

Specifying the Pattern of Tension Based on Geopolitical Resources in Interstate Relations

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Terms and concepts of tension, challenge, dispute, conflict and crisis are commonly used in the literature of political geography and geopolitics and international relations. And they are often used to express types of hostile relations between two countries or rival powers. Geography and geopolitics of every region play a major role in the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations among nations, or tension and conflict over that region. In other words, the root of many conflicts and tensions in countries relations is in the geographical and geopolitical features. At present, there is no single general theory about tension and conflict accepted by scientists or experts in other fields of political sciences or experts from whom political scientists have inspired. There is no way to determine the source of conflict or war, because not only they are numerous, but also they have been gradually increased.

The research hypothesis is that most of the theories presented by professionals and scholars relating to the sources of tension and conflict between countries have uni-factor or multifactor essence and none of them have succeeded in providing a comprehensive theoretical model. Accordingly, this paper by using descriptive-analytic approaches and using library resources attempts to assess and evaluate theories related to the origins of conflict and tension between countries and by the means of criticism and analysis of theories provides a new theory in the field of factors causing conflict in countries relations.

2. Review of Literature

The term tension refers to a set of attitudes and tendencies such as distrust and suspicion which people and policy makers have toward others. Tension does not cause conflict by itself, but it enables different parties to show behavior based on conflict if each of them tries to achieve incompatible objectives (Holsti,1991). Conflict is different from tension. Tension usually refers to a hidden hostility, fear, suspicion, and perhaps refers to a desire of dominance or revenge. However, tension does not exceed the level of attitudes and perceptions and does not include mutual deterrent efforts. Although tension often precedes conflict and it is always

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involved in it, it is not always synonymous with conflict and it is not always consistent with cooperation. However, causes of tension are likely to be related to the causes of conflict. Furthermore, if tension is sufficiently intensified, depending on the extent of its influence on the decision making process, it may be converted independently to contributing factors or outbreak of conflict.

Many of the underlying causes of tension and conflict between countries are considered in the realm of geographical and geopolitical factors and values. In other words, although occurring conflicts between countries may be affected by political or ideological factors, the vast majority of tensions and conflicts between countries have geographical origin and geographical values are the roots in the perceived national interests of the parties. Even if ideological and political factors are well analyzed, it becomes clear that such factors are also directly or indirectly have geopolitical nature.

3. Method

This article is based on descriptive-analytic technique and the data collection procedure is generally based on library research. In library research, the emphasis has been put on the examination of documents, reference to the relevant domestic and foreign books, periodicals and newspapers, articles, magazines and internet websites. After data collection and classification, the data analysis has been mainly carried out using descriptions based on logic and reasoning.

4. Results and Discussion

Model presented by Hypothetica from Peter Hagget is an attempt to study geographical factors causing tension in relations between countries. This model involves a hypothetical country called *The Hypothetica* which has a set of specific conditions causing disputes with its neighbors. The hypothetical country is landlocked and has potential twelve points causing tension in relations with its neighbors (Hogget, 1983, 2001). Hagget presented this model for the first time in 1972 in the first edition of his book *Geography: A Modern Synthesis*. This model has been mentioned without any change in subsequent editions of the book in 1975, 1995 and 1983. Also, in a new book by Hagget called *Geography: A Global Synthesis* which was published in 2001, this issue has been mentioned (Hogget, 1972, 1975, 1983, 1995, 2001). In his model, Hagget has mentioned geographical and geopolitical factors causing tension between countries, and compared to other theories, has put more emphasis on spatial and regional variables. However, Hagget's model lacks the variables related to environmental, ecological and geo-economic resources that cause tension. Hence, we cannot consider it as a comprehensive model.

Since geopolitics is the study of the mutual relationships of geography, power, and politics and accounts for consequences resulting from their interaction (Hafeznia, 2006), a model that can explain all sources of tension between counties should include all variables related to three parameters of geography, power and

politics. The main drawback of all models is that they consider only one aspect of geopolitics and they have failed to account for all dimensions. According to this view and authors of this article, a model that can explain geopolitical causes of tension and conflict in relations must simultaneously include cultural and geo-cultural, geo-strategic, political, territorial and boundary disputes, geo-economic, hydro-political, environmental and cyberspace related variables.

Each of these groups has several objective and subjective variables which dependently or independently pave the way for tension and conflict between countries. In this classification we have tried to include all geopolitical factors that cause tension and conflict in relations between countries and every factor causing tension and conflict is listed. Thus, we can conclude that this model, to some extent, has the capability to account for all geopolitical sources of tension and conflict in relations between countries.

5. Conclusion

By looking at theories proposed by experts in the fields of geography, geopolitics, political sciences and international relations in relation to factors that cause tension and conflict in relations between countries, we come to the conclusion that none of these theories have been able to account for all of geopolitical sources which cause tension and have only explained part of these factors. In other words, they have a uni-factor or multi-factor perspective towards the problem and, therefore, they cannot be considered as a comprehensive theory and model in this context. Meanwhile, Peter Hogget (1972) and John Collins (1998) have tried to take a comprehensive and multi-dimensional look at the issues of tension and conflict between countries, and in their theories, they have pointed out different variables such as strategic, cultural, economic, environmental and hydro-political factors. However, they have also failed to provide a model that account for all geopolitical sources that cause tension in relation between countries. According to this view, a model that can explain the causes of tension and conflict in relations between countries should simultaneously take into account cultural, geo-cultural, geo-strategic, and territorial and boundary disputes, geo-economic, hydro-political, environmental variables and factors related to the functioning of cyberspace. Each of these groups has several objective and subjective variables which dependently or independently pave the way for tension and conflict between countries.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Tension, Conflict, pattern, International Relations.

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