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MESHKIN DANIYAL RANJBAR. PRO-PAHLAVI MONARCHISTS WITHIN THE IRANIAN DIASPORA IN THE U.S.

Keywords: Iranian diaspora; Pahlavi monarchy; Iranian foreign policy; diasporic influence; political opposition in exile; Shain and Barth model; geopolitical strategy.

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Abstract. This article examines the role of the Iranian diaspora in the U.S. and its potential influence on Iranian foreign policy, focusing on Pahlavi monarchists in particular. Drawing on Shain and Barth's theoretical model, it provides an analysis of conditions allowing diasporic communities to influence the foreign policy guidelines of their countries of origin.

The study reveals that, despite the favourable democratic environment of the host country and the presence of identity-based motivations among the members of the diaspora, the real influence on Iran's foreign policy is limited by five structural factors, namely the economic vulnerability of the country of origin; the ideological characteristics of the regime, which views diasporic opposition as a tool used by external enemies; the potential for coercive influence from the Iranian authorities; significant fragmentation around foreign policy issues within the diaspora; and the Islamic Republic's negative perception of the diaspora.

The research shows that the Iranian diaspora's political agency remains structurally limited and unable to use demographic presence and democratic advantages of the U.S. in order to have a meaningful impact on Iran's foreign policy.

Diasporas are increasingly becoming key non-state actors in international relations, having a multifaceted impact on the political, economic, and cultural spheres. Though there is no universally accepted definition, diasporic communities generally maintain transnational ties to their historical homelands, manifesting themselves as active or passive, constructive or destructive actors in global politics [1]. Their importance lies in their ability to transcend national borders, thus shaping the foreign policy agenda through both formal and informal channels.

Relationships between diasporas and their states of origin include formal aspects governed by public policy, as well as informal networks encompassing social, financial, and cultural connections; together, they highlight the potential diasporic communities have to influence the foreign policy directions of both countries of origin and host countries [2]. As transnational actors, diasporas often become catalysts for shifts in policies by leveraging their collective identity and organizational resources to influence diplomatic interactions, allocation of resources, and geopolitical strategies.

Theoretical approaches to the study of diasporic influence have gradually evolved in view of this complexity. Notably, Shain¹ and Barth conceptualize diasporas as dynamic, intersecting nodes where identity construction actors shape the motivational core of diasporic communities, while liberally disposed actors in domestic politics