

THE IMPACT OF GEOPOLITICAL BORDERS FACTORS ON IRAN-TURKMENISTAN RELATIONS*

Sınır Jeopolitiği Faktörlerinin İran-Türkmenistan İlişkileri Üzerine Etkisi

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Abstract

One of the important issues about international borders is the different roles and functions of borders. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the Turkmenistan in Central Asia, a new chapter emerged in Iran's relations with its northeastern. In general, the relationship with Turkmenistan has been and is important for Iran in several ways; one of the most important reasons is that Turkmenistan is the only Muslim republic in Central Asia that borders Iran on land and navy border. But the two countries, given their border conditions, have challenges that affect relations between the two countries.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Border, Border Security, Iran, Turkmenistan.

Öz

Uluslararası sınırlarla ilgili önemli konulardan biri, sınırların farklı rolleri ve işlevleridir. 1991'de Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması ve Orta Asya'da Türkmenistan'ın ortaya çıkmasının ardından İran'ın kuzeydoğu ile ilişkilerinde yeni bir sayfa açıldı. Türkmenistan, İran ile ilişkilerine olumlu bir sınır işbirliği anlayışı temelinde başladı ve İran ile bir dizi dostluk anlaşması ve ekonomik işbirliği imzaladı. Genel olarak, Türkmenistan ile ilişkiler birkaç yönden İran için önemli olmuştur ve önemlidir; Bunun en önemli nedenlerinden biri, Türkmenistan'ın Orta Asya'da İran'ı kara ve deniz sınırında sınırlayan tek Müslüman cumhuriyeti olmasıdır. Ancak iki ülkenin sınır koşulları göz önüne alındığında, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkileri etkileyen zorlukları var.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jeopolitik, Sınır, Sınır Güvenliği, İran, Türkmenistan.

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INTRODUCTION

Political border refers to a phenomenon that displays the political sovereignty of a nation and forestalls the motion of people, the switch of products or the unfold of thoughts in step with sure rules¹. There are borders many of outstanding problems in this area in political geography.² People, nations, etc. knowing those problems may be a treasured useful resource withinside the area of interplay given the traits withinside the world, as knowledge nature, features and one-of-a-kind varieties of limitations has a crucial location in shaping the relationships and interactions among them.

Convenient and prepared and loose from war and war among people, nations, and causes. Border zones and border traces play the position of keeping apart political units. Border zones have unique traits because of their touch with numerous indoor and outside environments.³

The study of borders has undergone a renaissance during the past decade. This is reflected in the numerous conferences and workshops that have taken place during this period, together with a long list of publications in the form of conference proceedings, edited books, and papers in scholarly journals. Much of this renaissance has been characterized by a crossing of disciplinary borders, bringing together geographers, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary scholars, legal experts, along with border practitioners engaged in the practical aspects of border demarcation, delimitation, and management.⁴

1 Dorte Mirheydar, *Fundamentals of Political Geography*, Samat Publication, Tehran 2001, p. 114.

2 Problems that are created by factor of geography in the Turkey-Iran relations see: Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Latif N. Çakıroğlu, "Köpetdağ'ının İki Tarafındaki Komşular: Türkmenistan-İran İlişkilerinin Son On Yılı", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Türkmenistan Özel Sayısı, 7(2), 2001.

3 Reza Mokhtari-Mohammad Zohdi Goharpoor, "The Sources of Tensions and Threats in Iran and Turkmenistan Borders and their Effects on Internal Security and Geopolitical Relations between the Two Countries", *Journal of Border Science and Technology*, 7(2), 2014, p. 54.

4 David Newman, "Borders and Bordering: Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 2006, p. 171.

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Turkmenistan, which declared its independence on October 27, 1991, is Iran. Turkmenistan, which does not have direct access to the open seas, has a surface area of 488,100 square kilometers and has borders with Iran exceeding 1200 kilometers, is the only gateway of Iran to the Central Asian countries and the most important strategic partner of the Tehran administration in the legal status discussions of the Caspian Sea.⁵

Iran's political borders have constantly been strained during records and were visible because the maximum crucial trouble of Iranian territory and sovereignty. Neighborhood with 15 nations, 3965 km lengthy land border and 2045 water border, and the variety of interactions with every USA from beyond to give have made the border trouble a main political difficulty of the USA decisions.⁶

Apart from the ethnic and racial differences between the Persians and the Turkmen in terms of religion, the vast majority of Turkmens are Sunni and Hanafi, while the Persians or other ethnic groups living in Golestan Province are Shiites. The population of the province divided into two general categories, in one part of which are Turkmen, who call non-Turkmen by the name of the province. Turkmens living on both sides of the border rivers of Golestan province (Atrak, Harirod rivers) have more geopolitical commonalities with their counterparts in Turkmenistan in terms of race, ethnicity, language and religion.

Border rivers along the Turkmen Sahara region of Iran and Turkmenistan were a natural barrier before the collapse of the Soviet Union as a natural barrier, but with the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the geopolitical interests of Iran and Turkmenistan became closer.⁷

5 Emrah Kaya, "İran İslam Cumhuriyeti-Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Orta Asya ve Güney Kafkasya Siyaseti (1991-20210)", *Orta Asya ve Güney Kafkasya Siyasi Gelişmeler: 1991-2010*, Necati İyikan, ed., Hiperlink Yayınları, İstanbul 2011, p. 628.

6 Ali Mohammadpour et al., "Role of Transition in Border Function on Geographical Space: Bajgiran Area in the Iran and Turkmenistan Border", *Journal of Modarres Human Sciences*, 10(48), 2006, p. 152.

7 Hamidreza Paknejad-Ezatollah Ezati, "The Hydropolitic of Border River Atrak and Its Effect on Iran's and Turkmenistan's Relation", *Journal of Studies of Human Settlements Planning*, 6(14), 2011, p. 21.

The trouble of borders and border safety in Iran has constantly been one of the primary problems of governments. And every dynasty with a specific border and territory initiated conflicts with different dynasties and governments for its improvement or protection. However, the idea of country-wide border is one of the conventions that emerged withinside the new age of records⁸.

Since the territorial spaces of Iran and Turkmenistan are also geopolitical complements, this factor has caused the relations between the two countries to be on a logical path since the independence of Turkmenistan. Despite this, the two countries' politicians have tried to identify the sources of tension and threats on the border between the two countries and to examine the dangers arising from the manifestation of these tensions and threats to the internal security of the two countries.⁹

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of the present study is description-analysis and library studies in which the provisions of existing resources related to the challenges of the Iran-Turkmenistan border as well as existing resources on the impact of the border security of the country have been researched and analyzed.

The sources used in the present study include comprehensive country plans related to the Iran-Turkmenistan border and reliable statistics, as well as scientific sources mentioned in the sources section of the article.

8 Naser Takmil Homayoun, *What do I know About Iran?*, Iran Cultural Studies Publication, Tehran 2004, p. 55.

9 Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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CONCEPTUAL-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SUBJECT

GEOPOLITICS

The term geopolitics first appeared in 1899 by Swedish geographer Rudolf Kjellén in his article on the formation of Sweden's natural borders. Kjellén defines Geopolitics as "the theory that defines the state as a geographic organism, or a phenomenon of a certain breadth". In the early 1970s, geopolitics began to be used, especially in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, to highlight great power rivalries and the regional dimensions associated with them. Henry Kissinger is renowned for restoring geopolitics in US policymaking and academia. The transformation of Nazi Germany into historical memory, Henry Kissinger's widespread use of geopolitics as a scientist and policymaker, and the need to understand geographical factors in international cultural, economic, political and strategic development all contributed to the reappearance of geopolitics in scientific analysis in the 1980s. was found. However, there are also different definitions for Geopolitics.¹⁰

American geopolitician Cohen argues that geopolitics is the applied study of the relationship between geographical space and politics, which studies the mutual influence of spatial patterns, shapes, and structures on political ideas and organizations.¹¹ While Agnew mentions the study of the influence of geography, including human and natural geography, on relations between nations.¹²

10 Hazar Leylanoğlu-Syedmohammad Seyedi Asl, "İran ve Suudi Arabistan'ın 2003'ten Sonra Irak'ta Çıkar Çatışmalarına Jeopolitik Bir Bakış", *Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 8(22), 2021, p.109.

11 Saul B. Cohen, "Geopolitics in the New World Era: A New Perspective on an Old Discipline", *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the 21 Century*, G. J. Demko-W. B. Wood., eds., Westview Press, Boulder 1994, p. 17.

12 John Agnew, *Geopolitics*, Routledge, New York 1998, p. 15.

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Leading British scholar Peter Taylor also considers the study of the geographical distribution of power among the countries of the world, especially the competition between the great and major powers, to be his main geopolitical task.¹³

Political geographers have studied politics relationships between states. They comment on the role of border disputes as expressions of peacekeeping between states. They conjointly perceive the boundaries as expressions of lines drawn by people who have interaction in geopolitical relations: 'for many years geopoliticians have drawn lines of inclusion and exclusion that were supported power politics, culture, and even physical geographical arguments'.¹⁴

The borders remains a material and ideological geopolitical feature. Despite eye-catching, or perhaps more accurately "book-selling", cries of the end of the nation-state and a borderless world, movement of goods and people (but less so ideas) is constrained by physical controls imposed by governments.¹⁵ However, the study of international borders in political geography must also consider borders as a political divide that separates different nationalities. So it is probably a different image composition. "Therefore, political geographers must conduct research in sociology, culture, and economics, because the spatial pattern of social behavior may be more important than other models in determining influence. Borders and their feasibility as national delimiters".¹⁶

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13 Mohammad Reza Hafeznia, *Principles and Concepts of Geopolitics*, Papli Publications, Tehran 2017, p. 41.

14 Alison Mountz, "Border", *Key Concepts in Political Geography*, SAGE Publications, Carolyn Gallaher et al., eds., California 2009, p. 202.

15 Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics*, Routledge, New York 2006, p.131.

16 Henk Van Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries", *Geopolitics*, 10, 2005, p. 673.

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BORDERS AND TYPES OF BORDER

The first border studies dealt with the issue of creating a modern political system for the ruling countries of the land. Once it became clear that drawing political boundaries between states was a controversial step, new research was created to understand why the choice of political boundaries is problematic, and methods were proposed to resolve the ambiguity of the process.¹⁷

Political boundaries are the most important factor in distinguishing a politically organized unit from other units. It is also the existence of these lines that makes political unity possible in a land that may lack any natural or human unity. Border lines are lines of credit and contracts that are designated to threaten about one political entity on the ground. If we mean the political unit of the state, the lines that separate the territory of a state from the neighboring state are known as international borders. International borders play a prominent role in the form and type of political and economic relations between governments, and borders strongly influence the interaction of border residents.¹⁸

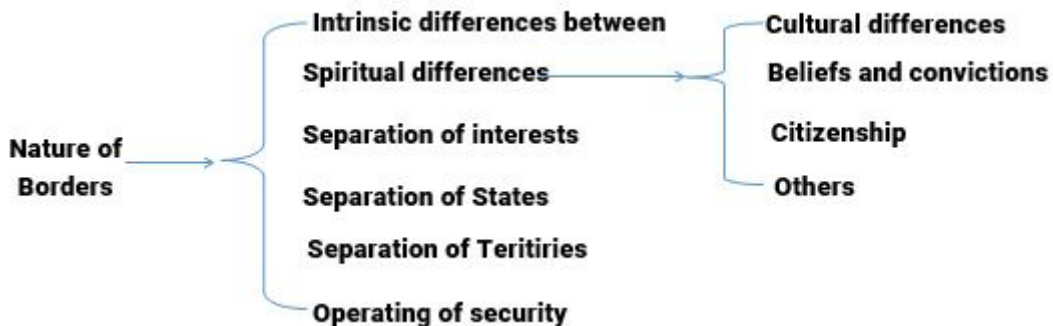
Defined species: "Border refers to spatial phenomena that reflect the realm of political sovereignty of a state and, according to certain rules, create obstacles to the movement of human beings, the transfer of goods..."¹⁹

17 Reece Jones, "Categories, Borders and Boundaries", *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(2), 2009, p.181.

18 Dorreh Mirheydar, *Fundamentals of Political Geography*, Samat Publication, Tehran 2001, p. 61-62.

19 Alasdair Drysdale-Gerald H. Blake, *The Middle East and North Africa: a Political Geography*, Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization Publication Tehran 1995, p.101.

Figure 1: The Philosophical Nature of Borders²⁰



BORDER FUNCTIONS

As regional geography took hold in the wider discipline, those interested in boundaries wrote survey articles that classified and organized the various types of international political borders that had emerged around the World.²¹ However, the border alone includes a role and function, which is to delimit the region during which a form of power is exercised; however as before long as a border area or border line is created, it will be not solely a natural landscape but additionally a section of it; however also to have an effect on the event and politics of neighboring countries.²²

Hartshorne further clarified the distinction of function by his suggestions contained in a short note in 1936 for classifying boundaries, not according to physical type, but according to their relationship with the cultural landscape at the time of their establishment. Hence an antecedent border precedes development of “most of the features of the cultural landscape”, a pioneer precedes all settlement, and its associated zone is in virginal form until the arrival of human settlement, and a subsequent border has a degree of conformity with major and minor natural and cultural divisions. In the absence of conformity the border is held to be

20 Mohammad Reza Hafeznia, et al, “Investigating and Analyzing Globalization Affects on Nature of Boundaries”, *Spatial Planning (Modares Human Sciences)*, 3(67), 2010, p. 49.

21 Reece Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

22 John R. V. Prescott, *Political Geography*, Mirheydar, Tehran Univeresity Publication, Tehran 1979, p. 61.

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superimposed. The basic property of a border which results in inertia was noted by Hartshorne.²³ Some geographers and specialists take into account 5 basic and necessary functions for borders:²⁴

1- Defensive Operate: The defense function is to defend the oldest functions of borders and frontiers. The fact that international borders play a defensive role gives us the concept of transcendental borders. Not all political borders can act as defensive frontiers, only those with natural characteristics can. The success of such frontiers has always depended on the strength of governments. In today's world, due to the development of new weapons, other borders, even if they are physically capable of the past, have lost their defensive function, and it is said that mountains and natural borders are not a barrier to attack from outside. Today, the discontinuity of land and sea has replaced air continuity. At the same time, destructive weapons can attack anywhere on earth.²⁵

2- Political Functioning: The international social group consists of variety of subsystems, among that the countries magisterially are a lot of important. As a result of every of those systems is separated by border lines, border lines are of nice importance within the international system. Each country, as a sub-system, tries to prevent political influence that undermines its security and credibility, and international borders help countries in this regard. Of course, efficiency and role vary from border to border. International borders limit the phenomenon of migration because the political ideology of this phenomenon may threaten the unity of a country.

23 Richard Hartshorne, "Suggestions on the Terminology of Political Boundaries", *Annals, Association of American Geographers*, 26, 1936, p. 56-57.

24 Ahmadipour, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

25 Zahra Ahmadipour, et al., "Economic and Social Impacts of the Boundaries' Reopening the Case: Bajgiran District, Iran & Turkmenistan Border", *Human Geography Research Quarterly*, 65, 2018, p. 5.

Borders, as a political barrier, restrict the cultural movement of the people, which also includes ideologys too. Thus the boundary acts as an invisible visual limit.²⁶

3- Economic function: Countries are known through international borders as world economic subsystems, and every country includes a separate policy and program that it regulates in keeping with its interests and interests, and on the opposite hand, borders will be opposed. Disrupt programs and threats that endanger their economy.²⁷

4- Social Function: In practice, borders enclose areas that have thereforecially integrated populations, as a result of the country tries to guard the cultural and social characteristics and structures of its nation, so borders are necessary during this regard.

Of course, the role and function of borders are not the same in all regions of the world, and according to different political, economic, geographical conditions and situations, the type of operation of international borders also varies. In addition to the issue of location, the issue of time is also important in the type of function of borders, which means that although historically the best function of borders has been to separate two political areas and two groups of people, but over time and progress has been made. In various fields of economics, politics, technology and communications, new functions have been defined for borders today. Political geographers believe that the role and function of borders change over time, and for example, today, advanced technology has reduced the value of the defensive function of borders.²⁸

²⁶ Ahmadipour, *loc. cit.*

²⁷ Mohammad Akhbari-Mohammad H. Nami, *Border Geography with Emphasis on Iran's Borders*, Geography Organization of Iran Publication, Tehran 2009, p. 27.

²⁸ Seyed Hadi Zarghani, *Introduction to National Power: Fundamentals, Functions, Survey and Measurement*, Strategics Study Publication, Tehran 2010, p. 115.

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THE CONCEPT OF BORDER SECURITY

The dictionary definition refers to security in the most general sense as freedom from threats, fear and dangers. Thus, one is secure under two conditions. First, when no one poses a threat to previously acquired values. Second, if such threats exist, one will be secure if one has the capability to defend oneself against the sources of danger at reasonable costs.²⁹

In alternative words, in such a world environment, one country's security equals the protection of all and vice versa, id est the construct of security may be a concept of reciprocity, equality, and equality for all governments. Prevalence in one space affects each close to and distant area. Hence, security may be the most reason for making a border. Security since times of yore has crystal rectifier governments to decide on and defend the territory at intervals their borders. These days borders play the role of security and guarantee the territorial security of nations and their interests through new functions.³⁰

As contemporary borders become deterritorialized and disaggregated, those border security functions have migrated away from the territorial limits of states to dispersed and heterogeneous sites located beyond geopolitical border lines, as well as inside the societies they are meant to secure. Scholars have assessed issues such as border officials' discretionary and exceptional powers, the escalation of crossborder policing over time, new border security technologies, migration control through citizenship regimes and deportation, the sometimes gendered and xenophobic dimensions of border security, and the acts of resistance of border-crossers and their allies.³¹

29 Benjamin Miller, "The Concept of Security: Should it be Redefined?", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 24(2), 2001, p. 16.

30 Reza Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

31 Karine Côté-Boucher, et al., "Border Security as Practice: An Agenda for Research", *Security Dialogue*, 45(3), 2014, p. 196.

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The border regions in each country have their own characteristics and are fundamentally different from the interior regions of the country. One of the major challenges facing border officials is the issue of border security and the expansion of border security, especially in countries where they have long common borders. Areas with their neighbors and always considered by the authorities.³² Security has been the main concern in the formation of a political region. The perimeter of the security later expanded from the fortress walls to the borders of the developing regional state, and its borders later became under the doctrine of state sovereignty.³³

The concept of creating border security is to prevent illegal activities at the borders of the country and to control the movement of people and transport according to the legal provisions on authorized border crossings. Hence, the most important role and main function of border is the barrier to the movement of people, goods and thoughts, also known as security boundaries. Border security means preventing all illegal activities at national borders and legalizing the movement of people and goods in accordance with the statutory provisions and through approved border crossings.³⁴ When we talk about border security, it means stability and impenetrability of borders in terms of contraband, comfort and security of border guards, no border threats, etc. Different roads, strategies and methods are used to maintain and ensure border security. As these activities are viewed as the current state border strategy, all border organizations, including the respected government delegation and chief of police, follow the borders of the border blocking plan through two traditional systems based on the creation of physical traffic blocks, as well as advanced and modern systems such as electronic devices, radar,

32 Sayed Mostafa Hashemi, et al., "Security Stable Ranking Border City Using the Cluster Analysis (Case city of North Khorasan Province)", *Journal of Geographical Planning of Space*, 9(32), 2019, p. 163.

33 Richard Muir, *Modern Political Geography*, Macmillan, London 1981, p. 23.

34 Sayed Hadi Zarghani, "Geopolitical Factors Effective on Role and Function of the International Boundaries with Emphasis on the Borders I.R. Iran", *International Quarterly of Geopolitics*, 3(8), 2007, p.116.

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etc. will all limit points controlled and monitored. In order to implement a Border Removal Plan, a thorough and complete knowledge of the border, border areas, relations between neighboring governments, etc. It is essential. In the age of globalization, depending on their importance, due to the homogeneity of the world community, all topics are interdependent and closely linked. One of these problems is security. In other words, in such a world, the security of a country is equal to the security of all countries, and vice versa; that is, mutual conceptual security is equal to the same for countries.³⁵

IRAN- TURKMENISTAN AND IMPACT OF GEOPOLITICAL BORDERS FACTORS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the Republic of Turkmenistan in Central Asia,³⁶ a new page was opened in Iran's relations with the northeastern country.³⁷ The newly established country of Turkmenistan started its relations with Iran on the basis of a positive understanding of border cooperation and made a series of friendly agreements and economic cooperation with Iran. This positive perception stems from geographical realities.³⁸

Iran and Turkmenistan share a border of about 1205 km. With the break-up of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence of Turkmenistan in October 1991, the Islamic Republic of Iran was one of

35 Mohammad Ali Basiri, "Developments in the Concept of National Security", *Quarterly Journal of Political-Economic Information*, 163-164, 2001, p. 171.

36 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Arzu Celalifer Ekinci, "İran'ın Orta Asya Politikası: İşbirliği Arayışları ve Güvenlik Sorunları", *Avrasya'nın Değişen Jeopolitiği: Yeni Büyük Oyun*, Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, ed., Barış Platin Kitabevi, Ankara 2009, p. 388.

37 Kadir Ertaç Çelik-Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Kuşak-Yol Girişimi Bağlamında ABD'nin İran Politikasının Analizi", *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3(2), 2019, p. 22.

38 Seyed Abbas Ahmadi-Elham Sadat Mousavi, "The Impact of Implementation of the Border Crossing Proposal on Iran-Turkmenistan Relations", *Quarterly Journal of South-west Asian Studies*, 2(6), 2019, p. 56.

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the first countries to recognize Turkmenistan, and a few months later, in January of that year, established an embassy in the capital.³⁹

Turkmenistan, with an area of 488.100 square kilometers, has a common border with Iran, of which 786 kilometers are land borders and 403.9 kilometers are water borders. The border line starts from the south and from the Talug line of Harir River located 11 km east of the center of Salehabad district at the border checkpoint of the border line between the two countries. The border line with a length of 146 km to the north coincides with the Talug Harir River line.

After the river was renamed Tajan, the border line crosses 24 km of the Talug line until it reaches land. From here, 540 km of the border crosses the mountain ridge. After that, the border reaches the Sombar River, which is 47 km long. The border enters the mountainous areas again and after 185 km, the border continues again along the Taluk line of the Atrak River and after 65 km reaches the desert and semi-desert areas east of the Caspian Sea.

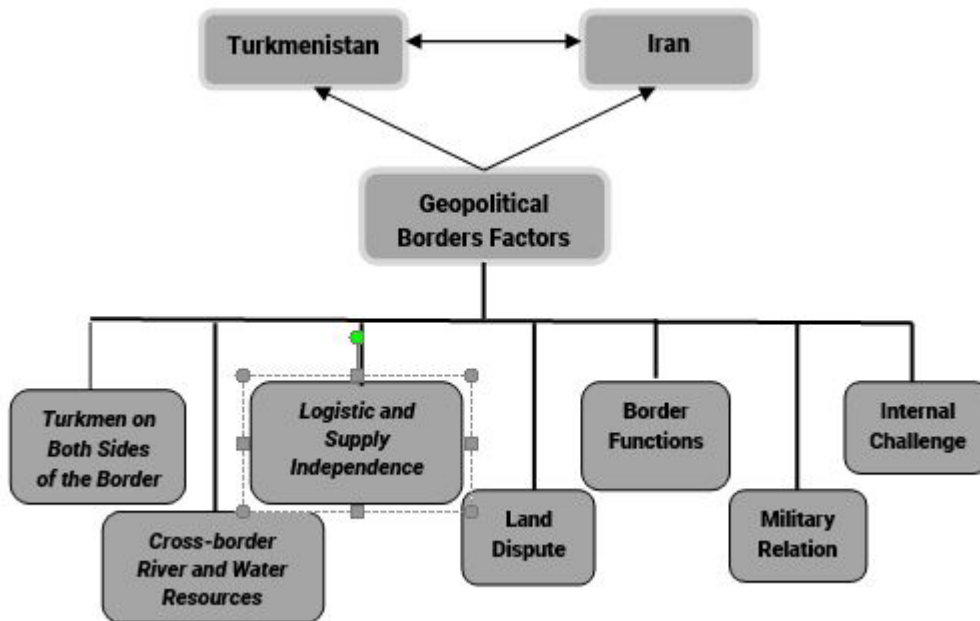
The length of the border here is 70 km and in the continuation of this route, the border reaches the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, 60 km from the port of Turkmenistan. The border between the two countries consists of 160 main bars and 468 side bars, starting from Hasankali Bay and ending in Afghanistan. The border line in the east of the Caspian Sea and north of Khorasan has been throughout the Atrak River.⁴⁰

³⁹ Hasan Karimi, *Republic of Turkmenistan (Green Book)*, Publications of the Office of Political and International Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran 1996, p. 83.

⁴⁰ Mohammad Akhbari, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

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Figure 2: Iran-Turkmenistan and Impact of Geopolitical Borders Factors



Source: Prepared by the Authors.

TURKMEN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER:

The region where Iranian Turkmen live is called Deşt-e Gorgan in Iranian sources, this region is called “Turkmen Sahara” among Turkmen, which starts from the Turkmenistan border and extends to the Caspian Sea, is located in the Gulistan Province of Iran; has an area of 18,572 square kilometers, and covers an area of 16,375 square kilometers of this Province.⁴¹

The extension, continuity and border concentration of the Turkmen ethnic groups of Iran with Turkmenistan can be a potential source of tension and even disputes between the two countries. The Turkmen of Iran are fully concentrated in the east of the Caspian Sea and in an area located between the Atrak border river and the Gorgan River, the east coast

41 Türel Yılmaz Şahin, “İran’da Unutulmuş Bir Toplum: Türkmen Sahra Türkmenleri”, *Akademik Orta Doğu*, 2(2), 2006, p. 204.

of the Caspian Sea and the west of Khorasan province and in an area of 173 square kilometers.⁴² The ratio of the population of Iranian Turkmen to Turkmenistan is more than %20. At present, Turkmenistan's attractions are not enough to boost the energy of the Turkmen convergence of the plains; On the other hand, the arena for their economic activities in Iran is almost favorable and they enjoy good religious freedoms. At the same time, linguistic, religious, and ethnic elements - especially in the case of the Teke and Yamut tribes - have provided a favorable cultural structure for reinforcing divergence from the political core of the Iranian government and, conversely, convergence with the Turkmen nation-state. The tomb of Makhtum Gholi, the mythical poet and hero of the world Turkmen in the border village of Aq Toteh, can strengthen and expand the socio-cultural relations of Turkmenistan with the provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran and Gilan.⁴³ It seems that the extension of Turkmen ethnic groups on both sides of the border, if the central weakness of the central government of Iran, could lead to the possible use of Turkmenistan and create darkness, tension and even an acute crisis in relations between the two neighboring countries. But Iran's hand in this field, as analysts have raised strategic issues, is not so short and is not in a position of pure passivity.⁴⁴

CROSS-BORDER RIVER AND WATER RESOURCES PROBLEM

The type of interaction between countries in the exploitation of shared water resources ranges from full compatibility and full cooperation to incompatibility and tension. One of the important dimensions of hydroplate in joint geopolitical factors between countries due to its

42 Yadollah Karimipour, *An Introduction to Iran and Its Neighbors (Sources of Threat and Tension)*, Jihad Danrshgjahi Kharazmi University Branch Publication, Tehran 2001, p. 126.

43 Araz M. Sarali, *Turkestan in History: An Attitude Towards Turkestan in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Amir Kabir Publication, Tehran 1996, p. 82.

44 Karimipour, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

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competitive nature is border rivers. Politicians and policymakers play an important role in cross-border water relations and apply their goals and policies openly and covertly.⁴⁵

Today, water is manifested as a geopolitical issue in relations between states, especially in areas with low surface water and climatically arid or semi-arid regions of the world. Interstate waters, such as the river waters of lakes and seas, naturally separate the political geographies of countries from one another, and this has been the source of bilateral or multilateral treaties between states and nations to reduce areas of territorial conflict. But with the advancement of technology and increasing life expectancy in humans and increasing population and increasing human need for fresh water, from the 70s, twentieth century onwards, water as a valuable commodity, a factor in competition in how to harvest and use It has been the source of tension and conflict in relations between governments.⁴⁶

The perpetual drought of the climate and Turkmenistan's location in the global arid belt is one of the enduring features of the geography of this nation and land. However, Turkmenistan has so far failed to manage water consumption, with Turkmenistan consuming 5,000 cubic meters of water per capita, which is one of the highest rates in the world, according to Professor Oli Varis. The figure is four times higher than the per capita water consumption in the United States and 13 times higher than in China.⁴⁷

45 Zahra Pishgahifard-Kamal Ranjbari, "Geopolitical Analysis of Iran-Turkmenistan Relations with Emphasis on Water Diplomacy and Energy Transfer", *Journal of Central Eurasia Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Science*, 13(2), 2020-21, p. 400.

46 Hamidreza Paknejad Motaki- Abdulreza Faraji Rad, "The Hydropolitic of Aras River Border and Its Effect on the Security of Ardabil Province", *Geographical Journal of Territory*, 7(28), 2011, p. 81.

47 Hadi Zarghani et al., "Analysis of Turkmenistan's Hydropolitical Challenges to its Neighbors", *Research Political Geography*, 4(2), 2021, p. 16.

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Turkmenistan has an arid climate and four-fifths of its area, or about 350,000 square kilometers, is the Qaraqom Desert. Except in the very short strip and the small area of Kope Dagh and Parapamiz mountains, no river flows in the whole area of 488100 square kilometers of Turkmenistan.⁴⁸ At this time, Turkmenistan's dependence on rivers from neighboring countries, including Uzbekistan and Iran, is a stable phenomenon in the relations between this country and its neighbors. Water bottlenecks and needs of the three countries that control the upper and middle reaches of the Amu Darya River (Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) The interference of their ethnic resources has raised serious questions about Turkmenistan's water security. At the same time, and on a larger scale, Iran's territorial space is Turkmenistan's second largest supplier of fresh water.⁴⁹

So far, only surface water management between Iran and Turkmenistan has been done and no major cooperation has been done in the field of joint groundwater exploitation between the two countries. These two countries are common in the two catchments of Qaraqum and Atrak, and the Harirod and Atrak rivers are the two main joint rivers between Iran and Turkmenistan; shared and managed⁵⁰. In addition to the permanent rivers of Atrak, Kalat Naderi, Drongar, Harir River (Tajan) and Sombar, which flow from the soil and space of Iran to Turkmenistan; Several rivers with variable and seasonal discharges such as Shurluq, Chehel Kaman, Chehcheh, Qara Takan and Line also flow from the border heights of Hezar Masjed to the low plains of Turkmenistan. The only volume of water entering Turkmenistan through Atrak and Harir River is 275 and 830

48 Alireza Sheikhattar, *The Roots of Political Behavior in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication, Tehran 1992, p. 283.

49 Reza Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

50 Mohammad Reza Dehshiri-Hamed Hekmatara, "Iran's Hydro-Diplomacy Towards Its Neighbours", *Journal of the Macro and Strategic Policies*, 6(4), 2018, p. 604.

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million cubic meters per year, respectively.⁵¹ However, in the future, the water coming from Iran and possible controls over it, can be one of the sources of tension and dispute between the two countries.

LOGISTIC AND SUPPLY INDEPENDENCE

The border, with its essential role of restricting the movements and duties of states in a geographical context, plays a completely strategic role in national convergence and homogenization and, conversely, the separation of nations.⁵²

After independence, Turkmenistan's gas revenues were the mainstay of the country's economic development. The main problem, however, was Turkmenistan's total dependence on Russia for gas exports. Hence, Ashgabat began to think about alternative routes. These alternatives will be mentioned briefly.⁵³

As a landlocked country, Turkmenistan is not only captivated by its greatest stable geographical strait, but its long landmass has created a long border with Iran, making it a gateway for four other countries to access Iran's southern coast. The country has five scenarios for access to open waters, especially the transfer of its gas resources: Afghanistan-Pakistan route, traditional Russia route, China route, Caspian Sea route (Baku-Ceyhan) and Iran route. While Iran's path is under US sanctions, Turkmenistan is eagerly awaiting the lifting of anti-Iranian sanctions; Because Iran's path is in the best position. In this way, Turkmenistan, as the only country in the region, can establish excellent relations with the Islamic Republic.⁵⁴ While the China route with a length of 3400 km

51 Abbas Jafari, *Rudha ve Rudanamehaye Iran*, Gitashenasi Publication, Tehran 1987, p. 102.

52 Yashar Zaki, et al., "Investigation and Hydropolitics of International Rivers with Emphasis on Aras Border River", *Journal of Military and Security Geography*, 1(1), 2015, p. 39.

53 Farhad Atai-Hamidreza Azizi, "The Energy Factor in Iran-Turkmenistan Relations", *Iranian Studies*, 45(6), 2012, p. 753.

54 Roy Olivier, "The Geopolitical Domain of Central Asia", *The Journal of Defense Policy*, 9(29), 2000, p. 103.

is the longest route and will pass through at least three countries, the Baku-Ceyhan route with a length of 1820 km, except Turkmenistan must pass through Pass three countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. Afghanistan's short route to the Indian subcontinent is also extremely insecure and will require crossing a double-walled crossing (Afghanistan-Pakistan).⁵⁵

Turkmenistan can directly export its energy resources to world markets through Iran. Iran's location has many attractions for Central Asia and Turkmenistan.⁵⁶ Given the geographical realities of geostrategy and geoeconomics, Iran is the most practical way to make oil and gas prices competitive in international markets and avoid the challenges of other routes. Turkmenistan has the capacity to collect energy resources in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea as an energy terminal and to enter the international energy markets in the Persian Gulf and Turkey through the geography of Iran.⁵⁷

LAND DISPUTE

The Iran-Turkmenistan border was first established by a treaty between Iran and Tsarist Russia in 1881. But in 1931, as a fledgling state, the Soviet Union, in order to reduce international pressure, relinquished a small part of the concessions that Tsarist Russia had gained in Iran, and placed the issue of international borders in the third chapter. The Soviet Union was included. During the negotiations that followed this agreement, it was decided that the old fern would remain in the possession of the Soviet Union, that Ashuradeh Island and the village of Firooz would be returned to Iran. Ashuradeh Island, which is located at the end of the peninsula between Kaleh, was returned to Iran, but the Soviet Union

55 Yadollah Karimipour, *op. cit.*, p. 1 30.

56 Doğacan Başaran, "Realizm-İdealizm İkilemi Bağlamında İran'ın Dış Politika Yönelimlerine Teorik Bir Bakış", *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1(2), 2017, p. 243.

57 Zahra Pishgahifard, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

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delayed the return of Firoozeh village and then refused⁵⁸. Firoozeh village in the area is the neighbor of Iran, it is the seat of the Presidential Palace of Turkmenistan and under normal circumstances, due to the type of relations between the two countries, it will not be possible at all, but Iran will always have the ability and privilege to raise this issue. Atrak border and changes in its route can be another issue to intensify differences and tensions between the two countries.⁵⁹

BORDER FUNCTIONS

Although the long-term control of the Iran-Turkmenistan border is the responsibility of the joint border forces of the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan, the extent of control of this border is not as accurate as it was in the years before 1990. While Iran-Turkmenistan has established several customs points such as Sarakhs, Bajgiran, Lotfabad and Pol-e-Pol station through the memorandum of consular agreements and for the free movement of citizens of the two countries, but smuggling is a common phenomenon between the borders. International is also prevalent in this part of the world. Drug trafficking from Iran to Turkmenistan and the arrest, trial and conviction of a large number of Iranians in this field⁶⁰. Israeli intelligence on this long border could have a worrying effect on relations between the two countries. It should be noted that the possibility of illegal traffic from Hossein Gholi Bay to Sarakhs is very difficult; Because the length of this region is 1206 km and it consists of physiographic areas of mountains, rivers, seas, deserts, foothills and swamps and is sparsely populated and sparse in terms of population density.⁶¹

58 Abbas Maleki, *Northeastern Borders of Iran, from Caspian to Sarakhs, Current Iranian Borders Report*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publication, Tehran 1992, p. 28.

59 Reza Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

60 Comprehensive Plan of National Divisions, *Khorasan Province Political-Security Committee*, General Department of National Divisions, Tehran 1999, p. 28.

61 Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

MILITARY AND STRATEJIC RELATIONS

On December 2, 2011, Turkmen President Robert Blake and Berdymukhamedov held talks in Ashgabat. The two sides stated their intention to cooperate on security issues. In addition to the policy of expanding and strengthening political and security relations with Central Asian countries, the United States has begun to build infrastructure with the aim of creating lasting and long-term interests in the region.⁶²

The United States, as a world superpower, is using various economic and political tools to thwart Iran's actions. The most important example of this effort can be seen in the Turkmenistan-Iran-Turkey pipeline project. In another example, the signing of a contract to transport 30 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas to Turkey and Europe in 1997 prompted Turkey to fulfill its commitment to buy 190 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Iran within 22 years (which it signed in 1996). Do not act and provide the ground for its abolition. In fact, the role and influence of the United States has not only prevented Iran-Turkmenistan relations in the field of energy in various cases, but also made Turkmenistan a rival for Iran.⁶³

Tehran closely follows the type and dimensions of Turkmenistan's relations with the United States and Israel; The widespread presence of the two governments, especially in the military and security spheres, could have a profound effect on Iran-Turkmenistan relations. However, at present, given the Tashkent Treaty and its annexes, as well as the relative dominance of the Russians in the system. The Ashgabat decision-maker is unlikely to have a US military presence in the country, and Russia has reserved the right to unilaterally intervene in the country, but given the pessimism and even Turkmen hatred of Russia, as well as

62 Mohammad Jafar Javadi Arjomand-Saleh Salavarzi Zadeh, "US Military-Political Strategy in Central Asia after September 11th; Goals and Challenges", *Journal of Central Eurasia Studies*, 10(2), 2017-2018, p. 280.

63 Farhad Atai-Hamidreza Azizi, "The Energy Factor in Iran-Turkmenistan Relations", *Political and International Scientific and Research Quarterly*, 2(3), 2010, p. 98-99.

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the general tendency to do so. In European life, this is not ruled out in the long run. The gradual dissolution of the Russian Federation and its continued disintegration could increase the likelihood of a US presence in Turkmenistan and other Central Asian countries.⁶⁴

INTERNAL CHALLENGES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES

The weakening of the central government of Iran has always led to the emergence, growth and expansion of numerous external and internal threats; it is possible for Turkmen governments to take advantage of these historic opportunities. At the same time, the type and extent of the continuation of the country's political stability will affect the interests and bilateral trade interactions, and especially the sustainable geopolitical needs of the two countries.

On the other hand, although Turkmenistan is considered one of the most stable countries in Central Asia, it also faces several profound challenges in achieving lasting stability and security. The following factors pose economic, political and social challenges and, in general, paint a picture of instability for the political-security future of Turkmenistan: Threats from Russia, disputes over territorial and ethnic interests, including more territorial claims between Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan over areas such as the rainfed region, claims over part of the Amu Darya in Bukhara province from Pakistan, and reciprocal claims from Pakistan over parts of Amu Darya in Charjui province of Turkmenistan.⁶⁵

The possibility of starting a water war, the growing impasse of racial separatism, the deterioration of the economic structure and the dominance of a less democratic regime. The flames of activating these sources of tension could affect Iran's security and interests. The emergence of any

64 Karimipour, *op. cit.*, p.133.

65 Drrh Mirheydar, "Spatial-Spatial Analysis of Current Crises in Central Asia", *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasus Studies*, 1994, p. 4.

kind of international insecurity in Central Asia, which can be widespread due to the complexity and interference of sources of tension in this region, if it does not directly involve Iran, will at least affect domestic security, especially the security of the north and northeast. On the other hand, the emergence of major conflicts in the region will affect Iran's interests and investment in expanding trade and economic interactions with Central Asia. Including the return of infrastructure investments in the provinces of Khorasan, Golestan, Mazandaran and Gilan for this purpose, will be called into question.⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

The interaction of border lines on the type of behavior of people and governments towards themselves, and on the behavior and function of the border, causes the governments on both sides of the border to show a special behavior towards each other, which will have a great impact on the situation and function of the border. In this article, different geopolitical commons such as political systems and type of relations between two neighboring countries, ethnic-religious characteristics of border residents of two neighboring countries, role of supra-regional powers, attitudes and policies of governments regarding borders and border areas, economic characteristics of border residents and economic development neighboring countries, etc. have been studied that affect the role and function of borders in different ways; In such a way that they either create and strengthen security in the borders and border areas and thus provide the ground for inclusive development in the border areas, or by creating tension in the border areas while disrupting the socio-economic development of the border areas, the ground for clashes and conflicts.

⁶⁶ Reza Mokhtari, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

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Iran and Turkmenistan are geopolitical complementaries. The growing development of relations between the two countries over the past decade and the stability along with the strategic calm on the borders are tangible reasons to prove this claim. But despite the many common interests and mutual interests, it is difficult to outline the long-term perspective of these relationships without considering the existing challenges. Fortunately, the role and importance of several important sources of tension, which can also be considered as excellent areas of cooperation, will determine the type and level of relations between the two countries in the future. But the internal challenges of Turkmenistan and Central Asia, and the possibility of pervasive regional tensions. Also, in parallel with the role of Russia's current policies in strengthening convergence, the different political systems of the two countries are among the factors of bilateral divergence.

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