

Atkins, P.J. (2013) Political geography, *Geography Review* 27, 2, 25

Political geography and the geography of conflict are important at A2 and they are also important for your general knowledge of the daily news. One of the best ways to understand events in the world's hotspots is to read a quality newspaper and to check news websites, such as the BBC or CNN, which have the resources to provide both day to day analysis and background stories. You should also familiarise yourself with reference websites, such as the *CIA Factbook*.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Political geography

Political geography, what is it? A large and important field has opened up in recent years that looks at geographical concepts such as space, place, and territory in terms of politics, power and policy. As a result various themes have emerged, including electoral geography, boundaries and territory, conflict and violence, the so-called "war on terror". All of these sound as if they lie at the intersection of politics and geography but there are others that are maybe less obvious. These include the state, nationalism, identity politics, sovereignty, governance, citizenship multiculturalism and separatism. You'll need a glossary or dictionary for these.

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=governance%2C+nationalism&rlz=1C1CHFX_enGB528GB528&oq=governance%2C+nationalism&aqs=chrome.0.57.11906j0&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#rlz=1C1CHFX_enGB528GB528&sclient=psy-ab&q=%22political+geography%22+glossary&oq=%22political+geography%22+glossary&gs_l=serp.12..0j0i22i30.105527.110263.0.112097.26.19.0.0.0.4.112.1333.18j1.19.0...0.0.0..1c.1.16.psy-ab.sX7khiwBw4M&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_qf.&fp=f14785ba4cd6c5d&biw=1920&bih=979

Geopolitics

During the Cold War the rivalry between the superpowers involved territorial strategies, such as spheres of influence, and the distribution of regional wars and insurgencies could be explained by the support given by one side or the other. The more recent rise of China has introduced new complexity and geopolitics has taken on more subtle everyday forms, for instance worries about pandemics of infectious diseases such as bird flu or the plight of asylum seekers and their marginalization in many countries.

<http://everydaygeopolitics.wordpress.com/>

[http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Publication/Klinke Ian Five Minutes for Critical Geopolitics A Slightly Provocative Introduction.html](http://www.exploringgeopolitics.org/Publication/Klinke%20Ian%20Five%20Minutes%20for%20Critical%20Geopolitics%20A%20Slightly%20Provocative%20Introduction.html)

Boundaries

Within the Europe Union the significance of borders has faded as goods and people can move more freely than ever before. Most of us think this is a good idea but can you imagine what the disadvantages are?

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/I33020_en.htm

There are still borders that represent a divide between radically different political systems or ethnic/religious groups, that are tense because of political differences, or that have yet to be delimited to the satisfaction of both sides. These may be at sea as well as on land. Examples of disputes may include the division of resources such as water flowing in a river or access to underground wealth in a cross-border oilfield.

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/>

http://www.geographyinaction.co.uk/Ethnic%20Diversity/Ethnic_PeaceLines.html

Conflict and violence

Much of recent violent conflict around the world continues to have echoes of colonial interpretations. These often involve imagined rather than objective views about the other side. Examples include Pakistan and Afghanistan where western perceptions have at times reduced ethnic, linguistic, religious and political complexities to crude stereotypes of us and them. One of the best geographical analyses of such matters is Derek Gregory's book "The Colonial Present". See his blog for his current thinking.

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Colonial_Present.html?id=DejCbO1mvCYC

<http://jim.secretcove.ca/index.Colonial.Present.html>

<http://geographicalimagination.com/>

War on terror

The attack on the twin towers in New York in 2001 was a threshold in terrorism that sparked President George W. Bush's "war on terror" and a shift to a new rhetoric in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. New weapons are now being deployed, such as the use of pilotless drones to gather information and kill suspected terrorists (with collateral damage to many innocent civilians), and there have been consequences for us all. Security has been tightened at key buildings and we now have to undergo checks at airports that would not have been acceptable even 20 years ago. Some passports and identity cards now have biometric content and some governments routinely gather information about their citizens, such as telephone and internet data.

<http://blog.geographydirections.com/2011/09/11/locating-the-everywhere-war/>

<http://toal.org/category/geography/>

http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/journal/23_2/essays/002

And finally

The nature of politics is constantly changing. Formerly we might have thought that the focus was general elections, Prime Minister's Question Time, and what the trades unions were willing to campaign on and perhaps strike about. But now I wonder what you think the future will be? Will it be single issues such as the siting of wind farms or the role of Facebook and Twitter in triggering revolutions in undemocratic states? Whether it is the high politics of parliament and the superpowers or the everyday politics of our lives as citizens, political geographers will have to follow.

<http://polgrg.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.politicalgeography.org/>

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