
GEOGRAPHY OF POWER AND INFLUENCE

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ABSTRACT

Power is an inter subjective concept that has various viewpoints. In the context of geography, the term power seems related to the way it deals with the dynamics of its people, place and politics. Political geography is concerned with the inter-relationships between people, state and territory. Political geography has the traditional ability to combine the intersection approach between geography and politics, which is termed as geopolitics. Geopolitics is the study of the effects of Earth's geography on politics and international relations. State is a territorially bounded sovereign polity that is ruled in the name of community of citizens, who identify themselves as a nation. Different approaches are adopted for studying political geography. *Morphological approach* deals with external and internal structure of the state; *functional approach* deals with the functions of the state, considering the state as a lively object; *historical approach* deals with the evolution of state; *power analysis approach* deals with the phenomena that how powerful a state is. Power analysis approach, analyses the state's power based on its geographical factors: spatial, physical, human and economic. These factors are resources present in a state which makes the state powerful. Thus, simple inter-relationships between people, state and territory, crosses the boundary, and space is viewed from the state's point of view. It is not confined to national boundaries, rather it is analysed internationally. Here the term 'Power Bloc' comes to fore. Power Bloc is an association of nations having a common interest and acting as a single political force. Some nations of the world may sometimes act as a Power Bloc individually due to their powerful position. Analysing the geography of power and influence through geographical factors, gives a better understanding of world scenario in this regard.

Keywords: Power, Political, State, Territory, Geopolitics, Power Bloc.

Political geography is the study of how humans have divided up the Earth's surface for management and control purposes. Political geography is the analysis of how political systems and structures from the local to international levels influence, and is influenced by the spatial distribution of resources, events and groups, and by interactions among sub-national, national and international political units across the globe. Political geography acknowledges, that the exercise of power is a part of

everyday life. The political context of geography examines about how politics influences place, and how place and its distinctiveness, shapes the kind of politics that operate there. The intersection between geography and politics is called geopolitics, which studies the effects of Earth's geography on politics and international relations. At the level of international relations, geopolitics is a method of studying foreign policy, to understand, explain and predict international political behaviour through geographical variables. These variables include area studies, climate, topography, demography, natural resources, applied science of the region being evaluated (Evans, 1998) Geopolitics focuses on political power linked to geographic space, territorial waters and land territory in correlation with diplomatic history. Relations between the interests of international political factors focused, within an area, a space or a geographical element, create a geopolitical system (Vladimir, Toncea, 2006) Geostrategy, a subfield of geopolitics is principally guided by geographical factors, as they inform, constrain or affect political and military planning Geo strategy is concerned with matching means to ends. Strategy is as intertwined geography as geography is with nationhood. Geostrategists approach geopolitics from a nationalist point of view. While geopolitics examines the impact of geography on politics, geostrategy involves comprehensive planning, assigning means for achieving national goals or securing assets of military or political significance. Thus, geostrategy is the geographic direction of a state's foreign policy.

Political geography studies both, the spatially uneven outcomes of political processes and the ways in which political processes are themselves affected by spatial structures. Political geography adopts a three-scale structure for analysis. In this structure, state is at the centre, study of international relation or geopolitics is above it, and the study of localities below it. The primary concern can be summarized as the inter-relationships between people, state and territory. State is a territorially bounded sovereign polity that is ruled in the name of a community of citizens who identify themselves as a nation. Members of the core national group see the state as belonging to them, and consider the approximate territory of the state to be their homeland. As a political model, the nation-state fuses two principles: the principle of *state sovereignty*, which recognizes the right of states to govern their territories without external interference; the principle of *national sovereignty*, which recognizes the right of national communities to govern themselves. Important facets of geography, such as, location, climate, topography, size, and resources play major roles in the ability of a nation to gain national power. (Organski. 1958). National power is the sum of all resources available to a nation in the pursuit of national objectives. (Instruments of National Power, 2010). Assessing the national power of political entities was already relevant during the classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and today (Fels, 2017) Power politics is a theory of power in international relations which contends that distributions of power and national

interests or changes to those distributions, are fundamental causes of war and of system stability. (Lemke, 2008) Thus, the concept of power politics provides a way of understanding systems of international relations. States compete for the world's limited resources, and it is to an individual state's advantage to be manifestly able to harm others. Power politics prioritizes national self-interest over the interests of other nations or the international community, and thus may include threatening one another with military, economic, or political aggression to protect one's nation's own interest.

National power of a nation comprises of two elements - natural and social (Jablonsky, 2010). Geography, resources and population are natural elements, whereas economic, political, military, informational and psychological (national morale) are social elements. Geography, raw material, natural resources, population and technology are tangible elements, whereas, morale, ideology, leadership, personality, quality of diplomacy and organisational efficiency are intangible elements. Here one thing must be clarified that all the above mentioned elements come in the ambit of geography, and where the word only geography has been used, it denotes spatial and physical factors. Thus, the elements of national power are -

- **Geography** - It is the most tangible, stable and permanent natural element. Maps, size, location, climate, topography and boundaries comprise the geography of a nation. *Maps* are purely geographical in nature and they are used as instruments for justifying a particular demand or action of a nation, *Maps* shows the population, raw materials, communication routes and other significant data of a nation which are used to interpret maps. *Size* of a country, if large, is capable to accommodate large population, offer better natural resources and can be more helpful in the defence of the country. However, a large size with inadequate natural resources, inaccessible mountains and forests, unhealthy climate and topography can be a hindrance in the way of national power. Existence of some other factors can help even the small sized states to develop a large amount of national power. Japan, England, USA are example. Some large sized countries, such as, Brazil, Canada, Zaire, Australia, Sudan, and now Russia are not as powerful as their sizes might indicate. But, generally a large territory creates the possibility of a great power. *Location* of a nation can be both helping as well as hindering factor for its national power. All great empires have been based on trade routes, and these are almost always maritime, making them sea-power. England could become a big naval power and thereby an imperial power because of its location. The location of Japan has helped it to be a major ship-building nation and location of Germany in the heart of the Europe has been a source of strength for it. The location of USA, being relative to land as well as seas, has helped it to be a both, land and sea power. The location of Switzerland has been instrumental in securing for it the status of a permanently neutralized state.

Location of Canada has hindered its emergence as a great power. Many of the world's poorest countries are severely hindered because they are landlocked, situated in high mountain ranges, or lack navigable rivers, long coastlines, or good natural harbours. Middle East and Continental Europe have been the potential zone of power rivalry because of their geographic and strategic locations. A favorable geographical location and friendly relations with neighbourhood countries can help a nation to be powerful. *Climate* determines the food production, economy and even the culture of a nation. It can be a source of big limitation or help for human capabilities to develop. The cold climate of Arctic zone and Antarctic, whereas the excessive heat of the Tropical zone, and Sahara, have kept the development of life backward in these areas. Poorest countries exist in the tropics, where it is hot, land is less fertile, water is more scarce and where diseases also flourish. Europe and North America profit from huge tracts of very fertile land, a temperate climate, and a good rainfall. Extreme hot or cold climate is unfavorable condition to develop as a national power. Some countries are just at a natural disadvantage and an unkind climate become their source of weakness. *Topography* is the nature of terrain which can influence the power of a state and its potential for offence, defence and growth. Natural boundaries with strategic advantages are always a source of strength for a nation. It is terrain which determines the decisions concerning physical security of the state. The English Channel has remained a source of defence and some security for England. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans have provided strength to the security of United States. *Boundaries* refer to settled and natural boundaries which are a source of friendly and cooperative relations among the nations of a region. Undefined and disputed boundaries are potent source of conflict which weakens national power. Thus, natural boundaries are helpful to national power and artificial boundaries are source of weakness and conflict.

- **Natural Resources** - Natural resources are gifts of nature of established utility which are responsible for the industrial capabilities and economic well-being of a nation. Natural resources in the form of minerals, fertile soil, flora and fauna need a planned exploitation and use to make a nation powerful. *Raw materials* as natural resources, comprise of minerals, natural products and animal products. Coal, petrol, iron, copper, zinc, tin, manganese, uranium are *minerals* present. *Natural Products* are rubber, jute, bamboo, medicinal plants, wood pulp, wood plants, colours, varnishes, forest products etc. *Animal Products* are milk, eggs, meat, wool, animal hides, feathers, silk etc. Raw materials influence national power, national policies and international trade of the nation. The United States has been nearly self-sufficient in respect of key minerals which has largely contributed to its industrial and military strength. The interdependence among nations stands largely constituted by the necessities of trade relations of raw

materials for their industrial needs. However, merely the existence of raw materials is not an automatic source of power. The ability to exploit and utilize raw-materials is also required which is linked to the level of scientific, technological and industrial advancement of a nation. *Food* is a big natural resource that determine policies of the nation. The existence of large stock of food grains and surplus food production can be a source of vital strength to the nation. Food production is mainly dependent upon agricultural technology and industrial capacity. The military preparedness of a nation is dependent upon adequate supplies of food.

- **Population-** Population of a nation is important in both ways, national needs as well as policies designed to serve these needs. Man power is needed for full exploitation of resources of the state and industrial production depends upon manpower as well as machines. Manpower continues to be a key factor in determining the industrial and military capacities of a nation, and its status as a power in international relations. Large concentration of manpower in Asia, has been an important factor of the power structure in international politics. Not merely the quantity of population, but the quality of population is a more valuable factor in the context of national power. Dedicated, disciplined, hard working, educated and skilled manpower alone can be a source of power. A nation inhabited by unhealthy, unemployed, lazy, unskilled, illiterate and ignorant people is bound to be a weak and inactive power. Moreover, people with ethnicity i.e. having common ancestry, language and religion show ethnic nationalism which make them powerful. *Ethnic traits* have strong sense of collective identity based on a real or fictitious sense of shared ethnic identity Ethnic loosely means race, and it is based on shared culture. People belonging to the same ethnic group believe in their common descent because of similarities related to physiology or culture or both. Ethnicity signifies self-consciousness of a group of people united or closely related by shared experiences, such as, language, religious beliefs, common heritage, which makes them powerful.
- **Economic Development and Industrial Capacity** – A nation with developed, healthy and growing economy alone, can be a great power. *Economic development* is the means for military power and the basis for welfare, prosperity and development of its people. Nations with developed economies can use the economic instruments - aid, loan, rewards, trade, grants and denial of rewards or punishment, for securing their desired goals in international relations. Thus the level of economic well being determines the power of a nation. *Industrial capacity* of a nation is linked up with economy. Today, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and Germany are powerful nations because of their huge industrial capacities. These nations have the ability to process raw

materials, and thereby are in a position to control international economy. Industrialized farming leads to increased agricultural production, thus making the nation powerful.

- **Technology-** It is the application of knowledge of science for promoting human welfare. A nation backed by highly developed and advanced technology alone can be recognized as a developed nation. It has been the advanced technological ability that has largely contributed to the prosperity and power of the developed countries. Today nuclear technology has emerged as an important source of power and influence in international relations. The nuclear technology, missile technology, space technology and information technology have given a big boost to the power of some of the states. Technological advancements are basic to international relations and also impacts the foreign policies of both the developed and under developed nations.
- **Military Preparedness** - Military power is a vitally important part of national power of a state. Military preparedness is basic to the success of a foreign policy and promoting national interest. Three factors are important in evaluating military preparedness - war technology, military leadership, quantity and quality of soldiers. *War technology* refers to the nature and type of weapon system that is available with the army of the state. The quantity and technical quality of weapons and military equipment, determine the level of military power of a nation. *Military leadership* is required to makes the best use of available weapons, equipment and manpower to make possible a victory. Military planning needs skilled, trained, experienced, dedicated, energetic and disciplined military leadership. *Quantity and quality of soldiers* are important because they actually use the weapons and equipment. The number, skill, training, discipline, dedication and morale of the soldier are very important in making the use of military weapons and machines successful. Military preparedness, though an important element of national power, functions effectively with other important elements as economy, technology government policies and strategic factors.
- **Intangible Elements** – They comprise of ideology, leadership, organization and quality of government, national character, national morale and diplomacy. *Ideology* of a nation can be a source of friendship and enmity in international relations. The ability of the nation to use several ideological principles, always determine its national power. The quality of leadership determines the nature and extent of power that a nation can use for securing its national interest. The government of the state should be organised, efficient and effective. Government should have the quality to coordinate, direct, control men and material resources for securing power for fulfilling goals of national interest. *National character* is a

collective term for referring to the traits of the people, their attitude and aptitude towards work and national needs. These factors impact national power as it manifest qualitative make up of the people in their actual behaviour. *National morale* refers to the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policy of its government in peace and war. High morale denotes the power of the nation. *Diplomacy* is the means of foreign policy and if it is of high quality, it can bring the ends and means of foreign policy into harmony with the available resources of national power. It can trap the hidden sources of national strength and transform them into political realities.

A nation with developed technology, surplus food, large industrial production, healthy and developed economy, good natural resources, can exercise more power and influence over other nations. Thus by measuring the scope of resources and capacities of a nation, the scope of power of nation can be measured. Depending on the interaction of the individual elements of national power, globally important states with dominant positions in all or almost all elements, are called superpowers. Soviet Union and the United States were called super powers during the Cold War. In the 21st century, the term is increasingly being applied to the People's Republic of China. The National Power Ranking of Countries divides them into categories of economic, military and geopolitical power, which is derived from statistical indicators. The evolution of the distribution of power in the world, shows an increasing shift of power from the Western world to the Asia-Pacific region. The top 10 state powers with ranks are presented in the following table –

Rank	Countries
1	United States
2	China
3	Russia
4	India
5	Germany
6	United Kingdom
7	France
8	Japan
9	Brazil
10	Canada

Source: State Power Index, 2017

India's Context

The Himalayas in the North and a long sea-coast in the South have made the defence of India a complex and difficult problem. But, on the other hand, since mid 1950s, defence of the Himalayas has been a source of limitation on India's power. The lack of good number of natural harbours along the sea coast has hindered the development of economic and trade relations of India with other countries. As for as relative location is concerned, India's position is on the negative side. Issues with China and Pakistan are a matter of concern for India. The prosperity of India stands inseparably conditioned by Monsoons. A failure of Monsoon weakens Indian and likewise timely and good Monsoon rains help India to be self-sufficient and even surplus in food production. As for as the natural resources are concerned, except Petroleum, India is quite rich in all type of natural resources. Thus it makes India a powerful nation. The food shortage in India was a highly limiting factor of the Indian foreign policy during 1950s and 60s. Food shortage leads to power shortage. The Green Revolution of 1970s, enabled India, not only to sustain its economy but also to preserve and develop its national power. Though population is a source of power, but overpopulation poses threat to development of a nation. Human power resulting from the presence of a large class of skilled workforce has been a source for the emerging power of India in the world. However, population has adversely affected the economic growth rate and has posed a perpetual food problem for India. Poverty in India has been largely due to its overpopulation. India is now emerging as an industrial power by overcoming her weakness of industrial capacity. Technological advancement in different spheres has decidedly been a source of power for India. By virtue of being a major military power, India besides other factors, is considered to be a major power with the potential of becoming a super power. Kargil victory was the outcome of the qualities of discipline, training and dedication of Indian officers and soldiers. India has adopted the ideology of democratic socialism to establish friendly and cooperative relations with the democratic west and the socialist East. It also acted as a source of popular support for the Government of India. Toleration, idealism and faith in rich cultural tradition, defines the national character of India and national morale is also high in the nation. In a nutshell, realizing all the above mentioned elements of national power in the context of India, it can be concluded that India is a powerful country and force to reckon with at the World forum.

Limitations of National Power

Though exercising national power by every nation is an accepted reality of international relations, but unlimited use of power by the states can be a source of war, anarchy and chaos in international relations. The need for sustainable all round development has compelled all nations to accept the need for controlling and

regulating the use of power by all states in the interest of preventing war and anarchy in international relations. The major limitations in this regard are-

Balance of Power, a device of both power management and limitation. No state should try to become unduly powerful as it can endanger the balance of power.

International Law, a body of rules that the nation-states accept as binding upon them, and which regulates their behavior in international relations. It constitutes a legal framework for the orderly conduct of international relations, both in terms of peace and war.

International Morality, provides certain values for the international community, as, peace, order, equality, goodness, mutual help, respect for life, humanity and liberty for all, respect for Human Rights. It has played a role in strengthening human consciousness against war.

World Public Opinion, emerged as an important factor of international relations. The presence of global peace movements, nuclear arms control and disarmament movement, global movement to protect Human Rights, all show World Public Opinion for the global welfare of nations.

International Organisations, The United Nations Constitutes a global platform for the conduct of international relations in a peaceful and orderly manner. Nations are bound by the UN Charter and they are expected to their powers only in accordance with its dictates.

Collective Security, is based on the principle that international peace and security is the common objective to be secured by all the states through collective action against any violation by any state or states. Such security is considered to be a check against war and aggression, that is, against the misuse of power by any state.

Disarmament and Arms Control, Arms control refers to the control over and limitation of the arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race through internationally agreed decisions, policies and plans. Disarmament refers to the liquidation, gradually or in one stroke of the huge stockpiles of arms and ammunition which the nation-states have come to possess till today. Both arms control and disarmament are based on the belief that by eliminating or reducing the possession and production of weapons, the military power or national power of the state can be limited.

Conclusion

Geography is the most important element of national power. Ideal geographical conditions can be a source of power and hindering geographical factors

can be a source of weakness towards national power. Other elements of national power, as, population, level of industrial development and technology, means of transport and communication, all function by linking with geography. In fact scientific inventions and technological innovations have made it possible for humans to adjust with and overcome hindrances. A nation cannot hope to be a big military, industrial and economic power without the possession of adequate quantities of raw materials. Nations sufficient in food production, are powerful. Population is a source of power which determines both, national needs as well as policies designed to serve those needs. Overpopulation leads to underdevelopment of a nation as well as poverty. Economic and industrial development with technological advancement, denote power. Quality and quantity of military is related with national power. A defined ideology which a nation carries, and the organization and quality of Government makes a nation powerful. All elements of national power work interdependently. When material factors are combined with right type of human factors, then it leads to national power.

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