

Methodology for the Study of Political Historical Geography of Russia in the System of Higher Education

Alexey M. Stolyarov¹

¹ Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Correspondence: Alexey Mikhaylovich Stolyarov, Kremlyovskaya Street 18, Kazan 420008, Russia. E-mail: yagello1386@mail.ru

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Abstract

The importance of the issue under study is determined by the need to improve methods of teaching historical geography to university students. Therefore, the achievements of foreign historical geography have been taken into consideration. The objective of the article is to give a comprehensive characteristic of the methods of Historical Geography teaching to university students. The main approach in the study of this issue is a problem-thematic one. The major results of the study are reflected in the systematization of the methods of teaching Political Historical Geography of Russia. The article highlights the basic elements of the methodology for the study of Political Historical Geography. The subject of Political Historical Geography of Russia has been divided into several stages. There has been introduced an algorithm of work with historical political maps. The material of the article may be useful for teaching Political Geography, Historical Geography, Political Science, and History of Russia.

Keywords: Political Geography, Historical Geography, state border, state border of Russia

1. Introduction

Historical Geography is defined by its constituent elements and is divided into a number of courses: Historical Geography of Nature (Historical Ecology), Population, National Economy, National Borders and Administrative-Territorial Division, Historical Events (Vodarsky, 2013). At present the subject of Historical Geography is defined as a multi-dimensional study of the interaction of human society and geographical space in time.

Historical Political Geography plays an important role in the training of soon-to-be specialists. The subject under study is at the junction of various branches of the humanities and sciences. Thus, its study performs an interdisciplinary synthesis. Historical Political Geography describes historical processes during the development of state political entities in their spatial and temporal dimension (Nikitin, 2011). Consequently, in general, the subject contributes to better understanding of historical relationships and patterns of society development.

Development of the methodology for the study of Political Historical Geography in the system of higher education is seen as important nowadays. This aspect is particularly laggard among the other issues of Historical Geography that Russian specialists, both scientists and methodologists, deal with. The only relevant experience can be observed in secondary school which introduced methods of teaching certain elements of Historical Geography, namely methods of work with historical maps at History lessons, to schoolchildren. The development of methods of teaching Historical Geography to university students doing a degree in education will improve their future professional competence. It will also improve the skills of university teachers as methodologists. Within the framework of the developed methods of studying Historical Geography it will be possible to effectively implement specific developments of specialists in the field of Historical Geography in general and Political Historical Geography in particular in teaching practice.

The chronological framework of the territorial expansion of the Russian state, covered by the proposed methodology for the study of Political Historical Geography, is limited by late 15th - early 20th centuries. At the end of the 15th century there was formed the original territory of the unified Russian state that became the 'core' joined by more lands (Zeleneva, 2005; Nikitin, 2012; Pokhlebkin, 1995). Limiting the study of territorial growth of Russia to the early 20th century can be explained by the fact that Historical Geography is taught to university

students in the same year as History of the Russian Imperial Period, which was also characterized by the expansion of the state. Thus, while studying Political Historical Geography, students update the knowledge they learned previously, and at the same time they study the new material more deeply.

2. Methodological Framework

2.1 Objectives of the Research

The following goals were put forth:

- 1) to apply the categorical and conceptual apparatus that exists in theoretical historical and geographical studies in order to develop practices to study Political Historical Geography;
- 2) to develop a methodology for studying the changes of the state borders of Russia within the study of the territorial and political aspect of Russia's foreign policy in its interaction with natural geographic, economic and political factors;
- 3) to develop a scheme and practices of working with historical maps.

2.2 Research Methods

The methodology of research approaches allows us to see major trends in the development of such a science as Historical Geography, to evaluate various practices of theorists, methodologists and practicing teachers, to get acquainted with the structure and level of methodological knowledge of predecessors and contemporaries.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was the conceptual provisions of the research in the study of the issues of history teaching in secondary school and university. The use of the methodology and methods of the existing research contributes to the development of historical and geographical scientific thought in the practice of teaching Political Historical Geography, methods and practices of research in this area.

A system and structural approach provided an opportunity to consider the complex system of methods of teaching History in secondary and higher education, and to choose optimal instructional techniques for teaching Political Historical Geography to university students. The system and structural approach also allowed us to unite the data of Political Geography, Historical Geography and Physical Geography under a single methodology of teaching.

Dialectical method plays an important role. It allows us to trace interconnections between the phenomena of historical and political life and the physical and geographical space that had a direct and reverse impact on each other.

The use of general historical logical method allowed us to develop the methodology in its continuity and consistency with the internal logical links between certain elements.

3. Results

3.1 The Subject of Political Historical Geography

Since the inception of the phenomenon of the state researchers in the field of historical geography have turned to its spatial-temporal characteristic that changes the parameters in the process of historical development of the state. At present, despite the trend of establishment of inter-state associations, the state still remains the most powerful subject of political activity determining the vectors of world political system development. Therefore, Historical Geography has long included Political Historical Geography.

The subject of its study is the patterns of formation and development of territorial and political systems in specific historical conditions and in cooperation with the geographical space. This approach includes appropriate division of Political Historical Geography into several sections:

- 1) Historical Geography of political power (political movements and organizations);
- 2) Historical Geography of political phenomena: a) administrative-territorial divisions; b) historical geography of the state border affecting collectively its change of factors.

3.2 Key Concepts

In this study the key concepts are state territory and state border.

State territory is part of the territory and waters under the sovereignty of a particular state. Within its territory the state is the highest power in relation to all individuals and organizations provided by the system of state authorities. The structure of the state territory includes land, internal and external territorial waters within the state borders, airspace over land and overwater, subsoil.

State border is a conventional or real line on the ground-surface and an imaginary vertical surface passing through it in the air and in the subsoil that defines the limits of the territory of the state and separates it from other states.

3.3 Supplementary Concepts

Political Historical Geography places the highest value on the so-called 'critical limits' and uncontrolled territories. Taking into account numerous facts when powerful states pursued to impose and defend their interests in other states and implemented it successfully, American political scientist K. Boulding proposed to speak about the origin of a "critical boundary".

Critical boundary is a notional boundary between the spheres of successfully implemented interests of some states on the territory of other states that are unable to resist such an implementation. This concept also applies to the history of foreign policy of the Russian state in the historical past and present.

Uncontrolled territory is a territory within a certain state recognised internally and de facto but not de jure by other states on which it cannot exercise full authority. In the history of the Russian state there have also been examples of appearance and prolonged existence of uncontrolled territories.

3.4 General Guidelines for the Study of the Growth of the Territory of the Russian State

When preparing to make a report in a seminar a student should analyse the features of the territorial growth and development of the state border of Russia. This analysis may be divided into the following stages:

I. Description of the border:

1. Features: a) shape (direction) of the border; b) the extent of the border.
2. Classification of various sections of the border in accordance with the political parameters recognised by Historical Geography: a) configuration (degree of the line curve) of the border; b) natural specifics (passing over natural objects) of the border.

II. Russia's territorial changes:

1. Details about the complex of factors that contributed to the change of the state border. To do this, a student should study the recommended scientific literature on the history of Russia's foreign policy and its neighbouring states.
2. Typology of the state border and its separate sections: a) by origin; b) by the terms and sequence of occurrence.

III. Estimation of the value of the adjoint (lost) segment of the border and an area of the state territory. To do this, it is important to characterize:

I. Strategic location of the area with respect to:

1. the capital of the Russian state and the capital of the state part of which was annexed to Russia;
2. the seaward extent of the area:
 - a) length and tortuosity of the coastline;
 - b) presence of islands near the coastline;
 - c) distance of the national economic centres from the coasts;
 - d) availability of suitable bays for the development of ports;
 - e) availability of access to the ocean from inland seas;
 - f) degree of remoteness of the coast from the main sea trade routes;
 - g) presence of indirect (through the possession of rivers flowing into the sea) access to the sea.
3. location of the area on the overland trade routes:
 - a) location of the area on the main overland trade routes;
 - b) location of the area on the secondary overland trade routes.

II. Scenery. To characterise the scenery of the area under study it is necessary to use atlases of physical geography of Russia and the world.

1. terrain;
2. vegetation and the possibility of its use in the national economy;

3. soils, the degree of their fertility and related productivity;
4. hydrological network (density and relative position of river routes) as the basis for the development of transport infrastructure;
5. subsoil:
 - a) marine resources;
 - b) land and seabed mineral resources:
 - 1b) extracted in the territory of the study area at the time of changing of its nationality;
 - 2b) potential, i.e. those that are widely used in a given historical period and that the state intends to extract having annexed the area.

While studying the material it is important to characterise the borders that can be defined as critical boundaries. They may occur mainly in three ways:

1. as a result of unilateral pressure of one state over another;
2. by voluntary recognition of a certain dependence of one state from another as a result of the pressure of a third state;
3. by an intergovernmental agreement (including secret agreements) on the division of spheres of influence in the territory of third countries not attracted to that treaty.

Critical boundaries form a sphere of influence of the state. It may subsequently become an area with signs of state citizenship, i.e. an integral part of the national territory. The main features of state citizenship of the territory:

1. being under the jurisdiction of the centre (the capital);
2. incidence of Russian taxes in a given territory or payment of specific direct taxes to the Russian budget by its citizens;
3. loyalty of the population of the territory, i.e. recognition of the supreme power of the Russian state (in the 16th – 19th centuries by swearing allegiance).

An important pattern of Political Historical Geography is that part of the new boundaries does not occur on a 'vacant place'. The existing border often changes its state status. In this case, the following options (symbol "----" means a change in the status of the border):

1. state border ---- state border;
2. state border ---- internal territorial-administrative border;
3. territorial-administrative border ---- state border;
4. territorial-administrative border ---- territorial-administrative border.

A student should follow the following steps when reporting at a seminar:

1. describe the initial position of the state border of Russia in the target direction;
2. name the historical conditions that contributed to the appearance of the area of the original border;
3. describe the complex of factors that propelled Russia or its neighbours to the desire to change the border in their favour;
4. describe the complex of factors that led to the change of the border;
5. if the change of the border occurred as a result of intergovernmental agreement, it is necessary to name the agreement, date of conclusion, place of signing, the participants.
6. show a new border on the map and describe it;
7. name the annexed (lost) areas (in this case, this area may have a historical, political, administrative and (or) ethno-national name);
8. describe the significance of the new state border and the territory to the strategic position and economic development of Russia.

4. Discussions

The issue under question has been mainly considered in historiography in terms of studying geopolitical factors

of the expansion of Russia's territory. Vodarsky studied the course of the expansion of the Russian state (Vodarsky, 2013). Zeleneva analyzed the vectors of geopolitical development of Russia and considered the phenomenon of "mobile borders" in relation to the Russian Empire (Zeleneva, 2005). Nikitin described the expansion of the territory as a geopolitical factor of the development of Russian statehood (Nikitin, 2011; Nikitin, 2012). The aspect described in the research - development of the methodology for the study of Russia's geopolitics in the system of higher education and the methodology for the study of the change of the state border in particular - has not been considered in these studies. The methodology is based on the Political Historical Geography - the study of changes in the state border. However, such narrow applicability is not, in our opinion, the reason for ignoring the use of the structural elements of this methodology in teaching Historical Geography in general. Since the focus of the presented method focuses on the study of the land borders of the state, it is quite possible to use the elements of this method for the study of marine borders of states in the future.

5. Conclusion

Thus, the current study presents a description of the developed method for the study of political historical geography of Russia. The basic elements of the methodology have been pointed out. Its structure has been defined. There has been developed a stepwise algorithm of students' work with materials on Political Historical Geography. A distinctive feature of this method is its specialization in Political Historical Geography - the study of changes in the state border. In addition, the use of elements of the proposed methodology for the study of changes in the internal administrative-territorial boundaries of a state is seen as promising. A unique feature of the proposed method is the structure of the characteristic value of the adjoint (lost) segment of the border or area of the state territory for the economy and politics of a state.

6. Recommendations

The material described in the article will be of interest to specialists engaged in teaching at higher schools of geopolitics, political geography, history of Russia, Russian historical geography, political geography of Russia.

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