

## **Back to Geopolitics: The Problem of Ignoring Iran's Geopolitics**

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### **Abstract**

Looking at the studies and analyses conducted in the field of Iran's issues with the world, we see the ignorance of Iran's geopolitical aspect. The concern of the present study is why Iran, despite its geopolitical importance, is always analyzed in terms of ideology and political Islam in the international arena? However, given the current geopolitical components and even its future geopolitical advantages, Iran has a potential and actual position and importance at the regional and international levels. The purpose of this study is, first, to highlight the more deliberate neglect of Iran's geopolitical aspect as an existing problem and to show some of its most important effects, and second, to highlight the geopolitical nature of Iran. The data collection method is descriptive-analytical, and they have been analyzed in the framework of the theory of "Geopolitics: The Impact of Politics on Geography" and the analytical framework of "Hermeneutics of Reflection". Based on the analysis of the effects of Iran's geopolitical neglect and with a look at the historical course (contemporary history), the research findings are a set of "historical" and "geopolitical" symbols and signs revealing the importance and determination of Iran's geopolitics, its precedence on political, ideological, cultural aspects, and the error of degradation in terms of geoculture. The result of this study is to ignore Iran's geopolitical aspect, reduce Iran's effective acting power in the international arena by introducing it more as an ideological actor, and put all the pressure on the Islamic Revolution, political Islam and the Islamic State.

**Keywords:** Geopolitics, Ideology, Iran, Islamic Revolution, Political Islam, International System.

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## **1. Introduction**

The development of human knowledge has caused a greater awareness of the connection between the components of any totality of knowledge, within itself, as well as its status and relationship with other bordering and neighboring knowledge. Due to the vastness and complexity of the world, human beings are solely able to understand a small part of every phenomenon and subject. This incomplete understanding is possible only by dividing the world of knowledge into very small parts, so that the human mind has the ability to understand it. Therefore, demarcations between sciences are for better and deeper understanding of world phenomena, and this is not the result of the essential separation of sciences from each other (Mir-Haydar and Hamidinia,2006:2), this lack of macroscopic view is one of the analytical damages at the international level in the evaluations of recent decades about the ratio of geoculture (cultural geography) and geopolitics (political geography) of Iran. Geopolitics that part of political geography that is quite close to international relations in terms of concepts and issues. The main topic of geopolitics is the study of cross-border relationships and links between places at various scales. The major issues in geopolitics, especially at national, regional and global scales, are very similar and close to those raised in international relations at the same levels (Mir-Heidar and Hamidinia,2006:38-39). Although geoculture, as in Wallerstein's opinion, along with "classical geopolitics" and "geoeconomics" are among the constituent elements of "modern geopolitics" (TaHERi and et al,2018:172) and geopolitics in its general sense, at the same time, face studies conducted in the field of Iran's geopolitics and geoculture, after the Islamic Revolution, the heavy burden of judgments has been placed on geoculture, *i.e.* "a complex process of the interactions of power, culture and geography" (TaHERi and et al,2018:167) with more weight on culture.

As we enter the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of the Islamic Revolution, it is appropriate to ponder more seriously over these relations. While it seems that the regional and global powers are jealous of Iran's privileged geopolitics more than they are worried about progressive and rational Islam in Iran, but in representing these two aspects, the efforts are deliberately or nonintentionally focused on introducing the Islamic Revolution as the center of the challenge by ignoring Iran's geopolitics. Although the geopolitics of any country is affected by constant and variable factors, and sometimes variable factors

affect the special work of fixed factors and vice versa, it should be clarified that in the case of Iran, the issue is basically to ignore the capacities and capabilities of this "country", and to degrade the related issues leading to the political and ideological aspect and its "state". It seems that culture is the life and soul of a nation, but the life and soul will not be effective as long as it is not placed in a strong and harmonious body, as Friedrich Ratzel, a German scientist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, believed that the state, in the true sense of the word, resembles a plant and includes the biological processes of plants and animals, but the roots of states are in the soil (geography) and every government must conquer good soils or bring them under its influence in order to survive and live better (Omidi,2006:123). In fact, geoculture will flourish in its meaning and concept if it has a specific ecosystem.

The great social revolutions of the world, and specifically the 1979 revolution in Iran, and as Michel Foucault explained, were a soul in a soulless world, but if this message came from a land without geopolitics, it might not be able to change the equations at different levels. As the review of geoculture theories also shows that basically the relationship between power and culture had lost its identity in the absence of a variable called "geography"(Taheri and et al,2018:163). This research will try to shed light on historical and geopolitical symbols and signs in these areas. The necessity of such attention is because most of the analyses and writings in the field of interaction between Iran and the world focus on cultural, ideological and political aspects, and they reduce Iran to the face of "state". The reasoning and innovation of the present article is to highlight this meaning as a problematique, to avoid that error of degradation and pay attention to the nature of Iran's geopolitics and its "country" aspect, which carries a unique geopolitics, which is described in this article, and also, some of its important aspects are re-emphasized and highlighted.

## **2.Literature Review**

Ghasemi (2018) in his study seeks to show the impact of the Islamic Revolution on the strength and expansion of the Axis of Resistance in the region to get rid of Imperialism and prove the role and impact of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution and Imam Khomeini's political thought on Islamic movements in designing the future of the Axis of Resistance. In the author's opinion, the discourse of the Islamic Revolution of Iran has had an undeniable effect on other regions of the world, as well as Islamic movements, such as "Islamism", "Anti-Imperialism", "Democracy",

"Islamic Awakening" and "Continuity of Thought and Action of Resistance in Movements", which are a reflection of Iran's Islamic Revolution. In their article, Gholizadeh and Badinlou (2014) have discussed the geopolitical explanation of the role of the Islamic Revolution on the politicization of Saudi Shiites and the analysis of its levels. Their survey indicate that taking any geopolitical view on Iran's issues and Shiism, each activity in Iran, as the center of the Shia religion, affects the Shia communities that belong to Iran's sphere of influence. According to the aforementioned authors, the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which is located in the center of the Shiite geopolitical structure, has led to the politicization and organizationalization of Saudi Shiites, who are considered around the center. Ahmadi, Vasegh, and Jassemnejad (2012), in their study of the geopolitics of Shiism centered on Iran, have come to the conclusion that with the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution and the geopoliticization of Shiism, Iran's position and status, especially from a political and social point, media, education and culture in the region have been improved, and this country has been able to have a better impact and role-playing than in the past. These types of studies claim that they have a consideration on the evolution of theories that have been discussed in the last century about the role of geographical areas in domestic and international politics. According to these authors, at the beginning these theories had a completely geopolitical state, but now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, taking into account cultural approaches and the role of culture in international politics, which is on the agenda of social and political sciences and practical policies, it is more a kind of transition from "geopolitics" to "geoculture" (Naderi,2014:123). The background of all of the above-mentioned issues about Iran refers to Iran's actions in the region after the Islamic Revolution and the creation of relative solidarity among mostly Shiite Muslims. These measures are evoked in the international space as an alarm such as the Christian club, which was able to develop and improve from the purely ethnic and religious dimension to the economic and cultural dimension. Considering the huge energy reserves in West Asia, if the Shia countries converge and expand their interactions, this will lead to the formation of a powerful Shia block that will have the possibility of undisputed confrontation with the superior regional and extra-regional powers. The international effort towards Iran is being done with two approaches of ignoring Iran's geopolitics in order to belittle the role of Iran and highlighting the ideology of political Islam in the direction of

"Iranophobia", "Islamophobia" and "Shiaphobia"(Yusefi and Rezayi Esfahani,2013:10). The distinction point of this article with these kinds of studies, which are not few and due to vocabulary limitation was enough to mention a few cases here, is in their main aspects and focal claims being the clear example of the process criticized in the present article. In clearer words, the point of distinction is highlighting the "geopolitical nature of Iran" and the challenge of lowering all the capacities of discussion to the transition from "geopolitics" to "geoculture" as well as the challenge with the sufficiency of the analysis from the ideological, political and cultural viewpoint.

### **3.Methodology**

In this article, the "documentary method" is used. Documentary method is a qualitative method in which the researcher tries to discover, extract, classify and evaluate materials related to the subject of his research by systematically using data that can be cited from written documents as well as information available on reliable research sites. According to Dimon and Holloway, the documentary method provides the possibility to go beyond the time frame of the researchers, and enables the descriptive, analytical and interpretive exploration of social events and all kinds of phenomena (Sadeghi Fasaei and Erfanmanesh,2015:69-70). The steps of implementing the documentary method are as follows: 1) choosing the topic, developing the goals and questions, 2) exploratory investigations and literature review, 3) choosing the theoretical approach, 4) collecting resources, sampling and techniques for reviewing resources (specifying key words , the use of the table of contents and the list of announcements, electronic note-taking, systematic review, classification and conceptual tables, data reduction techniques, theoretical interpretation of statistics), 5) (processing) (reevaluation and adherence to paradigmatic literature), writing and reporting (summarizing and presenting a viewpoint) (Sadeghi Fasaei and Erfanmanesh,2015:69-70).

### **4.Theoretical and Analytical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this article is the theory of "geopolitics", which is an important and effective indicator in the national, regional and international policy process of countries, and more than any other factor in regional and international influences of a country and the attention and stories it evokes plays a role. Having natural factors, enjoying diversity in borders, access to open waters, the number of neighbors, being in a strategic

area and having a country's position in the international system (Sayadi and Sanaei,2017:89), are some of the important components of geopolitics, these are the same specifications of a country, and basically in geopolitics, "country" is meant, not the government, as in Ratzel's topic, it is the complete reference of the country. While the theories of imperialism, social philosophies, realism, idealism and the systems approach all talk about the influence of the environment on politics and the conditions of society (Omidi,2006:124), a generation of Iranian writers and analysts' side by side with the western media empire has willingly or unwittingly neglected the geopolitical aspect of Iran, and, in clearer words, the country and its capabilities. As it will be clear from the description of the article, our goal is to ponder more over the facts, and to investigate the marginalized corners of Iran's geopolitics and to discover the truth. Therefore, perhaps "hermeneutics" as an analytical framework is more compatible with the goals of the current research. Ricoeur considered the knowledge of hermeneutics to include two approaches: "Hermeneutics of Recollection" and "Hermeneutics of Suspicion" and considered himself the creator of a third approach called "Hermeneutics of Contemplation". With this account, perhaps "hermeneutics" as an analytical framework is more compatible with the goals of the current research. Ricoeur considered the knowledge of hermeneutics to include two approaches: "Hermeneutics of Recollection" and "Hermeneutics of Suspicion" and considered himself the creator of a third approach called "Hermeneutics of Contemplation". The "hermeneutics of Recollection" approach is based upon understanding, and it is realistic. In this approach, the commentator/interpreter assumes a reality behind the text and tries to understand it. The "hermeneutics of Suspicion" denies the existence of any meaning and reality behind the text, and it has a pessimistic attitude towards reality and interprets the text based on the interpreter's mentality. Considering Ricoeur's thought, Phillips criticizes "hermeneutics of Recollection" and "hermeneutics of Suspicion" and expresses his own account of hermeneutics of Contemplation. According to Phillips, hermeneutics of Contemplation is the third approach being free from the criticisms of the previous two approaches. His hermeneutics of Contemplation is a philosophical approach to understanding with a focus on the application of concepts in life. (Hojjati,2016:39) Perhaps the "hermeneutics of Contemplation" which is obtained in the shadow of historical reflection here and avoiding conceptual confusions (Hojjati,

2016:40) will bring us closer to reality; especially when we see that when Iran was dissolved in the global structure and there was no relation between the dissolution of sovereignty and national authority and digestions and geoculture, this privileged geography has been coveted and divided between world powers. Paul Ricoeur's model of "hermeneutics of Contemplation" is useful for reaching the depth of some disputes surrounding the geoculture of the Iranian revolution or its geopolitics, because it seems that the type of encounter with these two deep debates has so far been freed from ideological presuppositions, especially in the analysis spectrum of the competitors of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ricoeur considering interpretation in the framework of the hermeneutic tradition as an all-encompassing and endless interaction between the reader, the text, the presence space and text reading claimed that thinkers like Hegel, Husserl, Weber, and Marx, despite their influential role, failed to understand some of the subtleties of the work of interpretation and the application of meaning, and he was able to will fix these defects through emphasizing components such as narration and time. (Alavipour,2019:237) Ricoeur considered reflection to be an epistemological practice that cannot be achieved by mental intuition, and to acquire it one must take a step on the way to action. The operational method that Ricoeur undertakes for this purpose is the interpretation of signs and symbols and myths (Ricoeur,1960; Cited in Hojjati,2016:44-45). By searching for "historical" and "geopolitical" signs and symbols, the present article analyzes the effects of Iran's geopolitical neglect and interprets, analyzes, and infers around it.

## **5. Research Findings**

### **5-1. "Historical" Signs and Symbols**

Has the Iranian Revolution caused a challenge in the region from the viewpoint of the content of political Islam alone, or have the critics of the Islamic Republic tried to deliberately show their previous envy of geography in the general sense and geopolitics in the specific sense in the rivalry with this unique land? Looking at some important historical events in Iran, the historical reasons for "precedence of geopolitics over geoculture" can be argued with the following examples:

### **5-1-1. Russian and British Competitions in Iran's Geopolitic Perspective**

Due to its geopolitical position, Iran has always had a special place in the foreign policy of the powers of its time, and the basis of that was taking concessions from Iran's geopolitics. Russian and British competitions have historical reputation. Russian and British competitions have historical fame. Reaching the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean made the Russians so greedy about Iran, that the threat of the Russians became the historical problem of the Iranians during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Tsarist Russia should be considered the biggest occupier of Iran's territory, this historical fact has been the policy of occupying Iran's territory from every possible point, preventing the influence of competing countries in Iran and obtaining the most economic and political benefits. This Tsarist colonial policy reached its peak with the treaties of Golestan and Turkmenchay, which dealt the biggest military, economic and political blow to Iran's independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and along the way, made England more greedy in competition with Russia. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, England and Russia competed with each other to gain more privileges from Qajar Shah, and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the country's resources and technical plans were under the management or extraction of foreigners. During this period, Russian domination increased. They not only expanded their borders by seizing Iranian lands and adding them to their territory, but also made the Shah of Iran practically dependent on them by granting heavy loans. After the victory of the Bolsheviks, the new revolutionary leaders who were thinking of a world socialist government, considering Iran as the Suez Canal of the Communist Revolution and the springboard of the revolution, tried to attract Iran to the orbit of the Soviet Union by using various tools. Iran's characteristics such as geographical location, mineral resources and economic and political issues were important for the Soviet Union. The geographical factor was one of the constant factors that imposed policies on the regional strategy of the Soviet Union. The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean were geopolitically of interest to the Soviet Union in order to establish a relationship between land and sea forces. Although the Russians had expanded their borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the strategic problem of not having access to warm waters remained strong despite the presence of countries such as Iran and Pakistan (Rezazadeh,2006:70-77).

**5-1-2. British Member Arrangement and Bringing Pahlavi to Power**

In continuation of the above process and the competition of great powers, the third coup of February 1921 can be interpreted as a turning point and a new way to exploit Iran by British political figures. This coup was the implementation of Neo-Colonialism in Iran, which not only turned Reza Khan into Reza Shah, but also marked one of the most important manipulations and interventions of British Colonialism in the fate of the Iranians. In the new English way, the exploitation of primary resources inside the country, as well as the promotion of Modernization and social transformation in the style and context of Western life, was done by assigning submissive and subordinate members. The 3 March Coup made Iran's political and economic dependence on the West more and more. By coming to power, Reza Khan practically became the most powerful arm of the British in Iran. The extension of the oil contract in 1933 finally became the basis for the failure of the nationalization of the oil industry, and the root of the coup d'état on August 19, 1953 should actually be found in the extension of this contract, after which the United States, as the new superpower and the new partner of British Colonialism, sought its role and contribution in Iran's geopolitical table (Zarei,2005:41-44).

**5-1-3. Occupation of Iran in September 1941**

The German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 disrupted the political and military equations of World War II. The necessity of sending weapons and equipment to the new ally, the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the favorable strategic direction of Iran from every viewpoint, on the other hand, drew the attention of the superpowers of the time to Iran, and in order to achieve this goal, Iran was militarily occupied from the north and south under the pretext of the presence of the Germans, and the pioneer of this plan was the British government. Although, due to its geopolitics, Iran was called "Bridge of Victory"; But in exchange for all the sufferings and injuries they inflicted on Iranians and Iran, they did not pay any price or privilege, but only imposed their will on the Iranian government with diplomatic pressure and military force, extensive occupation and the greed of dividing Iran (Tanhatan Naseri,2007:31).

**5-1-4. The Historical Dispute between England and Iran over Iran's Oil until The Hague (La Haye)**

With the nationalization of Iran's oil industry on March 20, 1951, and the removal of the Iran-UK oil company, the British government, believing that the nationalization law of Iran's oil industry, considering the content and

arrangements contained in the relevant contract between Iran and the British oil company, it is the unilateral termination of the contract concluded on May 26, 1972 in its acts of diplomatic protection of its citizen (Iran-UK Oil Company) towards the government of Iran and based on declarations of acceptance of the court's compulsory jurisdiction, Iran filed a petition in Register the secretariat of the court. Despite the presentation of several arguments by the British government to emphasize the competence of the court to handle this case, in the end, the court voted for its lack of jurisdiction in the formal hearing stage and removed the case from the agenda to confirm the legitimacy of the process. The government and people of Iran should nationalize the oil industry from a legal point of view (Aghaei, 2014:8). It is taken for granted that this historical challenge is due to Iran's strategic resources having a direct relationship with Iran's geographical climate and characteristics.

#### **5-1-5. The Coup D'état on August 19, 1953**

In some studies, based on the two components of Wallerstein's theory, i.e., "maintaining the exploitative relationship" (maintaining inequality in the global arena) and "control over raw materials" by the central countries and especially the global hegemon, the American-British coup against Mossadegh's national government has been discussed (Radmard and Hejazi, 2016:39), which makes Iran's geopolitical weight more obvious behind the scene of the coup.

#### **5-1-6. Announcement of Iran's Gendarmerie Mission in the Region**

According to the new US policy in the world during the Nixon era, Iran in the Persian Gulf region, due to having factors such as wealth and large population, strategic position, relative stability and military power that distinguished it from other small countries in the region, accepted practically the duty of the gendarmerie of the area. At the center of the causes and goals of choosing Iran in the regional strategy of the United States, there has been a strategic position caused by Iran's geopolitics. Because one of the important conditions of the United States in this choice was that the regional ally has an important strategic position in the desired area. A combination of oil in the South and Soviet Communism in the North were fundamental concepts and the obvious basis of Iran's strategic importance. Iran was a natural barrier against the Soviet influence on the oil resources of the Middle East, and by strengthening and supporting Iran, America actually preserved and protected its oil resources in Saudi Arabia.

As a result of Eisenhower's "peripheral defense" strategy, considering factors such as Iran's position in the northern line of the Middle East, the defense of the Mediterranean region using a northern base for air or ground attacks on the Soviet Union, the oil resources of Iran and other Persian Gulf countries to feed Europe and the West in a long war, as well as the possibility of exploiting Soviet espionage paid special attention to Iran. Harold Brown, one of the American prior defense ministers, in a comparison between the capture of Iran by the Soviet Union and the capture of Europe by the same country, opines that the advantage gained from Iran will be as big as Europe's. Iran was the center of the security belt around the Soviet Union on the periphery of that country and it was strengthened with the help of the CENTO Treaty in the framework of the policy of preventing the development and progress of the Soviet Union, because the weakening of Iran and the Persian Gulf would cause the Soviet Union to dominate Europe and East Asia. Iran was also responsible for connecting NATO to the CENTO. In order to block the influence of Communism, this defense chain started from Western Europe and the Northern Mediterranean, and ended at the end of the Eastern flank in Turkey, and led to Southeast Asia through Iran and Pakistan (Chamankar, 2006).

The aforementioned cases can be continued with other historical facts, what is certain is that all these historical axes have a close relationship with the geopolitical reading, all these events are based on an understanding of Iran's geopolitical possibilities, and it is needless to say that none of these are related to ideological background and political Islam and the emergence of Iranian geo-culture that happened decades later in 1979, do not find that beyond that, in some of these moments, Iran was basically transformed in terms of culture and politics in the world power structure.

#### **5-1-7. Continuous Effort to Replace the Geopolitical Characteristics of Iran**

The Iranian geopolitical situation and features are still dominant and so important and decisive that in addition to the past jealousies and enviousness of the great powers to these privileged features, various efforts have been made and are being made for a long time until now, which, if possible, able to provide an alternative in other neighboring regions of Iran for some geopolitical considerations, as in this regard, some of these activities can be mentioned:

**5-1-7-1. Efforts for Iran's Geopolitical Changes in the Northwest Region**

Caucasus is a mountainous region in the southwest of Russia, in this region five types of competition and clash of interests can be classified. First, the competition and conflict between the interests of the United States of America and those of Russia. Second, the competition and conflict between the interests of Russia and those of Turkey. Third, the competition and conflict between the interests of Iran and America, the West and Israel, the fourth, the competition and conflict between the interests of Iran and Turkey, and the fifth, the competition and conflict between the interests of the United States and China, which is mostly summarized in economic and energy matters (Ahmadi Musaabad and et al,2021:161). Also, what is going on in the disputes related to the level of access between Iran, Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan is a geopolitical conflict. The triangle of Israel, Turkey, and Azerbaijan has been trying to change the geopolitics of this region for a long time, and each of them is trying to surround Iran in a geographical area by gaining more control in this region. The Zionist regime is trying to gain access to the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf from Erbil as well as the South Caucasus, have bases near the borders with Iran, and challenge Iran by creating a physical belt. On the other hand, Turkey, Israel and Azerbaijan, by establishing convergence and security and military mechanisms, are trying to encircle Iran through the northwestern borders and prevent Iran from penetrating into Armenia and Central Asia. The war taking place between Azerbaijan and Armenia was a partial victory for Ilham Aliyev made him more determined to think about capturing Nakhchivan and other parts of Karabagh and preventing Iran's influence in Armenia. Desiring to establish a new Ottoman Empire, Erdogan is also acting in this direction with the cooperation of Elham Aliyev and dreams to bring Israel to this region. As a country without vital energy resources, Turkey has a plan to invest in importing energy from these regions and, while reducing its excessive dependence on the Middle East, take steps to transform itself into an energy transit route to Western markets (Ahmadi Musaabad and et al,2021:161). In fact, these regimes are trying to change the geographical chess of the region in order to cut off Iran's connection with South Caucasus and Central Asia, put Iran under siege and not allow the Silk Road to be rebuilt. All this is a geopolitical conflict in the framework of the approaches of America, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Israel and to create a security and economic challenge for Iran (Hanizadeh,2021).

**5-1-7-2. Efforts to Repalce the Peaceful Pipeline**

The issue of transferring Iranian gas to the Indian subcontinent is of interest to three countries of Iran, Pakistan and India. Since this economic project, in addition to the direct economic impact, also affects the political events and relations of the countries in the region, it is natural that it will follow the reaction of different countries. However, despite the fact that European countries have announced their readiness to buy gas from the Islamic Republic within the framework of Iran's gas transmission line to Europe, but the United States, which considers energy leverage as one of the important pillars of pursuing its unilateral policy, from the very beginning, he opposed this important regional plan and put alternative proposals on the agenda to dissuade India and Pakistan. (Hosseini,2006) TAPI<sup>1</sup> Pipeline project is an example of these cases. This pipeline, which is proposed as an alternative to the Peaceful Pipeline, seeks to remove Iran, which has a suitable strategic and geo-economic position, from regional and international political equations. The structural pressures of the international system through socialization and competition and its impact on the decisions and policies of the participating countries in the TAPI Pipeline project are the main factors behind the postponement of the implementation process of the Peaceful Pipeline and the introduction of the TAPI project instead. (Mousavi Shafaei and et al,2014:161)

**5-1-7-3. Efforts to Replace Other Regions with The Strait of Hurmoz**

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the sensitive and strategic straits in the world, which is considered a critical geographical factor in the balance of power and regional and international tensions due to its communication, geo-economic, geo-strategic and geo-political values. Since this strait is the main gateway of international trade of Iran and its southern neighbors to open waters, energy export and the focus of regional and international foreign policy, the occurrence of any traffic insecurity in it, the harmful and irreparable effects such as the presence and intervention of global and regional powers, insecurity in the traffic of ships will result in economic and political pressure on the countries of the Persian Gulf region, an increase in the price of oil, a weakening of the world economy, political, economic and energy crises at the global and regional level (Shamloo and Faraji Rad, 2019:167).

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1. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran

The strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz is undeniable due to the high and irreplaceable volume of energy carriers passing through it. The fact is that the total of alternative energy passages such as the east-west pipeline from Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea and the Iraqi pipelines, in the most optimistic state and if they are repaired and put into operation, cannot exceed 7 million barrels of the 17 million barrels of oil passing through this strait. (Persian Gulf Studies Center website) Among the Persian Gulf countries, only Saudi Arabia and the UAE have built pipelines to replace the Strait of Hormuz. In fact, as reported by Bloomberg, about 100% of Iran, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain's oil exports, about 90% of Iraq's and Saudi Arabia's oil exports, and about 75% of United Arab Emirates' oil exports pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The capacity of the replacement pipeline for the Strait of Hormuz, which was built by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, is a total of 6.5 million barrels per day, but only 2.7 million barrels of this capacity were used last year. Among the countries in the region, Saudi Arabia has made the most efforts to replace the Strait of Hormuz. By building a 746-mile (1,200 km) "East-West" mega pipeline, this country can send 5 million barrels of its oil a day to a port in the Red Sea. Although none of the other Persian Gulf countries have been able to achieve such a capacity to replace the Strait of Hormuz, despite Saudi efforts, it is still the country most dependent on the Strait of Hormuz for its oil export flow (Bloomberg analysis,2019).

#### **5-2. “Geo-Political” Signs and Symbols: “Double Geo-Politics”**

Iran has the capacity and ability to influence the international system from the three dimensions of "geopolitics", "energy" and "cultural-ideological". In addition, Iran itself has once been a constituent of the international order. In terms of geopolitics, Iran's geographical location is in the neighborhood of important powers such as Russia and America's sphere of influence (south of the Persian Gulf). Being located in areas where great powers have vital interests for themselves naturally increases the country's position in the interaction between great powers. From an economic viewpoint, the world's major commercial highways in the sea and on land either pass through Iran or near Iran, and accordingly, Iran has land and water borders with fifteen neighboring countries, while having access to a significant part of the world's energy, and having geopolitical dominance over more than half of the world's energy reserves in the Persian Gulf region, an important position among the oil exporting countries (OPEC), and finally, Iran's potential role

in providing economic security and energy as the fuel of politics in the world is particularly prominent. Due to the importance and sensitivity of this geopolitical situation that the great powers are hindering the strengthening and role-playing of Iran, which is inconsistent with the international system (Jahangiri and Athari, 2018:58-59), and the important and numerous features and components of Iran's geopolitics and geostrategic resources should be specified and emphasized.

#### **5-2-1. The Centrality of Iran in Geopolitical Theories**

According to Mackinder's theory, the north of Iran is part of the core region of the heartland and other parts are part of the internal (marginal) crescent. According to Spykman's theory, Iran is located in the borderland or Rimland. According to him, this region provides the possibility of combining land and sea power better. On the other hand, there are the most human resources and ease of communication in this part of the world. According to Brzezinski's theory, America considers the Persian Gulf region as its third strategic defense line after Europe and America. Therefore, controlling strategic areas and points, especially the Strait of Hormuz, is of particular importance. One of the most important foundations of the importance and strategic and geopolitical position of the Persian Gulf is the huge oil and gas reserves in it. About 66% of the world's known oil reserves are located in this region, and about 60% of the world's oil comes from the oil production of the eight Persian Gulf oil countries (Sayadi and Sanaei, 2017:95).

#### **5-2-2. Energy Security**

With the evolution of the geostrategic discourse to the geoeconomic discourse in recent decades and the playing of the superior role of the economy in the field of global relations, the geopolitics of energy and its security have enjoyed a higher position in international relations. In this era, the category of energy, especially oil, has gained a greater role in the energy security of creating regional and international conflicts. Therefore, concepts such as energy security, strategic reserves, oil resources, energy producers and consumers, oil and gas transmission lines and the security of these lines have found a special place. In this era, Iran is at the center of attention and international interactions from two aspects of energy production and transmission. On the one hand, Iran is in the center of the strategic energy oval, both in terms of oil and gas, and on the other hand, it is on the way to transfer this energy to the large energy consumption markets, namely South and East Asia and Europe. These features have potentially given Iran a

special geopolitical and geoeconomic position (Mokhtari Hashi and Nosrati, 2010:95) and made the country's position prominent in regional and global relations.

#### **5-2-3. Persian Gulf Energy Transit Agent**

From a geopolitical perspective, Iran and its subsurface region, the Persian Gulf, is a passage from East to West and a place of connection between the deep geopolitical north (Heartland region) and deep south (Rimland region) and in the new geo-economic realms, it is also at the center of the energy strategy oval located between three important areas of energy consumption, i.e., Europe, China and India. Connecting the energy corridor of the Persian Gulf to the areas of consumption will link the fate of the energy and economic security of these countries to the fate of Iran, create strategic partners, improve the level of the regional position, increase the coefficient of economic development and national security of Iran (Noruzizadeh and et al,2022:228).

#### **5-2-4. Territorial Extent and Tourism**

Iran is a country in Western Asia located at the geographical coordinates of 32 degrees North and 53 degrees East, and from the north to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea, from the east to Pakistan and Afghanistan, from the south to the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman and from the west It reaches Turkey and Iraq. This country also owns islands in the Persian Gulf. The total area of Iran is 1648195 square kilometers, of which 116600 square kilometers are the waters of this country. Almost one third of its 8,334 km border is water. (Middle East: Iran — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency,2020) The capacity and diversity of Iran's nature, apart from its abundant blessings as a four-season country, is also the greatest ability to benefit from geotourism and the tourism industry.

#### **5-2-5. Neighborhood and Geographical and Geopolitical Interdependence of CIS<sup>1</sup> Countries and Iran**

The geographical space of Iran is the link and buffer between the open waters of the south and the vast geographical expanse of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and even Eastern Europe. This is the advantage of Iran's transit position for the access and connection of CIS countries to open waters and, on the contrary, the transit position of some of these countries for Iran's connection with other CIS countries and Europe. (Vali Gholizadeh

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1. Commonwealth of Independent States

and Zaki,2008:28) In this regard, reviewing the size of Iran's borders is very important. In this measurement, the exact length of Iran's borders is also calculated:

The length of Iran's land borders:

1. Iraq: 11815 land, 4265 water, total: 1608 km
2. Turkey: 5242 land, 419 water, total: 5661 km
3. Armenia: 0 land, 45 water, total: 45 km
4. Azerbaijan: 1787 land, 5781 water, total: 7568 km
5. Turkmenistan: 786 land, 4099 water, total: 11899 km
6. Afghanistan: 6814 land, 2377 water, total: 9191 km
7. Pakistan: 6134 soil, 3114 water, total: 9248 km

Total land borders of Iran: 3965 land, 2045 water, total: 6010 km

The length of Iran's sea borders:

1. Saudi Arabia: 258 km
  2. Iraq: 24 km
  3. Kuwait: 144 km
  4. Bahrain: 27 km
  5. Qatar: 268 km
  6. UAE: 330 km (in the Persian Gulf)
  7. Oman: 227 km (in the Strait of Hormuz)
- Total sea border in the Persian Gulf: 1278 km
    1. Emirates: 102 km (in the Sea of Oman)
    2. Oman: 456 km (in the Sea of Oman)
    3. Pakistan: 204 km
  - Total sea border in Oman Sea: 762 km
    1. Azerbaijan: 224 km
    2. Turkmenistan: 300 km
  - Total sea border in the Caspian Sea: 524 km
- Total sea borders of Iran: 2564 km

With this description, the entire borders of Iran are as follows:

1. Land borders: 3965 km
2. Water borders: 2045 km
3. Sea borders: 2564 km

Total borders of Iran: 8574 km (Iran's Geography (In Persian), N.d.)

**5-2-6. Long Beaches in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman and the Strategic Strait of Hormuz**

The Strait of Hormuz is undoubtedly one of the most important and sensitive areas in the world in terms of geopolitical attitudes and strategic calculations. (Shamlou and Faraji Rad,2018:167) Possessing the strategic Strait of Hormuz and having a transit position has made Iran the world's best economic and energy bottleneck. If it happens, various factors such as: geography, energy, economy and security will mix and create a sensitive situation. Another unique feature of Iran is its long border in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, which connects Iran to open waters. Having such an important feature has distinguished Iran from other neighboring countries and even the Southwest Asia region. The location of the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea in the south has provided the best political position for the southern borders (Sayadi and Sanaei,2017:89).

**5-2-7. Caspian Sea**

Due to its location next to the Persian Gulf as the heartland of the world's fossil energy, Iran has the advantage of the Caspian Sea as the world's second energy priority. (Nami and et al,2009:58) A water area that is surrounded by Iran from the south, Russia from the north, Russia and the Republic of Azerbaijan from the west, and the Republics of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan from the east. In the past, this sea was part of the Tethys Sea, which connected the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. This sea, which is sometimes classified as the world's largest lake and sometimes as the smallest self-sufficient sea on the planet, is the largest body of water surrounded by land. Its length is about 1030 to 1200 km and its width is between 196 and 435 km. The level of the Caspian Sea is about 28 meters lower than the level of the open seas (Afzali,2013).

**5-2-8. Geo-Economic Capacities and Advantages**

In addition to geopolitical credibility, Iran also has unique geo-economic value and capacities. These capacities have made Iran a prominent player in China's energy security structure, as Iran can meet the growing needs of developing countries in the East Asia, and become the best option for Europe's energy supply and play a prominent role in geo-economic cooperation with Central Asian and Caucasus republics (Nami and et al,2009:58-60) Also, the interweaving of geography and underground resources should be added to Iran's geopolitics; when the resources and rare earth and mineral elements and energy being among the strategic products

of the world are tied with this geography, it produces a geo-economic situation and makes the challenges in this position of geopolitics clear and obvious. Iran has a lot of natural wealth; about 11% of its lands are arable, and oil, natural gas, coal, chrome, copper, iron, lead, manganese, zinc, and sulfur are Iran's most well-known natural resources. In terms of ruggedness, Iran is a mountainous country with desert and plains in the middle. The highest point of the country is Mount Damavand with a height of 5625 meters and the lowest height of the country is also recorded in the Caspian Sea at - 28 m. (Middle East: Iran — The World Factbook - Central Intelligence Agency, 2020) As it can be seen from some of the above-mentioned examples, Iran, which is geographically located in the center of the Islamic world and in the heart of the Shiite world, is in combination with other important geopolitical factors and elements such as "geopolitics of energy", "geopolitics of access" and "the geopolitics of position hegemony" has double geopolitics. This situation has caused Iran's developments to be at the center of attention of world powers and regional countries, which in combination with the historical record of the Iranian nation and national potentials, cycle of changes, seek a very fast, influential and prominent geopolitical position for it. (Jahangiri and Athari, 2018:58) Of course, Iran's geopolitical advantages are not limited to those which exist today and some of them have been mentioned, some researchers also talk about the geopolitical opportunities facing Iran, some of which are mentioned because the emphasis of this article on "double geopolitics" is very important. In this context, a clear example in the domestic field is the establishment of Chabahar port rail transit by connecting it to domestic and foreign rail transport transit and the north-south corridor, which increases the interaction of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other governments, attracting foreign capital, economic prosperity and increased employment and reverse migration will be achieved by significantly strengthening urbanization, creating security and political stability in the fragile region of the Middle East, accelerating the revival of the Maritime Silk Road and connecting this port to the Mackinder Heartland and benefiting from its geopolitical advantage (Akhbari and et al, 2022:70). Also, a clear example in the foreign context is the possible accession of Turkey to the European Union; Iran, which in the traditional geopolitics of Turkey is the most central target of the threats of the triangle of America, Israel and Turkey, but in the possible new geopolitical developments, it overcomes challenges such as the Great Middle East and benefits from important geopolitical

opportunities at the regional and extra-regional levels. Some of which can be: improving and strengthening relations between the Western world and the Islamic world and the possibility of more effective communication and improving Iran's relations with the European Union, greater security of Iran's borders, increasing economic investments in Iran, easy access to extra-regional markets, the increase in the importance of Iran's energy, the weakening of the US-Turkey-Israel triangle, the settlement of the Kurdish issue, and the decline of Pan-Turkism (Afzali and Hosseini,2008:151 and 174).

### **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

Iranians' Islamic Revolution achieved victory in a region that is the intersection of three continents; 50 percent of the world's oil is exported from this region, the Strait of Hormuz is located here, it is among the top countries of the world in important resources such as oil, gas, iron and copper; so, the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which led to the removal of the rule and hegemony of Russia, England, France, and especially the United States, and expelled them from a strategic region. It was natural that the messages of its revolution would be noticed by the world in the light of being located on such a global highway. But in the light of this event and against it, what has happened and is happening is that the important geopolitical contribution of Iran is forgotten, or the privileged position of geography in spreading the Iranian revolution is overshadowed only by the so-called expansionist, utilitarian and ideological policies. Investigating the fundamental axes and features in different generations of revolution studies shows that there is a significant relationship between the content of the revolution and the existing ecology and geography and geopolitics. Along with large lands, important ideologies, rich culture and the like, great social revolutions cause great changes. Being formed in a large land and on a global highway, and on the one hand, containing an important ideology, Islamic Revolution caused the issuance of its message in a process and natural manner, while the issuance of the revolution is explained more than the political position, and the geopolitical contribution was ignored and it was implied to be a construct called Iranophobia. Building "Iranophobia" on the purely political structure emanating from the messages of the Iranian Revolution and hiding the jealousy of privileged geopolitics is clearly an attempt to project the colonial characteristics of the West and create new enmities. Posing a question from the geopolitical position in this article

challenges this type of ideological meta-narratives, if the Islamic Revolution of Iran, in a blind region, lacked access to history-climate-civilization and generally lacked geopolitical features, would it have had the current effects? If, for example, the Islamic revolution of Iran had taken place in countries like Afghanistan or Australia instead of Iran's geopolitics, would the current Iranophobia still have happened or would it have spread in this way? Even in the light of the ideas of the fourth generation of revolution studies by people like Eric Selbin, John Foran, Jack Goldstone, Jeff Goodwin and Timothy Wickham, whose focuses were geo-culture, culture, ideology and leadership (Malakoutian and et al,2012:348) when it was written under the influence of the Islamic Revolution and for the Islamic Revolution, but Iran's geopolitics has been still neglected. These geopolitical jealousies towards Iran are carried out by critics of the Islamic Republic with ideological narratives such as "Iran's revolutionary Islam seeks political development". It is done by the "leaders of the Islamic Revolution who, with all enthusiasm and seriousness and relying on their spiritual influence, have promoted Islam as the major power in the process of historical development" (Mostafa Rad,2000). As in their opinion, the Islamic revolution has provoked the nations of the region and is the cause of inherent antagonism, and the revolutionaries of Iran have in practice attempted to issue the revolution and have caused antagonism in the region. These types of interpretations analyze the revolution only from a "religious", "ethnic" and "political" point of view. Some aspects of these three discourses - especially in the first two discourses - of course, have historical and deep roots. Sunni Arabs are very sensitive to Shiism, and Arabs' ethnocentric and nationalist view of Iranians has also been the basis for their judgments about nationality-based conflicts. The third category factors are; Political regional rivalries have also become more evident. It goes without saying that, in addition to the aforementioned factors, the role of some extra-regional powers is also prominent in the explanation of the factors of Iranian-Arab differences (Moradi,2014:121-123).

By going back and forth between Iran's geopolitics and geoculture, in its historical studies, this article considered more burden on the shoulders of Iran's geopolitics, and by questioning the reasons for Iran's geopolitics' superiority over geoculture, ideology and politics, it showed that a series of historical and geopolitical symbols and signs show Iran's geopolitical superiority over those aspects. In fact, this article tried to highlight the signs and symbols of Iran's historical facts and geopolitical interests and by

presenting a clear and accurate picture, as a necessary report, of what was and is, of the pressure on political Islam and reduce its radical and fundamentalist labels, which are the result of the project of Iranophobia and the projections of global powers and originated from the Orientalist Construction, and try to give a "human face" to geopolitical studies by freeing it from the abuse of political actors (Hafeznia,2007:2). At least the new generation, which in today's Iran or in the region of Western Asia, has an image of the West created in its mind, which is not colonialist, will understand that the content of the Islamic Revolution should not be considered as the only criterion for the enemies' hostility towards Iran, America as the biggest challenger of Iran's geopolitics does not have a little more than 240 years of history, but Iran has 7,000 years of history, culture and civilization combined with a privileged geopolitical and territorial structure in the world. Major social revolutions basically have transnational and international messages. And in this regard, you should not put the developmentist or totalitarian label of the Iranian revolution on the top, solid evidence shows that the West and basically the great powers, in particular, have been and still are greedy for our geopolitical advantages. Political analyzes are specifically aimed at overshadowing the still steadfast and paradigmatic approach of Western colonialism under the shadow of orientalist metanarratives and racial constructs, thereby forgetting the West's own history of exploitation, colonization and globalization is deposited, the West and especially the United States in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and the intervention in the anti-Yemen coalition, clearly emphasizes this relatively stable characteristic of its own, that is, obtaining the benefits resulting from the intervention and presence in the geography of the region. If we consider the choice of the title "Shia geopolitics" (Tuval,2005) for this book to be clever and to some extent misleading, because by choosing this name for his book, the author tried to magnify the danger of Shia. From that perspective, the subject of geopolitics is political power and geography; and Shia is an identity and religious approach, the argument of this article also seems clear. For such a compilation, the title of political geography of Shia seems more appropriate; Because in it, the role of Shia as an identity factor is mentioned, not the role of geography and environment on global politics, which is the subject of geopolitics (Mojtahedzadeh,2000:23; Alemi, 2013:176) and such a meaning signifies unjustified magnification, incidentally, due to Iran's unique geopolitical situation and its material,

valuable and strategic resources, unjustified actions are also attributed to the Islamic Revolution and political Islam. Basically, most of the events after the Islamic revolution, such as the occupation of the American embassy, the export of the revolution, internal and ethnic crises, such as the Kurdistan and Azerbaijan crises, have been geopolitical challenges facing the Islamic revolution of Iran (Hafeznia and et al,2007:33) In fact, if Iran did not have the current geopolitical position, some of these crises and other events basically did not appear. No one considers this logic to be a conspiracy illusion anymore, that the regions with geopolitics are the vital territories of the great powers, and therefore, they have intervened and infiltrated them, and in order to gain their own interests, they have entered into crises and caused their aggravation, and they turn them into an international crisis (Breacher,1993:69). The most important effect of ignoring Iran's geopolitical aspect in facing the Islamic Republic is putting all the pressures on the Islamic revolution and political Islam. Explanations of the type of the present article logically lead to the consistency of patriotic feelings in Iran and the region and invalidate prescriptions such as this one that is frequently reported in the media: "If we wash our hands of political Islam, the work of Iranians and lovers of Iran in the region will be ruined", and more than that, these types of writings reveal that "Political Islam" has defended the homeland from its geocultural point of departure and has taken care of Iran, its language, culture and geography in a deep and wise way. Therefore, in the thought and opinion of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution, the national identity of Iran has been continuously relied on. In this emphasis, the national identity shows the greatest proximity and relevance to the soil and geography, if political Islam was not compatible with this ancient climate and civilization, Iran's geography would probably collapse, because Iran is coveted as many times as America's lifetime by aliens. Therefore, political Islam, an excuse to ignore geopolitics and to attack Iran, has itself been ideologically abused, while the truth of the matter and the basis of the discourse regarding Iran in the international space is Iran itself with all its geopolitical advantages. In order to understand the current situation of us and the world, more than any discussion, we should talk about the geopolitical position of Iran in different proportions from a rational and scientific point of view. Any degradation of Iran's issues to geoculture, culture, and ideology should be prevented and the depth of enmity or challenges with the Islamic Republic of Iran should be deciphered by relying on documents and avoiding celebrities. Therefore, the effective

method is, of course, the back and forth and dialectic of geopolitics and geoculture of the Iranian revolution is that Iran's current and future path is directly related to it, and this research has also emphasized the possibilities and talents of geopolitics in general and in broadcasting the Iranian revolution in particular, and the preliminary effort of this article is also done in this direction. The practical and objective result of the article is that any highlighting of other aspects of Iran, regardless of Iran's geopolitics, as a country with "double geopolitics", is an analytical error, and the correct way to deal with Iran's issues is to avoid compromises and establish interaction. And it is between geopolitics and geoculture, but basically "the highlighting of geopolitics". Any method other than this can be a kind of oversight and research error, and in the position of confronting other countries, especially rivals and great powers with Iran, a media project against the Islamic revolution and political Islam.

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