

CRITICAL GEO-POLITICS AND ROLE OF IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

Notion of Geopolitics has its historical path in a close interaction with International politics. Different phases denote the primacy of ideas of the time. This paper seeks to analyse this development of geopolitical thought with special emphasis to the significance of narrative, identity and discourse in critical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics contrary to classical theories do not offer objective and final truth but advocates a perspective consist of some ontological-epistemological-methodology-axiology questions. This perspective is very crucial to understand the choices adopted by the nation states.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Geostrategy, Environmental Darwinism.

INTRODUCTION

Geopolitics is a subject of repute and fame towards knowledge orientations, strategy formation and implementation in world politics. This subject is a combination of politics and geography envisioned to provide strategic solutions and approaches in world politics management. This subject has the authority and power too which brought in the dimensions, challenges and orientations of authoritarianism and fascism to the world.

It is a subject of intellectual poison, for the American geographer Hartshorne (1954) who had clearly stated that this poison has to be avoided totally as the scholarly health has to be protected. It is an odd and intriguing perspective given by the author who has totally condemned the dimensions and implications of the subject in world politics. However, the conceptualization and proceeding towards an ideal goal is possible in world politics with the concepts and frameworks provided by Geopolitics.

Although intellectuals and scholars in the domain of geopolitics, like Heffernan (2000), agree that there is a tradition and history for this subject, the origins can be traced with social Darwinism theory during the late nineteenth century in Europe. To Parker (1985) it is a culmination of concepts and the geopolitical conditions which has made this evolution possible in the history of knowledge to give rise to geopolitics.

As Kearns (2011) cites Rudolf Kjellén, Swedish Judge for legal affairs had clearly stated that for the survival of states and societies there was a clear inherent need to assimilate the concept of environmental Darwinism. With the imperial rivalries and controversies which have been happening all over the world, this subject had magnetic influence as it was able to attract popular writers and contributors of the time like Halford Mackinder, Alfred Mahan and Friedrich Ratzel.

To Kuus and Agnew (2008) and Slater (2004) The contributory discussions and evaluations on world resources, location and specifying the importance of super powers like Russia, USA & Germany gave the impetus to proceed with the subject which made it to the subject of the

future. The contributions were made in to discussions, debates, arguments, controversies, disagreements and conflicting theories also which has led to the development of this subject with popularity and reach all over the world. The writers and contributions made on classical geopolitics with a comparison with critical geopolitics would be dealt in the next section.

Classical Geopolitics

This subject was formed initially with the sense of doubts, apprehensions which were widely held in society. The doubts and perceptual challenges led to the development of structures & systems with knowledge and orientation which naturally held its conceptual directions from environmental Darwinism and its influences. The Aryan races which were there felt a threat from other dynasties and they were the originators of systems, procedures and mechanisms to defend its territories. He further contended that Germany must proceed in acquiring land and resources that it can be better equipped against emerging countries and challenges of the modern world. His contributions to this field was the concept called as Lebensraum, which meant living spaces which provided the connectivity between environment, state and culture (Ratzel, F. (1940).

Critical Geopolitics

It is a sub field of study in the major investigations in to human geography. It is an assessment in to the assumptions and designations of geography which makes up world geopolitical scenario. It is specific in its spatialization of political actors who design and orchestrate world geopolitics. It is designed and managed as a world by particular types of places.

It emerged as a loose field with the support of political geography and international relations with the contributions of John Agnew, Gerard Toal, Simon Dalby, and Klaus Dodds. The word was coined by these geographers. In 1992 John Agnew, together with Gerard Toal published a paper —Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy. This paper in turn precipitated a research agenda and together with Agnew and Corbridge's article —The New Geopolitics: The Dynamics of Geopolitical Disorder, created an urge for the study of critical geopolitics.

It differs in its approach, thinking and in perspectives as it provides a new deep ideological form of political analysis instead of the traditional neutral consideration of geographical facts. So this approach tends to cross existing traditional boundaries of analysis as it has provided new dynamics and shape in to the whole affair.

Critical Analysis on Methods and Systems – Critical Geopolitics

The domain which has been there since 1990s is yet to evolve in its contour and domain as an independent research-oriented function. Although we could see studies have been done on this field, yet we do not find empirical studies which have been done on this domain. The majority of these studies have been theoretical and methodological in purpose and in its nature. It has no set of theories or operating mechanisms on its own. It provides alternatives to conventional international theories and it has to develop its own theories, methodologies and approaches. The study of Ó Tuathail, Dalby and Routledge (2006) states that conceptualizing geopolitics

as an interpretative cultural practice and a discursive construction of ontological claims, critical geopolitical analyses prioritize the contextual, conflictual and messy spatiality of international politics as such

Critical geopolitics also examines geopolitical practices with the goal of understanding geographical and political reasoning and how it conditions practices in world politics. It examines geopolitical tradition, revisiting the historical and geographical context of ideas about geography and politics, the relation between geopolitics and popular culture, and last but not least it studies structural geopolitics linking the practices of statecraft to globalization and information networks.

Later on, in 1998, Agnew defined three ages of geopolitics that developed over the period from the early nineteenth century to the 1980s in his book *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics*. These three ages are the age of civilizational geopolitics, naturalized geopolitics, and ideological geopolitics respectively. According to this view, in the first geopolitical order, which was a combination of the Concert of Europe and British domination, civilizational geopolitics prevailed. In the geopolitical order of inter-imperial rivalry, on the other hand, naturalized geopolitics prevailed, whereas throughout the geopolitical order of the Cold War ideological geopolitics prevailed, accompanied by their own geopolitical discourses.

Identity in Critical Geo Politics

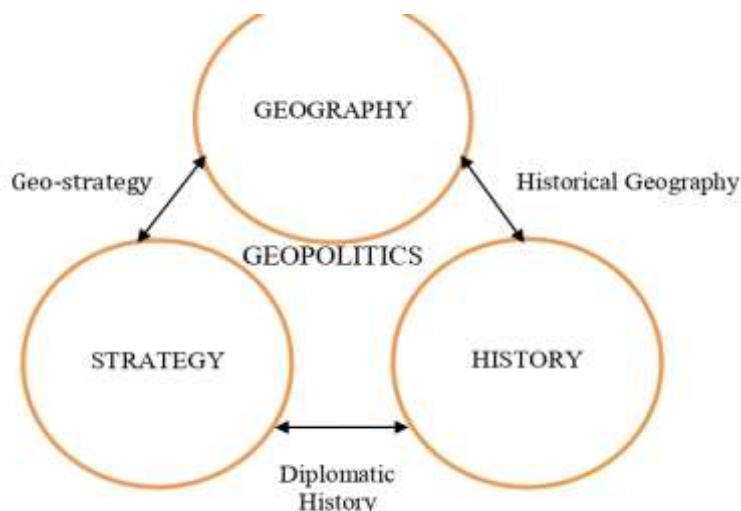
The concept of identity finds its relevance and prominence in critical geo politics as it deals with micro-level of geopolitical structure, under geopolitical imagination and geopolitical culture (macro-level), as well as geopolitical tradition and geopolitical visions meso-level (O'Tuathail, (2003)

Framing of a suitable foreign policy based on the geopolitical situations challenges, problems and issues is the need of the hour. As India would emerge as the super power in global geopolitics it's important and imperative that it maintains an effective foreign relation policy with China which would have further implications on its trade relations with Afghanistan.

Capabilities and possibilities decide in this multi-dimensional and complex relationships which prevail in global geopolitics. A careful and evaluated decisions by India and china would lead the world in to process of growth and development. If it is not attended with care and attention it would lead to disastrous consequences. A careful evaluation of the policies and geopolitical relations with China which would affect Afghanistan must be always in the minds of Indian foreign policy.

Geopolitics : Position and Perspectives

The subject by nature would address the challenges and issues which are prevalent in three domains of interest – geography, politics and strategic studies which are evident in the diagram below:



Source : Sloan (2017)

To Grygiel (2006) Geostrategy is an effective combination of geography and strategy had been envisioned this holistic concept. In this concept the state provides the visionary directive on power and authority on the dynamics of association between geography and strategy. Whereas logistics as Strachan (2005) describe, is another domain which also intervenes in providing resources on time for effective achievement of objectives. The strategic perspective is very fundamental and essential in achievement of objectives. The geographical issues would provide us better orientations and dimensions on power and its applications which could give geopolitical strategies for implementation. (Gray1999) The relationship between geography and strategy is evolving in nature, which could provide directives for effective management of geopolitical situations and crisis by countries all over the world.

History and Geographic Integrations with Developments

As Strassler (1996) concludes the historical perspective and directives have indeed shaped the dynamic and integrative aspects of geography with culture, economics and politics. This combined perspectives and associations had led to the emergence of geopolitics as a subject of interest all over the world. It also has political implications and importance which is the central and paramount importance in world functioning. To Baron de Montesquieu (1949) accessibility, mobility, visibility, communicability, availability, and vulnerability are the six major influencing factors of strategic geography. The intellectual thinkers also provide aspects of climate, culture and the impact of institutions which could be more determinantal in the process. Rudolf Kjellén (1915) had developed the system of political science which had remarkable impact and it had changed the entire dynamics of thinking on geopolitics. The word geopolitick was used to describe the geographic challenges which were inherent in the entire process of politics and state administration. Ecopolitick factor looked in to the economic factors and foundations which indeed determined geopolitics. Demopolitick had focused on the entire demography and its implications in determination of geopolitics. Sociopolitick had focused on the socio political factors which had an impact on geopolitics. All these factors indeed had a

remarkable impact on the nature and challenges which determine geopolitical strategies for a state.

Geopolitics has been a subject of sparkling interest with dynamism in which geography tends to affect international relations and affairs to a larger and greater extent. Mahan had discussed and evaluated the implications of naval and sea control and its impact on management of geopolitics by developed countries. The discussions and contributions by him was very significant which led to the development and effective management of knowledge and perspectives on geopolitics. Climate is the most important determinant in management of geopolitics of countries across the world. Non-human energy resources, conservation and its effective management could provide optimal solutions and effective management of geopolitics across the countries of the world. (Fairgrieve 1917; Thom 1929)

Sir Halford Mackinder provided the thesis on 1904 which was outlined in 1914 as *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* which was a major contribution in Geopolitics history.

The thinking, directives and perspectives on geopolitics revived in 1980s as we could find a tradition which was revived by most influential thinkers of that time. Geographers have provided additional dimensions & perspectives on geopolitics which have always been significant to develop expand the boundaries of its applications. National policies and geographical locations have a greater impact on geopolitical atmosphere and its (Hoffman's 1982 & Gray 1977, 1988) nature of functioning. Political ideologies seem to have a specific impact on geographical perceptions and this has been examined with various studies.

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