International Journal of Enhanced Research in Educational Development (IJERED)
ISSN: 2320-8708, Vol. 14 Issue 1, January-February, 2026

Geopolitics of Natural Resources or Political Borders

Dr. Seema

Assistant Professor in Geography, Government College Nalwa, Hisar

ABSTRACT

The geopolitics of natural resources and political borders are deeply intertwined, as uneven resource distribution (oil, water, minerals) creates power dynamics, fueling international competition, interdependence, and potential conflict, while fixed borders often cut across resource areas (like rivers or mines), making management complex and strategic, influencing national security, trade, and global power struggles, as seen in disputes over energy routes or shared water basins. Natural resources actually affect the power and influence the states to achieve their further political goals. It majorly analyzes the inter-state rivalry that originated from Western geopolitical thinking. This thought also influences and dominates the relationship between trade war and the power of a country. As an example, we can talk about the oil and oil reserves. Oil is that type of commodity which have the power to generate so much wealth. There are so many industrialized countries that may deploy their all types of military sections to show their power along the sea lines and near the exploitation sites. Resource Geopolitics comes into this picture to study how the states are using their resources to show themselves strong to the world.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Imperialism, Hypothetical resource, Geopolitical strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Geopolitics (from Ancient Greek geo means 'earth, land' and politikḗ 'politics') is the study of the effects of Earth's geography on politics and international relations. Geopolitics usually refers to countries and relations between them. According to multiple researchers, the term is currently being used to describe a broad spectrum of concepts, in a general sense used as "a synonym for international political relations", but more specifically "to imply the global structure of such relations"; this usage builds on an "early-twentieth-century term for a pseudoscience of political geography" and other pseudoscientific theories of historical and geographic determinism.

Friedrich Ratzel (1844 -1904) was the first German-speaking author to attempt to develop a scientific method for geopolitics, which he derived from natural history and zoology. Ratzel asserted that “in the state, we are dealing with an organic being. But nothing contradicts the nature of the organic more than a rigid boundary.” The seven laws established by Ratzel contain some natural laws with chauvinistic ideas, such as “the size of the state grows with its level of culture” or “the growth of a state takes place with the annexation of smaller entities by larger ones.” Since the organism is in competition with others, every large state with a growing population must claim more space in order to maintain its own civilised status. according to Ratzel. This spatialisation was then adopted and expanded by Karl Haushofer.

At the level of international relations, geopolitics is a method of studying foreign policy to understand, explain, and predict international political behavior through geographical variables. These include area studies, climate, topography, demography, natural resources, and applied science of the region being evaluated.

Geopolitics focuses on political power linked to geographic space, in particular, territorial waters, land territory and wealth of natural resources, in correlation with diplomatic history, in particular the context of a larger power relative to its neighboring states of smaller or similar power. Some scholars have argued that geopolitics should serve as "an aid to statecraft."Topics of geopolitics include relations between the interests of international political actors focused within an area, a space, or a geographical element, relations that create a geopolitical system.

CURRENT GEOPOLITIS ISSUES IN WORLD

Current geopolitical issues involve major power competition (US-China), ongoing conflicts (Russia-Ukraine, Middle East), supply chain restructuring ("de-risking"), cyber warfare, climate change impacts, rising protectionism, challenges to multilateralism, and resource competition, all reshaping global alliances and economic stability. Key flashpoints include US-Iran tensions, Indo-Pacific security, and emerging Arctic geopolitical dynamics, while internal political divides in nations like the US add complexity.

Major Power Dynamics & Conflicts
US-China Rivalry: Competition extends to trade, technology (semiconductors), and regional influence, impacting global sourcing.

Russia-Ukraine War: Continues to destabilize energy and food markets and test European-US alignment, with a push for diplomatic resolution.

Middle East Instability: Ongoing tensions between Iran, Israel, and regional actors create significant security risks, impacting maritime trade routes.

US Foreign Policy Shifts: Potential shifts in US engagement under different administrations create uncertainty for allies, challenging global alliances and multilateral institutions.

AMERICA GEOPOLITICS POLICY

As of January 2026, U.S. foreign policy is defined by a shift toward assertive, transactional, and unilateral actions, heavily influencing global stability. Key issues include a major trade and tech rivalry with China, a "Venezuela Gambit" involving direct intervention against its leadership, tensions over Greenland, and a pivot away from traditional alliances like NATO, leading to high-risk, unpredictable global relations.

Key Geopolitical Issues Involving America in 2026:
Trump Administration Foreign Policy: The U.S. is adopting a "rogue actor" approach, characterized by a dismantling of previous multilateral commitments, the weaponization of trade (tariffs/sanctions), and an emphasis on bilateral deals.

US-China Rivalry: Trade, technology, and geopolitical supremacy struggles continue, with geo-economics confrontation cited as the highest short-term threat to global stability, according to WION and S&P Global.

Latin America and Venezuela: The U.S. has intensified focus on Latin American drug cartels and initiated direct, "audacious" military actions, including operations against Venezuelan leadership, notes the Blackrock Investment Institute and CNBC.

Middle East Instability: High-risk confrontations persist, including potential Israeli strikes on Iran, affecting oil markets and regional security, according to the Geopolitical Monitor and U.S. Bank.

European and NATO Relations: The U.S. is reducing its commitment to NATO, questioning the value of traditional alliances, and adopting a more isolationist or "America First" posture, as analyzed by the Stimson Center and Council on Foreign Relations.

Arctic Security: The U.S. has expressed direct interest in acquiring Greenland, citing national security concerns regarding Russian and Chinese presence in the region, reports CNBC.

These developments have led to increased policy uncertainty, with many nations navigating a world where U.S. reliability is in question.

Geopolitics of Natural Resources
Power & Leverage: Resource-rich nations gain influence; resource-poor nations become dependent, affecting foreign policy and security.

Conflict & Cooperation: Competition over resources (e.g., oil, water) can spark conflict (like naval patrols near oil fields) or drive cooperation (transboundary water agreements).

Economic Drivers: Resources like oil, gas, and critical minerals (lithium, cobalt) are vital for industrial economies, making their control a key geopolitical objective.

Energy Security: Securing energy supplies (oil, gas, renewables) is a major national security concern, influencing alliances and military presence.

Defining Space: Borders (land, maritime) delineate sovereignty and control over territory, resources, and strategic locations like ports or waterways.

Territorial Disputes: Borders often cut through resource-rich areas or strategic geographic features (e.g., Himalayan range, rivers), leading to disputes and militarization.

Strategic Importance: Key border areas (e.g., canals, straits, coastlines) become focal points for power projection and competition between nations.

Resource Access: Borders impact direct access to resources and trade routes; for example, landlocked countries face challenges accessing markets and resources.

Resource Nationalism: Nations asserting control over their resources (often within their borders) can clash with global supply needs.

Global Trade Routes: Control over strategic maritime passages (like chokepoints) is crucial for resource transport, making these areas geopolitical hotspots.

Dynamic Relationship: Geographical features, resource distribution, and political boundaries constantly interact, shaping international relations, trade wars, and power struggles

RESOURCE GEOPOLITICS CONFLICT

Resource Geopolitics describes the method to study how natural resources actually affect the power and influence the states to achieve their further political goals. Let us discuss.

Resource Geopolitics describes the process of who gets what, when, where, and how. During the time of the Cold War, there are so many countries in the North adopted many methods to ensure the continuous flow of resources.

Oil is the most important resource which can affect the global strategy. This commodity has a high strength to generate so much wealth. Oil also can control the political struggles that can happen due to geopolitics.

The 30 percent of the total global oil production takes place in West Asia, particularly the Gulf region tops about this matter.

Water and water borders are the most important resource that is also relevant to resource geopolitics. The regional variations and the scarcity of fresh drinking water in the whole world are also considered the leading sources of geopolitical conflicts in the 21st century.

There are so many conflicts that take place between the different countries that shares the same rivers. This conflict may lead to the major military conflicts further.

Resource Geopolitics - Oil and Water

The Resource Geopolitics dynamics generally evolve with the allocation of resources. The resources are the major diving source that helped in the power expansion process of Europe as history says. The inter-state competition is totally based on resources in different ways like trade, warfare, and dominance. These factors played a major role in Western geopolitics. The main concern was there the overseas resources and maritime routes. In the 17th century, there was a steady supply of timber which was a major objective for all European Powers. At this time, Europe started to dominate the waterlines during the world wars. The important things supplied through these routes and majorly oil.

During the Cold War, the northern nations industrialized themselves through different tactics of safeguard including resource flow management and military deployment. The diplomatic relations helped the friendly nations and other nations came under the agreement of the multinational cooperation's. At this time, oil became an important commodity and so many nations started their rivalry due to this. Gradually West Asia, specifically the Gulf Region emerged as a place of oil resources. Around 64 % of known reserves of oil are found in the Gulf Region.

After this, the water also became a part of the dispute. It became a critical factor because of the context of the freshwater reserve. There are certain regions in the world where the freshwater reserve is too low. This also created so many conflicts and led to water wars. Another water dispute happened over pollution, irrigation, and dam construction which highlighted the potential conflicts as well, The Resource Geopolitics studies the sharing of river basins that can lead to military tensions.

Disciplinary differences in perspectives

Negative associations with the term "geopolitics" and its practical application stemming from its association with World War II and pre-World War II German scholars and students of geopolitics are largely specific to the field of academic geography, and especially sub-disciplines of human geography such as political geography. However, this negative association is not as strong in disciplines such as history or political science, which make use of geopolitical concepts. Classical geopolitics forms an important element of analysis for military history as well as for sub-disciplines of political science such as international relations and security studies. This difference in disciplinary perspectives is addressed by Bert Chapman in Geopolitics: A Guide To the Issues, in which Chapman makes note that academic and professional International Relations journals are more amenable to the study and analysis of Geopolitics, and in particular Classical geopolitics, than contemporary academic journals in the field of political geography.

There are many theories about the Geopolitics like; Alfred Thayer Mahan and sea power, Nicholas J. Spykman, Mackinder and the Heartland Theory

In disciplines outside geography, geopolitics is not negatively viewed (as it often is among academic geographers such as Carolyn Gallaher or Klaus Dodds) as a tool of imperialism or associated with Nazism, but rather viewed as a valid and consistent manner of assessing major international geopolitical circumstances and events, not necessarily related to armed conflict or military operations.

Implications for Global Stability and Conflict

1. Energy Security

Energy security is a major concern for all nations, driving policies and alliances aimed at ensuring stable and affordable energy supplies. Countries heavily reliant on energy imports, like Japan and many European nations, are particularly vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions in energy supply chains.

Diversification of Energy Sources: To reduce dependency on any single source or region, countries are investing in alternative energy sources, including renewables like wind and solar.

Strategic Reserves: Nations maintain strategic petroleum reserves to buffer against supply disruptions and price spikes.
Energy Diplomacy: Energy-exporting nations use their resources as diplomatic tools to exert influence and achieve political objectives.

2. Resource Conflicts
Competition for scarce resources can lead to conflicts, both within and between nations. These conflicts can arise from disputes over resource ownership, control, and allocation.

Intra-State Conflicts: Resource-rich regions within countries often experience internal conflicts, driven by local grievances over resource distribution and benefits.

Inter-State Conflicts: Historical examples include the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), partly driven by oil field disputes, and the Falklands War (1982), with underlying interests in potential offshore oil reserves.

Resource Curse: The paradox where countries with abundant natural resources tend to have less economic growth and worse development outcomes, often due to corruption, poor governance, and conflict.

3. Environmental Impact
The extraction and consumption of natural resources have significant environmental impacts, contributing to climate change, habitat destruction, and pollution. These environmental consequences are becoming increasingly important in geopolitical discussions.

Climate Change: Resource extraction, particularly fossil fuels, is a major contributor to climate change, leading to international efforts to transition to sustainable energy sources.

Environmental Regulations: Stricter environmental regulations in some countries are pushing resource extraction activities to regions with less stringent controls, often leading to ecological damage.

Sustainable Development: Balancing resource extraction with sustainable development goals is a growing challenge, requiring international cooperation and innovation.

Rare earth elements are essential for modern technologies, including electronics, renewable energy systems, and military equipment. China's dominance in the production and supply of these elements gives it considerable geopolitical leverage, impacting technological advancements and national security in other countries. Control over oil and gas resources significantly affects international relations by determining energy security and economic stability. Countries rich in these resources, such as those in the Middle East, often become focal points of global strategic interest and conflict. Water is a vital resource for agriculture, industry, and human consumption. In regions where water is scarce or where rivers cross national boundaries, competition for water rights can lead to tensions and conflicts. Climate change exacerbates these issues by altering precipitation patterns and increasing the frequency of droughts. The resource curse refers to the paradox where countries with abundant natural resources tend to experience less economic growth and worse development outcomes. This is often due to factors like corruption, poor governance, and conflict over resource control, which hinder sustainable development. Climate change affects resource availability and distribution, leading to changes in geopolitical dynamics. For example, melting Arctic ice opens new shipping routes and access to untapped resources, while altering weather patterns can exacerbate water scarcity and agricultural productivity, driving geopolitical tensions.

CONCLUSION

Natural resources actually affect the power and influence the states to achieve their further political goals. Resource Geopolitics is a method to study how natural resources actually affect the power and influence the states to achieve their further political goals. It majorly analyzes the inter-state rivalry that originated from Western geopolitical thinking. In this article we have discussed the different facts and aspects of Resource Geopolitics in detail. How the foreign policy of a state

is organized in detail depends on the political system of the state, its self-image and socio-cultural and religious orientation. It is also important to consider whether the state sees itself as a major global power or has the goal of moving in this direction. The goals of foreign policy also relate to energy and energy sources. It can therefore be confidently said that, regardless of a state's political system, the aim of foreign policy is always to avert or minimize risk from its own nation state.

REFERENCES

[1] An introduction to international relations. Devetak, Richard, George, Jim, 1946-, Percy, Sarah V. (Sarah Virginia), 1977- (Third ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom. 2017-09-11. p. 816. ISBN 978-1-316-63155-3. OCLC 974647995.

[2] Overland, Indra (2015). "Future Petroleum Geopolitics: Consequences of Climate Policy and Unconventional Oil and Gas". Handbook of Clean Energy Systems. John Wiley & Sons. pp. 3517–3544. doi:10.1002/9781118991978.hces203. hdl:11250/2451749. ISBN 978-1-118-99197-8 – via ResearchGate.

[3] Cope, Zak, ed. (2025). The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Geopolitics. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. doi:10.1007/978-3-031-25399-7. ISBN 978-3-031-25399-7.

[4] Gogwilt, Christopher (2000). The fiction of geopolitics: afterimages of geopolitics, from Wilkie Collins to Alfred Hitchcock, 1860–1940. Stanford, Calif.; Cambridge: Stanford University Press; Cambridge University Press. pp. 35–36. ISBN 978-0-8047-3726-5. OCLC 44932458.

[5] Dittmer, Jason; Sharp, Joanne P (2014). Geopolitics: an introductory reader. London; New York: Routledge. p. 64. ISBN 978-0-415-66663-3. OCLC 895013513.

[6] Deudney, Daniel (March 2000). "Geopolitics as Theory:: Historical Security Materialism". European Journal of International Relations. 6 (1): 77–107. doi:10.1177/1354066100006001004. ISSN 1354-0661. S2CID 146194629.

[7] Evans, Graham (1998). The Penguin dictionary of international relations. Newnham, Jeffrey. London: Penguin Books. ISBN 0-14-051397-3. OCLC 41113670.