

Chapter 9 – The Politics of Territory and Space

The Development of Political Geography

- Aristotle is often taken to be the first political geographer because his model of the state is based on such factor as climate, terrain, and the ratio between population and territory
- Scholars interested in political geography theorized that the state operated cyclically and organically
- States consolidated and fragmented based on complex relationships among and between factors, such as population size and composition, agricultural productivity, land area and the role of the city
- Political geography at the end of the nineteenth century was influenced by two important tradition within the wider discipline of geography: the people-land tradiiton and environmental determinism

The Geopolitical Model of the State

- **Geopolitics** – The state's power to control space or territory and shape the foreign policy of individual states and individual power relations
- Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) used biological metaphors to describe the growth and development of the state as well as seven laws of state growth:
 - The territory of hte state grows with the expansion of the population having the same culture
 - Territorial growth follows other aspects of development
 - A state grows by absorbing smaller units
 - The frontier is the peripheral organ of the state that reflects the strength and growth of hte state; hence it is not permanent
 - States in the course of their growth seek to absorb politically valuable territory
 - The impetus for growth comes to a primitive state from a more highly developed civilization
 - The trend toward territorial growth is contagious and increases in the process of transmission
- His model portrays the state as behaving like a biological organism; thus its growth and change are seen as “natural” and inevitable
- Views have continued to influence state theorizing
- Geopolitics stems from the interactions of power and territory
- Adherence to an organic view of the state has been abandoned, the twin features of power and territory still lie at the heart of political geography

Boundaries

- Important phenomena because they allow territoriality to be defined and enforced and because they allow conflict and competition to be managed and channelled
- Creation of boundaries is, therefore, an important element in place making
- Follows from the concept of territoriality that boundaries are normally inclusionary
- **Territory** – the delimited area over which a state exercises control and that is recognized by other states.

- Boundaries can be exclusionary – often fulfills the function of controlling people and resources
- National boundaries can be used to control the flow of immigrants or the flow of imported goods
- Boundaries can be established in many different ways, with differing degrees of permeability
- Implied boundaries that are set by markers and symbols but never delineated on maps or set down in legal documents such as the turf of a city gang, marked by graffiti.
- Formal boundaries established by law, delimited on maps, demarcated on the ground, fortified and aggressively defended
- Boundaries are an important element of geopolitics and of the geography of domestic politics
- **Boundary Formation**
 - Formal boundaries tend first to follow natural barriers, such as rivers, mountain ranges and oceans
 - Formal boundaries tend to be fixed along a straight line such as the western boundary of the US and Canada
 - Straight line boundaries are also characteristic of formal boundaries that are established through colonization, which is the outcome of a particular form of territoriality
 - Straight lines are easier to survey and even easier to delimit on maps of territory that remain to be fully charted, claimed, and settled
 - Formal boundaries often detour from straight lines and natural barriers to accommodate special needs and claims
 - Once primary divisions have been established, internal boundaries tend to evolve as smaller, secondary territories are demarcated
 - Higher the population density, the smaller these secondary units tend to be
 - Configuration tends to follow the same generalizations as for larger units, following physical features, accommodating special needs, and following straight lines where there are no appropriate natural feature or where colonization has made straight lines expedient
 - Territories delimited by formal boundaries – nation-states, states, counties, municipalities, special districts and so on – are known as de jure spaces or regions
 - De jure simply means “legally recognized”
 - De jure territories are often used as the basic units of analysis in human geography, largely because they are both convenient and significant units of analysis
 - Often, in fact, the only areal units for which reliable data are available
 - Important units of analysis in their own right because of their importance as units of governance or administration

Geopolitics and the World Order

States and Nations

- **Nation** – A group of people often sharing common elements of culture, such as religion or language, or a history or political identity
- **Nation-state** – An ideal form consisting of a homogeneous group of people governed by their own state
- **Sovereignty** – The exercise of state power over people and territory, recognized by other states and codified by international law

- In ancient and medieval history, individual rulers controlled their kingdoms through gifts of land or wealth for military service
- An individual's loyalty was to a person not to a physical entity or space called the state
- Two important consequences:
 - Kingdoms need not comprise discrete units
 - The realm of kingdom did not need to be a unitary whole; could be made up of a number of discontinuous parts.
 - Sovereignty was vested in the ruler's person
 - Wherever the ruler was, they ruled. All power flowed from the ruler, the principle developed that power was inherited through royal family lines.
- **Enlightenment** – An eighteenth-century European movement that sought to replace ideas of authority or explanation drawn from God with those that individual humans could establish through their own reason
- Once power was decoupled from the ruler and vested in the people, a link was soon forged between the area that the people inhabited and the space in which they exercised their sovereign power
- The two concepts of space (state) and people (nation) began to rise and the nation-state was formed as a political force
- It meant that the nation-state had two main ways of promoting itself
 - Ensure through various means, that all of the people included within the existing boundaries of the state were of one “nation” and to exclude or remove those who were defined as non-members of that particular nation
 - Second method was to adjust the state's spatial boundaries so that they could encompass all the people defined as a nation, a process that often led to the breakup and reconfiguration of states
- **Centripetal Forces** – Forces that integrate the state
 - Include cultural, economic, political, and regional factors that can be used to integrate the state
- **Centrifugal Forces** – Forces that can lead to the disintegration of the state
 - Factors that can divide or tend to pull apart the state
- **Nationalism**
 - **Nationalism** – The feeling of belonging to a nation as well as the belief that a nation has a natural right to determine its own affairs
 - Regional patterns of vernacular house types, folk customs, songs, languages, cuisine and accents are all pressed into service by nationalists to stamp a land with a particular identity and to use that identity as indicative of a unique nationality
 - **Imagined Community** – A group of people who believe that they share a common bond and thus are apart of the same nation
 - It can be imagined as a group of people mutually bound by shared symbols
 - Edward Said, a scholar, has noted that we are equally able to use these powers of imagination to construct stereotypes of other nations and to believe firmly in the validity of our own inventions

- Canada has been a part of unifying the Canadian culture, by assimilating Canada's indigenous peoples into the Canadian state that lasted well into the twentieth century
- Deportation of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in the 18th century and the internment of Japanese Canadians in BC's interior in the 1940's were both carried out because of questions over loyalty to the Canadian state.
- **Territorial Manipulation**
 - Second approach to forging a nation-state has been to adjust the physical boundaries of the state to conform more exactly to the spatial distribution of people thought to comprise the nation
 - Historical examples include the growth of Germany in the years prior to World War II
 - Europe's colonization of Africa was another example, as the nation-state was the model of political geography
 - Once decolonization occurred, the logic of the system fell apart and the imposed boundaries themselves have become the focus of a large number of conflicts in Africa
 - The manipulation of boundaries to produce nation-states sometimes has resulted in the breakup of larger entities to form smaller units, the division being made on "ethnic" grounds
 - Process of decolonization also brought about division on occasion, most notably the creation of Pakistan as a separate Islamic state when the Indian subcontinent achieved independence from Britain in 1947

The End of the Nation-State

- The true "nation-state" has never existed, but few would deny the importance of the nation-state idea as a model for state formation or that its dominance in recent history has been because it became part of the way in which the global core dominated the world-system
- **Citizenship**
 - The eighteenth century saw the emergence of the civil and political rights of the citizen as one outcome of the assault on feudal powers and privilege, a development that led to individual freedoms concerning the rights to property, personal liberty and full and equal justice before the law
 - Late nineteenth century saw the grafting political rights of citizenship onto the pre-existing civil and legal rights as trade union agitation led to individuals gaining the right to vote and hold elective office
 - Rights included publicly funded universal health care, state pensions, subsidized housing, and unemployment benefits for those that needed them
 - New rights were a product of the post-war welfare state, designed to counteract the effects of the free market and to enable each citizen to participate fully in the social life of the country according to society's standards
 - The package of rights has increasingly come under pressure across the Western world as twin forces of domestic economic restructuring and globalization have made the costs of full social citizenship more difficult to meet.
- **Universalism and Difference**
 - The possible end of the nation-state lies in its origins

- The appeal to the rights of the people and to their reason in the form of the Enlightenment, led to the usurpation of the ruler's power and its replacement with a citizen controlled state
- Crucial point is that the appeal was to the universal values and rights that the people have as humans, or their human rights
- The appeal to universal values, on which the modern state was built, has led to a challenge to the modern state from that very perspective-from universal values and rights
- Challenge to the sovereignty of states based on universal standards of human rights meant that it was no longer possible for a country to do what it liked to its citizens
- Canada took a leading role in preparing the 1951 International Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees, and a Canadian, John Humphrey, drafted the first version of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Treaties, such as the international law of the sea or various environmental protocols, also slowly erode individual states' own sovereignty
- International bodies and political arrangements all lead to significant curtailing of individual states' rights
- Example: Canada's ability to exploit its own forests is currently under severe threat from American complaints under NAFTA regarding this country's pricing of softwood lumber exports from British Columbia to the US
- For many theorists in modern political geography, this argument is seen as the postmodern challenge to universalism
- Challenge argues that the Enlightenment's idea that universal values are inherent in humanity is really only an idea, one that has no better basis supporting it than anything else
- The postmodern appeal to the local and the acceptance of difference as the new standards of human rights have themselves led to the rise of a number of movements
- Differences found in the practices of various cultures toward human rights are no better or worse than anywhere else
- It is equally possible that because of their international connections and global movements, Canada's immigrant communities are forging new communities of identity that cross state boundaries and exist only in the interconnections that occur
- **Diasporic Community** – A group made up of emigrants from a particular homeland who maintain their cultural, political and economic ties with each other, despite having been dispersed across many countries
- Although its individual members are physically separated, a diasporic community is held to function as an entity in some ways because its individual members maintain their own economic and cultural ties
- Some diasporic communities also maintain the political affiliations developed in their homeland, and this has proved to be a problem for host countries, since the struggles of diasporic groups need not correspond with the political goals of the Canadian government
- **Transnational Communities** – International communities of peoples across international boundaries
- Transnational communities are varied, from wealthy entrepreneurs moving from Hong

Kong to Vancouver and Guatemalan refugees in Southern Ontario, who often depend on financial help from their families in Guatemala

- **The Ambivalent Position of Canada**

- Tension created between the goals of the state to control citizenship, and the postmodern desire to celebrate differences wherever they occur in the world place such countries as Canada in a dilemma
- Canada's multicultural and immigrant heritage urges this country to take a more inclusive role on the world stage
- The concern to limit costs has increasingly prompted Canada to question the size of its global commitments
- CICA is an example of Canada's commitment to help developing countries
 - Note that budget cuts over the last 10 years have decreased the total money available to CIDA
- Tension is amplified by Canada's ambiguous position as a country in the world-system
- Canada is simultaneously in both the global core and the periphery
- Canada has always displayed its core nature in its military alliances with Western Europe and in the defence of Hong Kong
- Canada recognizes its peripheral role in global geopolitics such as the support for Cuba and the international treaty against land mines
- Canada has sought to adopt a “middle power” path, using its special positions in the Commonwealth and la Francophonie to add to its credibility as a global intermediary

Imperialism, Colonialism, and the North-South Divide

- Geopolitics may involve extension of power by one group over another
- Imperialism is the extension of state authority over the political and economic lives of other territories
- Imperialism has resulted in the political, economic, cultural, and even environmental domination of strong core states over the weaker states of the periphery
- Does not necessarily imply formal governmental control over the dominated area
- Can also involve a process by which some countries pressure the independent governments of other countries to behave in certain ways
- Pressure may take many forms, such as military threat, economic sanctions, ecological imperialism, or cultural domination
- Imperialism involves some form of control of one state over another
- In the first phases of imperialism, the core exploits the periphery for raw materials with later exploitations being cash economies
- May also become a market for the manufactured goods of the core
- Eventually, the periphery can become a new arena for large-scale capital investment
- It is possible for peripheral countries to improve their status, becoming semiperipheral or even core countries
- Colonialism differs from imperialism in that it involves formal establishment and maintenance of rule by a sovereign power over a foreign population through the establishment of settlements

- Colony does not have any independent standing within the world-system, but it is considered an adjunct of the colonizing power
- From the fifteenth to the early twentieth century, colonization constituted an important component of core expansion
- The British, most notably the more widely known colonizing power, had set up colonial communities in many parts of the world but has never succeeded in imposing British administrative or legal structures in any widespread way
- The substantial British presence in India began with the establishment of the East India Trading Company in the mid-eighteenth century
- British government gave the company the power to establish forts and settlements as well as to maintain an army
- Military, administrative and economic presence by the British government over time, which did not end until Indian independence in 1947
- The Indian population was brutalized, many killed, and their society was transformed by British influence
- Influence permeated nearly every institution and practice of daily life
- Regional conflicts in India included radical movements for independence in the states of Kashmir and Punjab
- Since the turn of the nineteenth century, the effects of colonialism continue to be felt as peoples all over the globe struggle for political and economic independence
- **North-South Divide** – The differentiation made between the colonizing states of the Northern Hemisphere and the formerly colonized states of the Southern Hemisphere
- Colonization of Africa, South America, parts of the Pacific, Asia, and smaller territories scattered throughout the Southern Hemisphere resulted in a political geographical division of the world into North and South
- Crucial point is that a relationship of dependence was set up of countries in the South, or periphery, on those in the North, or the core, that began with colonization and persists even today
- Very few peripheral countries of the South have become prosperous and economically competitive since achieving political autonomy
- Markedly different from economic independence

Twentieth-Century Decolonization

- **Decolonization** – The acquisition of control by colonized peoples over their own territory
- Examples are the American Revolution (1776-1783), conflicts in Latin America in the 1800s
- Between 1918 and 1960, more than 50 countries gained independence from European empires
- For many African and Asian countries, lacking even internal self-government by 1914, the process of decolonization lay less with armed revolt and more with the development of new local professional elites and in the establishment of political and military organizations
- Karl Hack, author of *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, has suggested that scholars identify three types of cause for decolonization
 - “metrocentric”, “peripheral”, “international”

- Decolonization has been seen only a political step – the formal act of separation
- It is possible to argue that “full” decolonization must involve far more than simply a transfer of sovereignty
- Especially so if the achievement of independence marks little more than the transfer of political power from one elite to another, leaving all the ties of dependence in place between the former colony and colonial power
- The colonized and the colonizers are tied together in a series of dependent relationships that are not as easy to end as formal decolonization would suggest
- Formal or legal decolonization has merely served as a cloak for business interests in core countries to continue their domination over former colonies using informal means
- In the case of the United States, the processes of neo-colonialism have enabled that country to extend its global reach in a variety of ways, without the formal or overt act of formally colonizing other states
- Ensuing creation of a market in land are some of the hallmarks of such “neo-liberal” development policies, and may well offer economic development, but at the price of becoming part of an American-led value system
- The re-casting of many American values as “universal” or “global ideals” is clearly to the United States' advantage but has led to a series of anti-globalization movements across the world, as peoples seek to turn back what they see as the rising tide of American neo-imperialism
- Spread of a capitalist world order has had the undeniable impact of “modernizing” traditional societies through education, health care, and other factors
- This world order, based on imperialism and colonialism, has been financed with a great deal of bloodshed and numerous human lives
- Geographers have historically played very central roles in the imperialist efforts of European states
- Usually begins with exploration
- Have also played a part in developing geopolitical theories that justified the continued domination of the world by the colonial powers

The East-West Divide and Domino Theory

- **East-West Divide** – Communist and noncommunist countries, respectively
- End of WWII marked the rise of the United States to a dominant position among countries of the core
- The tension that arose between East and West translated into a US foreign policy that pitched the United States against the former Soviet Union
- **Domino Theory** – The belief that if one country in a region chose or was forced to accept a communist political and economic system, then neighbouring countries would be irresistibly susceptible to falling to communism
- Was the source of American foreign policy that included economic, political and military objectives directed at undermining the possibility for Soviet world domination
- Held that if one country in a region chose or was forced to accept a communist political and economic system, then neighbouring countries would be irresistibly susceptible to falling to communism as well

- Concept behind the domino theory held that if one country in a region chose or was forced to accept a communist political and economic system, then neighbouring countries would be irresistibly susceptible to falling to communism as well
- One falling domino in a line of dominoes causes all the others in its path to fall
- Antidote to preventing the domino-like spread of communism was often military aggression
- Adherence to the theory began in 1947, as the US feared communism would spread to Europe
 - Led to the more recent US wars in Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Persian Gulf
- The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the consequent end of the Cold War effectively left the US as the only superpower

International and Supranational Organizations

- **International Organization** – A group that includes two or more states seeking political or economic cooperation with each other
- Examples: the United Nations, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
- They all aim to achieve cooperation while maintaining full sovereignty of the individual states
- Post-war period has seen the rise and growth not only of large international organizations but also of new regional arrangements
- Regional organizations and arrangements now exist to address a wide array of issues, including the management of international watersheds and river basins
- **Supranational organizations** – Collections of individual states with a common goal that may be economic and/or political in nature; such organizations diminish, to some extent, individual state sovereignty in favour of the group interests of the membership
- Organizing and regulating designated operations of the individual member states, these organizations diminish, to some extent, individual state sovereignty in favour of the collective interests of the large membership
- For example, the European Union was created to preserve important features of state sovereignty and identity as well as create a more efficient intra-European marketing system and a more competitive entity in global transactions
- The EU holds elections, has its own Parliament and court system, and decides whether and when to allow new members to join