

## Subject matter of political geography

At the end of this unit the students will be able to:

Define the political geography

Identify the relationship between geography and politics

Explain the main approaches for the study of political geography

Understand the historical background of political geography

Discuss the main concept of personal space

Explain the difference between territory and territoriality

Geography and Politics Activity:

What is geography?

What is politics?

What is political geography?

**Geography** - is often referred to as a spatial science, i.e. the discipline concerned with the use of earth space. Geography might better be defined as the study of spatial variation, of how-and why- things differs from place to place on the surface of the earth. It is, further, the study of how observable spatial patterns evolved through time.

**Politics**- is a central element or key issue of discussion investigated by different disciplines. Such as Economic, social and cultural phenomena cannot be conceived without an understanding of world politics. It is the science of governments of states. It is also defined as the art and practice of government of human societies,

**Political geography** -is a diverse and ever-changing field of geographic enquiry. As such it defies easy definition. It has moved from being an account of the distribution and arrangement of power at different (though overlapping and interdependent) geographical scales to a consideration of how power diffuses across different scales.

Political Geography :Traditionally geography has been defined broadly as the study of the earth's surface. But, as far as humans activity is concerned this is often thought to involve four (overlapping) aspects. These are:

I. **Space: geographers** study the spatial distribution of human activities. They are also interested in the influence of spatial organization on social, political, economic and cultural process.

II. **Place:** the characteristics of places, the relationship between people and their places, and the diverse role of places in human activities.

III. **Landscape:** geography focuses on the development of landscapes, and the meaning and significance of landscapes of people.

IV. **Environment:** geographers are interested in the relationship between people and their environments, including their understandings of environments and their use of environmental resources of all kinds.

The phrase „world politics“ itself conveys a sense of a geographical scale beyond that of any particular state or a locality in which states and other actors come together to engage in a number of activities (diplomacy, military action, aid, fiscal and monetary activities, legal regulation, charitable acts, etc.) In the commonsense view politics is about governments, political parties, elections, and public policy, or about war, peace and foreign affairs. There are two ways of understanding of politics.

**A. Formal politics:** is defined as the operation of constitutional system of government and its publicly defined institutions and procedures. The implication is that politics is a separate sphere of life involving certain types of people (political and civil servants of organizations (state institutions). The political system may accord the people formal political rights (such as the right to vote, or own property) or formal political duties (such as the duty to serve on a jury, or to pay tax). Alternatively it may from time to time affect the society in which one lives, through changes in public policy, for example in the sphere of education or environmental protection. Formal politics is seen as something that can sometimes affect everyday life, but really part of everyday life. The rest of people interact with this separate sphere in limited and usually legally defined ways. Formal politics is seen as something that can sometimes affect everyday life, but it is not part of everyday life, for example, issues about election, war, public policy, political parties, foreign affairs and soon. Political Geography

**B. Informal politics-** it can be summed up the phrase ‘politics is everywhere’. A good example is the idea of office politics. It is about exercising power, getting people to do things. Household politics I.e. Households (parents) attempt to influence children, women to do more house work than men do, is also considered as informal politics. In fact, if informal politics is to be mentioned, there is no aspect of life, which is not political. So, politics is really everywhere. Informal politics can be summed up by the phrase politics is everywhere. It is about forming alliances, exercising power, getting people to do things, developing influence, protecting, and advancing particular goals and interests. In the field of education, some subjects and points of view are taught while others are not, some children benefit more from education than others even of television (some people gave more chances to have their say on TV than others)

The two ways of relationship between geography and politics Activity:

what is Politics of Geography

What means of Geography of Politics?

The Politics of Geography

The political geography is to examine the interventions made by geographers into 'live' political issues. It should be obvious from what has already been said that much political geography is far removed from the model of detached academic neutrality much touted in various circles. Instead, the imperialist leanings and political biases of the likes of Mackinder, Ratzel's, and Bowman have been obvious. The ways in which political geographers have interacted with those in the world of 'real' politics have varied over time. It could be said that many geographers, particularly in the past, saw their role as supporters of those in power and their work as serving clear political ends. More recently many geographers have seen their role more as one of a critical observation and a questioning of accepted orthodoxies rather than a willing subservience to power. Among other things this has involved focusing attention on the complicity of geography in colonialism, for example, and casting light on the political agendas underpinning some geographical research and the ideological nature of much 'objective' research. Here are three relatively recent examples of geography and politics intersecting in a very direct way:

### **The Geography of Politics**

According to, Geography of Politics analyses how politics (the tactics or operations of the state) shapes geography. A clear way how politics shapes geography is to show how systems of political representation are geographically anchored. Example, USA, has a political system in Political Geography which democratic rule and territorial organization are linked together on the concept of territorial representation. A democratic rule is a system in which public policies and officials are directly chosen by popular vote, whereas territorial organization is a system of government formally structured by area, not by social groups. State power, therefore, is applied within geographical units and state representatives are chosen from geographical units.

### **Definition of political geography**

Political geography is a systematic field, one of the oldest in geography, focuses on the spatial expressions of political behavior. Boundaries on land and on the oceans, the roles of capital cities, power relationships among states, administrative systems voter behavior, conflicts over resources,

and even matters involving outer space have politico-geographical dimensions. Modern political geography also focuses on political behavior and the way this varies across the cultural landscape.

Definitions given by famous political geographers: Hartshorne (1954): Defined as “the study of the areal differences and similarities”. Cohen and Rosenthal (1971): stated “...political geographers are concerned with the geographical consequences of political decisions and actions, the geographical factors, which were considered during the making of any decisions, and role of any decisions, and role of any geographical factors, which influenced the outcome of political actions, e.g. the importance and contribution of Suez Canal to Egypt in world politics. Weigert: Political Geography is concerned with a particular aspect of earthman relationships and with a special kind of emphasis... the relationship between geographical factors and political entities. Alexander: Political Geography is the study of political regions or features of the earth’s surface.

**Political Geography** is the study of variation of political phenomena from place to place in interconnection with variations in other features of the earth as the home of man. On the other hand, studies in political geography should clearly demonstrate the spatial causes and effects of political processes; if neither of these is apparent, the subject is not a political geographical one. These definitions demonstrate that there is no generally accepted definition of the field. Although many critics assail this vagueness as a fault, in reality it might be considered as a virtue. The lack of rigidly defined focus of precise boundaries has enabled political geographers to investigate various phenomena that exhibit both political and spatial, or geographic characteristics without being concerned about straying from the central theme of the field .Political geography draws from other social and behavioral sciences, such as political sciences, economics, history and psychology, but concepts from physical geography are important to the students of the discipline. None human elements of the world, such water bodies, landforms, climates and resources are important in the study of political decisions and actions. The two integral parts of political geography are spatial distributions and political phenomena. Spatial distributions include objects that are spread out from each other in space, on the surface that usually means the surface of the earth, e.g. Population, minerals, cities, rivers etc. Political phenomena include all those activities and actions of man that are political in nature. We can make map of the political phenomena (voting) in order to describe the spatial distribution of the results.

**On one side is the** triangle of power, politics, and policy. Here power is the commodity that sustains the other two. If money makes the economic world go around, power is the medium of

politics. Politics is the whole set of process that are involved in achieving, exercising, and resisting power from the functions of the state to election to welfare to office gossip. Policy is the intended outcome, the things that power allows one to achieve and that politics is about being in position to do. The interaction of these three entities is the concern of political science.

**Political geography** is about the interaction of these entities and a second triangle of space, place and territory. In this triangle, space (spatial patterns or spatial relations) is the core commodity of geography. Place is a particular point in space, while territory represents a more formal attempt Power place Political Geography.

**Political Geography** to define and delimit a portion of space, inscribed with a particular identity and characteristics. Political geography recognizes these six entities, power, politics, policy, space, place and territory are the intrinsically linked, but a piece of political geographical research does not need to explicitly address them all. For instance spatial variations in policy implementation are a concern of political geography, the influence of territorial identity on voting behavior. Therefore, political geography embraces an innumerable multitude of interactions of the above entities. Because of this political geography has only frontier zone, not borders.

### **Approaches to the Study of Political Geography**

1. What are the main approaches of political geography?
2. Can you list and explain each approach?

There are six approaches that employed by political geography.

#### **1. The Power Analysis Approach**

It is commonly used by non-geographers. Some of who like to define geography as one of the several power resources of in relations. One such study, for example divides national power in to five components: geographic, economic, political, sociological and military. The geographic element include location, size and shape of the area, the degree to which land is arable or barren, the effect of climate, and the reservoir of natural resources with which the land is endowed. This is, however, represents a limited geographical approach, for geographers do not isolate geography as determinant of national power. A fully geographic approach would make an inventory of pertinent categories and relates this inventory to politically significant phenomena.

The categories include:

- I. The physical environment (landforms, climate, soils, vegetation, water bodies etc).

- II. Movement (the directional flow of transportation and communication of goods, men and ideas).
- III. Raw materials, semi-finished and finished goods (employed and potential, in both time and space terms)
- IV. Population (in its various characteristics, particularly qualitative and ideological)
- V. The body politic (its various administrative forms, ideals, and goods in their areal expression, as a country, national and international block frameworks).

All of these five categories are all viewed from within spatial framework, geographers also work space as six and direct category. In these sense the location, shape and boundaries of political entities analyzed, as well as the impact of space up on the internal character and external relations of such political entities.

## **2. The Historical Approach**

Is generally, adopted in studies, which describes the evolution of a political or social unit through time. Historical political geography has its focus on the past, both for the sake of understanding the past better and for analyzing current problems. "People will not look forward to posterity who never looks back ward to their ancestors" E. Burke. While much that now exist can only be understood in terms of what existed in the past, most studies in historical political geography have their greatest value in explaining the past. To rely upon them as guides to projecting political roles and activities of states today can prove fruitless and even misleading.

## **3. The Morphological Approach**

It is the study of form and structure. It calls for a descriptive and interpretive analysis of the external and internal structure of the state area as a geographic object. The external morphological attributes include size, shape, location and boundaries, whereas the internal morphological subdivisions include core areas, the capital, and the cultural regions. It studies political areas according to their form that are their patterns and structural features. Patterns refer to the arrangement formed by the association of political units, whether national states, regional blocks, global alliances, or international administrative divisions, as expressed by location, size and shape. Structure on the other hand refers to the spatial features that political units have in common i.e. population and economic cores, capitals, boundaries, and underdeveloped or otherwise problem units.

## **4. The Functional Approach**

It is concerned with the functioning of an area as a political unit. Every political unit has subordinate areas of organization, each with its own governmental functions. These subordinate areas must have stronger political associations with the state than with one another or with outside state. For the state to function properly it must have unity, homogeneity, coherence and viability basic requirements for such unity. Viability of the state is related, not only domestic economic relations, but also economic, strategic and political relations with other states.

Thus, the functional approach would study state strengthening or centralizing forces and state strengthening forces as they are related to space. Example, with in USA, one of the function of the state is to keep freedom of passage across interstate lines. Another example of the functional approach can be drawn from a state's external economic relations. The function of the state is to create or to maintain economic viability for its citizens. Law on foreign trade, including subsidies, tariff, and embargos are tools used by the state to promote this particular function.

### **5. The Behavioral Approach**

Behavior refers to the sequence of interrelated biological and mental operations by which organisms respond to stimuli. The perception and attitudes toward foreign countries among political decision-makers may well affect foreign policy.

1. Individual behavior- one man's behavior

2. Aggregate behavior- includes such types as mass-group, institutional, and international behavior.

3. Spatial behavior- indicates where the various attributes of space center in to behavioral- as a salient and independent variable. The perception of and attitude towards foreign countries among political decision-makers may well affect foreign policy.

4. Territorial behavior- the propensity to possess, occupy, and defend a particular portion of area refers to the spatial patterns of behavior, in which each occurrences can be located by geographical coordinates and the resulting pattern can be analyzed.

### **6. The Systematic Approach**

It is derived from general system theory. The essence of general system theory is that it focus on systems of interrelated objects (person or thing), which enter the system of framework as an inputs, exit as outputs, and interact within it as elements that feed or flow internally. The emphasis is on the unity or the wholeness of the framework. Systems, in to which new elements enter and from

which elements leave, are open systems, in contrast to the closed ones which function through the internal generating of energy.

The geopolitical system is advanced as a unit within which the political process interacts with geographical space. Political transactions, structures and societal forces are the component of the process; place, area and landscape are the components of geographical space. Process and space interact through the nation of political action areas, and various ideological attachments, organization and perceptions, practices these action areas.

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