



GEOPOLITICS OF CONFLICT AND WAR OF THE WORLD- A STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PHENOMENA AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS.

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ABSTRACT

There is a close relationship between man and environment. Geography has much to tell us about human conflict. This paper topic titled 'Geopolitics of conflict and war of the world- a study of environmental phenomena and its relationships' is based on philosophy where the schools of environmentalism state that 'Environment controls and governs the course of human actions'. The study is based on theoretical discussion and experiences of the recent happenings of war and conflict in different parts of the world. In the recent decades, there are also problems of climate change like draughts, floods and strong winds which poses threat to the existence of humanity. The geographic environment to some what extent influences the cultures, behavior and actions of the people in a particular region. Moreover, the problems of insurgency and conflict are concentrated in certain pockets region of the world which may be related to environmental phenomena. This paper attempted and gives underlying reasons behinds the war and conflict zones of the world. The paper discusses and brings relationship of war and conflict in terms of environmental factors and present status of the environmental which may have changes the psychology and behavior of people of the region brought by harsh environment and may have sought to civil war. The paper also brings out the importance of physical environment and its need for safeguarding. The paper also reveals that physical environment is one of the important parameters in understanding the root cause of conflict and war.

Keywords: Environmental relationships, Philosophy, human behaviour, conflict and war

I. INTRODUCTION.

The present study topic titled *'Geopolitics of conflict and war of the world- a study of environmental phenomena and its relationships is a study based on philosophy of environmentalism in geography.* **To state that-** People and ideas influence events, but geography largely determines them. To understand the coming struggles, it's time to look back to schools of environmentalism in geography. This philosophy can really help in understanding the problems of war and conflict region of today's world. Geography has much to tell us about human conflict. It is a known fact the first geographer was concerned about the impact that borders, ethnicity and continents had on war.

In the recent decades, the war and conflict of the world have increased. This war may be based on political control or may be based on religion, races and ethnicities etc. The condition of the world is in precarious. The stability of peace is lost. However it is to point out that the war and conflicts are mainly concentrated in certain pockets of the world, although other region also faces problems of conflict and war but with less intensity. To mention few, there are problems of insurgency in dry Middle-East, in deep rainforests Africa and hilly and thick forests of South-East Asia. The researcher may study the cause of war and conflict in different angles. We know that the recent conflicts of the world are mainly based on political control, their way of fighting rights and emotional attachment of the religion, race and cultures. The culture influences the behavior and actions of the people. The study made an attempt and gives underlying reasons of environmental factors which may be one of the prime causes of conflicts and war. We need to assess deeply that the outbreak of any war and conflict of the region may be related to environmental status of the region. Some of the environmentalist mentioned that the recent outbreak of civil war in Syria may be draught which has prevailed in the region few years back before the conflict. The studies discusses and bring relationship of war and conflict in terms of environmental factors and present status of the environment which may have changes the psychology and behavior of people of the region brought by harsh environment and may have besought to war.

II. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE: The methodology used here is based on discussion and philosophical interpretation of war and conflicting zone of the world. It is also based on recent happenings and experiences of war and problems faced by the terrorism of the world. For the

study, the conflicting zone of the world are discussed separately giving base on geographic interpretation of war and conflicting nature of the people which is associated with environment.

To assess and understand the subject properly, the information is derived from various sources of Journals, Books, news; conference and statement made by environmentalist, leaders, researchers related to the topic are widely referred. I have related to the topic with the philosophy background of Environmentalism.

DISCUSSION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS:

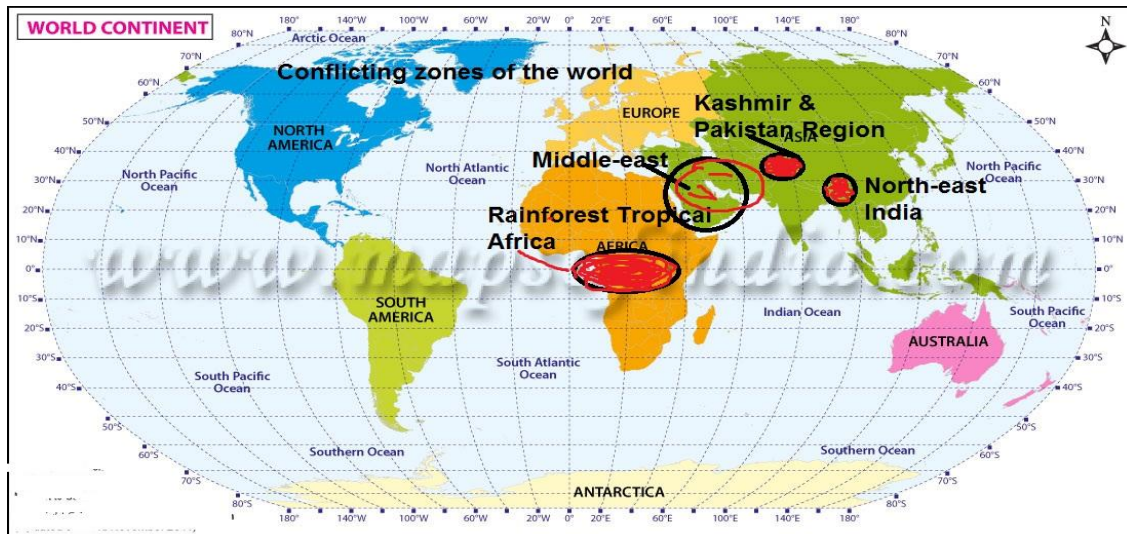
There is as close between humans and their surroundings. It is true that Environment largely controls the course of human actions. In other words, the belief that variation in human behavior around the world can be explained by differences in the natural environment. The subject Geography very much deals with these relationships and is known as philosophy of 'Environmental Determinism'. The physical appearance and behavior of people like hard working, jolly and peace loving, lazy, timid and courage are somewhat influences by the environment of their country (physical, landscapes, climate, ethnic etc).

The different countries are at different level of the development because of suitable opportunities provided by the environment. Although human institution and cultures plays very important in the development of a nation, the influences of environment cannot be denied. The conditions of war, peace and ethnic riots happening in the present world are somewhat controlled by the environment in which they habitat. *Montesquieu* pointed out that the people in cold climates are stronger physically, more courageous, frank, less suspicious than those of the warm climates. *Almausadi* an Arab geographer asserted that where land water is abundant, the people are gay and humorous while the people of dry and arid lands are short tempered. Even the major religion of the world are the product of the environment in which they habitat. Their religious rituals, philosophy ideas, cultures and customs are very much attached with the environment from where the religion takes their origin. In human Geography, Majid Hussain an Indian Geographer has discussed on these aspects.

III. A STUDY ON WAR AND CONFLICTING ZONE OF THE WORLD.

The different conflicting zones of the world are discussed in systematic approach with their bases on philosophic interpretation. For better analysis, the selected conflicted zones are

discussed. They are South and south-east Asian region (Indian Subcontinent), Middle-east region, rainforests African region.



Map No.. 1 Major Conflicting Zones (War) of the world and Militancy operation zones.

1. Middle-East prone to wars and attack from invaders: The wars in the Middle-East are mainly to control the petroleum resources and other socio-economic factors. More over the region is mostly at war with the invaders. In the couple of decades, the region has experienced Gulf war I & II. The subject Geography always has given importance to resources for the progress of the nations. Hence the countries are fighting to control resources in Middle-East.

i). Easily Accessible, less physical barrier and featureless desert:- The Middle- East / Arabian Peninsula are prone to attack from invaders as they are no natural physical barrier to restrain from the invaders. It is a region of featureless plains of deserts with very scarce vegetation. The absence of forests and hills in the region make them easily targeted by the invaders as there are no safe places for hiding and carrying out their operation. It is true that the countries need to be developed and equipped with weapons. But the physical barrier and natural security also matters a lot in successful war.

ii). Difficult accessible by U.S military in Vietnam: It is said that United States in post 1960 led a war against Vietnam (a small country economically very weak) had to face huge problems and loss for raiding Vietnam. It was because the country Vietnam is located in the dense equatorial forests. More over the country is also hilly terrain and landlocked country which made US soldier difficult to successfully carry out war.

iii). Easy accessible lead to successful war by invaders: Where as in the case of Arabian Peninsula, the region is easily accessible through seas from the southern portion. The warship of US can easily take their base within close proximity of the targeted country. It is said that thousands of military Tanks and Jet planes are brought by war ships which is only possible through navigation of sea. The rebels and army of the region could not take their safeguards from air raids of invaders as the region is featureless plains with desert. It becomes easier for air raids and bombing their military base by invaders. The visibility and easy identification of targeted spots are very clear from satellite images.

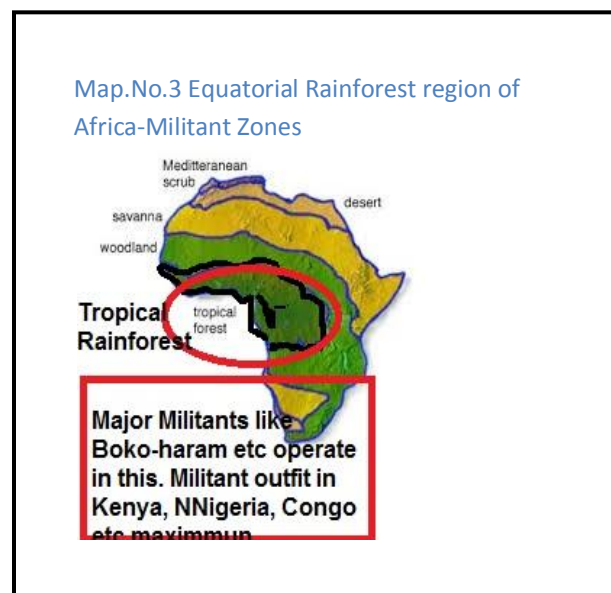


iv). Socio-Cultural and physical Environment: We cannot deny that institution, cultures and religious ideas also plays a lot in the culture of war and violence. But this condition can be interpreted

by the influence and affect of the harsh physical environment they live around. In Middle East, there is a hostile environment with acute shortage of water and scarce vegetation. The people are facing difficult life which make harder for living and survival. The importance of life and love of their life is not properly realized. As the environment is not friendly, it may influence them to be lover of violence and war. All these combined factors make Middle-East one of the most disturbed and unrest peace in the world.

2. Ethnic violence and Insurgency problems in middle rainforest Africa:

The ethnic violence in tropical Africa in countries like Nigeria, Kenya and other Congo basin are largely due to *innumerable tribes* living there in the thick tropical forests. The *thick forests* are harder to live. The people of this area had to fight with wild- animals and unsuitable dense forest for



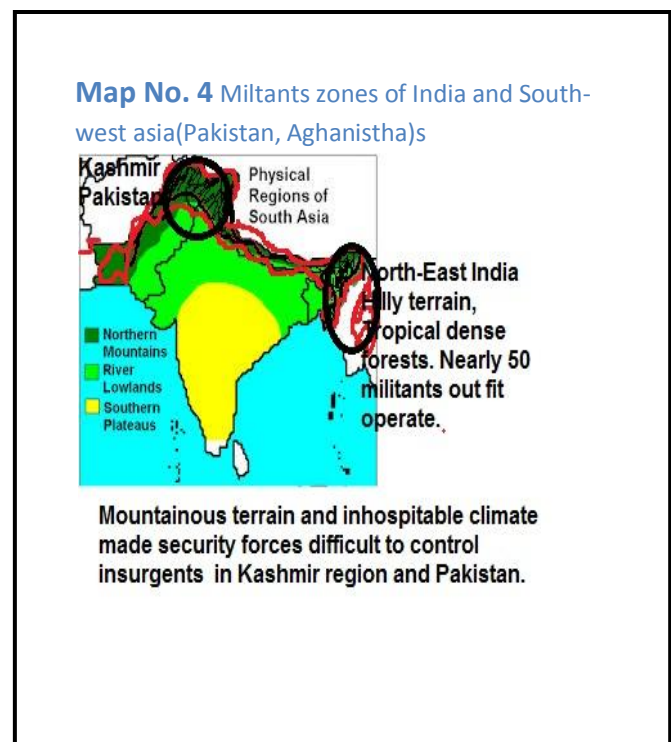
their living. Hunting has become the part of their daily lifestyle. These types of *lifestyles* trained them to be good in *guerilla war*. The forests are not well accessible; it is very much natural that *dwellers of forests* are *not open minded* people like the people who live in plain and open areas. The people in the open areas can travelled to long distances and interact with other groups of people and so have mutually understanding of among each other. Whereas the forests acts as *closed systems*, therefore the dwellers of forests can raise number of ethnic community differing in language, dialect, cultures within the close proximity because of their less interactions with other communities. The tribes living are *insecure and suspicious* of other tribes hence rising to *many ethnic riots*. The forests are also act as ‘**Home of Insurgency**’ where it becomes difficult to tackle and uproot the insurgency by the respective Govt. security forces of the country.

3. Geography of insurgency in North-East India.

i). *Multiple tribes leading to Multiple Insurgencies in North-East India:*

The occurrence of multiple number of Insurgency in the region has given the unique identity about North-East India. It is to state that almost every state of North-eastern region has insurgency problems. In a state like Manipur, there are as many as 16 insurgencies represented by different tribes.

The state of Nagaland, Assam and Tripura also has number of insurgencies. Although the causes of insurgencies can be of many factors like social issues like fighting for rights, developmental issues and demanding greater autonomy, the role of environment and its influences on social life cannot be denied. The rise of multiple insurgencies and its uncontrolled continuation can be studied from the point of geographical perspectives. The geographical location of North-east India is mainly surrounded by international boundaries and is connected by mainland India by only narrow passage. More over the physical landscapes is covered by hill rugged topography. It is also covered by thick dense forest of tropical forest mainly in the state of Tripura.



ii). Culture and lifestyle associated by difficult geographic environment: The people of this North-eastern region are mainly hunters and they lived a difficult life in the hilly terrain. Their lifestyles naturally and automatically trained them to be good in war. It is said previously that Nagas (tribe) were hunters warriors equipped with spears and sharp weapons and presently the conditions have not changed much, only the weapon has changed. The spears are replaced by modern equipped guns. The cultures of wars are inherited characteristics from their ancestors. The physical hilly landscapes, dense forest and their inaccessible gives rise to many ethnic small communities within the close proximity. It is reported and known facts that there are as many as 100 tribes or more living in the North-eastern region. The settlement groups of one area hardly interact with the tribes of other settlement areas. So they have less close relation and have bitter mutually understanding among different neighbouring tribes. In these conditions, there arose insecurity among tribes thus giving rise too many ethnic riots happened in the recent past. *These types of ethnic riots are similar to ethnic problems faced by middle rainforest Africa.*

The geographical hilly terrain landscapes and inaccessible dense forests isolate the settlements from one area to other within the close proximity. It is seen in Arunachal Pradesh that language and dialect differ from one village to another as the village had hardly interaction with other neighbouring villages and often treated enemies of one another. This make them insecure and thus giving rise to civil war among different tribes. Many tribes feel insecure till now. So even at present this internal security turned out to be the cause of insurgencies among different tribes for their protection and demanding certain civil rights from government. The inaccessible physical landscapes and dense forests shape the behavior of tribal people in the North-East. They are always insecure about their existence. They find it hard and uneasy to accept those people other than their tribes. More over they want to be undisturbed and wished for living in harmony with the natural surroundings.

iii).Hilly terrain and Dense forests a safe zone for insurgencies to operate: The occurrence of insurgency and incidence of ethnic violence can be somewhat studied in matters relating to geographical features of the region. The existence, operation and continuity of insurgencies in the North-east region are because of confidence in the dense forest and inaccessible rugged terrain where they can easily hide from government army raid. It also becomes difficult to uproot the insurgencies as operation of the army is difficult in these rugged terrain and inaccessible

forests. The security army can often be targeted by guerilla war where they are not conscious about it. The operation of insurgencies also has become easier where the region is surrounded by international boundary. The insurgencies of the state of Assam can take safe haven in country of Bhutan and insurgencies of state Tripura in country of Bangladesh. The insurgencies of Nagaland and Manipur can take safe protection in the thick forests of Myanmar. The insurgency can easily escapes in the continued forest and hills to neighbouring countries from their region. These natural surroundings give confidence of existence of insurgencies in the region. Therefore it became very difficult to control the insurgency in the North-east region.

4. North-West India Kashmir and Pakistan region.(South- Asia).

i). Inhospitable climate and mountainous terrain of Kashmir and Pakistan:

The cause of insurgencies in these regions may be of political domain but the continuity of terrorist activities are because of presence of inhospitable climate and mountainous terrain in Kashmir and Pakistan which provide safe haven for insurgencies to operate and continue. The military security forces found difficult to combat the terrorist activities as the climate is extremely cold and mountainous terrain. Hence the insurgencies activities in Kashmir and Pakistan are very strong.

III. CLIMATE CHANGE DISTURBING THE ENVIRONMENT OF PEOPLE LIVES AND HABITAT.

The climate change is a serious issue which poses threat to human existence. If the environment is disturbed with climate change like global warming, draught and other degradation of the environment, it can lead to mass chaos in the world. The problems of availability of food and suitable habitat are related to our healthy environment. The climate change can lead to food crisis by draught or by flood or by uncertainty in the weather conditions can lead to mass displacement of people and civil war among the people for survival. In the United States, the Pentagon regards climate change as a ‘threat multiplier.

In 2009, Burke et al. published an alarming piece in the American journal, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences entitled ‘Warming increases the risk of civil war in Africa.’ This came as something of a surprise to conflict researchers, who had otherwise been noticing a decline in levels of conflict. It did not take long for a response to Burke et al.’s claim to be published, in the form of Halvard Buhaug’s 2010. He also stated that ‘Climate not to blame for African civil wars’ in the same journal. But we can somewhat relate the happenings with the influence of physical environment they habitat.

i). Recent Syrian war caused by Draught in the region or Political or socio-religious factor?

The devastating civil war that began in Syria in March 2011 is the result of complex interrelated factors. The focus of the conflict is regime change, but the triggers include a broad set of religious and sociopolitical factors. There is a long history of conflicts over water in these regions because of the natural water scarcity, the early development of irrigated agriculture, and complex religious and ethnic diversity. The recent Syrian has killed many thousands and left millions homeless is one of the challenges that the world leaders have to faces in modern time. Although the major the cause of civil war is political control derived by socio-religious revolution by (ISIS) Islamic state organization, there is also the environmental factors which secretly or indirectly one of the causes of outbreak in civil war.

Severe Draught in Syria before the outbreak of War: Some of the environmentalist of the world and leaders blamed the climate change to be one of the important factors underlying behind for outbreak of Civil war in Syria. The draught may have caused lots of struggle for survival in the region which in turn disturbed the emotions and normal life of the people. In this situation, people will become ferocious and may sought to war. This behavior of people is related with the statement made by Schools of environmentalism, one of the main philosophy thoughts in geography. The belief that environment control the course and govern the lifestyles of human actions can be applied to this type of outbreak of war. The Middle-East countries are a draught prone region and therefore it has given rise to various types of problems. It is true that in the recent past before civil war, there was severe draught in the region. Peter H. Gleick, 2014: Water, Drought, Climate Change, and Conflict in Syria. *Wea. Climate Soc.*, **6**, 331–340 has written paper and made deep analysis on the importance of Draught in the region for the cause of outbreak. *Chip Knappenberger and Pat Michaels* have made an analytical study and discuss on Syrian war based on climate change causes of civil war. He has given much importance Political disorder rather than Climate.

IV. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION: from the discussion we know that this paper has attempted to study the underlying reasons, the influences of geographic environment on issues of conflict and war in different parts of the world. Although we understand that major conflicts and war arise due to political freedom, demanding rights and preserving one own cultures and influenced by the cultures like belief in religion and philosophy. However we can draw some

conclusion, that physical environment also plays important role in the behavior and mind set of the people. This behavior can either result to Peace or Conflict depending upon the Physical and social environment they live around.

1. The discussion study reveals that most of the Militants outfits that operate successfully have been directly or indirectly related to the Physical geographic environment. The hilly terrain with tropical forest in the North-east region made many insurgencies to operate successfully as nature itself protects them from easy targets by the security forces. This is similar with the case of Kashmir and Pakistan region. The mountainous and extreme inhospitable climate make harder for security forces to combat the terrorists activities. The similar cases are also with Tropical rainforests of Africa where the region is densely covered by forests and it naturally safeguards militants to operate successfully. The causes and origin of multiple insurgencies, ethnic races, riots and civil unrest are also influenced by the type of environment they live around. All these have the influence of physical environments.

2. The Middle-East is prone to easy invaders. The invaders in the Middle-East can easily access to the targeted land and get control of the country. The constant civil war and mass disorder in the Middle-East may be influence of the environment. The arid climate with scarce vegetation, low economy made the survival even harder for existence. This type of environment made people arrogant and despair which may result to routine civil war in Middle-East. As there are lesser means and ways of income, the people in this region join the terrorist activities as engagement to job. The presence of thick dense forests and inaccessible region gives rise to many ethnic communities as observed in North-East India and Rainforest African region. This variety of ethnic within small area gives rise to ethnic riots in both regions.

3. From the discussion, we can assess why natural physical barrier is so important in operation of war. India, should well maintained its natural physical barriers, the Himalayan region is the one which protect from Chinese invaders. The North-eastern region also acts as natural frontier which prevents invaders for easy access to the nation as it is covered by hilly terrain and dense forest. The vast stretch of deserts, river Indus and Kashmir valley also act as western natural frontier from the invasion of Pakistan. Towards the south, it is bounded by seas and oceans making hard for easy access, unless those invaders are powerful in navy. Moreover the Country has vast stretch of forests and dense vegetation for safe protection and easy identification of

spots. So India has good strategic location and protective/ defensive natural environment. All these natural frontiers should be safeguarded and kept under control.

4. The problems of insurgency and cause of ethnic riots could be well tackle if geographical perspectives are taken into account. The administrator and governors should also learn that not only political and social issues gives rise to conflict and war, the importance of physical environment in which they lived in also need to be emphasized. Efforts should be made by the administrator to minimize the hostile environment by building extensive road connectivity and developmental infrastructure for easy living of the North-eastern people. It also discussed about the consequences of climate change and natural disaster which is going to be the main cause of war and violence in different parts of the world in the near future. The world should realize to preserve the stability of climate and take necessary steps to minimize the disaster caused by environment before it is too late.

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