

Identifying Geopolitical Factors Affecting Foreign Policy

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Geography has always played an important role in human affairs. It has shaped or hindered the identity, nature, and history of national governments, helped or hindered their social, political, and economic development, and played an important role in their international relations. As such, political entities have a special status in terms of their natural and human geographical features and characteristics which, in terms of their role in the international system, interact with other countries, especially with world powers positively or negatively. Paying attention to the characteristics and factors of geopolitics will make politicians aware of their weaknesses and strengths and their national power in general. They will have the necessary goals in adopting political and international policies, and pursue interests in accordance with their capabilities, role, and position in the international arena. The important thing is that decision-makers in foreign policy, with complete and accurate knowledge of geopolitical factors, make the best possible decision, take full advantage of the positive factors in order to realize the national interests and minimize the adverse effects of the negative geopolitical factors. Accordingly, the present study, derived from a doctoral thesis, seeks to answer the question of what the geopolitical factors influence foreign policy.

2. Review of Literature

There has been a lot of work done on the geopolitical factors influencing foreign policy, and each has developed its own perspective. Some of these are as follows: Hafeznia et al. (2011) have made a good relation between politics and space. In this book, the basic concepts of politics and space has been stated, as well as the interaction of politics and geographical space. In other words, understanding the processes and quality of geographical space formation under the influence of political ideas and decisions, the effect of space requirements on policy formation has

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expressed. Etaat (2006) has divided the geopolitical factors affecting the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran into two general parts: fixed factors (position, size, topography, shape of the country) and variable factors (humans, population, resources, political and social context, the characteristics of the international system (transformation of the centers of world power)), the requirements of these factors in the direction of the country's foreign policy has take into account. Iran's foreign policy during the First and Second World Wars was explored from a geopolitical perspective. Navazani (2012), referred to the relations between Iran and the United States, and discussed the behaviors of the United States before and after the Islamic Revolution. He provided a comprehensive overview of US behavior, but pays little attention to Iran's geopolitical capabilities and does not explain the impact of these capabilities on US behavior with Iran.

3. Method

The present study, as a basic research, attempted to identify the geopolitical factors affecting foreign policy using a descriptive-analytical method. Data was collected through the use of expert opinions through reference books, articles, and websites. Then effective geopolitical factors in foreign policy were identified and introduced.

4. Results and Discussion

The regulation and direction of foreign policy of countries involve various factors and variables that are undoubtedly useful for understanding what is going on in a country's machine and policy making system (Kazemi, 1999). Among these influential factors, geopolitical factors are of high importance. A look at these factors indicates that they are incomplete. To attain the geopolitical factors influencing foreign policy, related theories and perspectives were thoroughly explored and some factors were added by the researcher. These geopolitical factors comprise 56 factors that, for better understanding, are divided into seven sections: geographic factors, demographic factors, economic factors, political factors, defense-security factors, regional, and global factors, and scientific program factors.

5. Conclusion

The changes and alternation that have taken place in the world over the last decades in various forms have given rise to the increasing dependence of countries on each other. This dependence is to the extent that it is impossible to achieve national interests and national security without active and powerful role-playing in preventing effective and realistic foreign policy in the regional and global arena. In order to have an effective foreign policy, it is important to identify the factors that influence foreign policy and strive to strengthen these factors to achieve national goals. Among the factors affecting the foreign policy of countries, geopolitical factors are among the most important ones. According to the increasing importance of geopolitical factors influencing foreign policy, there has been no adequate scientific research in this area that can fully recognize and explain the geopolitical factors influencing foreign policy in the context of new developments and provide a model of the factors affecting foreign policy. Therefore, in order to achieve this

model, the present study has attempted to study the geopolitical factors influencing the foreign policy of countries according to developments in recent decades by examining the theories and work done in this field and present it in a new segmentation format. The geopolitical factors affecting foreign policy obtained through this include 56 factors that are outlined in the following seven sections for better understanding: geographical factors; demographic factors; economic factors; political factors; defense- security factors; regional and global factors.

Overall, developments in the global arena have significantly increased the status and impact of geopolitical factors on countries' foreign policy. As the surveys show, to the extent possible that realistic and effective foreign policy prevention is in line with geopolitical factors, achieving national goals and interests at regional and global levels will be easier.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Geopolitical Factors, Foreign Policy, State, International Relations

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