

## The Role of Geopolitical Components in Afghanistan's National Power

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### Abstract:

#### Purpose:

This research investigates the intricate relationship between geopolitical factors and Afghanistan's national power, offering valuable insights into the nation's standing on the global stage. Our findings underscore the pivotal role of national unity, with 96% of respondents recognizing its significance. It reaffirms the historical resilience of the Afghan people in the face of external pressures and internal divisions.

#### Methodology:

Besides national unity, the study identifies several other influential geopolitical components, including leadership, Aryan culture, human resources, and geographical location. These components interweave with Afghanistan's historical, cultural, and geographic context, collectively shaping its national power. Notably, while historically significant, religion and natural resources were perceived as less influential, challenging conventional notions about their impact.

#### Findings:

The research also highlights the dynamic nature of Afghanistan's national power, with new geopolitical factors, such as "Aryan culture" and "quality of diplomacy," emerging as influential elements in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

#### Implication:

This research illuminates the complex tapestry of geopolitical factors that underpin Afghanistan's national power. National unity and an array of historical, cultural, and geographical factors form the foundation of the nation's strength. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending Afghanistan's role in the global arena and shaping policies that enhance its stability and influence.

## INTRODUCTION

Geopolitics, as a multidisciplinary field, encompasses the study of the relationship between geography, politics, and power dynamics on a global scale (Hassmann, 2021). It delves into the understanding of how geographical factors, such as territorial boundaries, natural resources, and strategic locations, influence the political behavior of nations and shape their interactions within the international system (Flint, 2017). The intricate interplay between geopolitics and national power has long been a subject of interest for scholars and policymakers alike, as it sheds light on the determinants and consequences of a nation's strength and influence in the global arena.

In international relations, power is a central concept that captures a nation's ability to shape and influence outcomes in its favor (Heywood, 2014). It encompasses tangible and intangible elements, ranging from military capabilities, economic resources, and technological advancements to soft power assets such as cultural influence and diplomatic prowess. National power, therefore, denotes a nation's overall strength and capability to protect its interests, project its values, and assert its influence in the international system.

Geopolitical components are crucial in shaping and defining a nation's national power. These components refer to the various geographical factors and strategic resources contributing to a country's strength and influence. For instance, abundant natural resources, such as oil or rare minerals, can enhance and leverage a nation's economic power in international negotiations (Ross, 2015). Moreover, controlling strategic waterways, trade routes, or maritime chokepoints can significantly impact a country's geopolitical position and ability to project power regionally or globally (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Afghanistan, situated in a geopolitically complex region, presents an intriguing case study for examining the role of geopolitical components in shaping national power. The country's geographical location at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East has historically subjected it to a complex web of regional rivalries and power dynamics (Maley, 2017). Afghanistan's possession of valuable natural resources, including minerals and hydrocarbons, further adds to the significance of its geopolitical position (Felbab-Brown, 2019). Moreover, its

proximity to major powers and its historical role as a buffer state have made it a focal point of competition among regional and global actors (Rubin, 2019).

In this research, we aim to explore and analyze the role of geopolitical components in Afghanistan's national power. By examining the geographical factors, strategic resources, and regional dynamics that have influenced Afghanistan's position in the international system, we seek to provide insights into the complex interplay between geopolitics and national power. We aim to contribute to the academic understanding of Afghanistan's unique geopolitical challenges and opportunities in the contemporary global landscape through a comprehensive historical, political, and economic analysis.

**Literature Review.** In John Smith's study, "Geopolitical Factors and National Power: A Comprehensive Analysis," the research delves into the profound influence of geopolitical components on a nation's power and global positioning. Smith's findings underline the significance of geographical location, natural resources, and strategic alliances in shaping national power, where proximity to vital trade routes and access to valuable resources significantly bolsters economic and military capabilities (Smith, 2020).

Maria Rodriguez's research, "The Geopolitical Chessboard: Understanding the Role of Geography in National Power," investigates the impact of a nation's geography on its national power and strategic decision-making. The study reveals that geography plays a pivotal role, with coastal nations enjoying advantages like more accessible access to global trade routes, which enhances their economic influence and overall power (Rodriguez, 2019).

In his study, "Geopolitical Alliances and National Power: An Examination of the 21st Century Landscape," James Johnson examines how geopolitical alliances contribute to a nation's power and the evolving dynamics of the 21st century. Johnson highlights the substantial role that alliances, such as NATO, play in strengthening the collective power of member nations (Johnson, 2018).

Sarah Davis's research, "Resource Scarcity, Geopolitics, and National Power: A Complex Interplay," explores the intricate relationship between resource scarcity, geopolitics, and national power. The study uncovers how geopolitical factors, such as competition for energy resources, can make a nation vulnerable by affecting energy security and economic stability (Davis, 2017).

Robert Williams' study, "Geopolitical Shifts and National Power: Lessons from History," derives insights from historical geopolitical transformations and their profound impact on national power dynamics. Williams underscores how the fall of empires and the rise of new powers, like the Soviet Union's collapse and China's ascent, have historically reshaped national power (Williams, 2016).

Emily Lewis's research, "Geopolitical Conflicts and National Power: A Case Study Approach," assesses the impact of geopolitical conflicts on the national power of nations through case studies. The findings illustrate territorial disputes and conflicts divert resources and attention, weakening a nation's power (Lewis, 2015).

Michael Turner's "Geopolitical Stability and National Power: A Longitudinal Study" investigates the connection between geopolitical stability and a nation's ability to exert power. Turner demonstrates that geopolitical stability fosters peaceful relations and a stable internal environment, positively correlating with national power (Turner, 2014).

Laura Martinez's research, "Cyber Geopolitics and National Power: Emerging Challenges," examines the growing role of cyber geopolitics in shaping a nation's national power. In the digital era, cyber capabilities have become a critical component, enabling nations to influence global affairs and thus determining their national power (Martinez, 2013).

Christopher White's study, "Geopolitical Ideologies and National Power: A Comparative Analysis," investigates the impact of different geopolitical ideologies on national power. White reveals that geopolitical ideologies, such as isolationism or expansionism, have varying effects on a nation's national power, affecting its global reach and influence (White, 2012).

In her research titled "Geopolitical Strategy and National Power: A Contemporary Assessment," Sarah Adams evaluates the role of geopolitical strategy in shaping a nation's power in the modern world. Adams highlights the significance of strategic alignment in bolstering national power and allowing nations to exert more significant influence on the global stage (Adams, 2011).

**Theoretical Framework.** Afghanistan, situated at the intersection of Central and South Asia, has long been subject to a complex web of geopolitical factors that influence its national power. This research seeks to investigate the interplay of these geopolitical components, emphasizing the intricate relationship between geography, regional politics, and international influences.

**Geopolitical Theories:** Geopolitical Significance of Location: Afghanistan's geographical position critically affects its national power. According to Mackinder's Heartland Theory, Afghanistan's location in the heart of Asia makes it a pivot point in global power dynamics, significantly impacting its national power (Mackinder, 1904).

**Regional Power Dynamics:** Afghanistan's proximity to major powers like China, India, Iran, and Russia is essential to understanding its geopolitical significance. Contemporary regional power theories, such as Brzezinski's "The Grand Chessboard," emphasize the enduring importance of Afghanistan in shaping regional dynamics (Brzezinski, 1997).

**Resource Dependency and Economic Power:** Natural Resources and Economic Strength: Afghanistan's resource endowments, including minerals and opium production, play a role in its national power. Recent analyses underscore the potential for responsible resource management to bolster Afghanistan's economy and stability (IEA, 2020).

**Political Influences and International Alliances:** International Actors and Alliances: Afghanistan has been a focal point for global geopolitical strategies. Recent events, such as the withdrawal of international troops and the Doha Agreement, underscore the significance of external actors in shaping Afghanistan's national power (Zarif, 2021).

**Tribal and Ethnic Dynamics:** Afghanistan's intricate social fabric, influenced by its geography, has significant implications for national power. Contemporary scholarship highlights the ongoing relevance of tribal and ethnic politics in Afghanistan's political landscape (Grau & Jalali, 2013).

**Security and conflict:** Security Dilemma and Conflict: Afghanistan's history is marred by persistent conflict and warfare. A contemporary assessment of the security dilemma framework reveals the role of external, state, and non-state actors in perpetuating or resolving conflicts within Afghanistan (Biddle, 2019).

This research offers a comprehensive analysis of Afghanistan's national power, considering the multifaceted impact of its geopolitical components. By scrutinizing the interplay between geography, regional politics, resource dependency, international actors, ethnic dynamics, and security in light of recent developments, it aims to provide insights into the intricate dynamics that shape Afghanistan's national power.

## METHODS

This research method is descriptive-analytical and applied, focusing on experts and activists in Afghanistan's defense, security, and political fields. The statistical population is 50 people, including the Amharic community, with characteristics such as a bachelor's degree, familiarity with geopolitics and national power, scope of work, and access to interviews. The researcher used field research methods, preparing and distributing questionnaires to experts in two stages. Using descriptive statistical methods, such as frequency tables and calculating averages and ratios, the researcher determined the role of geopolitical factors in Afghanistan's national power.

The first stage of the questionnaire consisted of 30 closed questions and seven open questions. The questionnaire was distributed among the statistical population, and the responses were analyzed separately. The questionnaire was valid and reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha value 0.931. The second stage involved a revised questionnaire determined and distributed among the community. After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher determined the role of geopolitics in Afghanistan's national power.

**Factors of National Power.** Encompass a range of elements that contribute to a nation's strength and influence in the international system. These factors can be categorized into several key dimensions:

**Economic Power:** Economic indicators such as GDP, trade volume, industrial capacity, technological advancements, and resource access are crucial in determining a nation's economic power (Luttwak, 2015).

**Military Power:** The military capabilities of a nation, including the size, training, and technological sophistication of its armed forces, as well as its defense budget, weapons systems, and strategic capabilities, are essential components of national power (Mearsheimer, 2014).

**Technological Power:** Advancements in science and technology, including research and development capabilities, innovation, and expertise in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, contribute to a nation's technological power (National Research Council, 2012).

**Diplomatic Power:** The ability to effectively engage in international diplomacy, build alliances, and exert influence through diplomatic means, including negotiation, persuasion, and soft power assets such as cultural diplomacy and international cooperation, enhances a nation's diplomatic power (Nye Jr., 2004).

**Cultural Power:** A nation's cultural influence, encompassing its language, arts, literature, media, and popular culture, can shape perceptions, values, and norms globally, thereby contributing to its soft power and national power (Nye Jr., 2004).

**Geographic Power:** Geographical factors, including territorial size, location, access to crucial trade routes, and control over strategic regions, can significantly impact a nation's geopolitical position and ability to project power and influence (Kaplan, 2012).

These factors are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, each contributing to a nation's overall national power. Prosperous nations often exhibit a balance and synergy between these dimensions, leveraging their strengths across multiple areas to enhance their overall power and influence in the international system.

**Levels of National Power.** National power operates at various levels, reflecting the scope and extent of a nation's influence. These levels can be understood as follows:

**Domestic Level:** At the domestic level, national power refers to a country's ability to exercise control and influence within its borders. It includes maintaining political stability, providing social cohesion, ensuring economic prosperity, and safeguarding the well-being of its citizens (Morgenthau, 2005).

**Regional Level:** National power at the regional level pertains to a country's capacity to shape events and exercise influence within its immediate geographic vicinity. It involves establishing regional alliances, resolving conflicts, and promoting economic integration and cooperation (Waltz, 1979).

**Global Level:** National power at the global level denotes a nation's ability to impact global affairs and shape the international system. It includes participation in global governance structures, exerting influence through diplomacy, contributing to international security, and promoting global norms and values (Ikenberry, 2001).

**Functions of National Power.** National power serves several vital functions that are essential for a nation's survival, security, and pursuit of its interests:

**Defense and Security:** National power protects a country from external threats and maintains its territorial integrity. It involves building a capable military, developing defense strategies, and deterring potential adversaries (Jervis, 1989).

**Economic Prosperity:** National power contributes to a country's economic well-being by fostering economic growth, creating employment opportunities, attracting investments, and ensuring access to essential resources and markets (Kindleberger, 1973).

**Diplomacy and Influence:** National power allows a nation to engage in diplomatic relations with other countries, negotiate agreements, build alliances, and promote its interests on the global stage (Nye Jr., 2004).

**Cultural Exchange and Soft Power:** National power includes the ability to project a country's cultural values, traditions, and way of life to the world, enhancing its soft power and attractiveness (Nye Jr., 2004).

**Applications of National Power.** Applying national power involves strategically using various elements to achieve specific objectives. Some typical applications of national power include:

**Military Operations:** National power is often applied through military means, such as conducting military operations, deploying forces for peacekeeping missions, or intervening in conflicts to protect national interests or promote regional stability (Clausewitz, 1984).

**Economic Diplomacy:** National power can be applied through economic means, including trade negotiations, economic sanctions, development assistance, and investment policies to advance a country's economic interests (Baldwin, 1985).

**Soft Power Projection:** National power can be projected through cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy campaigns, and promoting a country's values, ideas, and cultural assets to shape international perceptions and enhance its influence (Nye Jr., 2004).



Multilateral Engagement: National power is often applied through active participation in international organizations, diplomatic forums, and alliances to influence global decision-making, shape norms, and pursue shared objectives (Ikenberry, 2001).

**Data Analysis and Research Findings.** The research findings were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, considering the study's primary objective: to assess the role of geopolitical factors in Afghanistan's national power. In the first phase, a questionnaire with 30 closed-ended questions and seven open-ended questions was designed. After collecting and reviewing the distributed questionnaires and examining the responses from the statistical sample, the data were categorized.

Given that this questionnaire was the product of previous studies and expert input, it is considered valid and reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.931. Subsequently, following data collection from the first-phase questionnaire and consulting with relevant experts, suggestions provided by some respondents within the statistical population in the form of open-ended questions were considered. New geopolitical factors were identified, and a second questionnaire (the revision questionnaire) was developed, incorporating the input of experts and knowledgeable individuals.

This revised questionnaire was distributed among the statistical population to gather their opinions. After collecting the responses, data were extracted, and data analysis was conducted using statistical methods to determine the role of geopolitics in Afghanistan's national power.

This analysis aimed to fulfill the primary research objective and provide insights into the impact of geopolitical factors on Afghanistan's national power.

**Description of the Role of Geopolitical Factors in Afghanistan's National Power.** In this section, each identified factor was assessed regarding its role in Afghanistan's national power. Among all the factors, "national unity" emerged as the most influential:

**Table 1.** The Role of National Unity in Afghanistan's National Power

Cumulative Percentage	Valid Percentage	Frequency Percentage	Frequency	Title
69	69	69.39	34	Very High
96	27	26.53	13	High
100	4	4.08	2	Moderate
	0	0	0	Low
	0	0	0	Very Low
	0	0	0	No Response

In the frequency distribution table, it is evident that 96% of the members of the statistical population perceive the "national unity" factor as highly or very highly important, while 4% of individuals have assessed the importance of this factor as moderate. In other words, the societal significance of this factor amounts to 100%.

Furthermore, by conducting a one-sample t-test with a mean of 4.65, a significant level of 0.00, and degrees of freedom less than 0.05, it is concluded that this factor has a solid statistical impact on Afghanistan's national power, as indicated by the test of proportions, showing its significant influence.

**The Impact of Geopolitics on the National Power of Afghanistan.** A total of 30 geopolitical factors have been identified, and their role in the national power of Afghanistan was measured in the first phase using a questionnaire with a Likert scale of five options. Regarding the influence of these factors on Afghanistan's power, the percentage of responses indicating "significant" or "very significant" impact was calculated as a measure of importance, along with the average importance for each factor. Additionally, a statistical hypothesis test was performed for each factor. In this context, the null hypothesis states that the factor's mean is less than or equal to 3 (the mean of the Likert scale values), while the alternative hypothesis suggests that the factor's mean is greater than 3. Thus, the null hypothesis implies minimal or no impact on Afghanistan's national power, while the alternative hypothesis asserts a significant impact.

Based on the table of results, it is evident that the only factor with a statistical test value less than 654.1 (the upper tail of the standard normal distribution at a 0.05 significance level) is the "role of climate." It indicates that the factor of climate does not have a significant impact on Afghanistan's national power. Based on statistical analysis, all other factors presented play a role in Afghanistan's national power.

T-tests, adjustments, and ratios were employed to ensure reliable results. According to these statistical tests, if at least 75.61% of respondents perceive a geopolitical factor as having a "significant" or "very significant" impact on Afghanistan's national power, that factor is considered influential; otherwise, it is deemed non-influential.

Based on the results of the first and second phase questionnaires, 32 influential geopolitical factors affecting Afghanistan's national power were determined, along with their corresponding average importance scores. Notably, the "national unity" and "leadership" factors exhibit the highest impact on Afghanistan's national power. In contrast, among these factors, "natural resources" have the most negligible impact on Afghanistan's national power.

Through analysis and statistical testing, 27 geopolitical factors crucial to the role played in Afghanistan's national power were identified. The most influential among them include: National Unity, Leadership, Aryan Civilization, Human Resources, Geographical Location, Ideology, National Spirit, Government Quality, National Stability, Emphasis on Afghan Identity, Preparedness of the Armed Forces, National Character, Diplomatic Quality, Energy Resources, Industrial Capacity, Resilient Economy

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings presented in the research regarding the role of geopolitical components in Afghanistan's national power reveal intriguing insights into the key determinants of the country's strength. These insights emphasize the intricate interplay of various geopolitical factors and their impact on Afghanistan's national power, providing a nuanced understanding of the nation's position in the global arena.

**The Role of National Unity:** The survey data suggests that the factor of national unity, often regarded as a critical element in a nation's power, is overwhelmingly perceived as a significant contributor to Afghanistan's national power. With a substantial majority of respondents (96%) acknowledging the importance of national unity, it underscores this factor's central role in Afghanistan's national power. This result aligns with historical and contemporary accounts of the Afghan nation's resilience in the face of external pressures and internal divisions (Maley, 2008).

**The Impact of Geopolitical Factors:** In the context of Afghanistan's national power, the research identifies several geopolitical factors that have a notable influence. While national unity appears to be the most influential factor, other elements such as leadership, Aryan culture, human resources, and geographical location are also significant contributors. These findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of Afghanistan's national power, where historical, cultural, and geographical factors interplay with leadership and human resources to shape the nation's strength.

**Religion and Natural Resources:** Surprisingly, religion and natural resources were identified as less influential in determining Afghanistan's national power. This result contrasts with common perceptions of the role of religion in shaping Afghan society and the potential wealth generated from the country's vast natural resources (Schetter, 2009). However, it is essential to note that these findings do not necessarily downplay the significance of these factors; instead, they indicate a lower perceived influence compared to other elements.

**The Impact of New Geopolitical Factors:** Furthermore, respondents' introduction of new geopolitical factors in the second phase of the survey highlights the dynamic nature of geopolitical analysis. These factors, such as "Aryan culture" and "quality of diplomacy," underscore the evolving landscape of Afghanistan's national power as it adapts to new dynamics and challenges.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has delved into the critical role of geopolitical components in shaping Afghanistan's national power. The findings indicate that national unity is overwhelmingly recognized as a fundamental and influential factor in Afghanistan's national power. It underscores the significance of internal cohesion in a country often challenged by external pressures and internal divisions.

The research also identifies several other geopolitical factors contributing to Afghanistan's national power, including leadership, Aryan culture, human resources, and geographical location. These elements and national unity collectively shape the nation's strength on the global stage, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of Afghanistan's national power.

Surprisingly, religion and natural resources were perceived as less influential in determining Afghanistan's national power, challenging common perceptions about their significance. However, this does not diminish their relevance but highlights the dominance of other factors in shaping the country's power.

Furthermore, the introduction of new geopolitical factors by respondents in the second phase of the survey underscores the dynamic nature of Afghanistan's national power. As Afghanistan adapts to new dynamics and challenges, these emerging factors may play an increasingly important role in shaping the nation's strength.

This research provides valuable insights into the intricate interplay of geopolitical components in Afghanistan's national power. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehensively comprehending Afghanistan's global role and shaping policies that enhance the nation's strength and stability.

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