

## **Chapter 9 – The Two-Way Street of Politics and Geography**

### **The Politics of Geography**

- Territory is often regarded as a space to which a particular group attaches its identity
- **Self-Determination** – The right of a group with a distinctive politico-territorial identity to determine its own destiny, at least in part, through the control of its own territory
- **Regionalism**
  - Movements to territorial claims because of certain beliefs
  - **Regionalism** – A feeling of collective identity based on a population's politico-territorial identification within a state or across state boundaries
  - Often involves ethnic groups whose aims include autonomy from an interventionist state and the development of their own political power
  - For example, in 1993, “Basquism” movements were common in Europe to free the Basque people from the modernized industrialization and would undermine Basque pre-industrial traditions
  - Politics of geography, in terms of regionalism, also finds strong focus today in rural versus urban politics
  - In France, attitudes about birth control are significantly different between the urbanized north of the country and the more rural south

### **The Geography of Politics**

- **Geographical Systems of Representation**
  - **Democratic Rule** – A system in which public policies and officials are directly chosen by popular vote
  - **Territorial Organization** – A system of government formally structured by area, not by social groups
  - **Unitary State** – A form of government in which power is concentrated in the central government
  - **Confederation** – a grouping of independent jurisdictions, such as provinces, into a larger unit that is given separate powers
  - **Federal State** – A form of government in which powers are divided between the federal government and smaller units of government (such as provinces) within the country
  - Canada is made up a nested hierarchy of jurisdictions, each represented by its own spatial unit of representation and its own elected representatives
  - Confederation in 1867 established that the four provinces that composed Canada at the time should have a Parliament comprising two houses
  - The historical compromises at the root of Canadian confederation meant that this general principle has been subject to the need to recognize Canada's diversity, Quebec's status and the position of the smaller provinces and territories as Canada grew in population size and geographical extent
  - **Reapportionment** – The process of allocating electoral seats to geographical areas
  - **Redistricting** – The defining and redefining of territorial district boundaries
  - If additional seats have been created since the last election, a considerable redrawing of boundaries may be required to accommodate the extra ridings

- Comissions must take into account such issues as the historical development of the riding and the strength to which areas within it identify with particular communities
- Before independent boundary commissions were established, the redrawing of boundaries in Canada was often deliberately influenced by political parties to further their own partisan ends
- Drawing boundaries that excluded areas that did not vote for a particular party and included those areas that did, it was possible to manipulate the boundaries of a riding to achieve the election of a particular party's candidate.

### **Politics and the Environment**

- Worldwatch Institute's State of the World Report noted that “about a quarter of the 49 wars and armed conflicts waged during 2000 had a strong resource dimension- in the sense that legal or illegal resource exploitation helped trigger or exacerbate violent conflict or financed its contribution
- **Environmental Scarcity** – A scarcity of renewable natural resources that, if not addressed by technological, social or economic means, may cause social disruption or violent conflict
- Howard and Homer-Dixon illustrated one of the main three types of enviornmental scarcity:
  - Demand-induced scarcity because of population growth or increasing per capita consumption
  - Supply-induced scarcity because of the degradation or depletion of natural resources
  - Structural Scarcity because of an unbalanced distribution of resources that affects less powerful groups in society
- Two patterns of interaciton are especially common:
  - Resource capture – occurs when supply-induced and demand-induced scarcities work in conjunction to produce structural scarcity
  - Ecological marginalization – occurs when demand-induced scarcities and structural scarcity interact to cause supply-induced scarcity
- Even if environmental scarcity does not always directly cause conflict, it can still be a major factor behind the worsening of social and economic conditions that trigger violence