

# The Nature and the Scope of the Political Geography

## The Nature

Different leading authorities in the field of the political geography have defined the nature and the scope of this subject in the different terms. There is no unanimity of the opinion in the matter. However, the students of an introductory course in the subject need not be bogged down by this multiplicity of the views. Following discussion is enough to understand the basic nature and the scope of this sub-discipline.

Political geography personified has a nature, just as any human being has a peculiar nature or the psychological tendency. As says **H.J. Mackinder**, the geography is a science, the arts and the philosophy by nature. So, it follows that the political geography is a ***science, arts and philosophy, too.***

It is a science because it follows the scientific methods of the observation, the collection of the data, the hypothesis, the theory and the model building ever open to the scientific scrutiny in terms of the relationship among variables under the study and the validity of such a relationship.

It is an art, since it involves quite a subjective approach, too in terms of the skilful organization of the field studies, the collection of the data, the map drawing and the interpretation of the results.

It's a philosophy, too, in terms of ever trying to philosophize the questions of the human beings and the environment relationship in the political terms. It tries to frame the postulations as to what, why, how and where a political activity takes place in a particular corner of the globe or the spatial point in the universe?

Finally, it of course *inter alia* is interdisciplinary, flexible, dynamic, friendly and far-reaching, too.

## The Scope

The scope, ambit or area of the political geography is quite vast both in the temporal and the spatial terms, besides the applicability. The Universal Integrated Cubical Temporal - Spatial - Applicability Scope model of the Scope illustrates it aptly. The given cube can easily be sliced

into 90 pieces (3 *Temporal* faces x 6 *Spatial* faces x 5 *Applicability* faces). Each slice represents one face each of the Temporal - Spatial - Applicability Scope. Thus, we may elaborate the scope of the subject in 90 different ways.

For example, let us cut the slice with the 3 following faces: the Future, the Philosophical and the Asthenospheric. This *slice* means that the political geography can be studied from the point of view of the philosophical questions related to the use of the Asthenospheric resources at any given point of time in the future.

Although Hartshorne and Alexander opine that "the geographer is concerned primarily with variations from place to place rather than from time to time" yet a geographer can't escape studying the temporal aspects, too in terms of studying the varied geographical patterns of the phenomena prevailing at any given point of time on the Earth.

A complete and detailed exposition of all the above mentioned 90 integrated slices is beyond the scope of this article. So, I have attempted the following brief description of the various facets of the scope of this challenging dynamic subject:

### **(i) The Temporal Aspect/Scope**

With the emphasis on the current contemporary situation, it includes in its ambit the scope of going back into the times, since the ills of many countries today have their roots in the past geographical economic spatial patterns like during the great age of discovery, 30 million young people aged 15-35 years were removed from the Africa during the Slave Trade Era which depleted the human resources of that continent.

It caused a lack of the significant political development in the Africa whereas the slave trading nations like the U.K., Spain, etc., flourished and built up the enormous monetary and the capital assets which helped them later to kick start and sustain economic/political development in their own countries. This led to the spatial variation in the economic/political development in that bygone era. But, its repercussions are still felt in the Africa where the economic/political development has quite been low due to the bequeathing of no significant economic/political development by their preceding generations.

Thus, one may divide the temporal aspect into following broad categories:

1. Ancient,
2. Medieval,
3. Great Age of discovery
4. 19<sup>th</sup> century
5. 20<sup>th</sup> century
6. Contemporary
7. Recent
8. Present

## **(ii) The Spatial Aspect/Scope**

Political geography has enormous spatial scope which includes the following aspects/points:

### **1. The Vertical:**

It includes the spatial locations right from the ocean bed to the mountain top and the related economic/political phenomena. It includes the aspects like the asthenospheric, the lithospheric, the atmospheric and the galactic.

For example, there is a lot of extra-terrestrial scope. With the opening up of the extra-terrestrial scope, the political geography shall have to take into consideration the availability of the economic/political activities/possibilities in the outer space like the Moon, the Mars, etc.

The experiments carried out to produce the special kinds of the minerals aboard the spacecrafts to score the political points over the rival nation-State fall within the spatial scope of the political geography.

### **2. The Horizontal:**

It includes a study of the politico-geographic aspects in the horizontal direction in terms of the phenomena like the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the biosphere, etc.

### **(a) The Continental Scope:**

It includes the studies of all the continents/islands in the political terms and their interactions.

### **(b) The Hemispheric Scope:**

The political geography may be studied in terms of the eastern, the western, the northern and the southern hemispheres.

### **(iii) The Political Activities Scope**

#### **a. The Production:**

It includes the studies of the production of all kinds of the political activities at all the levels from the local to the international.

#### **b. The Exchange:**

It includes the value addition to each political product, goods, services created by the specialized services provided at each level of the handling, including the packaging, the promotion, the financing and merchandizing of the political product.

#### **c. The Consumption:**

It includes both the pattern of the political consumption and the spatial aspects of the political consumer behaviour.

#### **d. The Developmental Scope:**

It includes the study of the spatial variation in terms of the political development, i.e., the different categories of the countries like the more developed and the less developed countries.

### **(iv) The Other Aspects/Scope**

#### **(a) The Integrative Scope:**

It includes the study of the spatial variation in the political activities in terms of an integrated approach to all the spheres, i.e., the lithosphere, the atmosphere, the hydrosphere and the biosphere. It includes the studies of the underground spatial aspects like the asthenosphere, the sial, the sima, the mantle and the core so as to determine their influence on the political activities of the human beings.

#### **(b) The Global Scope:**

It has the global scope because of the variations in the level and the interdependencies that exist in the international political development. The whole Earth has become a global system with the shrinking economic/political distance. So much that even a person in the most remote geographical/economic/political areas of the world now participates in a political system that is less the local and the regional and more the national and the international in the scope.

### **(c) The Theoretical Scope:**

It has enormous theoretical scope. The theories are used in so far as possible to explain as to why the political activities happen spatially, i.e., the *Heartland*, the *Rimland* and the *Libensraum* are the excellent examples.

It includes the concepts in the analytical work like the *neighbourhood effect*.

### **(d) The Interdisciplinary Scope:**

It takes the help of the other subjects like the economics, the agriculture, the climate, the math, etc., to gauge the effects on the spatial variation in the political activities, of the factors like the climate and the economy of a nation, the macro forces associated with the transition of the world polity from an authoritarian to a democratic base, the international political system and the multinational corporations.

### **(e) The Methodological/Approaches Scope:**

Broadly speaking, the following are the "15 Golden" or the main methods of/ways of/approaches to the study of "the political geography" and any other sub-discipline in the field of the geography or any other subject:

1. The Descriptive, Analytical, Prescriptive
2. The Empirical (inductive)/Normative (deductive)/Optimiser/Satisficer
3. The Deterministic (environmental/natural, human, nature-human)
4. The Subjective/Artistic, Objective/Scientific
5. The Holistic/Whole/Homogeneous, Isolationist/Parts/Heterogeneous/Choreal, Particularistic

6. The Systems, Systematic
7. The Political: The Socialist, Capitalist, Communist, Democratic, Fascist, Liberal, Neo-liberal, Neo-conservative
8. The Activity, Principle
9. The Quantitative/Mathematical, Qualitative/Behavioural/Humanistic
10. The Temporal, Spatial, Spatio-Temporal
11. The Philosophical, Theoretical, Practical/Applicability
12. The Ecological/Environmental/Consequential, Inter-disciplinary
13. The Gender, Racial
14. The Civilian, Military
15. The Economics, Geographical, Econo-Geographical