# In what ways have the environmental legacies of geopolitics produced the environment of Berlin today?

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*Introduction*

As stated in the study of O'Lear and Dalby (2015), the environment plays an important part in the geopolitics of the world. In the current world, climate change is an emergent issue that is a concern for all. Agreed by Oberthür (2016), many countries are responsible for contributing to the harm to the environment and causing global warming. The countries of the world are thus required to do their part in is tackling the climate change issue by looking after the environment. Similarly, as added by Jacobs (2016), Germany tries to do its part in looking after the environment and taking action in benefitting it. Germany has had adopted many policies that minimises its contribution to the global warming. The emission of $CO_2$ gas in the environment was one of the area the policies are targeted to. Furthermore, as per Ringel et al. (2016), Germany also aims at increasing the green, and many German cities, particularly Berlin, have planted many trees and plants to tackle the climate change issue. As stated by Thierfelder and Kabisch (2016), with respect to Berlin, the capital city of Germany had failed to adhere to the standards of the World Health Organisation (WHO). In response to the issue, the city has made a positive stance towards tackling the environmental issue. According to Visit Berlin (2020), the city has an environmental zone where the emission of the harmful greenhouse gases in minimum. In this zone, only environmental friendly vehicles are allowed that do minimal damage to the environment. In this study, the environmental legacy of Germany and its capital will be discussed, analysed, and evaluated. The study will look at the current environmental condition of Berlin and the policies taken by the government to tackle the climate change issue. The study will further glance at the past performance of Germany in its effort towards benefiting the environment.

*Discussion*

*The History of Geopolitics in Germany*

Geopolitics is the concept of political actions, within the regional or international arena, for geographical motives, like expansion, access to key resources, etc. (Flint, 2016). The concept of geopolitics is prevalent throughout the world, throughout history and in one form or another. In the case of Germany, the country shares a border with nine European countries and is located at the heart of Northern Europe (Smith, 2018). The geographical location of Germany that entails border sharing with countries like France and Russia has led to several political conflicts between the countries. On the other hand, Klinke (2018) has attributed the German concept of geopolitics to Carl Schmitt, who in the 1930s gave rise to the notion of *'German Großraum'* or a greater German space. This was the first school of thought in the German geopolitics that initiated expansion and encouraged Germany to break out of its centric position in Europe, in order to ally with other world powers.

However, the advent of geographical motives within German politics was not brought about by Carl Schmitt in the 1930s, rather it is much older than that. In the study of Reuber (2016), it is discussed that before World War I, Friedrich Ratzel incorporated population growth with territorial expansion. According to Ratzel's teachings, Germany as a world power cannot limit itself within Europe, therefore expansion into other parts is needed. This is the classical view of geopolitics and expansionist mindset found within several European states before World War I. Although, Klinke (2018) adds that Ratzel's concept did not die down after the WW1, rather it set the foundation for the eventual geopolitics employed by the Nazis in World War II.

The worldview of Nazis was entangled between territorial might, along with concepts of spatiality. This gave rise to the Nazi German view of *'Lebensraum'*, which means a vital living

space (Giaccaria and Minca, 2016). Conceptually, Lebensraum means adequate living space, in terms of population, economy, military prowess, etc. In Hitler's Germany, the concept of Lebensraum was at the center and formed the basis of German Geopolitics of the time. This led to the initiation of World War II by the Germans and the inception of wars with Switzerland, Russia, England, France etc. (Murphy, 2018). However, this is the historical perspective of geopolitics within Germany, the present state of geopolitics has abandoned the expansionist mindset. Friedman (2018) believes that the re-unification of East and West Germany followed by entrance into the European Union, brought major changes in Germany's geopolitics. The study further adds that with the most recent election results, a rise of nationalism has been seen within the country, therefore the future of geopolitics for Germany is more nationalist than expansionist, as seen in the past.

*The environmental legacies of geopolitics*

The environmental legacies according to Keeling et al. (2018) are natural changes occurring because of the predecessor of human unsettling influences. The unsettling influence might be a consequence of changes in land use and land spread, fire system, water preoccupations, presentations of synthetic hydrological and biogeochemical systems (Schmidt and Regner, 2018). Bleicher, David and Rutjes (2018) stated that the environmental legacies are significant because full comprehension of the elements of an ecological framework calls for acknowledgment of the drawn out history and direction of changes. Numerous speculations have been progressed concerning contrasts in the state of frameworks with and without environmental legacies (Sandlos and Keeling, 2016). According to Oxford Bibliographies (2020), an incorporated, process-arranged, verifiable perspective on natural, geomorphic, hydrological, and biogeochemical frameworks is required, and the investigation of environmental legacies related to the thought of

environment and affectability on a landscape may uncover significant ramifications of the diligence of effects that may impact long haul strategies for overseeing worldwide change.

The geopolitical legacy of many countries has affected the current climate and environment policies within them. According to Husted and de Sousa-Filho (2017), the geopolitical aspect of the territory of a country affects the availability of resources and energy production, which consequently affects the environmental efforts of the country. This is applicable in the case of various countries which lack the energy and fuels and majorly export them from other countries (Rosenow, Kern and Rogge, 2017). Whereas Newell (2019) has highlighted the green politics of late 20$^{th}$ century as the biggest environmental legacy of past geopolitics. The legacy of green politics has proven well for sustainability purposes within industrialised countries such as Germany and Europe. The urban green space development within Berlin is also a part of many eco-friendly projects which are being considered the sustainability of the country.

*Impact of geopolitics on the environment*

The impact of the activities of people on the environment is viewed as a characteristic of human life in geopolitical ideas and practice (Flint, 2016). Researchers such as (Le Billon, 2017; Harper and Snowden, 2017; Dalby, 2018) in their study discussed the possibility of impacting the environment of the world due to the supposed geopolitical issues. Geological highlights, qualities, and divisions in this sense were viewed as timeless, and consequently resistant to human modification in the past (Bjornerud, 2020). Geology was, in this manner, diminished to the job of essentially giving a regional platform on which the connections of states were formed (Greene, 2017). According to Power (2019) as a wide arrangement of compositions that originally got published in the mid1990s, basic geopolitics went under the boundaries of the order of geography.

The initial researches immediately multiplied into a broad exhibit of productions that assisted with forming the scholarly limits and directions of the new phenomenon of basic environmental effects of geopolitics. According to the work of Okereke (2018), the key issue for basic geopolitics is to uncover the different effects of it on the environment and the dangers that the environment faces due to the geopolitical tug of war. When the effects of the geopolitics on the environment are examined, the epistemological pathways are open up to decipher understandings about how geopolitics present dangers to society and how geopolitical assets enlighten society and account for the drive of the interaction of humans (Ide, 2016).

According to the UNHCR report, millions of individuals have been displaced by geopolitical events such as wars such as in Syria, which has destroyed the entire region and its environment (O'Reilly, 2019). The geopolitics instability is presently dominating the shaping process the current world. Environment from the beginning of time has been a significant factor behind the process of moulding the people and social practices however today it has become the most significant due the non-eco-friendly processes carried out by the general public. The test at that point lies in making sense of the harmony between the geographical and environmental aspects. Geopolitics-on-Environment according to Dalby (2020) expects to give one-stop specialty stage by conveying different talks and ideal models to tackle the heap ecological difficulties in the current situation and as well as in the past. According to Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill (2016), due to the rapidly spreading awareness about the environmental issues great emphasis is being put upon the limits of human activities as the factors such as the population growth and industrialisation has caused the ozone depletion and the other environment issues. Blue and Tadaki (2020) agreed and stated that Geopolitics is the key to limiting the human activities which are disturbing the ecological balances and harming the environment. Bryant, Straker and Wrigley

(2019) stated that the geopolitical approaches of the government should contain concern towards the environment which can be helpful in its rebuilding.

*Historical Perspective of Berlin's Environment*

The earliest concept of environment within Berlin can be seen within the European wave of romanticism and its interpretation for the Germans. Wimborne (2012) has highlighted that romanticism in Germany taught a subject's level of consciousness of the value of the natural world. This view of nature was the first of its kind registered within German history, in which people were encouraged to become aware of nature. Contrarily, Stone (2014) has specified that the school of thought of romanticism was more concerned with a person's initial alienation from the natural world and subsequent reconciliation. Although, this viewpoint takes into account nature, but it only deals with human's relationship with nature, rather than protection or sustenance of nature.

However, this point of view of nature as given by the movement of romanticism did not last very long. In early 20th century, romanticism declined and a general lack of priority was seen among Germans for environmental protection. According to the study of Keynes (2017), the fascist ideology that led to massive destruction in the country, made economic reconstruction and industrialisation a top priority, making environmental protection of least importance for most Germans or people of Berlin. A turning point for Germany's environmental policy can be seen after 1969, with the form of coalition government of SPD and FDP (Rootes, 2014). The study further explains that the strategies of an Environmental Program formed by this government are based on three principles, precaution, causation and corporation. These three principles are seen as the basis of environmental policy within Berlin even today.

Furthermore, in 1980s, the civil society in Berlin became more vocal about environmental protection, with movements like *'Waldsterben'* for forests and *'Mutter Gegen Atomkraft'*, which means mothers against nuclear power (Kirchhof and McConville, 2015). These gave rise to a cultural shift within the country, as more people became expressive of their opinions on problems of environmental sustainability. Lastly, at the end of the 20th century the city of Berlin was planned and strategised as a safe and eco-friendly urban space, with the help of stringent environmental laws and guidelines (Bendt, Barthel and Colding, 2013).

*Environment of Berlin in the 21st Century*

With the advent of the 21st century, the biggest changes to environmental laws were brought about by the Grand Coalition headed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Mushaben, 2016). Under this coalition, environmental laws were amended and a final product was presented in 2005, which prioritised nature. Juerges and Newig (2015) adds that in the recent environmental laws, Germany as a member state of the EU, is majorly influenced by EU environmental codes. These include aspects of nuclear waste, waste reduction, fossil fuel reduction, air quality and water quality. The European Union has provided assistance and strategised, in terms of environmental laws in collaboration with German cities like Hamburg and Berlin. An example of this is Green and Blue infrastructure currently employed by Berlin for biodiversity conservation, which is in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (European Commission, 2019). The official report further specifies the funding of these practices also, as EU is responsible for a major chunk of financial resources for biodiversity conservation. In terms of Berlin's internal policy framework, Federal Nature Conservation Act, Marine Strategy Framework and waste reduction are only a few of the legislative guidelines (European Commission, 2019). Each law has been framed in different

years, under different ministries, but all are encompassed under a single Environmental Law of Germany.

However, in the ratings of environmentally friendly cities within Europe, Berlin scored 16 coming behind most big cities like Paris, London, Vienna etc. (Lopez, Santamarina and Nowakowski, 2020). This is a low score for a city like Berlin, with various sustainable and reduction guidelines in place for each sector and at each stage. DW (2020) has attributed this low score to Berlin's major issue of air quality, which is worse as in most urban city centres. The study further specifies that the Air Quality Index in Berlin has failed so miserably that it is in contradiction to EU laws and can even prove fatal for citizens of Berlin. On the other hand, Thierfelder and Kabisch (2016) believes that the sustainable laws enacted within the city of Berlin are more focused on visually pleasing projects, like open parks, urban spaces etc. while key issues of air and water quality are usually overlooked. However, much has been done in terms of attaining sustainability in berlin, with goals of achieving net zero carbon emissions within the city (Lopez, Santamarina and Nowakowski, 2020). Even with such optimistic goals, Berlin still has a long way to go before becoming completely sustainable.

*Urban green spaces in Berlin*

Urban green spaces are profoundly important for wellbeing and prosperity of the urban occupants (Rahman and Zhang, 2018). Various studies such as the study of (Eisenman, 2016; Haas, 2016; Baldwin and King, 2018) discuss the positive attributes of urban green spaces that are beneficent for the urban populace, for example, by helping the urban atmosphere through temperature decreases or air filtration. Furthermore, Soga et al. (2016) demonstrated a quantifiable, positive psychological impact on urban inhabitants who have contact with nature especially with

elevated levels of biodiversity. According to McQuire (2017) the piece of the urban space which have a specific sum and quality and which are available in the close to private condition have demonstrated to be inconceivably useful for older individuals. However Wüstemann, Kalisch and Kolbe (2017) argued and stated that developing urban green spaces doesn't benefit all of the urban population and are of no use to the majority of the urban population.

The city of Berlin in Germany is one case of a city with population growth in the world, the other cases also include Tokyo, Delhi and Shanghai (Frantzeskaki and Kabisch, 2016). According to Feng and Tan (2017), the biggest city of the nation, Berlin is today home to 3.5 million occupants, the increment in population in the most recent decade has also come with an expansion in the size of neighbourhoods and decrease in green spaces. Concerning urban green spaces, the city contains open green spaces and forest regions which covers over 30% of the city territory (Aronson et al., 2017). Pietrzyk-Kaszyńska, Czepkiewicz and Kronenberg (2017) stated that these spaces incorporate parks, private yards, distributions, burial grounds, recreational regions, sport grounds and street greenery. The biggest urban green space in Berlin is Tempelhof which the previous city air terminal which is one example where changing the use of area has made a huge green space in the city (Berlin.de, 2020). According to Bernt, Grell and Holm (2013), albeit being unique in Berlin, Tempelhof represents the experience of numerous old industrialised urban areas where downtown vehicle zones or huge water fronts have been changed over to other land engagements. There is also a need to spread this practice to other parts of Germany with smaller number of green spaces (Grunewald et al., 2017). Keeping the demographic change of Germany in mind there is a need of focusing on the elderly individuals and their accessibility to green spaces when developing such spaces in urban areas. According to Kabisch and Haase (2014),

the elder population in Berlin is mostly benefited from the high quality and good accessible urban green spaces of significant size.

*Role of Environmental Legacies of Geopolitics in Shaping Berlin's Current Environment*

The geopolitical legacy of Germany has affected the current climate and environment policies within Germany and Berlin. According to O'Sullivan, Overland and Sandalow (2017), the geopolitical aspect of the territory of a country affects the availability of resources and energy production, which consequently affects the environmental efforts of the country. This is applicable in the case of Berlin in Germany as well, as energy and fossil fuel is majorly exported from other countries (Pegels and Lütkenhorst, 2014). This incorporates the variable of geopolitics with the environmental sustainability efforts done by Germany.

In terms of the environmental legacy of geopolitics, the biggest source of influence for Germany has been the Nazis. Pluda (2019) has discussed that Nazis showed positive attitude towards conservation practices, specifically in the case of animal testing and abuse. According to the study, major reforms and initiations were made under Nazi rule to bring sustainability within Berlin and other cities throughout Germany. On the other hand, Bradley and Hedrén (2014) has highlighted the green politics of late 20th century as the biggest environmental legacy of past geopolitics. Berlin is considered as the place of origin for green politics within Germany that led to the rise of Alliance 90 or the Green Party of Germany still active today. Rosol (2012) believes that the legacy of green politics has proven well for sustainability drives within Germany and even Europe, as most of Western Europe has seen initiation of sustainable policy shifts from green party members. This includes the urban green space activities within Berlin that are regarded as eco-friendly projects.

*Recommendations to align Geopolitics for Improvising Environment of Berlin*

Berlin is under geopolitical pressure due to issues, the vitality utilization and broad measure of populace development, improving access to vitality brings various advantages that are fundamental for humans and along these lines assists with making the conditions important for geopolitical security (Klinke, 2018). Poverty according to Dittmer and Bos (2019) poverty is an improvement concern as it diminishes the opportunities and satisfaction towards life for people and systems. Even more extensively, it is a danger multiplier because it causes or fuels a wide scope of issues, including poverty, social distress, displacement of people, and the fragility of environment. Therefore, according to Cherp et al. (2017), there is an immense need of regulating the use of energy in berlin to reduce its effect on the environment for the reduction of energy insecurity.

Berlin has also been under pressure due to its rapid changing geopolitics, which has affected it environment drastically (O'Sullivan, Overland and Sandalow, 2017). Berlin scored low in the ratings of environmentally friendly cities due to its air quality which is immensely poor due to the number of green spaces reduced for the settlement of urban population (Arcadis, 2020). The frequent use of energy which is polluting the air in Berlin have made the air quality index of the city to be drastically low has to be improved with biodegradable and renewable energy. This can also be intensify the minimization of the energy insecurity in Berlin. The geopolitics of Berlin can be further aligned for the improvement of city by increasing the number of projects for the development of urban green spaces and improving the laws overseeing the rights of individuals about the visitation of such places.

*Conclusion*

Like any other country of the world, Germany has had its contribution in the climate change. It contributed in harming the environment as well as take certain actions to contain its negative role in the global warming. Berlin, being the capital of Germany, is the representative of Germany in respect to containing the emission of harmful greenhouse gasses. Germany has made certain efforts to make Berlin's environment healthier. However, thus far, the efforts of have not been sufficient when catering the issue as the capital still faces environmental issues. With respect to the past legacy of Germany, the Nazis made significant efforts in benefiting the environment. However, after the defeat of Germany in World War 2 and the introduction of the notion of global warming, Germany is still behind other European countries when catering to the environmental issue. Berlin still has low ranking when compared to other big urban cities of Europe when considered to being an environmental friendly city. To tackle this issue, the city has developed an environmental zone where the emission of $CO_2$ is considerably lower due to certain policies. Only environment friendly automobiles are allowed to enter this zone and requires a green sticker to pass through. The Berlin's environmental zone is a positive move, however, the cities still has a long road ahead when solving the environmental problems.

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