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Energy and International Management:

From the Perspective of the Geoeconomics Approache

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Abstract

Energy is one of the basic structures of the global economy, as it is the main engine for it and for all economic activities over time, and the importance of energy resources is increasing with the increase in scientific and technological development, and these resources are witnessing vigorous and renewed research by countries due to their importance and position in the power of the state on the one hand and the preservation of its sovereignty on the one hand On the other hand. The country that possesses energy resources is a country with energy immunity against scarcity and oligarchy, as well as against exploitation and vulnerability by other countries. The status of energy resources has increased with international competition over them, especially in the last decades of the twenty-first century.

✓ Energy. International Management. Geoeconomics Approach
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1. Introduction:

Energy is a vital resource for the economies of all countries and societies, whether they are advanced, emerging, or underdeveloped. All of them strive to achieve self-sufficiency in energy resources to ensure their economic, social, and political stability. Importing countries, especially major nations, seek to ensure the continuous flow of energy resources and tighten their control over their sources, following the principle that whoever controls energy resources controls the world and guarantees global sovereignty.

On the other hand, this is also crucial for securing their domestic social, economic, and political interests. Exporting countries, on the other hand, always aim to secure safe markets for their energy resources, transportation routes, and prices that serve their national interests and maintain their social and economic stability. Additionally, energy plays a significant role in international relations among nations, often acting as a driving force for their external behaviors and influencing the dynamics of a country's regional and international relationships.

2 . Exploring the Concept of Energy and Its Diverse Sources:

When discussing energy, we refer to it in its traditional sense, encompassing oil, natural gas, and coal. However, in this study, our focus will solely be on oil and natural gas, as they still represent the largest and most crucial sources of energy to date. Energy, in its simplest form, comprises a collection of natural resources, primarily oil, natural gas, and coal, utilized in various daily activities such as transportation and various industrial and economic sectors.

The hierarchical arrangement of energy sources has undergone significant changes since the beginning of the 20th century. While coal held the forefront in research and usage among energy sources during the 18th and 19th centuries, its position diminished at the start of the 20th century in the face of oil and natural gas.

Coal's utilization declined from 95% at the beginning of the 20th century to 28.2% in the 21st century. Simultaneously, the share of oil increased from 3.6% to 40.2%, and natural gas from 1.3% to 26.4% (Rahban, 2011, p. 365).

Thus, oil and natural gas have long dominated international energy sources with some minor relative changes. The percentage of fossil fuel utilization in total energy consumption decreased from approximately 85% in the early 1970s to around 80% in the early 1980s (Griffith, 2018, p. 2). Throughout the past century, oil and gas have played a pivotal role in driving global development. Most studies concerning the future of energy indicate that oil and gas will remain dominant energy suppliers even in this century. However, without exploring new energy sources and adopting appropriate policies, the world's demand for oil is projected to grow at 1.6% annually. Furthermore, oil will continue to supply over 90% of energy needs for transportation until at least 2030, and the demand for natural gas is expected to increase at a faster rate of 2.3% each year (International Energy Agency, n.d., p. 37).

Initially, researchers and energy enthusiasts have differed in defining the concept of energy in a manner that aligns with the overall framework of all nations. This variation is attributed to the diverse perspectives of countries regarding energy, making it challenging to construct unified policies and strategies that operate within a mutually agreed context among all nations. Energy is the potential effort or capacity inherent in any object or substance to perform work or action, often associated with the mechanical motion of objects. This form of energy has become one of the most crucial physical properties of matter (Rahban, 2011, p. 367).

The term “energy” is a literal translation of the word "energie" or "energia" in various modern European languages. It is derived from the ancient Greek word "energos" or "energeia," composed of two parts: "en," meaning "within or inside," and "ergos," meaning "activity." Thus, the word “energy” signifies "activity within or inside" something or that a thing contains effort or work. It refers to anything that

produces effort or work, such as heat and light. In this study, our focus will be on fossil fuels, which are traditional energy sources like oil, natural gas, and coal. However, there are also non-fossil fuel sources, known as renewable energy sources, such as nuclear, wind, solar, etc. (Al-Khaffaji, 2018, pp. 26-27).

Moreover, different energy sources are considered the fundamental pillars of economies and societies of nations. The strength of a country is now measured by its possession of energy sources and its ability to harness and utilize them to achieve its objectives and highest interests. Energy is the primary driving force behind both national politics and economy, shaping the behavior of a nation in its foreign relations on regional and international levels.

There are two types of energy sources: the first is the depletable or fossil fuel energy, which includes oil, natural gas, and coal. These are organic compounds resulting from the decomposition of living organisms and plants over thousands of years, transforming into latent chemical energy. They are characterized by depletion and non-renewability. The second type is renewable energy, especially nuclear, solar, hydroelectric, and wind energy, which represents a new category of significant importance for nations and international organizations. These entities emphasize the necessity of preserving the environment from pollution caused by excessive use of fossil fuels. We witness an increasing share of renewable energy sources in the world's total energy consumption due to their cleanliness, as they do not produce environmentally harmful emissions (Al-Khaffaji, 2018, pp. 29-30). Additionally, renewable energy sources are cost-effective, low-risk, and economically viable.

In this article, our focus will be on the first category of energy sources, namely depletable energy, specifically on oil and natural gas, aligning with the research context and its specificity, given their significant role in the global economy and international energy relations.

- **Oil**: The first commercial use of oil began in the United States in the mid-19th century, primarily as a fuel for lighting. With the invention of the internal combustion engine, oil became the fuel for all kinds of movement. Early on, the British recognized the importance of petroleum in the new industrial era (Radwan, 2016, p. 19). Intensive research at the end of the 19th century led to the identification of three major oil-producing centers: North America, the Caucasus in southern Russia, and the East Indies (Indonesia), which was a Dutch colony at that time. At the beginning of the 20th century, evidence of significant and alluring oil reserves emerged in the Middle East, particularly on the shores of the Gulf, which were under British control at that time. The strength of a country or empire at that time was measured by the power of its fleet, which relied on oil. The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Edward Grey, declared at the end of World War I: ***"The sovereignty of Britain in the Gulf must be asserted... this sovereignty is directly equal to the strength of the British fleet, and the power of this fleet means the power of Britain"*** (Radwan, 2016, p. 20).

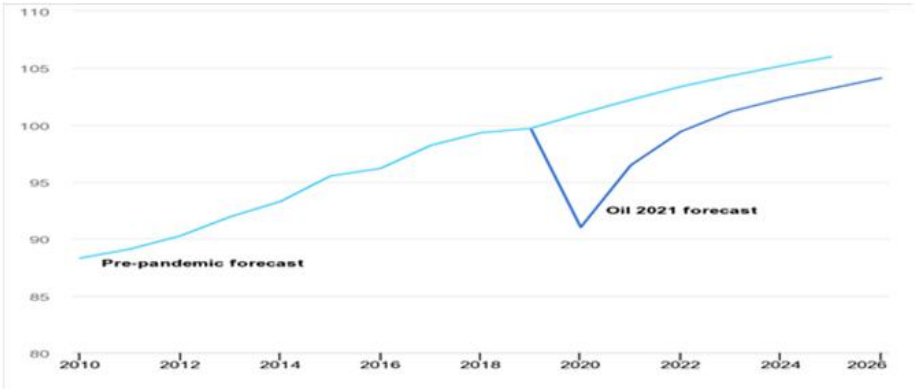
Oil is considered the most important energy source and serves as the foundation upon which countries build their goals, progress, and continuous growth. It is likely that oil will remain dominant as the largest commercial energy source in the world without competition from the year 2000 to 2030. Despite its relatively low growth rate of 1.7% annually, oil's share in global energy consumption is not expected to decrease significantly, only slightly from 39% in 2000 to 38% in 2030. The projected oil consumption is expected to increase from around 75 million barrels per day in 2000 (Kaliki, Golden, 2010, p. 63) to 105.4 million barrels per day in 2030 and around 106.4 million barrels per day by 2040. According to a report by the International Energy Agency in 2019, the global demand for oil is expected to reach its peak in 2030 (https://bit.ly/3yDP5E4), driven by the increasing requirements for transportation and communication, as well as the growing industrial uses, including chemical industries.

The importance of oil has significantly increased in the era of globalization and technological advancement. Industrialized nations are now in dire need of more oil to sustain their advanced industries. The significance of oil for importing countries, especially advanced ones, lies in its pivotal role in their economy, political influence, cultural impact, and strategic positioning. This has led to a rapid increase in consumption and a demand for higher production. Technological progress in all economic, political, and social aspects necessitates more energy.

For oil-producing countries, the importance of oil lies in the financial benefits it brings, which are crucial for their political, economic, and social development plans. It serves as a primary source of income for most oil-producing nations that heavily rely on its exportation abroad. Additionally, international trade heavily depends on the export and import of this vital commodity (Al-Khaffaji, 2018, pp. 35-36).

Most statistics, including those from the International Energy Agency and oil-related studies, indicate that global demand for oil will continue to rise in the coming years, driving daily consumption rates to consistently higher levels (Clair, n.d., p. 48). The graph below illustrates the increasing global demand for oil in the period from 2010 to 2026.

Fig.1 A graph representing the increasing global demand for oil from 2010 to 2026.



Source : https://bit.ly/3NfepnZ

Asia is at the forefront of the world's oil-producing continents, accounting for approximately 43% of the world's total oil production according to 2011 estimates, particularly due to the oil-rich countries in the Arab Gulf region, which lead in reserves and production. This has made Asia a significant battleground for international competition to secure oil. It is expected that the Asian continent will become the region with the highest oil consumption in the world, driven by the expanding total energy demand in countries such as China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand. Asia's share of global energy consumption was around 15% in 1970, reached approximately 27% in 2000, and is projected to rise to 35% by 2030 of the total global consumption (Kaliki, Golden, 2010, p. 62).

Conversely, the world's oil consumption is expected to decline in both North America and Europe. Oil use in North America grew at about 1.3% annually from 1970 to 2000, and this percentage is expected to remain the same. The consumption growth rate in Europe was approximately 1% per year from 1970 to 2000, and both North America and Europe are expected to retain a market share of 25% each by 2030. On the other hand, South America, Central America, the Middle East, and Africa are anticipated to gain market share with an annual consumption growth rate of 2.5% until 2030. These regions are starting from relatively weak positions and are not expected to surpass a combined global share of 15% by 2030 (Kaliki, Golden, 2010, p. 63).

- **Natural Gas**: Natural gas is known as a carbon compound composed of the same basic elements as oil. While the latter (oil) exists in a liquid state, natural gas exists in a gaseous form. It is a compound with no shape, odorless, and colorless, consisting of organic hydrocarbon materials (Mohammed, Ahmed, 2020, p. 17). Natural gas is considered an alternative to oil as a fossil fuel source in the near future, as it is one of the cleanest and lowest-carbon fossil fuels. The reserves of natural gas have doubled, with the confirmed global reserves estimated at 185 trillion cubic meters by the end of 2008. These reserves could fulfill the world's

oil needs for approximately 60 years based on the current production rate. According to the estimates of the U.S. Geological Survey, the remaining extractable resources of natural gas in the long term amount to 436 trillion cubic meters, encompassing confirmed reserves, their growth rate, and undiscovered quantities. The cumulative production percentage for 2008 does not exceed 18% of the total natural gas reserves (Al-Khafaji, 2018, p. 37).

Natural gas reserves are characterized by their abundant availability compared to oil, and they extend widely across the world. Russia, along with the Central Asian and Middle Eastern republics, possesses significant gas reserves. Over the past three decades, confirmed natural gas reserves have more than doubled, thanks to increased attention, the discovery of new fields, and advancements in exploration and production technologies (Mohammed, Ahmed, 2020, p. 45).

Map Nº 1. represents the natural gas reserves in regions around the world.

Source : https://bit.ly/3PnHKhP

Natural gas was discovered in the early 20th century when it was found in the states of New York and Virginia in the United States in 1920. During this period, the produced gas was often burned and wasted as it was considered an associated gas during World War II, mainly because consumption markets were unable to

absorb the quantities produced. Additionally, transportation methods were not advanced at that time. However, after World War II, with an increased demand for energy and significant technological advancements in using pipelines for transporting natural gas through extensive networks, production increased, and exploration for natural gas expanded (Mohamed, Ahmed, 2020, p. 20).

Until the end of both world wars, natural gas was considered a secondary source of energy. However, its significance grew after 1945. By 1952, natural gas accounted for a quarter of the energy consumed in the United States. The U.S. alone consumed approximately 90% of the world's gas consumption in 1955. During the period from 1950 to 1980, the world witnessed an increasing consumption of natural gas, reaching 140 billion cubic meters, equivalent to over 2 million barrels of oil per day (Masa'id, 2011, p. 227).

The beginning of the new millennium marked a relative shift in preferred energy sources. The International Energy Agency's report in 2011 referred to it as the "Golden Age of Gas." The agency indicated that by the year 2020, natural gas would be the second-largest source of energy in the world after oil, based on objective considerations, the most prominent of which is the continuous increase in demand for natural gas since the beginning of the second millennium, especially from emerging Asian economies like China and India. (https://bit.ly/3sEcT6W). According to the International Energy Agency's reference scenario, the share of natural gas in global energy supply will reach 24% by 2020 and is projected to rise to 28% by 2050, assuming a low-carbon emission growth scenario prepared by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the World Energy Council (Al-Khafaji, 2018, pp. 38-39).

What confirms the importance of natural gas is its expanding use in meeting global energy demands. Its specifications and abundant reserves play a crucial role in all energy scenarios, and its position in diversifying global energy sources

is growing. Natural gas possesses some characteristics that have made it a competitive source compared to other traditional energy sources. Notably, it is one of the cleanest fossil fuels. In recent decades, after extensive use of coal and oil, environmental pollution became a pressing issue due to carbon dioxide emissions. Natural gas stands out with its lower carbon content compared to other fossil fuels. Its wide usage in residential applications and electricity generation, along with its various components such as methane, ethane, and butane, known for their thermal energy, fuel industries with high-energy demand. Therefore, it has received significant attention, leading to improvements in its transportation methods to reduce costs (Mohammed, Ahmed, 2020, pp. 21-22).

The processes of extracting and producing natural gas are very similar to the costs of oil production because most of the natural gas reserves are discovered incidentally during oil exploration and drilling. Moreover, the production methods and well drilling are almost identical. Generally, the costs of extracting natural gas are low compared to other energy sources. However, its transportation and marketing are highly expensive. The liquefaction and transportation costs are very high, mainly due to the need for advanced technology in the liquefaction process and shipping in refrigerated tankers. Additionally, the relatively high transportation fees reduce the profit margins from its trade. Natural gas can be transported either in its natural state directly through pipelines from production wells to the end consumer or by converting it into a liquid state under specific temperature and pressure conditions. This is done by cooling it to (-161) degrees Celsius, where its volume decreases by about 600 times, and then transporting it using specialized carriers. Both methods are cost-intensive, with transportation costs estimated to represent around 45% of the natural gas price (Mohammed, Ahmed, 2020, p. 34). Therefore, its transportation requires the laying of pipeline networks, building necessary infrastructure, and establishing fixed facilities, all of which are financially expensive, especially for long distances.

Regarding natural gas prices, if we track the historical trend of natural gas prices, we find that the general trajectory has been gradually increasing over time. This relative importance has supported the credibility of natural gas in the global market and its ability to meet the world's energy demand. This resource has evolved to become a model for sustainable and advanced energy consumption, which has contributed to the increase in its price. There has been a comprehensive rise in natural gas prices in all Asian, European, and American markets, especially since the year 2000.

The reason for this increase can be attributed to the gas crisis experienced by the American markets during that period and the sudden and significant surge in American natural gas prices in the winter of "2000-2001." Prices soared from $2.5 per British Thermal Unit (BTU) at the beginning of 2000 to over $10 per BTU by the end of the same year. This sharp increase was caused by an imbalance between supply and demand for natural gas in that market (Mohammed, Ahmed, 2020, pp. 38-39).

The pricing of natural gas has remained linked to the pricing of oil, and the exporting countries of natural gas have continued to call for breaking this linkage to establish a separate gas market independent of the global oil market. The issue of linking gas prices to oil prices has been a topic of discussion in various conferences and meetings dedicated to oil and gas, held in several countries. For instance, the Gas Conference held in the United Arab Emirates in 1996 and the Middle East Gas and Oil Conference in Abu Dhabi witnessed demands for the creation of a Gas Exporting Countries Forum similar to OPEC. This forum would include major gas-producing and exporting countries such as Russia, Qatar, Iran, Algeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others, to coordinate cooperation on gas pricing and industry matters. (Masa'id, 2011, p. 232). Because of these demands, the "Gas Exporting Countries Forum" was established, following the first ministerial meeting held in Tehran in 2001. The meeting was attended by Iran, along with

Algeria, Qatar, Russia, Turkmenistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Oman, with Norway as an observer. During the meeting, the forum's objectives were outlined, including promoting the concept of mutual interests through dialogue between producers, producers and consumers, and between governments and gas-related energy industries. The forum aimed to provide a platform for research, exchange of views, and to enhance a stable, transparent, and more efficient gas market (Rolami, Ashorn 2017, p. 134). The member countries of the forum sought to coordinate their joint policies through various meetings, recognizing the importance of collective action to protect their interests rather than working individually, and thus, creating a new institutional model that focuses on gas markets and prices.

In conclusion, since the discovery of oil and natural gas, countries have sought to achieve self-sufficiency and control over production areas, supply routes, and prices in line with their national interests. This has led to competition among these countries and sometimes resulted in conflicting relationships due to conflicting interests on one hand and fears of scarcity and depletion of these resources on the other hand. As a result, many studies have emerged emphasizing the importance of energy in international relations, shaping a country's destiny, status, and influence in the international system, and this is what we will discuss in the following section.

3 . Energy from the perspective of geo-economics approach in international relations:

The term "Geo-economics" is a new concept that emerged in 1990 with the analyses of the American economist **“Edward Luttwak”**. It refers to the reliance of the new world order on economic power instead of military power as an effective tool used by states and major corporations to assert their strength and influence in the world. On the other hand, **“Pascal Lorot”** defines it as "a science aimed at analyzing

economic strategies, especially trade strategies, pursued by states as part of their policies to protect their national economies through monopolizing advanced technology and controlling global markets related to the production and marketing of sensitive products. Owning or controlling such products grants the possessor, whether a nation or a national institution, international power and influence and strengthens their economic and social capabilities" (https://bit.ly/3ModnWM).

The term "Geo-economics" is a new compound word in English that consists of two parts: "Geo," which is of Greek origin and means "earth," and it is synonymous with "space," "area," or "broad expanse" of the earth, and "economics," which refers to the field of economics and the related activities of production, distribution, consumption, and finance, as well as the resulting relationships of exchange, competition, and conflict. Therefore, the subject of Geo-economics is the study of the complex interactions, intersections, and combinations between space and the economy. From a terminological perspective, there is no precise definition of the concept of Geo-economics, even in the works of the American strategic expert **“Edward Luttwak”**, in his famous article "From Geopolitics to Geo-economics" and his book "The Endangered American Dream". He summarized it by saying, "Traditional geopolitics must include the economic dimension in the power relations between nations, and international trade becomes the mainstay of prosperity" (https://bit.ly/3ModnWM).

The French strategic expert **“Jean-François Daguzan”** defined Geo-economics in an article titled "Survival of the Crisis or the Sudden Return of Geo-economics" as: "Geo-economics is the study of economic and social flows and the interactions of the active parties, whether states or others connected to power. It is the study of the ability of these actors to influence or not influence these flows".

The French Geo-economist **“Pascal Lorot”** defined it with regard to the subject of study as: "Geo-economics takes on the analysis of economic strategies, especially

trade strategies, decided by the state within the political framework to protect its national economy or specific sectors accurately defined. It helps national companies to control technology and enhance their economic and social roles" (https://bit.ly/3ModnWM).

Through the definitions provided by thinkers, we find that Geo-economics deals with studying the relationship between geography and the economy, particularly focusing on geographic regions with significant geographical resources. It involves studying "Geo-economics of agriculture," "Geo-economics of water," and "Geo-economics of energy," where energy resources have become part of economic geography studies, and "Geography of Energy" is one of its newest branches. Writings about this field emerged in the 1950s, despite the numerous studies that have addressed energy resources within economic geography.

Geo-economics is concerned with studying energy resources in terms of their characteristics, diversity, and geographic distribution on both a global and political unit level. It also examines the factors influencing energy production, transportation, distribution, and consumption, relying on a general geographical perspective in analysis and interpretation.

The term "Geography of Energy" first appeared in France, specifically with the publication of the book "**Geographi de L'energie**" by the economic geographer **"Pierre George"** in 1950. A book by researcher **"Chardonnet"** in 1962 and **«The Geography of Energy»** by **"Gerald Manier"** followed this in 1964. **Manier**'s book was one of the first works to address the topic of energy from a geographical perspective. He adopted an economic geographical approach in analyzing the spatial characteristics and studying the production, transportation, distribution, and consumption of energy. He also acknowledged the role played by local policies and global powers in shaping energy patterns (Rahban, 2011, pp. 369-370).

During the 1970s, the field of Energy Geography witnessed the emergence of numerous significant works and studies. Notably, **"Joule"** in 1971, **"Kuran"** in 1973, **"Audel"** in 1974, **"Chapman"** and **"Cook"** in 1976. One of the most important books during this period was **"The Petroleum and the Great Powers"** by **"Audel Peter"**, which addressed the topic of energy geography comprehensively. The book discussed oil, its production, and the role of advanced and industrialized countries in its production. It also examined the factors influencing global oil production and delved into the petroleum refining, transportation, and distribution industries. Moreover, the book highlighted the influential factors in the localization of the refining industry while emphasizing the economic significance of oil. In the 1980s, studies focusing on Energy Geography witnessed notable developments, particularly in their methodologies. In 1989, **"Chapman"** released a new book titled **"Geography and Energy: Commercial Energy Systems and National Policies"**. In this book, he discussed the geographical distribution of various energy resources, their uses, production patterns, and consumption. The book specifically emphasized the coal, oil, natural gas, and electricity industries (Rahban, 2011, p. 371).

In the field of international relations, the 21st century witnessed a change in the methods used by countries to achieve their foreign policy objectives. There has been a relative and gradual shift in the means employed in interstate relations, moving away from military power towards more advanced and cost-effective approaches, with economic tools at the forefront. This transformation in foreign policy tools sparked extensive and profound discussions about the growing importance of geo-economic considerations over traditional geopolitical considerations. Following the Cold War and the emergence of globalization in the last decade of the 20th century, the perspective of economic geography has become closer to explaining the international reality, especially in the context of war (https://bit.ly/3wl7hky).

The idea of using the economy to serve the political objectives of the state was overlooked by political thinkers and researchers until some economists pointed out

that strategic objectives linked to economic policies of states should be taken into account within economic analysis. They advocated using the economy as a tool in the service of state power, as economic interests become the subject of conflicts due to the distribution of global wealth. In this context, the partial replacement of territorial invasions with market invasions occurred. Hence, there is a constant war waged by countries and their corporations to share in global production that would be more beneficial and serve national interests.

Restrictions, customs barriers, setting quotas, imposing industrial standards, direct and indirect control over financial markets, and continuous investigation of monopolies all serve as powerful and effective weapons to reshape the international hierarchical order of powers in favor of the countries that use them. The bet lies in proving the possibility of using economic relations, such as foreign trade (foreign aid, capital flows, or trade negotiations), as a tool of political pressure. Therefore, all matters related to economic strategies are pursued by countries as a policy of power and influence, regardless of the reasons behind them. In this regard, "**Thomas C. Schelling**" emphasized the need to focus on different aspects of international economic policy and link them to the political objectives that the state seeks to achieve through its foreign economic policies. Using foreign economic relations as a means of political pressure is an application of economic values as resources of power and influence (Fontal, 2006, pp. 28-29).

Therefore, instead of using hard power based on geopolitical rules, countries now employ economic tools to achieve influence, promote their interests, and gain an advantage over their rivals in economic warfare. These economic tools include foreign direct investments, supply and demand chains, exploiting natural resources, foreign aid, offering incentives such as price reductions, and the threat of sanctions. All of these tactics are part of the dynamics of the game of geo-economic power. The energy pipeline war is one of the most prominent examples of energy geopolitics and its geopolitical implications on the interests of competing countries. It has brought

back echoes of the Cold War between the Russian Federation and the United States, within the context of energy wars and competition over European and Asian regions using their energy resources (gas and oil), as well as the networks and pipelines for achieving political influence and international dominance within the global system and its various units. The recent Ukrainian crisis serves as the biggest evidence that the new millennium wars are energy wars with geopolitical dimensions. In this regard, US Senator "**Richard Lugar**" stated, "The primary reason for potential armed conflict in the European theater and surrounding regions would be the scarcity of energy and manipulation of its resources" (https://bit.ly/3wl7hky).

In the same context, the geographical map of countries has become characterized by geographical-economic implications rather than geographical-political ones. The size of countries and regional entities is now measured by their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the economic geography of a state is defined by high population density, short distances, and reduced divisions. Countries have reduced border barriers and entered global markets. Notably, the United States, the European Union, and Japan are prominent examples of countries that have redefined their economic geography (https://bit.ly/39TCpyy) in line with their strategic interests closely linked to energy sources, their locations, and transportation routes. This is where the significance and strategic importance of energy in international relations become apparent. It plays a crucial role in determining the dominant and powerful players in the competition for hegemony and the pursuit of national interests. We will conclude the research by exploring this final point in the following section of the study.

4 . The status of strategic energy and its dimensions in relations between states:

When delving into the discussion of international relations, it is necessary to go back to the origins and evolution of the international community, which laid its foundations and rules with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This period, spanning between the 16th and 19th centuries, witnessed the emergence of the nation-state in

Europe. During this time, the inter-state relations among European countries were characterized by the development of international law on one hand, and the nature and scale of interactions on the other hand.Since then, the relations between nation-states have been characterized by two interrelated phenomena. The first is the phenomenon of cooperation, integration, and merging among states when their interests require this type of relationship. The second is the phenomenon of conflict, arising when interests clash, and each party perceives an external threat to its security and existence. Both of these phenomena have contributed to the development and progress of those nations and their political entities (Bin Sultan, 2011, pp. 10-11).

The development of international relations has been influenced by a set of variables that have had an impact on the evolution of interactions and behavioral patterns among entities in the international community. Among the most prominent factors is the changing units of the international community. As states evolved and their functions and activities developed, and with the increase in the number of actors in the international community, including both states and non-state entities, a complex network of political and economic interactions emerged among these units. Another significant variable is the economic aspect, which has also played a major role in shaping the course of international relations. This variable continues to have a significant influence on the development of international relations and in establishing specific patterns of conflictual or cooperative interactions between states.

The search for resources and foreign markets has been one of the main drivers of competition and conflict among countries, leading to the division of spheres of influence in the world. However, the necessity of cooperation and coordination of economic policies also arises due to the mutual needs between countries for goods, services, and capital. This necessitates the establishment of cooperative international economic relations and the creation of institutions and economic organizations to regulate the network of these relations and interactions. These interactions tend to take on increasingly multi-party forms within the international system and regional

sub-systems. This multi-party dynamic has contributed to the establishment of very interconnected relationships. (Brair, Jalili, 2009, p. 99) and led to a profound modification of the nature of interactions between countries by limiting political choices and favoring multidimensional economic options through various mechanisms.

The most prominent of these mechanisms is economic and cultural globalization, which goes beyond all geopolitical considerations, by introducing new actors alongside states in the competition to control geography. This has led to the emergence of what is known as geo-economics and geo-culture as two new and integrated variables with contemporary geopolitics (Dufay, 2007, p. 72). This implies viewing the international system as a dynamic entity formed by the strategies of multiple actors that are increasing in number and diversity, with major powers occupying a leading position. This whole system consists of spaces and actors with unequal capabilities seeking to position themselves within the hierarchy of power interactions in international relations (Deswa, 2014, p. 84).

Since the end of the Cold War, political analysts have been seeking to identify the central variable of the new international environment and its control over the interactions between states. **"Samuel Huntington"** went on to say that the driving force behind global security would be "the clash of civilizations," where it is assumed that states will develop their security policies based on religious and civilizational loyalties (Western Christian, Slavic Orthodox, Islamic world). He also proposed that the clash between civilizations would be the final stage in the emergence of conflicts in the modern world. Some international events, such as the Bosnian and Kosovo wars, confirmed this perception. However, what prevailed in international developments was the fervent pursuit of abundant resources and the disregard for any civilizational considerations. An example of this can be seen in the stance of the United States towards the three Muslim countries, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, against two Christian-majority countries, Armenia and Russia, in the

competition over the Caspian Sea (Keller, n.d., p. 18).

As for **"Robert Kaplan",** he believed that chaos resulting from population growth is a characteristic of the international environment. However, this chaos, experienced by African countries, did not deter major energy companies from conducting profitable business operations and exploration projects in these regions, which suffer from serious and complex disruptions. This is achieved through developing security arrangements with local elites and warlords. As for "**Friedman"**'s theory on economic globalization and the primacy of economic relations in explaining and managing international affairs, he believes that most major resource conflicts will be resolved through market mechanisms, ignoring the fact that states have repeatedly resorted to war to protect their vital national interests, including energy supplies, access to resources, and strengthening their control over them (Keller, n.d., p. 19).

It has become clear that the driving forces of international interactions cannot be explained without acknowledging the central importance of energy resources. The pursuit of possessing and protecting these resources has become at the core of the national security strategies of countries, and it is one of the most explanatory variables for what is happening in the world today. The availability of energy is essential for the existence of modern states and civilizations. The struggle for control over energy resources intensifies between energy-producing and energy-consuming countries on one hand, and among energy-consuming countries themselves on the other hand. Energy has multiple and interconnected dimensions, ranging from political and economic to strategic. The importance of states is determined by their possession of energy resources and their ability to secure them and ensure access to them. Moreover, their foreign policies and behaviors can lean either towards international cooperation and policy coordination or towards conflict and competition to gain control over these resources (Hamoudi, 2003, pp. 49-50).

The pursuit of states, especially major ones, to secure their energy sources to meet their domestic needs has led to intensified conflict and competition among them to control regions rich in energy resources, especially oil and natural gas, and bring them under their influence and dominance. As a result of this competition and conflict over energy sources and their transportation pipelines, it has escalated into an economic and energy-focused war, with the use of military force to achieve these objectives. For instance, the Soviet Union waged a war in Afghanistan in the 1970s, which lasted for a decade, in order to secure the oil transportation pipelines from the Caspian Sea region and Central Asian countries to the Pacific Ocean (https://bit.ly/3NnlwuS).

This is what strategists describe as "militarization of energy security" and reliance on the concept of scarcity and need. How the world will respond to the depletion of energy resources in the coming decades, the most prominent answer will be an escalation of competition for the remaining energy resources, especially oil and natural gas. The concept that scarcity of resources generally leads to intensified competition has a solid foundation. When these supplies are depleted, governments will naturally seek to reach the maximum possible access to disputed regions (Dandan, 2022, p. 37).

Under the pretext of securing energy sources, countries have granted themselves the right to military intervention to protect their spheres of influence and to fuel regional internal conflicts to strengthen their control over energy resources. They also aim to direct supply routes in a way that serves their competitive economic interests, as is the case with the United States. This direction was expressed by former President **“Jimmy Carter”**, who declared in his speech in 1980 that "any attempt by external powers to control the Gulf would be seen as a threat to American interests, which calls for strong intervention to protect American interests." This vision has been the cornerstone of US foreign policy since then and continues to be so today. Successive US administrations have adopted this principle to achieve American

energy security through three main tools of their foreign policy. **The first tool** involves using military force to ensure the security of energy-producing countries, as well as energy facilities and supplies in the international market, including those destined for the American markets. **The second tool** lies in the American approach to seek alternative regions instead of traditional ones on which it relied, such as the Arabian Gulf region, due to the numerous problems it faces and the rising cost of depending on energy extracted from that area. As a result, the US turned its attention to African countries and the Caspian Sea region. **The third tool** was providing economic aid and assistance to energy-producing countries and resolving conflicts in the countries that are key sources for US energy consumption (Abdul-Aati, 2014, pp. 113-114).

Many analysts have suggested that the US war on Afghanistan in 2001 was not a direct response to the events of September 11th, and similarly, the US war on Iraq in 2003 was not solely due to Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. Instead, these were energy wars planned by America due to the geopolitical and strategic importance of both Iraq and Afghanistan in American energy security. Additionally, the significance of the Eurasian region, rich in energy resources, which accounts for 60% of the world's GDP and 75% of global energy reserves, played a crucial role in seeking to strengthen control over it and ensure its presence in the region. Therefore, Afghanistan became a pivotal point for American presence in the area and one of the most influential players in it (Abdul-Aati, 2014, p. 121).

By analyzing the various conflicts and wars that emerged after the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the new millennium, we find that most of them revolve around energy resources due to their increasing scarcity and value over time. These conflicts include internal wars and disputes between groups over energy-rich regions to gain control and strengthen their hold over them. Recently, civil wars have been fought to control exportable resources in countries like Angola, Congo, Peru, Cambodia, and others. Additionally, conflicts have arisen between countries and

regions, especially when the supply is insufficient to meet the increasing demand. Given the scarcity of energy resources and the possibility of their depletion, nations have been compelled to adopt more intense competitive strategies to protect their national interests and energy security. (Heinberg, 2006, pp. 91-92).

Finally, the geopolitical and geo-economics reality of energy compels us to emphasize the importance of energy-producing regions and their strategic significance in shaping the behaviors, policies, regional, and international interactions of states. Energy can be utilized as an effective tool and weapon to influence the dynamics of the international system and relations between countries, on one hand, and to employ the power of energy diplomacy within international institutions and organizations to achieve national interests on the other hand.

5. Conclusion:

The research endeavor of this article revolved around exploring the concepts of energy and international management from the perspective of the geo-economic approach. The conclusion reached at the end is that the concept of energy lacks academic consensus among researchers and between energy-producing and consuming countries. Each party views it in accordance with their own interests and objectives. The geo-economic perspective emerged as a new approach to studying the importance of energy in international relations. It is based on the duality of geography and economy as controlling variables in the behavior of states to achieve their interests and maximize their gains. The geography of energy has become one of the most influential variables in interpreting the nature of international relations in the 21st century, which oscillates between conflict and competition on one hand and cooperation and the formation of regional and international blocs on the other.

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