Approaches in Political Geography

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Reference

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Scientific Approach in Political Geography

- General approach
  - Organic approach
  - Morphological approach

- Approach to Political Area
  - Functional approach
  - Unified field theory
  - Political systems analysis
Karl Ritter (1779 – 1859)

Main thesis: human culture are organic entities and the culture are born, they mature, and eventually die (The Cycle Theory)

Political geography
- As the study of the role of the physical environment in shaping the political life of man
- Started with “physical environment” and ended with “an analysis of how political events and organizations had been determined by them”
- Described as political environmentalism
Organic Approach

- Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) : *Politische Geographie* in 1897
- Geography as a science of man’s relation to his physical environment (*Anthropogeographie*)
- “A social Darwinist” theory of state
- Main ideas:
  - *The state as an organism attached to the land*
  - *State must have room to grow in order to survive*
Ratzel’s contributions….

- Three sets of geographical factors which govern man and his development:
  - **Situating** (*lage*): location with respect to people
  - **Space** (*raum*): area which may be either central or peripheral, with a tendency for a people to expand beyond its nursery to its natural limits
  - **Limits** (*rahmen*): the result of expansion of neighbouring people
Ratzel’s contributions....(cont’d)

- The theory of state
  - State is a particular type of spatial grouping on the earth’s surface
  - State is an “earth-bond organism” consisting of “a piece of humanity and a portion of the earth”
  - State seeks to reach its natural limits
  - Conquest of space with a view to the foundation of states
Ratzel’s contributions....(cont’d)

- Three essential geographical facts:
  - States are territorial in character:
    - It occupies a definite territory
    - A spatial organism with a fixed location which may be viewed in terms of its physical location as well as its politico-geographic location in relation to other state and centres to political power
  - States represent a group of people who feel almost inseparably identified with geographical area of state, and who increase in number as states grow in maturity
  - State always develop within the limits of “natural framework” toward which beginning form small territorial nuclei, they stretch out and with their growing strength they often over-reach
Ratzel’s contributions…. (cont’d)

- Geopolitical concept:
  - Labensraum (living-space): the geographical area within which organism develop
  - States need larger territories in order to provide sustenance to the growing numbers
  - As among living organism, there was an ongoing struggle for the survival of the fittest
  - Struggle for space in which the more powerful expanded at the cost of their weaker neighbours
Ratzel’s contributions…. (cont’d)

- The land area of a state is the best indication of its political powers.
- The people of state should develop space conception: an idea of the possible limits of territorial control.
- Youthful people with a large space conception are likely to press for the expansion of their state’s boundaries.
- The decline of state’s geographical area is the result of its declining space conception.
Morphological Approach in Political Geography

- Inspired by Hartshorne (1953)
  - Morphology of state area is significant primarily as it effects the functions of the state
- Emphasis on the study geography as chorology
  - Geography as the study of areal differentiation
- Political geography as the study of the state as a characteristic of areas in relation to other characteristic areas
- State were to be studied as areas rather than organization or integrated systems
  - Concentrate mainly on features such as location, size and shape, boundaries, capital and core areas, regional breakdown of state
A contemporary approach of the organismic theory of state

How state had come to occupy the included within its present-day boundaries?

Consisting of the analysis of the evolution of political unit, especially the nation-state, in its historical setting

Whittlesey (1939) combined the morphological and historical geography
In many social aspect, state may tolerate considerable variation in its different regions
  - There is a tendency to exert unifying control
In the economic field, state tends to develop some degree of unity of economic organization
  - State is under uniform control
State is subject to threat of destruction
  - Every state must strive to secure the supreme loyalty of the people in all its region in competition with any local or provincial loyalties
Functional Approach to Study of State

- Concern with emphasis on regional differences
- Interest in the problem of unification of diverse regions into a single whole
- The primary function of any state leads directly to the primary problem of political geography
- Internal and external problems of state
- How to bind together diverse areas into one effective whole?
  - Regions are separated by physical or human barriers
  - Regions diverge in their relation with outside states
  - Regions differ among themselves in character and population, economic interests, and political attitudes
Functional Approach to Study of State

- Centrifugal vs Centripetal Forces
- The issues:
  - The basic political idea of state
  - The concept of nation
  - Core area – its role in spreading the idea
  - Effect of particular types of physical features
  - Separation by a zone populated by a different people, especially an unfriendly people
  - One or more its regions have closer relation with regions of outside states than with those within state
  - State’s political economic framework
  - Internal organization of state
Functional Approach to Study of State

- Application state-idea in political geography
  - Where is idea applies?
  - In what degree it operates in the different regions?
  - How is the extent of correspondence those regions to the territory?
    - Are the region within the state whose population do not feel themselves part of nation?
    - Are the regions of the nation that are not included within state?
Functional Approach to Study of State

- External problems of state-idea
  - Territorial relations (international boundary)
    - Degree of acceptance
    - Degree of maintainance
  - Economic relations
    - Degree of economic sufficiency
    - Degree of mutual advantages
  - Political relations
    - Degree of political control by an outside power
  - Strategic relations
    - Degree of strategic alliance
    - Degree of defensive/offensive purposes
Unified Field Theory

- **The Idea - Area Chain**
  - Political idea – decision – movement – field – political area

- **Political idea** is more than state idea
  - “War begins in the minds of men”

- **Decision** is a necessary prerequisite to action

- **Movement** as “a circulation fields”
  - Every political decisions involves movement

- **Field** as spatial variation in force

- **Political area** means any politically organized area
  - A national state, a dependent area, a sub-division of a state, or an administrative region or district
Unified Field Theory

**Application to Political Area**

- Examples of Idea:
  - Roman Empire (Italy), Sea Commander (Britain), Zionism/The Balfour Declaration (Israel), The Containment of Communism (USA)

- The process of national integration can be interpreted as a process of changing fields

- Decision may affect the political area as a whole and may create or control movement over the entire area

- There is no deterministic about the idea-area chain
  - A given idea might lead to a variety of areas, a given area might condition a variety of ideas
Unified Field Theory

Application to Political Area

Studies of National Power
- Power as “participation in making of decision”. Power is linked to decision support
  - Where is power more concentrated?

Boundaries, Capital, Cities
- The boundary region is the line between the political areas condition much of circulation
  - Is the circulation in frontier area may develop the new political areas?
- The idea need for central administration leads to decision of the capital
  - What kind of decisions and movements create the primate city?
  - How the choosen capital will affect the establishment of the field?
- The metropolitian district outgrows the political limits
  - How the sort of “metropolitan-idea” will develop the functional authorities or political integration?

Kinetic and Dynamic Field
- The conflict ideas are embodied in decisions that create or obstruct movements.
- The field may be in contact or conflict
  - What kind of movement will create contact or conflict?
Unified Field Theory

Utility of theory

- It integrates morphology and function, region and process in political geography studies.
- It unites two main parts of geographical theory: possibilism and regionalism.
  - Possibilism focuses on man’s choices among environmental possibilities.
  - Regionalism focuses on study of area.
  - Both lead to ideas, decisions, and movements.
Political System Analysis

- Concern on political process and spatial consequences
  - Process in the key to spatial arrangements
- Political geography is concerned with spatial attribute of political process
Political System Analysis

- Political system
  - The societal forces that shape political institutions and the transaction through which the institutions operate together with pertinent environment
  - Political institution: kinship, class, status, authority, elitism, and bureaucracy are mechanism by which men make operational such forces as nationalism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, democracy, totalitarianism, imperialism, colonialism, racism...

- Locational perspective is related to the perceived needs of external links or connectivity
  - That is degree to which the system is open or closed
    - Open system is a product of interdependence
    - Closed system is a product of self-containment

- By viewing system within its open or closed context, then provide a benchmark from which to interpret and forecast landscape change
Political System Analysis

- Spatial attributes
  - Defined as the distributional patterns of political processes and spatial relations
- Processes and patterns form unique political areas (fields of action)
- Political area and action field may not be identical
- How to establish the state of conformity between political area and action field?
  - Degree of effectiveness and legitimacy government
- Counteraction area: reflects the political efforts of any counterforce to limit extent of an emergent political action area or to counter it
  - Express by various measures of political socialization and political institutions