

In the study of defence studies you will come across three terms that are relevant to the understanding of national security issues: political geography, geopolitics and military geography. What do they mean? What is the relationship between them?

Let us see what is meant by political geography. Political geography is a branch of geography that deals with boundaries, geographic divisions, jurisdictions of countries. It concerns both, politics and geography.

Geopolitics is a branch of political geography. It studies the relationship between politics, geography and power and their interactions. The focus is on the impact of geography and politics on foreign and defence policies of a country.

Military geography is closely linked to geopolitics. Military operations are based on the understanding of geography. Military operations like peacekeeping, disaster relief, or combat require different types of geographic information. We can define military geography as the application of

geographical tools and techniques to the solution of military problems.

Geopolitics

The word geopolitics was originally coined by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen. He defined it as “the theory of the state as a geographic organism or phenomenon in space, i.e: as a land, territory, area or more specifically, as a country”. He believed that state power could be analyzed with its geography, population, economic resources, social structure and government of the state.

In simple terms, Geopolitics is the effect caused by geography on internal and external policies of countries. The study of geography includes the following areas :

- (1) Land (Physical) forms like mountains, plains, forests, deserts, snow covered peaks, rivers and lakes etc.
- (2) Large water bodies like oceans and seas.
- (3) The weather and climate.
- (4) Economic factors like the agricultural produce, minerals and raw materials

Difference between Political Geography, Geopolitics and Military Geography-

Sr.No.	Political Geography	Geopolitics	Military Geography
1.	It is a discipline that is concerned with both, politics and geography.	Geopolitics analyses the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations	It is the application of geographic information, tools, and technologies to military problems.
2.	The study is ‘static’. It studies events as they are. It analyses the interrelationship between territories and politics.	The study is ‘dynamic’. It provides a framework for studying foreign and security policy. It tries to explain and predict the behaviour of countries based on geographical variables.	The study is ‘dynamic’. It looks at the interaction between military organization, strategy, and technology, and shifts in the political relationships between military institutions and civil society.

found in the crust and the soil.

- (5) Demography like population and its composition and their culture.

All these aspects are inter-related. All of them play a part in influencing the policies of countries. These factors determine the strategy and tactics adopted by countries for protecting their national interests. When we say that the policy of the government is guided by geopolitics we use the term in the context of something. For example we may say 'geopolitics of oil' or 'geopolitics of borders', etc.

There is a strong relationship between geography, ideology, sociology, politics, economics and application of military power. The role played by geographical factors in protecting national security has been discussed since ancient times. In India, Kautilya has written about it in his work 'Arthashastra'. His concept of 'Mandala' is the use of geography for national security.

Military Geography

There are four key dimensions to military geography :

- (1) **Spatiality** : Military geography is interested in the operation of military activities across space. It seeks to understand the relationship between "terrain and tactics". This would help

Can you find out ?

These are some of the prominent Geopolitical Thinkers. Can you find out what their contribution was ?

- (i) Alfred Thayer Mahan : Mahan focused on sea power as source of world domination.
- (ii) Sir Halford Mackinder : Mackinder focused on land power.
- (iii) Nicholas Spykman : Theory of Rim-land
- (iv) Kautilya : Mandal Theory.

in understanding how specific military campaigns have been shaped by various environmental factors.

- (2) **Place** : The relation between place and social relations is an important element. For example the location of a defence industry or a military base would have an impact on the social relations.

- (3) **Environment** : Military activities have environmental impacts. The environmental effects of military activities are associated with instances of armed conflict; for example the physical destruction brought by the deployment of artillery, practices of aerial bombardment, etc. The study of environmental impact both, as short term and long term is a significant element of the study military geography.

- (4) **Landscape** : Studies of military understandings of landscape include the specific ways in which ground is studied for military purposes. This includes understanding the landscape for infantry patrols for tactical purposes or for broader strategic purposes.

India

The geopolitics of India must be considered in the geographical context of the Indian subcontinent. This would include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. We would also include the Indian Ocean region in the context of India's geopolitical perspective. This would refer to India's Indian Ocean islands, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar. It would also include Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Geographically, India is divided into four distinct parts from North to the South :

- (1) The mountains along the northern borders: The Himalayas in the North form a barrier against the Tibetan plateau. This mountain chain influences the country's rainfall, climate, availability of water,

etc. To the West of the Himalayas are the Hindu Kush and the Karakorum ranges. The traditional passes to enter the subcontinent were through the Hindu Kush along the Kabul valley into the northern part of the Indus valley or from central Afghanistan into western Punjab.

In the east, the southern Himalayas eventually branch off to become Naga Hills and Manipur plateau and various hill lines follow south demarcating the border with Myanmar. There have been very few invasions from the east.

(2) The great Indian plain comprising of



India Physical

Can you find out ?

On a map of South Asia mark the following different geographical features: Hindu Kush mountains, Karakoram range, Arakan mountains, Aravali ranges, Deccan Plateau, Chotanagpur plateau, Konkan coast and Satpura Ranges.

the Sind and the Ganga-Brahmaputra plains: The main approaches to the plains have been from the North-West. This was also the main trade route to enter India.

- (3) The Central Indian Plateau: This is the region between the Aravali Range in the West and the Chotanagpur plateau and the Garhjat Hills of Orissa in the East.
- (4) The Deccan Plateau and the Coastal Plains: This lies between the Eastern and Western Ghats. The Western coastal plain is a narrow coastal strip between the Ghats and the Arabian Sea. The Eastern coastal plain is broad and has several river deltas.

How does this geography influence India's military history ?

- (1) Most of the invasions into India have been from the North West region, through the passes of the Hindu Kush mountain ranges. Once the invaders crossed the mountains and reached the plains there was nothing to stop them.
- (2) The northern mountain ranges have isolated India from the Eurasian continent. The entry into India from the north has been difficult because of these ranges. Therefore the invaders who came in India from the North West had limited contact with their land of origin. The prosperity in the Indian plains also kept them in India. This gave rise to their assimilation into the Indian culture and society.
- (3) The hills and mountains of the Indian

Can you find out ?

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was able to successfully use the geography of the Deccan region to develop and use the system of guerrilla warfare.

Can you find out some of the battles where he was able to successfully use the system of guerrilla warfare ?

Plateau and the Deccan made it difficult for the invaders from the North to reach southern India. The system of warfare in this region was different from the one used in the plains. In the Plains large armies could fight battles facing each other. In the Deccan the topography led to the development of guerrilla warfare.

- (4) The long coast line provided opportunity for maritime trade. Indian records show that there had been trade with the Greek and Roman empires. There were close trade links with the Arab world. India had also carried out successful maritime expeditions to South East Asia during the Cholas rule. In the later years the Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British came into India through the sea routes.

The Geopolitics of Modern India

India holds a central position in Asia. India is a meeting ground between the East and the West. India's geographic location gives it the opportunity to play a significant role in Asia.

Let us now see how geopolitical features have influenced India's relations with its neighbours.

India and Pakistan :

Look at the features of the Indo-Pakistan border. In the north there are the mountain regions in the area of Kashmir. Further south in the area of Punjab we have the plains of the Indus river. Then as we move southwards along Rajasthan we have the

Do you know ?

Chabahar port's location on the south-eastern coast of Iran is expected to open up greater opportunities for promotion of trade and commerce, especially from the ports along India's western coast, with Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond.

India's participation in the development of Chabahar Port will provide India an alternative and reliable access route into Afghanistan utilizing India's earlier investment in Zaranj-Delaram road built in Afghanistan, and also a reliable and more direct sea-road access route into Central Asian Region.

(Minister of State In The Ministry Of External Affairs, Lok Sabha 03.01.2018)



desert region with marshy land in the Gulf of Kutch area.

The main dispute between India and Pakistan is over Jammu and Kashmir. The first conflict between India and Pakistan took place in 1947-48 over the issue of Kashmir. A part of Jammu and Kashmir is under the control of Pakistan. This region is called Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). India and Pakistan have experienced conflicts in the region of the Siachen Glacier and Kargil. There is also a boundary dispute in the area of Sir Creek in the Kutch region.

Can you find out ?

1. What is the nature of dispute between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir ?
2. Identify the region of the Siachen Glacier, Kargil and Sir Creek on the map.

India and Afghanistan :

India has a border with Afghanistan. However, this border region falls in the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir region. This is why India cannot have a direct road access to Afghanistan.

India and China :

The border between India and China is all along the Himalayan mountain ranges. Towards the West is the Aksai Chin region, in the central and Eastern region the border goes along the Himalayan ranges. The entire border is along the Tibet region of China.

Can you find out the importance of CPEC?

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a framework of regional connectivity. It includes the following :

- (1) Development of an integrated transport & IT systems including Road, Rail, Port, Air and Data Communication Channels between China and Pakistan
- (2) Energy cooperation
- (3) Building of industries, etc. The CPEC will connect China's Xinjiang province to the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi.

The main conflict between India and China has been in two areas: Ladakh and the border between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh called the McMahon Line. China claims that both Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (earlier called North East Frontier Agency, NEFA) belong to China. In 1962 a major conflict took place between the two countries. Both areas are in high altitudes and hence the armed forces have to make special preparations for defending this border.

Can you find out ?

Nathu La is a mountain pass in the Himalayas in East Sikkim that connects it with Tibet. Can you locate the pass on a map and find out about the 1967 border clash between India and China in that area ?

Did you know ?

- **Cease Fire Line :** It is the line where the war actually stops. The line can be a narrow strip of land or a broad strip of land depending where the war has halted.
- **Line of Control (LOC) :** A Cease Fire Line is converted into a Line of Control when the two sides draw the Cease Fire Line on a map. The local commanders of the two sides agree to the line shown on the map. There is a difference between a Line of Control and a Line of Actual Control (LAC). A line of Actual Control is like a Cease Fire Line. It is not drawn on the maps. The border between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir region is called LOC. The border between India and China in the Aksai Chin sector is called LAC.
- **International Border :** An International Border is a legal border recognised by the governments of both the countries.

India and Nepal and Bhutan :

Both Nepal and Bhutan lie in the Himalayan region. Both of these are landlocked States. To their North is the Tibetan plateau. The main river flows and trade routes have always been from these countries towards India. Both the countries depend on India for their trade and other services. India has security treaties with both the countries.

India and Bangladesh :

Bangladesh is surrounded by India from all sides except the South where its border is along the Bay of Bengal. The rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra flow from India into Bangladesh. Both countries are dependent on these rivers for their sustenance.

India and Myanmar :

The border between India and Myanmar runs along the Arakan Mountains. This is a hilly region with dense forests. This area is often used by insurgent groups to wage insurgency against the Indian state.

India and the Indian Ocean :

The unique geopolitical position of India in terms of its peninsular presence in the Indian Ocean presents an opportunity for India to emerge as a key player in the Indian Ocean region.

It is the sea routes that became the route to colonization of Asia. The Western powers entered India through the Indian Ocean region. Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in 1498, and the Dutch British and French arrived. in the seventeenth century. Post World War II, the Americans and the Soviets started establishing their presence in this region. Today the Chinese are interested in creating their influence in the Indian Ocean region.

Indian Navy's Maritime Strategy today speaks of the need to project power as a means of supporting foreign policy objectives. The areas of primary interest that have been identified by the Indian Navy include :

- (1) The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal,;
- (2) The choke points leading to and from the Indian Ocean, they being the Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz, strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Cape of Good Hope;

Do you know ?

- **Territorial Sea** : Territorial sea is a belt of coastal waters extending at most 12 nautical miles (22.2 km; 13.8 mi) from the coast.
- An **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** is an area which is beyond the country's territorial seas and extends no more than 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from a country's own coastlines. Find out the importance of the above two areas and discuss them in the classroom



Indian Ocean Region

- (3) The island countries like Sri Lanka, and Maldives;
- (4) The Persian Gulf as a source of oil supply and
- (5) Principal international sea lanes that cross the Indian Ocean Region.
- (6) Protection of India's Exclusive Economic Zone

Like land frontiers, the coasts have to be guarded. This results into special security measures being adopted. Coasts are vulnerable to terrorist infiltration. In India, the terrorists who had struck in Mumbai in 2008 had infiltrated by sea.

When would the Indian Navy use military force ? It is likely to use its naval power in the following circumstances :

1. Conflict with a state in our immediate neighborhood
2. Assistance to a friendly nation
3. Anti-terrorist operations conducted multilaterally or unilaterally
4. Actions to fulfill international obligations.
5. Ensuring safety and security of International Sea Lanes through the Indian Ocean
6. Actions to assist the Indian Diaspora
7. Peace Keeping operations under the aegis of the United Nations.

Do you know ?

Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC):

The IOR-ARC is a regional cooperation initiative of the Indian Ocean Rim countries established in 1997. Its aim is to promote economic and technical cooperation. It aims to create a platform for trade, socio-economic and cultural cooperation in the Indian Ocean rim area.

Geopolitics is an analysis of the geographical factors underlying international relations and guiding political interactions. Most of the international military alliances, treaties, economic organizations or agreements, such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum), EU (European Union), etc. are based on geographical advantages and disadvantages. Most of the global issues today are concerned with geopolitics. They need an in-depth geopolitical analyses that could be useful in formulating the appropriate policies and strategies for common public good. These policies would be in areas like global financial stability, food security, human development, education, health, migration, environment, natural resources, arms proliferation, terrorism, etc.

Please see the following websites for further information :

1. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India
Border Disputes with Neighbouring Countries
https://mea.gov.in/Images/attach/lu2722_new.pdf
2. Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India
The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976
http://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1976-80_0.pdf
3. Ensuring Secure Seas : Indian Maritime Security Strategy
Prepared by the Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), New Delhi.
https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

EXERCISE

Q. 1 (A) Choose the correct alternative and complete the following statements.

- i. The word geopolitics was originally coined by _____.
 - a. Rudolf Kjellen.
 - b. Alfred Mahan
 - c. Halford Mackinder
 - d. Nicholas Spykman
- ii. Chabahar port is located in _____.
 - a. India b. Pakistan
 - c. Iran d. Bangladesh

(B) State the appropriate concept for the given statement

It is the application of geographic information, tools, and technologies to military problems.

(C) Find the odd word from the given set.

Myanmar, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan

Q. 2 Observe the map and explain the following.

- i. Strait of Malacca
- ii. Karakoram ranges

Q. 3 State whether the following statements are true or false with reasons.

- i. Cease fire line is an international border
- ii. Guerilla warfare and geography are closely linked.

Q. 4 Explain the co-relation between the following.

Political Geography and Geopolitics

Q. 5 Observe the given image and write about it in brief :



Q. 6 Express your opinion on the following.

- i. The Indian Ocean Region is an important security concern for India.
- ii. How does this geography influence India's military history ?

Q. 7 Answer the following in detail with reference to the given points.

What is military geography ?

- (a) Spatiality
- (b) Place,
- (c) Environment and
- (d) Landscape

