South Asia as a Region

Lecture 1

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Economic and Political Geography of South Asia

IS 529 N
What is South Asia

- A sub-continent
- A region with perennial history of invasions
- A land with longest traditions in social philosophy
- A region with many languages (661 living) cultural diversity
- A society with maximum degree of stratification
- A region with more than half of people living on agriculture
- A land of poverty, (> 40% of world), peoples (> 200 mln)
- A region with fastest economic growth (> 6%) in last two decades
- A region of low intensity warfare
- A region of political movements
Concept of a Region

- Michael Keating, “A minimal definition would present it as an intermediate territorial level, between the state and the locality”.

- Blotevogel, Weichart and Giddens, have identified three basic elements necessary for a definition of region: (1) spatial relationships, (2) issues of scale and (3) relations between subjects and their territory.

- Political science is mainly interested in the region as an action unit, regional studies and geography focus on the region as an action space.

- These conceptual divergences (especially on the part of political scientists) limit the range of research and as such the political implications of reality (i.e., the extension of region to include the processes of regionalism and regionalisation) are only insufficiently grasped.
Concept of a Region

- The generic differentiation of earth's surface into several regions, describing peoples and their places endowed with different qualities of life which they derived from their environment and its role in transformation of their social and political life. Therefore, every region has some unique endowments of resources and their societal manifestations aka power.

- It only became a force to be reckoned that some regions though did not endow with a particular kind of resource still produced evidences of human organisation that obliterated the relationship between location and distances, thereby liquidating the direct one-to-one relationship between physical and human in most conventional terms.

- The case albeit becomes unique when some regions are smaller than nations and vice-versa. And, the regions and fixities got shaken with this human attribution of knowledge beyond regions.
Concept of a Region

- Territory as Actor, Typology of region – administrative, economic, labour, structural regions.
Hettne's 5 degrees

1) **Location matters**: regions are delimited by their geographical character || discernible **boundaries defined by more or less physical barriers**.

2) **Region as a social system**: implies the existence of an established network of translocal relations among human groups.

3) **Region entails interaction** but organised cooperation in any of the cultural, economic, political or military fields.

4) **Region-'ness'** inculcates a distinct civil society, which takes shape when the organisational framework promotes not only social communication but also a convergence of values throughout the region.

5) **Region-'ness'** is achieved with the coalescence of a distinct **identity**, institutional capability, and legitimacy (both internal and external).
Region in Global Context

This structure that is trans-regional brought universalised knowledge in form of generic concept of a region, incipient to the case for globalisation. This brought into existence regional studies.

Thus, regions and globalisation are a 'hammer and gong' relationship that has generated lot of global understanding. So, there is a diffusion of regional influence beyond its realms.

History has been testimony to regions being the source be to the globalising influences from Attila, the Hun to Industrial Revolution of England.

Globalisation is not only de-regionalising force it is also a re-regionalising force.
Region- A geographical concept

Its ontology begins with ancient narratives of famous scholar Strabo-who used to terms, namely, the earth and the country.

He gave a bipartisan perspective to the discipline under the nomenclature of *Geographica* and *Chorography*.

The first connoted physical geography and the second referred to the political geography.

The two terms were not set against each other in fact it meant the reference of physical bases of human power, i.e., the organised power -> political.

Region and Networks- The New Semiotics

The famous American scholar Carl O. Sauer brought connection between land and people as the least squaring-off the diverse relationship
Region- A political concept

- The fixed cartographic entities that are reinforced by mutual recognition by states are territories. The territories are characterized by units of political administration as basic element of identity.

- Regions are essentially thematic, even though cartographic, are collective recognition by community of states, often devoid of any administrative unit, but convened by an agency of interest.

- Hard and soft regional units. Those which are defined by economic and political organizations and have supra-administering power over state territories are hard regions. IGOs concerned with free trade, collective security.

- The soft regions are thematic interest groups, but without any supra-structure control over sovereign states. ROs as Geographic associations of countries, OAU.
Characterising Region- South Asia

Region.Civil_Society {which takes shape when the organisational framework promotes not only social communication but also a convergence of values throughout the region.}

Region.Security_Framework {India and Pakistan due to historical differences and domestic conflicts define the security environment.}

Region.Economic_Entrepôt {South Asia represents as an entrepôt to vital sea-lanes of commerce and also one of the important destination of global capital inflows.}

Region.Human_Landscape {Mega-cities, conflict zones, impoverished regions, Billionaire business tycoons, Science & Technological achievements, mass poverty, ethno-religious tensions}
Critical assessment of regionness in South Asia

- “South Asia is the least integrated region in the world.”
- “Regional economic cooperation and integration are seen as a route to economic prosperity. Present data on South Asia show that of the region’s total trade volume of $517.5 billion in 2007, only 4% was intraregional trade.” ADB Report
- Nuclear threat in South Asia amid conventional wars
- Civil wars in South Asia challenging the state sovereignty
- Conflict narrative the larger discourse of South Asia
Introducing South Asian Parameters

- Physiography
- Climate
- Agro-ecological zone
- Population
- Political organisation
Physiographic Regions
World Tectonic Regions
Orogeny of Indian Continental Plate
Tectonic Processes and Metallogeny along the Tethyan Mountain Ranges of the Middle East and South Asia (Oman, Himalaya, Karakoram, Tibet, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia)

Michael P. Steel, Laurence J. Bobb, and Nicholas J. Gardiner
Department of Earth Sciences, Oxford University, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3AN, United Kingdom
Fig. 3. Simplified geologic map of the Himalayan region.
Physiographic delimitation - parameter

CONTINENTAL AND MARITIME DELIMITATION
Mean annual temperature
Thermal climates
Thermal climates, comparative
Indian Monsoons – Role of ITCZ [Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone]

- The southeast trade winds in the southern hemisphere and the northeast trade winds in the northern hemisphere meet each other near the equator.
- The meeting place of these winds is known as the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ).

Monsoon in South Asia

MAP I
THE SUMMER MONSOON

Very Light
Moderate
Heavy
Heaviest in the World

Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
Indian Ocean

Himalaya Mountains
Ceylon
Deccan Plateau
Vindhyt Range
Central Indian High Plains

25
Agro-climatic region of South Asia

Agro-ecological zone - parameter
One Belt One Road

The Belt and Road Initiative: Six Economic Corridors Spanning Asia, Europe and Africa

http://www.visualcapitalist.com/ambitious-infrastructure-megaproject/
South Asia in OBOR

The OBOR blueprint encompasses over 60 countries, which account for 60% of the world’s population and a collective GDP equivalent to 33% of the world’s wealth.

Six economic corridors are proposed as the framework of the OBOR initiative outside China:

1. New Eurasian Land Bridge
2. China - Mongolia - Russia Corridor
3. China - Central Asia - West Asia Corridor
4. China - Indochina Peninsula Corridor
5. China - Pakistan Corridor
6. Bangladesh - China - India - Myanmar Corridor

Compile by: Ubaid Ur Rehman

2 corridor in South Asia
Empires as regions - parameter

MAURYAN EMPIRE

Justus Perthes, Gotha.
Anthroposcape - South Asia
South Asia 'Region'

- A Region is defined as a space identified by an occupancy of network, structural relations, spatial distribution or spatial correlates.
- A region can also be delimited by an 'ethnoscape' whereby communities extend beyond national territories.
- A region is also defined by delimiting factor as geographic elements, such as, mountains, oceans, climate.
So, such a South Asia...

- South Asian regionalism is largely dependent on geographical contiguity among the South Asian countries.

- The regional objectives are
  - Intra-regional trade (SAFTA)
  - Free movement of people (VISA Free)
  - Transport and communication linkages

- Constraints
  - Border management
  - Trust deficit
  - Outward looking common objectives
Modern South Asia

- The present South Asia is 'over' politicized rather than geographical entity.

- The emergence of states preceded the nations at least in the case of India and 'iteratively' in case of Pakistan.

- However, Bangladesh emerged as a nation first and it followed more conventional path of statehood.

- Colonial legacy has loomed larger, and hence territorialization in South Asia remained a passive entity subject to the conscious polity of the times.
So, such a South Asia...

- Has been under perennial dialectics between democracy and authoritarianism.
- The modernist challenges are
  - Development
  - Social inequality
  - Civilian Freedoms
  - Secularism
  - Governance
  - Terrorism
  - Centrifugalism
South Asia, the 'Indian' Heartland

- India, a colloquial identity for South Asians
- India, a converging point of cultural dimensions
- India, a repository of religious identities
- India, a 'balance within balance' of geo-powers
- India, a reference to diverging political identities
- India, a 'diffused' identity
- India, a democracy
- India, symbolism
So, such a South Asia...

- Has India constantly reshaping the South Asian space as a geo-cultural core
- The Elements of Indian Identity are
  - Third-Worldism
  - Anti-fundamentalism
  - Cultural bridge between Southeast, West and Central Asias
  - Non-Alignment, BRICS, Global Disarmament
  - Legacy of Prime Minsters- Nehru, Gujral and Vajpayee
  - Linguistic Federalism
  - Anti-terrorism
Great Powers in South Asia

- South Asian region has been a geopolitical paradigm in later half of the Second Millennium.
- The Imperial Powers contested Maritime space in South Asia, viz. Portuguese, French, Dutch and the British.
- The Imperial Powers contested Continental space in South Asia, viz. The British and the Russians.
- The Cold-war period further modelled on this approach that has epitomized post-9/11.
- Now, China and US vie for their respective sphere of influence in South Asia.
So, such a South Asia...

- The political consciousness in South Asia reverberates with the terms like colonialism, anti-imperialism, neo-colonialism, internal colonialism.

- The world order in South Asian context is debated on following perspectives,
  - Neo-realist
  - Constructivist
  - Determinist

- New Geopolitics of the region post-2014
South Asia BLC Johnson

- Chapter 1
  - Uniqueness of South Asia – Land of two great religions – Hinduism and Buddhism. Islam though originated in the Middle East- it is home to the largest Muslim population.
  - Unlike in most of the developing countries, South Asia has the strongest credentials of democracy.
  - Persistent struggle between the State and Pluralistic aspirations of societies.
  - Nationalism has been an ambivalent category in South Asia.

Source: Johnson
Regions through Networks
THE LAND

- India: 64%
- Pakistan: 15%
- Afghanistan: 13%
- Nepal: 3%
- Bangladesh: 3%
- Bhutan: 1%
- Sri Lanka: 1%
- Maldives: 0%
THE POPULATION

- India: 69%
- Pakistan: 10%
- Bangladesh: 9%
- Afghanistan: 1%
- Sri Lanka: 1%
- Nepal: 2%
- Maldives: 0%
- Bhutan: 0%
THE ECONOMY

- India: 82%
- Pakistan: 8%
- Bangladesh: 6%
- Afghanistan: 1%
- Sri Lanka: 2%
- Nepal: 1%
- Maldives: 0%
- Bhutan: 0%
FRAGILE STATE INDEX, 2018
Net Primary Production of Biomass - parameter
Population of South Asia
South Asian vs Global Population

Countries with a smaller population than Uttar Pradesh

Sources:
Census of India (2011)
World Population Prospects (2011)

The Ten Kingdoms

The ten regions originated with the Club of Rome “think tank”, and was established by the United Nations. The Club of Rome was given the task of uniting Europe, and dividing the world into manageable blocks. Here's a map of the world, divided into the ten economic regions, which the United Nations and the Club of Rome call “The Ten Kingdoms”.

Source: http://www2.ministries-online.org/biometrics/rome.html
Economic Infrastructure