

## **TERRITORY**

Area occupied by a specific species or community.

The territory is distinguished by three basic features: (1) habitation, presence of a phenomenon of an animated nature (plant species, animal species, human group), (2) definable limit of this presence (habitation) and (3) efforts made to secure species (animals, plants) or socio-cultural (groups of people) survival in the designated area. The composition of the territory includes land space with water reservoirs, sea and air.

The term territory can have different connotations: biological, geographical, cultural, political, social, military. In social sciences it means an area subordinate to a specific administrative authority, described by a border, inhabited by a specific social and cultural group (tribe, family, nation), in which civil protection, cultural goods, administrative or economic efficiency is ensured (e.g. language, ethnographic, religious territory).

In geopolitical terms, it means the area under the jurisdiction of a particular ruler, an administrative unit (province, municipality, district, state, occupied, overseas, trust, dependent) which it manages. In biological-geographical terms, it means an area characterised by specific geographical, climatic and physical conditions, with the consequence that it is often dominated by specific species of fauna and flora, as well as by the management by human communities.

In anthropological terms, having a territory, alongside a common language, history, name, group identity, customs and traditions, is – although not always – the basic determinant of an ethnic group. The loss of territory may become a disintegrating factor for a cultural group (the case of some groups of Indians from both Americas or Aborigines), although it is not a dependency occurring without exception (the case of Jews or Poles living for 123 years without state territory). In the latter cases, the meaning of the term territory is transferred from a *strictly* geographical dimension into a symbolic or mythological dimension (e.g. "the promised land"). Nevertheless, the settlement and defence of territory in many theories is presented as key to building identity, and on its basis the notion of nation. Ratzel described territory as the highest value in the survival process. Kjellén compared the state to a biological organism and the territory to one of the tissues. The notion of territory also includes the related notion of "expansion of territory", which is connected with conquest, colonialism and slavery. Colonies formed as a result of conquest lost their status of independent territories, becoming areas of exploitation. Decolonisation that has been taking place since the Second World War, the causes of which should be seen in the changes in the balance of power on the geopolitical map of the world, resulted in the emergence of multinational territories (e.g. France, Great Britain).

[M. G.]

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