

Historical and Political Geography: A Review

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Abstract - Georgians are an indigenous, autochthonic population of the Caucasus. In the second millennium B.C. the Georgian tribe settlement covered the present territory of Georgia and spread far beyond its current southern and south western borders. Georgia's geographical location is most favourable in that it is the only country among the eight South Caucasian and Central Asian countries to have direct entrance into the World Ocean; it is the shortest way connecting Europe with the Central Asian countries by sea; it is the most suitable transit country for transportation of Caspian basin oil and natural gas to Europe; it is the intersection where "North-South" (Russia-Georgia-Armenia-Iran-Arabian countries) and "West-East" (Europe-Georgia-Azerbaijan-Central Asia-China) vectors cross; and it has a common border with all the republics of North Caucasus, making it the central junction country of the Caucasus.

Keyword: Asian Countries, Location, Georgian, Geographical etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political geography is a sub discipline of human geography that has an evolving relationship with the other sub disciplines, especially cultural, urban, and environmental geography. Historically, political geography has largely concerned itself with the spatialities of the state, whether internal or external. In addition, early political geography often attempted to derive insights from the natural world, often leaving it open to accusations of environmental determinism. Later, political geography would follow the rest of the discipline in abandoning environmental determinism for quantitative, Marxist, and cultural turns but would generally do so several years after the other parts of the discipline. Nevertheless, each of these turns remains embedded within the contemporary literature of the sub discipline. For instance, the quantitative revolution can be witnessed in the ongoing (if limited) agenda of electoral geography, whereas economic structuralism continues to feature strongly within political geography, in its world-systems theory, regulation theory, and political ecology variants. The cultural turn can be found throughout the sub discipline, with its post-structuralist sensibilities dominant in studies of identity, geopolitics, and beyond. Yet, it is not just theoretical orientations that have changed since the 1990s; the entire focus of political geography has been called into question as well, as the cultural turn and the rise of feminism as a major influence on the sub discipline have highlighted the distinction between "Politics" and "politics." Politics (with a capital P) can be understood to be the realm

of the state and formal political processes. Political geography has traditionally studied Politics in this sense. However, the realization that politics suffuses all spheres of life has not only opened up political geography to new topics and scales of analysis, this move has also blurred the boundaries, in largely productive ways, with neighboring sub disciplines, such as cultural, urban, and environmental geography. In short, political geography has become more diverse, more diffuse, and more central to the geographic endeavour than ever.

II. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Historical geography is the branch of geography that studies the ways in which geographic phenomena have changed over time. It is a synthesizing discipline which shares both topical and methodological similarities with history, anthropology, ecology, geology, environmental studies, literary studies, and other fields. Although the majority of work in historical geography is considered human geography, the field also encompasses studies of geographic change which are not primarily anthropogenic. Historical geography is often a major component of school and university curricula in geography and social studies. Current research in historical geography is being performed by scholars in more than forty countries

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE

In its early days, historical geography was difficult to define as a subject. A textbook from the 1950s cites a previous definition as an 'unsound attempt by geographers to explain history'. Its author, J. B. Mitchell, came down firmly on the side of geography: 'the historical geographer is a geographer first last and all the time'. By 1975 the first number of the *Journal of Historical Geography* had widened the discipline to a broader church: 'the writings of scholars of any disciplinary provenance who have something to say about matters of geographical interest relating to past time'.

For some in the United States of America, the term *historical geography* has a more specialized meaning: the name given by Carl Ortwin Sauer of the University of California, Berkeley to his program of reorganizing cultural geography (some say all geography) along regional lines, beginning in the first decades of the 20th century. To Sauer, a landscape and the cultures in it could only be understood if all of its influences through history were taken into account: physical, cultural, economic, political, and environmental. Sauer stressed regional specialization as the only means of gaining sufficient expertise on regions of the world. Sauer's

philosophy was the principal shaper of American geographic thought in the mid-20th century. Regional specialists remain in academic geography departments to this day. Despite this, some geographers feel that it harmed the discipline; that too much effort was spent on data collection and classification, and too little on analysis and explanation. Studies became more and more area-specific as later geographers struggled to find places to make names for them. These factors may have led in turn to the 1950s crisis in geography, which raised serious questions about geography as an academic discipline in the USA.

This sub-branch of human geography is closely related to history, environmental history, and historical ecology.

IV. POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Political geography is concerned with the study of both the spatially uneven outcomes of political processes and the ways in which political processes are themselves affected by spatial structures. Conventionally, for the purposes of analysis, political geography adopts a three-scale structure with the study of the state at the centre, the study of international relations (or geopolitics) above it, and the study of localities below it. The primary concerns of the sub discipline can be summarized as the inter-relationships between people, state, and territory.

V. HISTORY

The British geographer Halford Mackinder was also heavily influenced by environmental determinism and in developing his concept of the 'geographical pivot of history' or the Heartland Theory (in 1904) he argued that the era of sea power was coming to an end and that land based powers were in the ascendant, and, in particular, that whoever controlled the heartland of 'Euro-Asia' would control the world. This theory involved concepts diametrically opposed to the ideas of Alfred Thayer Mahan about the significance of *sea power* in world conflict. The heartland theory hypothesized the possibility of a huge empire being created which didn't need to use coastal or transoceanic transport to supply its military-industrial complex, and that this empire could not be defeated by the rest of the world allied against it. This perspective proved influential throughout the period of the Cold War, underpinning military thinking about the creation of buffer states between East and West in central Europe.

The heartland theory depicted a world divided into a *Heartland* (Eastern Europe/Western Russia); *World Island* (Eurasia and Africa); *Peripheral Islands* (British Isles, Japan, Indonesia and Australia) and *New World* (The Americas). Mackinder argued that whoever controlled the Heartland would have control of the world. He used these ideas to politically influence events such as the Treaty of Versailles, where buffer states were created between the USSR and Germany, to prevent either of them controlling the Heartland. At the same time, Ratzel was creating a theory of states based around the concepts of

Lebensraum and Social Darwinism. He argued that states were analogous to 'organisms' that needed sufficient room in which to live. Both of these writers created the idea of a political and geographical science, with an objective view of the world. Prior to World War II political geography was concerned largely with these issues of global power struggles and influencing state policy, and the above theories were taken on board by German geopoliticians such as Karl Haushofer who - perhaps inadvertently - greatly influenced Nazi political theory, which was a form of politics seen to be legitimated by such 'scientific' theories.

The close association with environmental determinism and the freezing of political boundaries during the Cold War led to a significant decline in the perceived importance of political geography, which was described by Brian Berry in 1968 as a 'moribund backwater'. Although at this time in most other areas of human geography new approaches, including quantitative spatial science, behavioural studies, and structural Marxism, were invigorating academic research these were largely ignored by political geographers whose main point of reference remained the regional approach. As a result, most of the political geography texts produced during this period were descriptive, and it was not until 1976 that Richard Muir could argue that political geography was no longer a dead duck, but could in fact be a phoenix.

VI. CRITICAL POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

Critical political geography is mainly concerned with the criticism of traditional political geographies vis-a-vis modern trends. As with much of the move towards 'Critical geographies', the arguments have drawn largely from postmodern, post structural and postcolonial theories. Examples include:

- Feminist geography, which argues for recognition of the power relations as patriarchal and attempts to theorise alternative conceptions of identity and identity politics. Alongside related concerns such as Queer theory and Youth studies
- Postcolonial theories which recognise the Imperialistic, universalising nature of much political geography, especially in Development geography
- Environmental justice which addresses the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. In other words, it is a human right for all people to share equally in the benefits bestowed by a healthy environment.

VII. CONCLUSION

Political geography has extended the scope of traditional political science approaches by acknowledging that the exercise of power is not restricted to states and bureaucracies, but is part of everyday life. This has resulted

in the concerns of political geography increasingly overlapping with those of other human geography sub-disciplines such as economic geography, and, particularly, with those of social and cultural geography in relation to the study of the politics of place (see, for example, the books by David Harvey (1996) and Joe Painter (1995)). Although contemporary political geography maintains many of its traditional concerns (see below) the multi-disciplinary expansion into related areas is part of a general process within human geography which involves the blurring of boundaries between formerly discrete areas of study, and through which the discipline as a whole is enriched.

VIII. REFERENCES

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