphere, ranging from religious to secular, from Western-oriented to communist, and from nationalist to globalist. Sometimes these differences, particularly ethnic and religious diversity, have created grounds for violence and confrontation among these societies. The question that arises is how the potentials and platforms of Nowruz can be used in the direction of convergence, intercultural communication, and alignment of these countries, or what strategies and platforms can be established to preserve and strengthen cultural convergence among the countries of the Nowruz sphere. To provide answers to these questions, there is an urgent need for field and in-depth research and the utilization of elites’ perspectives. However, what can be considered above all as a strong hypothesis is the use of cultural soft tools such as mass media in strengthening the discourse of Nowruz and achieving cultural convergence among the countries of the Nowruz sphere. This article, emphasizing this issue, seeks to conduct an analytical examination of the possibilities for cultural policy-making in the countries of the Nowruz sphere to achieve this goal. Given that the field of media and communications is very extensive, this research focuses on one of its most important dimensions; namely, media diplomacy for paving the way for convergence in the Nowruz sphere. In this regard, the fundamental issue of this research is an analytical inquiry into how the media policies of the Nowruz countries can strengthen the discourse of Nowruz in today’s global conditions to achieve convergence among the societies of this cultural civilization.

Today, the international community is in greater need than ever for moral and spiritual reconstruction, and the nations of the world require a cultural model free from selfishness and egocentrism. The Nowruz ritual, due to its deep connection with nature and life as well as its possession of universal human characteristics, has a high capacity and can become a cultural factor in international relations (Mazaheri, 2025). This, in fact, is the significance of this research.

Meanwhile, the question is not about the possibility or impossibility of Nowruz for intercultural linkage to achieve convergence among these nations, but rather about how the strategic expansion of

Nowruz can be realized in cultural diplomacy, media strategies, and life within environments influenced by the digital space. Of course, the meaning of convergence in this text is considered as *“a process in which independent national units interact by cooperating with each other and resolving issues through joint efforts, and to form a whole in order to achieve a goal or a coalition of several countries on at least issues based on cumulative benefit”* (Basiri & Mousavi Noghli, 2015: 70).

Research Objective

Therefore, the main objective of the research is to identify the capacities of the media in creating cultural convergence among the countries of the Nowruz sphere within the framework of media diplomacy.

Secondary Objectives

Within the framework of the above objective, more specific and detailed objectives can also be identified. These include providing strategies and media policies to strengthen Nowruz convergence, identifying the increasing role of the media in promoting this convergence, and ultimately identifying the capacity of Nowruz as a platform for intercultural communication among the countries of the Nowruz sphere, which are the secondary objectives of the research.

Research Questions

The fundamental question of the research is: which media strategies have a prominent role and effectiveness in cultural convergence among the countries of the Nowruz sphere? What potentials and capacities does Nowruz have for cultural convergence among the member countries of Nowruz?

Literature and Research Concepts

Nowruz

The United Nations, by designating 1 Farvardin/21 March as “International Nowruz Day,” provides the following definition of this ritual:

“Nowruz, which means 'New Day' in Persian, is much more than just the beginning of a new year—this ancient celebration honors life, rebirth, and the triumph of light over darkness. With roots dating back more than 3,000 years to the Zoroastrian era, Nowruz marks the arrival of spring and is celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, usually March 20 or 21. Today, this celebration unites diverse cultures in Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and beyond, offering a rich array of shared customs, traditions, and values” (United Nations, n.d.).

Nowruz is not only a calendrical event or a local ritual, but also a reflection of a collective cultural memory in which joy, human solidarity, and connection with nature are central. These multidimensional characteristics make Nowruz potentially a bridge between cultures; a bridge that not only reflects the

civilizational values of our region but also aligns with contemporary concerns and values (Mesbah, 2025).

Therefore, Nowruz is a distinguished element within a shared civilizational sphere that connects these countries and nations and historically encompassed a wider geography, which over the centuries included a vast area from Anatolia to Mesopotamia, India, and Central Asia (Sazmand, 2018).

Cultural Convergence Theory

This research is conducted within the framework of cultural convergence theory. Convergence is considered a process in which independent national units show a tendency to cooperate with one another and to resolve issues through joint efforts, and strive to overcome differences and conflicts to pursue ways of collaborating with each other (Basiri & Mousavi Noghli, 2015). Cultural convergence occurs when cultures become more similar to each other through increased interaction. With a high level of encounter and exchange, the beliefs, behaviors, ideologies, and languages of two or more cultures become “convergent” and adopt each other’s characteristics (Boyd, 2024, p. 22).

This theory refers to the process of linking and bringing closer the values and behaviors of different cultures as a result of interaction, and through cultural synergy and exchange, it reduces conflicts. Cultural convergence is a phenomenon within the cultural and social geography in which different cultures become more similar to each other due to shared influences and interactions. This process is driven by multiple factors, including globalization, technology, migration, and communications. Cultural convergence can lead to the integration of traditions, customs, and values, and consequently create a more homogeneous global culture. However, this phenomenon may also provoke resistance and efforts to preserve unique cultural identities (Yadav, 2024).

Research Background

Scientific studies have addressed various aspects of Nowruz. In a study, the similarities and differences of Nowruz from Kurdish and Persian perspectives are examined, and it is concluded that although Nowruz is a symbol of rebirth, renewal, freedom, and peace, there are many differences in the way Nowruz is celebrated; for the Kurds, it is a symbol of resistance, whereas for Iranians, it is a cultural celebration.

A study titled “Futures Studies and Scenario Building for Cultural Relations between Iran and Central Asia Based on the Nowruz Tradition” (Vosoghi & Mousavi, 2014: 22) examined possible scenarios in cultural relations among these countries and showed that due to interests, religion, and ancient traditions such as Nowruz, long-term convergence is achievable if cultural diplomacy is applied. The media background of Nowruz among the seven Turkic-speaking countries (Batu, Öz, Tos, & Kurban, 2026) indicates that for these countries, Nowruz represents abundance, prosperity, unity, and renewal, and its fundamental essence demonstrates a lasting link between past and future traditions.

Their research findings show that media coverage has mostly focused on events rather than rituals. The result of this study indicates that Nowruz should be incorporated into educational programs, the media, and international cooperation in order to increase cultural awareness and to recognize and celebrate this treasure of tradition and festivity. Therefore, great efforts are made to preserve and promote it as a priceless cultural heritage so that its significance and vitality are not lost for future generations. This research emphasizes that the power of Nowruz as a unifying force for humanity across these diverse cultural landscapes should be recognized and celebrated, as it serves as a foundation for global cultural diversity. Also, (Batu, Kurban, & Tos, 2022) in their research show that Nowruz rituals include actions performed based on people's beliefs, such as hospitality, visiting ceremonies, entertainments, competitions, and visiting relatives, which reflect unity and solidarity. According to their findings, during this celebration, social class differences are diminished, interpersonal communications are strengthened, and shared feelings are exchanged.

The Capacity of Nowruz for Cultural Convergence

Recent studies also show that the Nowruz ritual leads to the creation of perceptual and active convergence, the intermingling of emotional flows among discursive actors, and the establishment of interaction between them (Saeidi et al., 2025: 50). Rituals such as house cleaning, sprouting greenery (sabzeh), and setting the Haft-Seen table are pre-Nowruz celebrations with the capacity for expansion, openness, and movement. In addition to extending the space of Nowruz and bringing it early into people's lives, these rituals permeate one another and contribute to the transmission of values (Saeidi et al., 2025: 55).

The adoption of the resolution titled "International Nowruz Day" on 24 February 2010 and the recognition of Nowruz as an international occasion by the United Nations across 11 countries represents a new development in regional convergence among culturally, historically, and ethnically related countries of Southwest Asia (Movaffagh et al., 2024).

As Hakim Abu al-Qasim Ferdowsi (329–416 AH) states in the *Shahnameh*, Nowruz is a celebration of truth and honesty, and a season of friendship, greenery, and separation from evils (Tolouei-Azar et al., 2015). These elements, which have a lofty human dimension, can revive and develop the powerful commonalities within the Nowruz civilization.

Media Diplomacy

Diplomacy is a specific mechanism that is mostly used in the field of state foreign policy for political and cultural objectives of governments. Gilboa, in his article, presents two conceptual models of diplomacy, namely public diplomacy and mediated media diplomacy. According to him, media

diplomacy (MD) refers to the use of mass media by authorities to send signals, exert pressure on governments and non-state actors, build trust, advance negotiations, and gain public support for agreements (Gilboa, 2020).

In a general sense, media diplomacy means the use of media to complement and enhance foreign policy, which “*is pursued through multiple ordinary and special media activities, including press conferences, interviews, meetings of government leaders and mediators in rival countries, and media events organized to open a new era in mutual relations*” (Babran & Pour Rashidi, 2012). It has also been described as “*the specific use of media in advancing and facilitating foreign policy*” (Gilboa, 2002).

Today, media diplomacy has gained importance because “*media are intermediaries between individual awareness, extensive international structures, and meaning-making*” (Mehdizadeh, 2010: 24), and their role as one of the key actors in international relations and intercultural communication is seriously considered. In today’s context, it refers to a set of media mechanisms through which part of policies can be applied to the public, political parties, politicians, groups, institutions, international organizations, and even other states (Sadati, 2014).

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METHOD

This study is conducted using an analytical and descriptive method, through the review of scientific works and research related to four areas: media, media diplomacy, culture, and Nowruz. The research, with focus and emphasis on the units of analysis—namely convergence, intercultural communication, media diplomacy, conflict reduction, and innovation—examines the position of Nowruz as an intercultural platform within the framework of media policy. The theory of intercultural convergence is considered as the theoretical framework in this study, and the answers to the research questions are provided based on this framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With an emphasis on the theory of cultural convergence and the capacity of Nowruz as a platform for alignment, media diplomacy is among the actual and potential possibilities for strengthening this convergence among the countries of the Nowruz domain. The findings of this study indicate that in macro media strategies based on this civilizational domain, Nowruz is recognized as a shared symbolic asset that connects the countries of the Nowruz region. In terms of media diplomacy, both traditional communication tools and modern digital communication instruments provide significant opportunities

for the societies of this civilizational domain. Based on the research findings, media diplomacy requires that specific attention be given to several important areas among the countries of the Nowruz region.

Nowruz Media Union

The first step in establishing Nowruz as a generative element of convergence is the creation of a Nowruz Media Union, especially within the context of migration and diaspora. Considering that at the heart of Nowruz lies the spirit of solidarity and unity (Motaghi Tabari, 2024), Nowruz—which represents an intercontinental celebration with the participation of nations with different languages, religions, and cultures—can serve as a very rich subject for analyzing and understanding cultural convergence and divergence (Batu, Öz, Tos, & Kurban, 2026).

Union and collective processes led by media workers can materially and meaningfully address issues of equity and diversity in media (Cohen, Trusolino, & Grzincic, 2025). Considering the cultural, linguistic, and social shifts caused by migration, intercultural communication among migrant communities is possible through aligning elements such as Nowruz. In the diaspora, Nowruz is not only a nostalgic factor but also a strong platform for empathy and convergence among these communities. In this context, the production and digital archiving of Nowruz content, as well as the implementation of joint projects around it by the Nowruz Cultural Union, will make these efforts more fruitful.

Production of Cinematic and Media Content

One of these diplomatic strategies can be the production of films and animations based on Nowruz, focusing on the shared rituals and rich history of this civilizational domain. *“The production of impactful and strong films in this field and their translation into the languages of other countries within the civilizational domain can be considered an important and influential action. This is because one of the ways to introduce this ancient heritage to the general public of the countries in the Iranian civilizational domain is through broadcasting effective historical and documentary films, in which attention is given to the geographical extent, historical dimensions, and cultural aspects and commonalities”* (Sazmand, 2018).

Nowruz Dialogues in Mass Media

Designing dialogue programs on national and transnational television networks based on the shared discourse of Nowruz within this civilizational domain will establish the roots of convergence. *“Today, Nowruz is celebrated by people with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, reflecting a shared and universal desire for renewal, peace, and prosperity”*(United Nations, n.d.).

Through its rituals and symbolism, Nowruz demonstrates how geography and culture are transcended in this global and universal symbol: a sense of renewal and cultural heritage. Therefore, from the above analysis, the intrinsic meaning of this celebration in many societies becomes evident, emphasizing the importance of intercultural dialogue and valuing diversity in our globalized world (Batu, Öz, Tos, & Kurban, 2026).

Of course, considering the prevailing policies in Afghanistan, the possibility of forming such a strategy within this territory has become virtually zero. Due to the shift of the public sphere from domestic media to exile media, Afghanistan's Nowruz media diplomacy is likewise limited to exile media, which can play a distinguished role in advancing this initiative.

Joint Cultural Think Tanks

In this context, the establishment of joint cultural think tanks among Persian-speaking countries, the development of communication infrastructures, content production, research, and the study of shared cultural figures (Movaffagh et al., 2024) are among other measures in the media domain.

This research demonstrated that Nowruz, as a cultural platform encompassing universal human values such as peace, peaceful coexistence, truthfulness, moderation, and the confrontation of ignorance and oppression, represents the greatest potential for cultural convergence—not only among the countries of the Nowruz region but also among other nations of the world. According to this study, Nowruz possesses the power and capacity to play a strong and effective role in the convergence of the peoples of this civilizational domain, a role that can be realized through the use of modern tools and systems in creating dialogue and narrative. The culture of Nowruz, aside from its capacity for diverse interpretations and celebrations, also clearly demonstrates the ability to adopt soft media tools in order to achieve the objectives of Nowruz. Governments of the Nowruz region, as well as cultural and media figures within this domain at national and transnational levels, are in serious need of a tactical shift in media diplomacy through a deep reassessment of the representation of Nowruz in the media. This change should be implemented at the national level in more stable and well-organized countries in terms of media infrastructure; however, in countries where information flows still face political and security challenges, representations can take place through exile and transnational media.

In general, the creation of a Nowruz media union among prominent media figures at the transnational level, aimed at creating, preserving, and disseminating the culture and civilization of Nowruz, constitutes the first step in this diplomacy. At the core of this union, the broadcasting and distribution of Nowruz films and animations from member countries, as well as the establishment of in-depth dialogues with a convergence-oriented perspective in both transnational and domestic media, can be realized.

CONCLUSION

According to the research findings, the discourse of Nowruz, as a result of media representation within the framework of meaningful and systematic policymaking, provides the possibility of convergence and closer connection among the societies of the Nowruz region. Considering the multipolarity of societies in today's world, Nowruz, as an intercultural platform, functions as an element of resilience in this domain, and the media play a supportive and effective role. This study shows that the establishment of media organizations at the transnational level to strengthen Nowruz dialogues is one of the most significant media policies in elevating the discourse of Nowruz, aiming to achieve empathy and cultural convergence among the societies of the Nowruz region. This research aligns with the study by Vosoghi & Mousavi (2014: 22), which considers the application of cultural diplomacy as a means to achieve long-term convergence. The establishment of a media union at a macro level is consistent with the findings of Batu, Öz, Tos, & Kurban (2026), whose study indicates that Nowruz should be incorporated into educational programs, media, and international cooperation in order to increase cultural awareness and to recognize and honor this heritage of tradition and celebration.

This research, overall, highlights the three fundamental pillars of the media diplomacy triangle in strengthening the Nowruz discourse. These three pillars are: establishing a major global agenda for organizing a Nowruz media union at the transnational level, shaping Nowruz discourses—especially based on peace, justice, and innovation—on a global scale, and producing artistic and cinematic content based on Nowruz messages by artists and the cinema sector. With this approach, media diplomacy plays the greatest role in forming the cultural convergence discourse, while, on the other hand, the true nature of Nowruz—which is participation in dialogue, acceptance of differences, and support for new values—is emphasized.

Suggestions

Our study showed that, despite existing research on Nowruz, there remain areas and opportunities for further investigation in this field. In this study, we suggest that research be conducted on the following topics, which still appear to be underrepresented in academic journals:

1. The representation of Nowruz in Afghan mass media
2. The core messages and symbols of Nowruz in Afghan society
3. A comparative study of how Nowruz is celebrated and analyzed in the countries of the Nowruz cultural sphere
4. A study of the opportunities and challenges of celebrating Nowruz in the migration context

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

AI Usage

The translation of this article from Persian into English was assisted by artificial intelligence tools. However, the manuscript was carefully reviewed by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content in its entirety.

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