

# **Why Geography Matters: Three Challenges Facing America Study Guide**

**Why Geography Matters: Three Challenges Facing America by Harm de Blij**

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# Plot Summary

*Why Geography Matters: Three Challenges Facing America* was written by Harm de Blij, a Dutch-born geographer who has taught geography at US universities for half a century. De Blij identifies these three major challenges as being the rising power of China, climate change, and global terrorism; however, he also recognizes that there are many other potential challenges to the US. Using physical and cultural geography, de Blij explains the reasons for many of the planet's problems and offers solutions. Through his focused discussion of the three major threats, de Blij provides vital historical data about the geologic development of the planet, global warming, the development of the human race, the planet's soaring population, the rise and fall of significant empires, and the root and future of Islamic terrorism.

As Earth approaches a population of seven billion, the people of the planet face numerous challenges. For the United States, the three major challenges in the next fifty years will be climate change, the rise of China, and global terrorism. Although these challenges will be significant and will not be the only challenges the US faces, if the people of the US and its government are prepared to deal with them, they can be addressed. In the past, from Vietnam to Islamic terrorism, the US has either demonstrated an inability to understand the situation, or has been poorly prepared to deal with such issues.

The threat of climate change is real but it is not new. For millions of years the Earth has experiencing warming and cooling periods and the current warming period is just another episode in that long series. The Earth is currently in an ice age, but we have been experiencing the Holocene interglaciation (a period of warming within an ice age) for about the past 12,000 years. Scientists expect that eventually the interglaciation will end and the ice will return to much of the planet's surface. No one knows for sure when this will happen, and once it happens, there is little human action that can reverse it. In the meantime, however, no one knows what the impact of human activities such as pollution and the greenhouse effect will be on the length of the interglaciation, so limiting human impact on the planet is advisable. Once the Earth begins to cool, climates will change and shift. Many of the inhabited polar regions, especially in the northern hemisphere, will no longer be able to sustain human life and most of today's agricultural zones will become too cold to be agriculturally viable, so food production will shift to lower latitudes and may be severely limited. With seven billion people on Earth, these new limitations on space and agriculture may cause severe problems for the people of Earth.

In the past 25 years, China has transformed from a relatively quiet, isolated agrarian culture into a major economic force with a massive military complete with nuclear weapons, and its huge 1.3 billion population. As China continues to flex its muscle, issues between the US and China may arise, particularly over territory in Southeast Asia. Since the ending of World War II, the US has had a strong presence in Asia; however, in recent years, it has begun to reduce its military presence. Without the balancing influence of the US, China may use military power to regain former territories



such as Taiwan, or to expand its boundaries in order to accommodate its ever-increasing population. That population will also place a huge demand on global resources, particularly on oil and gas. As reserves in the Middle East continue to dwindle, the need for these resources may also lead to military conflicts in regions such as Russia, where oil and gas is still plentiful. There is a great risk that a new cold war, this time between the US and China, will develop. However, this cold war will be between two cultures with very few commonalities, which may increase the risk of fatal misunderstandings. The American public would be wise to learn more about China and its culture in an effort to minimize cultural misunderstandings and intolerance.

For Americans, global terrorism didn't become a true reality until the 9/11 terrorist attack. Since that time, Americans have shared the global communities' long held fear of terrorism. Terrorism is nothing new; it's been used as a political tool for centuries. However, this newest wave of terrorism, Islamic extremism, is far more frightening than previous forms. Because Islamic terrorists seem to have no specific objective other than terrorizing, it is a major challenge for the world. However, because terrorism breeds in failing or malfunctioning societies, there are ways to prevent its expansion and intervene before it is too late. As failing states increase in numbers, it is vital to global security that the world community ensures stability and hope in these failing states before fear, frustration, and poverty enable terrorists to recruit these victims into their realm of terror and expand their threat to the world.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

*Why Geography Matters: Three Challenges Facing America* was written by Harm de Blij, a Dutch-born geographer who has taught geography at US universities for half a century. De Blij identifies these three major challenges as being the rising power of China, climate change, and global terrorism; however, he also recognizes that there are many other potential challenges to the US. Using physical and cultural geography, de Blij explains the reasons for many of the planet's problems and offers solutions. Through his focused discussion of the three major threats, de Blij provides vital historical data about the geologic development of the planet, global warming, the development of the human race, the rise and fall of significant empires, and the root and future of Islamic terrorism.

In the decade leading to the turn of the 20th Century, the world, from a geographic perspective, changed dramatically. The Soviet Union disbanded, South Africa reinvented itself, the North American Free Trade Agreement was signed, the European Union was established, Yugoslavia was crumbling, and China was emerging as an economic super power. At the same time, the world's physical geography was changing and facing new challenges, including global climate changes. With these significant changes in the 1990s, the world expected a calmer, less active first decade of the 21st Century. It soon became apparent, however, that the new century would bring many more changes. Global terrorism, war in the Middle East, North Korea's nuclear ambitions, African wars, and the AIDS crisis in Africa continue to demonstrate to the world the importance of geography.

The discipline of geography began when Greek philosopher Eratosthenes measured sun angles and determined that Earth was, in fact, round. He also estimated, with amazing accuracy, the circumference of the globe. Later, geography became a critical part of the age of exploration and cartography. More recently, geography has become part of the technological age with satellites transmitting valuable information for analysis and political decision-making. Although modern technology has influenced geography, four traditions within the discipline of geography remain strong. First, geography deals with the natural world as well as the human world. Geographers study coastlines, deserts, glaciers, and weather patterns, as well as city planning, winemaking and churchgoing. The second tradition is that geographers assess complicated relationships between human societies and natural environments. This second tradition includes such topics as why people live flood zones, how people react to environmental hazards, and the origin and spread of disease. The third tradition of geography is the research and study of foreign cultures and distant regions. The fourth tradition is the location tradition. In this tradition, geographers study why certain human activities, such as the movie industry, are located where they are. These geographers look at the geographical implications of location. All geographers, regardless of their specialty, look at the world



spatially. Historians look at the world temporally or chronologically; economists and political scientists look at the world structurally; geographers look at the world spatially.

Geography is important, and in this ever-changing and global world, it is becoming even more important. The more we know about our planet, its people and cultures, its borders and economies, the better off we will be. Yet, with the obvious critical role of geography in today's world, fewer and fewer Americans are learning geography. In 1984, only about seven percent of American students were studying geography in school. Today, after years of effort and an intensive and expensive campaign led by the National Geographic Society, the number is still less than 30 percent. Geographic knowledge is vital to our national security. It is also an excellent means to overcoming our national isolationism. Some researchers suggest that our national lack of geographic knowledge is due to our isolation between two oceans and two nations. The present war in Iraq is a prime example of how important geographic knowledge can be to a nation and its people. When military action in Iraq was successful, the US and its allies assume the war is won. The US and its allies, however, do not know the region or understand the people, the Iraqi language, culture, or faiths. Because of this utter lack of understanding, the war continues.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

Maps are important tools in helping people understand their world. A globe is the best map of all because it reminds us of the limits to our living space, with 70 percent of the Earth's surface covered by water and ice. A globe also shows us that most habitable regions on Earth are above the equator, which may help explain why the northern hemisphere countries dominate world affairs. Cartography, the art of drawing maps, has greatly evolved since the Mesopotamians began scratching maps in clay thousands of years ago. During the great age of discovery (which is actually still going on today), explorers and others brought back vital information that enabled mapmakers to improve the accuracy of maps. Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe and Mercator's formulation of a grid to allow navigators to plot a straight line compass bearing contributed significantly to the advancement of cartography. As maps have evolved and improved, they have also become more complicated. Unfortunately, many Americans have difficulty using maps, even simple ones. Standard properties, such as scale, direction, distance, and symbols cause confusion for many Americans and others. One of the most confusing concepts of map reading is projection. Projections were designed to enable mapmakers to represent our round planet on a flat surface. Projections are based on an imaginary grid around the planet. The problem with projection is that, depending on the method used to create a projection, there can be significant distortion in the size of a particular feature, such as land mass.

In Mercator's Projection, which is the most widely used projection, Russia, Europe, Canada and other mid-latitude countries appear much larger than they actually are compared to their southern and northern neighbors. In Mercator's Projection, Greenland appears to be significantly larger than South America, when, in reality, South America is eight times the size of Greenland. Until 1984, the National Geographic Society often used Mercator's Projection to illustrate changes in world politics. When the National Geographic Society announced in 1984 that it would be switching to the less distorted Robinson's Projection, a news reporter asked why it had taken the Society so long to abandon this form of cartographic imperialism. In history, the size distortion created in Mercator's Projection has often been used for political advantage. The Nazis and the Communists both used this cartographic deception to their advantage.

Maps are changing continuously, and this is not a new phenomenon. Until recently, there had been relative stability in the world of mapmaking for the past century or so. However, the period before decolonization was quite a challenge for mapmakers. More recently, during the 1990s, cartographers were kept especially busy with changes brought about by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the collapse of Yugoslavia, and China's transition from the old form of spelling to the Pinyin system, where place names such as Peking became Beijing and Canton became Guangzhou. When the National Geographic Society published the revised version of the sixth edition of its Atlas, it



contained about 10,000 changes, yet it was still out of date by the time it hit the bookstores.

In addition to the constant changes, map-making, especially the issue of place names, can be highly political. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, one new republic called itself Macedonia. The Greeks took offense since Macedonia is the name of one of its ancient provinces and refused to acknowledge Macedonia as the republic's official name. Similarly, the Sea of Japan, as it is known in the West, has always been called the East Sea in Korea, while the Japanese prefer the Sea of Japan. Often, to avoid political turmoil over maps and place names, mapmakers will use two names (i.e., Sea of Japan and East Sea) to identify one place. The decision of what place names will be officially recognized by the US is a complicated process. A US government nine-member board, divided into two committees, the Committee on Foreign Names and the Committee on Domestic Names, makes these decisions. The Committee on Foreign Names consists of representatives from the Department of Defense, State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Library of Congress. The committee considers changes as spelling, internal divisions with existing countries such as republics within Russia, and international features such as rivers and mountain ranges that span international borders. The approved changes are published in the *Foreign Names Information Bulletin*.

Maps are valuable tools, helping us figure out where we are and where we are going. They also do much more. During a cholera outbreak in London in the 1850s, physician-geographer John Snow created a map that showed where the majority of cholera cases had been reported. When he realized the locations were in a specific area within the city, he speculated that the cause of the outbreak was related to some environmental factor. Snow believed that a water pump located in the vicinity was the culprit. When the water was cut off, the number of new cases of cholera dropped significantly. Although far more complicated today, maps are still important instruments in epidemiology.

While maps have been used for the benefit of mankind for centuries, they can also be misused. In 1990, an official map of Iraq was released in Iraq that showed Kuwait as Iraq's 19th province. Within a short time, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The map should have been an early warning sign of trouble to come, but few saw it that way. In a similar situation, a map published in China in 1986 shows China's borders extending well beyond its actual boundaries, and well into India's Arunachal Pradesh State. The map should also serve as a warning to India, and the rest of the world, of the possible geopolitical aspirations of China in its southern region.

Despite the importance of geographic knowledge in global affairs, the US government continues to cut positions critical to maintaining this important knowledge. In addition, many of these critical positions are being filled by people who have no language skills or cultural understanding of the countries in question, a recipe for certain disaster. Despite advancing technology such as satellites and Geographic Information Systems, field experience is still the single most important aspect to understanding a culture. This understanding will become even more critical in the coming years as the US faces three



significant challenges: accelerating climate change; the rise of China as a global power; and the intensification of extremist Islamic terrorism.



# Chapter

## Chapter Summary and Analysis

Global warming has been one of the most highly debated issues of the past ten years. The global warming debate pits scientist against politicians and environmentalists against energy companies. The public hears a great deal of conflicting information on the issue of global warming and most people are not sure what to believe. Global warming is part of the Earth's natural cycle, and although pollution and other human-related factors contribute to the phenomenon of global warming, it will not end until the natural cycle has run its course.

The Earth was formed about four and a half billion years ago from an orbiting band of cosmic matter. About four billion years ago, a planetoid struck the Earth's surface, and failing to escape the Earth's gravitational pull, it became the planet's moon. By this time, the Earth's rotation had slowed considerably and the Earth's crust began to harden. The planet's landmasses are continuously recycled and are pushed and pulled below the crust. These landmasses also shift horizontally in a process called continental drift, a theory put forth by geographer Alfred Wegner in 1915. According to Wegner's theory, the continents were once part of a supercontinent he called Pangaea. More recently, scientists have determined that the break up of Pangaea was just the most recent episode of continental movement spanning billions of years. The continents, which are made from the lightest rocks on Earth, float on mobile, heavier plates beneath them.

Today, we can actually measure the movement of the continents. With more than 70 percent of its surface covered in water and ice, the Earth is often called the Blue Planet. Scientists do not know exactly how or when the Earth acquired its water. The most critical question related to the Earth's water supply is whether the Earth will retain its oceans permanently. Probes sent to Earth's neighbor, Mars, provided evidence that Mars once had a significant global ocean - and may have had more water (in proportion to land) than earth. What happened to Mars' water, and does the same fate await Earth?

For billions of years, the earth has experienced Ice Ages and within these periods of extreme cold lay shorter periods of warmth. The earth is currently experiencing one of those warming periods that has been underway for about the last 12,000 years. The current Ice Age began about 40 million years ago. Ice Ages are times of accelerated evolution and their rapid environmental swings pose challenges for all life on Earth. Although scientists do not know how many Ice Ages the Earth has experienced, they are sure of the most recent one. This occurred between 290 and 251 million years ago during the Permian period. The Permian Ice Age occurred when the planet was heavy with forests and teeming with life. When it ended, one of the greatest mass extinctions of all time nearly completely destroyed all life on Earth.



Scientists initially believe the Ice Age was responsible for the mass extinction. However, in 2003, scientists find evidence of a huge meteorite that struck Earth about 251 million years ago, killing as much as 90 percent of the planet's life. The disaster ushers in the Mesozoic era and the age of the dinosaurs. This is a period of abundant life on Earth. Then, about 56 million years ago, a six-mile wide comet crashes into the planet, near the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, and devastates life on Earth, bringing an end to the Cretaceous period. The blast leaves long-term effects on the Earth's environment. Rock and debris from the blast remain in Earth's orbit, blocking the sun's rays. Smoke from fires around the globe darkens the skies. Eventually, the planet cools and the lack of sunlight results in the lowest temperatures in 185 million years. Because of the increase in carbon dioxide in the air from the explosion and fires, the greenhouse effect warms the planet, and the increase in temperature kills off many species that had survived the explosion and its aftermath.

The next epoch, the Eocene Epoch, brings cold temperatures again and the Cenozoic Ice Age is on its way. During the Cenozoic Ice Age, the climate seems to level off and biological diversity thrives. About 14 million years ago, however, global cooling resumes and temperatures plunge, affecting the entire global ocean. An even cooler period follows until the Pleistocene Epoch, in which we are right now, begins about two million years ago. One of the most important effects of the Cenozoic Ice Age is the dual migration of primates. Ancestors of chimps and gorillas migrate further into Africa while ancestors of orangutans migrate to Southeast Asia. The Pleistocene Epoch is marked by several periods of glaciation, followed by relatively brief periods of warmth called interglacials. The most recent glaciation, the Wisconsinan, is punctuated by several brief interglacials, which make life possible for thousands of years. These climate fluctuations occur rapidly, with apparently very little warning. Early humans are migrating from Africa to Eurasia via the Sinai Peninsula when the Wisconsinan begins; they never reach their destination. About 85,000 years ago, humans try a different route to Eurasia, Red Sea coral reefs, exposed due to low sea levels, to reach the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, and eventually India and Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, a volcanic explosion on the island of Sumatra destroys this route by causing tons of debris to block the sun and alter global temperatures, thus ending the human migration. This could not have happened at a worse time. Anthropologists call this the great evolutionary bottleneck, suggesting that a great deal of human genetic diversity was lost in that fateful moment. The Earth's history is marked with dramatic climate change. From about 10,000 years ago until today, humanity has thrived in the warmth of the Holocene interglacial. Nevertheless, what happens when the ice returns as it has so many times before?

# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

When the Wisconsin Glaciation finally ended about 18,000 years ago, global warming begins. Glaciers melt, sea levels rise dramatically, and streams become raging rivers. In Europe, Britain is separated from the European Continent by the English Channel; ice disappears from Central Germany and most of Russia; the Alps recede. To our Stone Age ancestors, this is welcome relief. The climate has warmed before, but the warmth has never been so persistent. People begin to migrate toward the north and south poles.

About 12,000 years ago, however, an ice sheet about the size of a large Canadian province slides into the North Atlantic Ocean, causing disastrous waves and reducing temperatures to glaciation time levels. This event, known as the Younger Dryas, causes more than 1,000 years of cooling. By 10,000 years ago, temperatures begin to warm again. This warm period is called the Holocene Epoch, although there is no evidence that this is, in fact, a new phase following the Cenozoic Ice Age. It may be just another interglacial period within the Cenozoic Ice Age.

Before the Holocene assumes its current environmental features, another huge ice sheet cools the North Atlantic. Although not as devastating as the Younger Dryas event, the ice sheet causes a surge of water to flood the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Sea then floods the Black Sea, forcing villagers to move more than one mile a day away from shore. By the time the flooding is over, the Black Sea's level has risen by 500 feet, and quite possibly, the biblical story of the Great Flood is conceived.

About 7,000 years ago, environmental conditions stabilize and conditions much like the ones we experience today prevail. Scientists call this the Post-glacial Optimum. Although conditions continue to be relatively good during this period, there are a few climatic events worth noting. About 3,600 years ago, a volcano on the island of Santorini explodes. This is possibly the last straw for the Minoan Civilization, as the Roman Empire and Han Dynasty rise to power during the Medieval Optimum. As the "Little Ice Age" arrives, colder climates return and these empires, too, collapse.

The minor glaciation that occurs in the post-1300 period is commonly called the Little Ice Age. Europe's climate fluctuates wildly, causing famine, then prosperous times, then suddenly, famine again. As Mongols move westward, they bring bubonic plague-infected fleas with them and the Black Plague ravages Europe, killing millions of already weakened Europeans. In China, rains stop, crops fail and epidemics surge. Toward the end of the 16th Century in Europe, signs indicate that the Little Ice Age is getting worse. In the early 17th Century, conditions are worsened by volcanic eruptions in Southeast Asia. Some scientists call the period between 1650 and 1850 the "real" Little Ice Age, because conditions are worse than any other time in that 200-year period.



Between 1675 and 1735, the planet experiences the coldest temperatures of the millennium. The growing seasons are shortened and ice blocks rivers and ports. In North America, these climatic changes may explain the failure of the Jamestown Colony. Only one year before the colonists arrive, the area begins a seven-year drought, bringing severe famine to the region. In the 1780s, a volcanic eruption in Iceland lowers temperatures in North America by seven degrees for an eight-month period. This also causes frigid winters in Europe, Russia, and even northern Africa. On April 15, 1815, a volcano in Indonesia explodes, sending tens of millions of tons of ash into orbit and darkening skies around the globe. The following year, 1816, becomes known as the year without a summer. Famine is widespread.

Since the 1850s, when the Little Ice Age gave way to more consistent temperatures, scientists have learned a great deal about environmental changes. Scientists, however, do not know how the vast amount of gases we are releasing into the environment will impact the planet. Until the natural cycle reverses and the Pleistocene cooling returns, we are facing an uncertain future. The current warming trend began around 1850 and continues today. From 1940-1970, the Earth begins experiencing a cooling trend. In the late 1950s, the term "global cooling" is as popular a buzzword as global warming is today. Abrupt climate change will trigger rapid environmental shifts. Will humans, with their enormous numbers, be able to adapt?

Vladimir Ktzppen devised a map to classify earth's climatic zones. Using six major zones, Ktzppen classified the entire planet. "Climate C: mid-latitude, mild," for instance, describes the Mediterranean region, as well as California, Chile, Australia and South Africa. Ever since Ktzppen published the map, scientists have pondered the relationship between certain climates and certain successful societies. Ellsworth Huntington suggested that the mild mid-latitude climates produced natural leaders. Many people accused Huntington of being racist, and often his comments were simplified and criticized. In recent years, Huntington's theory has been revisited. Perhaps a combination of natural conditions put certain people at an advantage, suggests Jared Diamond, author of "Guns, Germs and Steel." One thing is certain, climate is cyclical, and Ktzppen's map shows only the current conditions. In this time of global warming, climates are shifting. The question is, therefore, how will this affect the planet and its seven billion people?



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Global population has exploded in the past 200 years. Shortly after the Industrial Revolution begins, the world population is only 900 million, less than India's population today. By 1930, the Earth's population has grown to two billion, and by 1975, it reaches four billion. At present rates, the Earth's population will reach eight billion by the year 2035. A combination of factors has caused this explosive growth. Death rates decline due to improved hygiene and medical advances. Two inventions, effective soap and the toilet, contribute significantly to the decline. Such advances have also helped babies survive, decreasing the infant mortality rates around the globe.

Infant mortality rates vary around the globe, however. In 2004, some countries, including Japan and Sweden, report all-time low infant mortality rates of 3 deaths per 1,000 births. Yet, at the same time, in 18 African countries and several Asian countries, infant mortality rates exceed 100 per 1,000 births. Today, there are still significant differences in regional population rates. In some countries, population is stagnant or declining. In Russia, the population is decreasing at a rate of 0.7 percent each year and, in Europe, it is decreasing at a rate of 0.1 percent each year. Meanwhile, in sub-Saharan Africa, the population is growing at a rate of 2.2 percent (despite the AIDS epidemic) and in Mexico, the population rate is growing at 2.1 percent. Some countries within geographic regions defy these trends. Although the Islamic world's population, in general, is growing at a rate of 1.9 percent, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are growing at a much greater pace, while Tunisia and Iran are growing much slower. In Europe, all nations except Albania are growing at a rate of less than one percent. Although it seems logical to attribute some of the population growth to religious beliefs, the data doesn't back this up. Although some Roman Catholic countries, especially those in Middle America are growing, many others, including Italy the cradle of Catholicism, is decreasing. Low rates of population growth have more to do with levels of development and the status of women in society than with religious faith. Some countries, like China, attempt to slow population growth through policy. China's "one child only" policy keeps the nation's growth rate at 0.7 percent, but with their huge numbers, this still means that China alone is adding 9 to 10 million people every year.

According to the United Nations, by 2050, the population of the globe will be about nine billion people. The countries of the European Union, however, will see a significant decline, from 482 million to 454 million. Italy may drop from 58 million people to 45 million, Germany from 82 million to 69, and if this pattern continues, to a mere 25 million by the year 2100. These declines may bring significant economic difficulties to these countries. As life expectancies continue to rise, by 2050, a significant percentage of the population of these countries will retire and rely on tax-derived pensions. In Europe today, there are 35 pensioners per 100 workers. By 2050, if present demographic trends continue, there will be 75 pensioners for every 100 workers; in Spain and Italy, the ratio of pensioners will be 1:1. In order for countries like Germany and Italy to maintain the



generous pension levels their people have become accustomed to, the tax rates would have to increase enormously. In the European Union, other countries will resent being taxed to pay for the high pension rates and political problems will ensue. One way to avoid this problem is to increase legal immigration and naturalization, but that creates its own set of political, social, and economic problems. According to estimates, immigration in Europe, which today is mainly from Turkey and northern Africa, would need to increase five to ten times today's rates in order to compensate for the population decline. This huge increase rate in immigration would cause severe social strains.

The populations of rich countries are growing at a rate of .25 percent annually, while poor countries are growing at a rate of 1.46 percent. In the world's least developed countries, the 50 countries that hold the Earth's 700 million poorest people, population rates are growing by more than 2.4 percent. Most of these people will crowd into cities. Of the projected 2.2 billion additional people in 2050, it is estimated that all but 100 million will move to urban areas. In the process, more children will be born out of wedlock, the proportion of old people will outnumber the proportion of young people, life expectancies will increase further, schooling and literacy rates will become higher, and secular lifestyles will become more common. How will the rich countries of the world deal with the overwhelming numbers and growing economic and military strength of the poorer countries?

With people moving out of rural areas and into the cities, it is easy to assume that rural areas, including forests and rainforests will benefit from this mass rural exodus. Expanding urban areas, however, places great strain on rural areas, requiring more food, water, and resources. As people move to the city and develop a more varied diet, including the addition of more meat and poultry, forests will be leveled to make room for more pastures and pollution levels will increase. Worldwide population growth should be of great concern to Americans. Underdeveloped countries with increasing populations have an increased need for foreign aid. Overpopulation also leads to desperate emigrations - often these desperate people are crossing US borders. Expanding populations stress governments' abilities to exercise control and American relief efforts, as witnessed in Somalia, cost money and lives.

So, why is it that the world's poorest countries have the highest rates of population growth? It seems that neither poverty nor hunger slow population rates. For a period in the third quarter of the 20th Century, Kenya had the world's highest rate of population growth at four percent. As a geographic region, sub-Saharan Africa grew faster than other region in the world. This is a reflection of Africa's rural nature and cultural traditions: having many children is a matter of family security and status. Several children will die early, men want to have male children, and having many children will increase the odds for this. Although childhood mortality rates are still high, they are much lower than they used to be. Continued fertility, combined with declining mortality rates, equal skyrocketing populations.

Meanwhile, the AIDS epidemic is having a dramatic effect on life expectancy in other parts of Africa. In Botswana, life expectancy fell from 60 to 39, during the period

between 1994 and 2004 - a figure not seen since the Middle Ages! Some scientists are predicting AIDS-related population declines of 10 to 20 percent in some of the hardest hit countries in Africa. By 2010, Africa will have 20 million AIDS orphans. Severe poverty prevents Africans from receiving adequate treatment, and often any treatment at all, for AIDS. Poverty also causes 825 million people, mostly children, to be malnourished. Although there is enough food on Earth to feed everyone adequately (not well, but adequately), distribution is not easy or affordable. Some governments, such as Sudan and North Korea, use food as a weapon against their own people.

Although population growth is still a major global problem, many scientists predict that Earth's population will never exceed 10 billion. The question, however, is how much of the planet's natural environment will remain. Even as Brazil's population declines and urbanization increases, destruction of the rain forest accelerates. The same is true for African forests. Global demand for forest products, from lumber to leather, especially in wealthy urbanized countries like the US, is responsible for much of the destruction. If there is a light at the end of the population tunnel, it is dimmed by the fact that the world today is a much more volatile place than it was 30 years ago. Nuclear proliferation, economic globalization, and conflict bring new and dangerous threats to the future of civilization.





# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

While a few remote locations, uninhabited by man, still exist on the planet, every square inch of land on Earth "belongs" to some government. For the most part, the appropriation of territory on this planet is complete. Occasionally, borders will change, as such as Germany following World War II and the more recent dismantling of the Soviet Union. The period from about 1650-1850 is the heyday for colonialism and the world experiences three simultaneous revolutions: industrial, agricultural, and political. At this time, the nation-state emerges as a popular concept in Europe.

Nation-states are countries whose territory exists within specific boundaries and whose populations share common features, such as language. Nation-states are small, but powerful. As European countries colonize in other regions, such as Africa, the nation-state model is employed. Colonialists draw boundaries, build capital cities, and develop the means to exploit their overseas domains. Not surprising, the interests of the indigenous peoples in these new acquisitions are not considered. In 1884, the colonial powers in Africa agree to divide the continent of Africa peacefully, rather than fighting over the territory. During the Berlin Conference, Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, and Spain split up the entire continent of Africa among themselves, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia. The colonialists draw boundaries that often divide existing African nations. The same thing occurs in colonized Southeast Asia. These arbitrary boundaries, which eventually become international borders, set the stage for cultural and ethnic clashes within these ill-conceived sovereign nations for years to come.

Most people envision national and international borders as lines on a map, but it is important to remember that borders are not two-dimensional. Borders divide not only the surface of the land, but the resources below and the air space above. In the first Gulf War, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was based on acclaim that Kuwait was taking oil from Iraq's reservoir through underground drilling. Similar conflicts between Germany and the Netherlands have occurred over mining rights along their shared border. Even the issue of pollution crossing borders has created international tension. Canada has complained for years about acid rain resulting from US-created air pollution that has drifted over the border.

International borders are not limited to land. The borders of the world's oceans are also subject of intense territorialism. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea established the current recognized ocean borders. Although the US is one of the few countries that had refused to sign this convention, it still adheres to the convention's terms. The terms grant all states a 12-mile-wide territorial sea of which they have sovereign power and a 188-mile-wide Exclusive Economic Zone in which they have economic rights such as mining, drilling, and harvesting, but all ships have the right of innocent passage. The remaining open ocean is not owned or controlled by any one country and is considered



the common heritage of mankind. Borders are sensitive issues and territorialism remains strong in the world today. Some borders, especially those established during colonialism, are not recognized by indigenous people, although for the most part, native Africans have accepted their inherited boundaries. In other cases, such as the dispute over the border between India and China in Tibet, governments are unwilling to recognize borders of which they claim their predecessors were coerced into accepting. Although most international borders are clearly, albeit subtly marked, some nations have taken border demarcation to the extreme. The Berlin wall, the fence that separates parts of the US and Mexico, and the "security wall" between Israel and the West Bank are a few examples.

Today, the world is made up of nearly 200 countries, but the web of borders illustrates regional clusters that share cultural histories and geographic realms with little in common. Only the US, China, and India dominate their geographic realms. Although the US has significant global power, its population does not come close to that of China and India. As the new world order develops, these three countries will play dominant roles. As the Pacific Ocean has become the dominant world ocean, in volume as well as value, China has emerged as an economic super power with enormous consumer power. As China and the US compete for the political and economic upper hand in Southeast Asia, India will benefit and will also play a major role in this new world order.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

China reaches its greatest imperial dimensions during the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, from 1644-1911. The Qing rulers conquer much of Indochina, Tibet, the Korean Peninsula, Kazakhstan, Taiwan, Myanmar, eastern Siberia, the Sakhalin Islands, Mongolia, and Xingjian. China's present day claims to some of these territories are based on these imperial boundaries. The 19th Century brings problems for China. The nation is overextended; it also endures invasions from European colonialists, and it suffers economic woes. When the Qing Dynasty collapses in 1911, the empire's territorial losses are severe, but the worst is yet to come. Nationalists, Communists, and Japanese fight a three-way battle over the ravaged nation. During the early 20th Century, while Europe is busy colonizing Africa and Southeast Asia, China quietly exists within its self-imposed isolation. After declaring China the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong implements collectivization on farms throughout the country, which improves food distribution and public health, and curtails child labor. This is known as the Great Leap Forward. Collectivization, however, disrupts the "historical rhythm" of agriculture and, between 1958 and 1962, 20 to 30 million Chinese starve to death. During this same time, China reclaims its perceived historic right to Tibet, invading and destroying the peaceful mountain nation. Two of Mao's other initiatives, encouraging women to have numerous babies and erasing the legacy of Chinese philosopher Confucius, also have lasting effects on China.

In 1971, then-President Richard Nixon visits China and meets face-to-face with Mao. Many Americans are shocked that President Nixon would meet with the leader of the world's largest Communist nation, especially one responsible for so many American deaths during the recent Korean War. Even before Nixon makes his historic visit to China, the US announces it will support China's bid for entrance into the United Nations. The US also claims this support will not change or alter its support for Taiwan. However, when China is formally admitted to the UN, the same resolution granting their admission also removes Taiwan, and the US is a signatory. With its admission to the UN, China enters the world stage. During this time, China experiences severe internal difficulties. In an effort to purify the Chinese Communists from possible Soviet "deviation," Mao initiates the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. The Revolution mobilizes the younger generation into what is known as the Red Guards and orders them to attack bourgeois elements in China. Schools are closed, intellectuals are persecuted and sometimes executed, and elderly citizens, traditionally revered in Chinese society, are mistreated and disrespected. The economy begins to suffer, and food production and industrial production declines. The Revolution is a grand failure and reflects poorly on the Communist Party and its chairman, Mao. With the country already in terrible straits, two massive earthquakes strike the city of Tangshan, about 100 miles from Beijing, killing perhaps 700,000 people. A few weeks later, Chairman Mao dies, ending a tragic era in Chinese history.



Deng Xiaoping emerges as the new leader of China. Xiaoping combines Communist dictatorship with a market-driven economy and initiates China's transformation. Within decades, China becomes a global nuclear power, an economic powerhouse, a military giant, and a nation of significant influence. Although many are surprised by China's rapid ascent, many geographers expected it, and some, such as H.J. Mackinder, predicted it. In a paper written in 1904, Mackinder argues that although its naval fleet enabled Britain to become the current global superpower, the next super power would be built on land-based strongholds. Mackinder believed the key - or the Pivot Area - as he called it, lay in Eurasia and Russia. Years later, when Russia emerges as a super power, Mackinder's theory receives a great deal of late recognition. In the past 25 years, China has transformed into a modern, fast-paced nation. Cities that were agricultural bases just a few years ago are now lined with skyscrapers and equipped with modern airports, high-speed highways, suspension bridges, hydroelectric projects, and modern ports. China's new economic strength brings with it political clout and changes the dynamics of its relationships with the US.

As Chinese nationalism swells, anti-American sentiments increase. The Chinese people see the US as arrogant, and resent American omnipresence in the region, including the US role involving Taiwan, US criticism of Chinese human rights practices, and US support of Chinese dissidents. The issue of Taiwan is a particularly emotional subject. Another more recent issue, North Korea's nuclear aspirations, is also a possible point of contention between the US and China. It is possible that these issues could create a new Cold War between China and the US, but there are other issues involving China that must be addressed. As China's population continues to skyrocket, its energy needs also grow, while global energy resources continue to dwindle. China and Japan are both vying for access to Russian oil reserves. As supplies decrease and demand increases, the need for oil and other fuel will strain regional and international relationships.

Despite some serious mistakes made by Chinese leaders in recent times, China remains a powerful empire. China is divided into four centrally controlled municipalities, 22 provinces, one Special Administrative Region for Hong Kong, and five Autonomous Regions. China's imperialistic territorial drive, which remains strong, may be of significance as the US and China competes for influence and power in the western Pacific. With its military presence in the region, the US has long been a stabilizing force there. However, as the US plans to withdraw troops from Japan and Korea (US troops left the Philippines in 1991), its presence will decline significantly. Meanwhile, China is expanding its geopolitical realm into Middle and South America, winning the contract to operate the Panama Canal, and building relationships with Venezuela and various Caribbean nations.

As Anti-Americanism increases in light of US actions in Iraq, China is seen more and more as a possible obstacle against US dominance. One of the most effective ways to avoid a new Cold War is for Americans to better educate themselves about China and its people. There are many similarities between the two countries. China and the US are of similar size, although most Americans mistakenly believe China is much larger. Both countries exist within similar latitudes and share common climates and environmental

characteristics. Of course, with 1.3 billion people, China's population is much greater than that of the US.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, and it is not the sole property of Islamic extremists. Terrorism has been around for ages and has been employed by many cultures. From the Irish Republican Army to Palestinians and Jews, to the Basques in Spain, terrorism is an unfortunate part of life on Earth today. Although most people would agree that terrorism is a global problem, few people can agree on the definition of terrorism and where to draw the line between state-sponsored terrorism and war. Varying definitions of terrorism include "intimidation through violence," "any action intended to kill or seriously harm civilians or non-combatants, with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling action by a government or international organization," and "unprovoked attack against civilian non-combatants away from any theater of war by men or women not working for a power openly at war with the victims' country." There is no simple definition.

Traditionally, for many acts of terrorism, there are clear objectives. Corsicans, Basques, Tamils, and Chechens want independence from what they see as an oppressive, occupying force. For more recent acts of terrorism, such as those conducted by al Qaeda, the objective itself seems to be Islamic-inspired violence. This new form of terrorism is well funded and highly organized. Although small, localized terrorist groups have been around for a long time, the seeds for this new terrorist wave were sowed in the 1970s beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union initiates an attempt to establish a secular government in Afghanistan. Rather than support this effort, which would have been consistent with US policy to support secular governments, the US retaliates against the Soviet Union, and supplies anti-Soviet rebels with money and arms.

When the USSR is forced by the US to leave Afghanistan, the country is flooded with weapons and internal struggle between warring factions ensues. Millions of Afghan refugees go to Pakistan where they find Islamic extremist schools called madrassas, which are funded by Saudi Arabia, and are ready to recruit disenchanting, angry Afghan youth. The schools are based on the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. With money from Saudi Arabia and extremism from Pakistan, Afghanistan is poised to become a base for terrorism.

The missing link, Usama (or Osama) bin Laden, builds a network of terrorists called al Qaeda. When the Soviets leave Afghanistan, bin Laden returns to his native Saudi Arabia. When he is exiled for publicly denouncing the government of Saudi Arabia, bin Laden goes to Sudan where he continues to build his network, establishes legitimate businesses, and opens terrorist training camps. In 1996, through pressure on Sudan's government from Western governments, bin Laden is forced out of Sudan and returns to Afghanistan, where the Taliban and their teachers are taking control. The formal Taliban movement takes control of the country, ruling it with strict Islamic law and swift

punishment. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden begins planning the attacks on New York and Washington, DC.

The physiography of Afghanistan helps make it an ideal location for such a movement to succeed. About the size of Texas, Afghanistan is remote, isolated, rugged, and fragmented. Its now famous cave systems provide excellent refuge. Its cultural make-up also aids in its transformation from a small, rural nation to a terrorist hotspot. Afghanistan has a population of about 30 million people and there is no dominant ethnic majority. In 2000, the country suffers some of the lowest vital statistics rankings in the world, including child and infant mortality, life expectancy, income, education, medical facilities and services, and nutrition.

The Muslim world once extended from west Africa to central Asia and from eastern Europe to Bangladesh. It included most of Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, much of India, and part of western China. Muslims once ruled the Ottoman Empire, which reached from modern-day Turkey to Vienna, and a Mogul Empire from Pakistan to Bangladesh. The Muslims lost Iberia, were forced out of eastern Europe, were battered by Crusaders, and were colonized by Europeans and Russians. Muslims were given no voice when the United Nations created the state of Israel, and when the US and other western nations swooped into Saudi Arabia for its oil, their economic, cultural and political influences invaded the Arabian Peninsula, the site of Islam's holiest cities, Mecca and Medina. Although various cultures have suffered a similar if not worse fate than did the Muslims, the source of Islamic resentment toward the West is clear. The dogmatic extremist nature of many of today's Muslim leaders suggests a moderation movement within the Muslim world is not possible. It appears that Muslims will not be satisfied until they regain all that they have lost. It is important to remember however, that Islam is six centuries younger than Christianity. The status of Christianity at the same point in its history, around the 1400s, reveals a similar fervent and somewhat barbaric approach. The Enlightenment was still 300 years away. With a significantly different administrative structure than Christianity, one that relies on local leadership instead of popes and bishops, Islam lacks inherent controls. There is hope that millions of Muslims emigrating to Europe and other Western countries may develop a modified form of their faith that will enable them to succeed in the West, without compromising their faith. This could yield a more liberal form of Islam in Europe.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Since 9/11, Americans have learned to live with the daily threat of terrorism. As we all realized in September 2002, terrorism can happen anywhere. There are, however, certain places in the world where terrorists thrive, and where targets of terrorism are at greater risk. Terrorism thrives in failed or malfunctioning states, where disorder enables terrorist cells to organize and operate with little notice. Unfortunately, the number of failing states is increasing. While places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, and Turkmenistan lie in or near the Islamic realm, other areas such as Venezuela, Paraguay, and Cuba cause concern because of their proximity to the US. Terrorists also like large, chaotic cities because they offer necessary amenities such as phones and banks for organizational needs, and relative anonymity. Cities like Manila, Jakarta, Karachi, Cairo, and Sao Paulo are popular harbors for terrorists. Terrorists also like rugged, remote terrain, such as that found in Pakistan.

With this information, it is relatively simple to identify locations at higher risk for terrorist activities. Understanding that Westerners are most often the targets, it is easy to connect the dots and realize some of the most unsafe places, with respect to terrorism, are popular Western resorts located near known terrorist refuges. Deadly and potentially deadly examples are Bali, Manila, Sipadan, and Phuket. Islamic terrorism is most frequently associated with the Middle East, but Middle and South America are quickly becoming popular areas for terrorist groups. The Triple Frontier, made up of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, is teeming with Islamic extremists. Considering that the US is flanked by oceans to the east and west and by an ally to the north, the most logical point of entry for would-be terrorists is clearly the south. As more countries in Middle and South America, such as Venezuela and Colombia, develop characteristics of malfunctioning states, the region will become more inviting to terrorists, and a greater threat to US security.

Africa is also a hub of terrorist activity. Islam has been in Africa since the 7th Century. Traditionally, Islam has been more popular in northern Africa while Christianity has ruled the south. During colonial times, Christianity made its way into Africa and halted Islam's progression southward. Today, the Islamic Front, where Africa's Islamic people meet Africa's Christian and animist people, is a zone of conflict and a breeding ground for terrorism. The worst impact has been felt in Sudan, where the Muslim government has waged war against its own southern Christian provinces for decades. Similar conflicts exist in Liberia, Ivory Coast, Somalia, and Kenya. The international network of terrorism, from Africa to the Middle East to Middle and South America, is well financed. Funding comes from a variety of sources including illicit enterprises such as the production and sale of opium and cocaine, the smuggling of contraband, theft, and extortion. Personal funds, as was the case with Usama bin Laden, and money collected through Islamic charities and mosques, also fund the movement. Members of the Saudi Arabian royal





family, who apparently want to ensure their protection in the event that the royal family is overthrown, also provide indirect funding.

When the US invades Iraq in March 2003, it appears to be in direct response to the 9/11 attacks. Although the target is supposedly Usama bin Laden who is believed to be in Afghanistan, a connection between bin Laden and Iraq has never been established. There are several principal reasons for the diversion from Afghanistan to Iraq: intelligence reports indicate that Saddam Hussein possesses chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction; Iraq is an immediate threat to Israel; Iraq is cooperating with terrorists; Iraq is defying UN resolutions; Hussein and his administration is perpetrating dreadful human rights abuses; Iraq's oil industry is crumbling and needs to be revived; and President George W. Bush has a personal score to settle with Hussein who attempted to assassinate his father. In Iraq, the US administration expects a swift operation, but because they clearly do not understand Iraq's historical or cultural geography, they are mistaken. There are 25 million people in Iraq; 20 million who are Arabs and five million who are Kurds. The Arab population is divided between Sunnis in the north and Shi'ites in the south. Although Shi'ites outnumber Sunnis two-to-one, through violence and intimidation, the Sunnis have assumed power. Internal conflicts between the Sunnis and Shi'ites, a Sunni insurgency, and a scandal involving US soldiers' mistreatment of prisoners help erode the situation in Iraq. Although many accomplishments have been made in the Shi'ite and Kurdish areas, problems in the Sunni Triangle, which includes the cities of Ramadi, Tikrit, Baghdad, and Fallujah overshadow the successes and ensure no end is in sight for the US and its allies. Whatever the outcome in Iraq, the US campaign there has several implications for the future:

The destabilizing consequences of unilateral intervention may do more harm than a slower, multilateral approach.

With the global dissemination of weapons, it is no longer practical to attempt sociopolitical transformation through force.

In tradition-bound societies, a schedule for transformation is pointless.

The Dayton model used in Bosnia should have been considered in Iraq.

Unilateral and multilateral intervention in one state will have consequences for neighboring states.

The acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorist organizations should be of greater concern than the acquisition by rogue states.

Representative government comes in many forms and so does democracy.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

Europe has long played a central role in human activities on Earth. Through exploration, colonialism and emigration, Europe's influence has spanned the globe. During the 20th Century, however, Europe twice sent the world to war. After the Second World War, Europe lost valuable colonies, political influence, and wealth. More recently, Europe's economic recovery and Eastern Europe's rejection of communism has improved the situation for Europe. The continent's current experiment in creating a supernational, the European Union, is by far the most promising and most challenging change in Europe's recent history. The European Union may eventually lead to a united states of Europe, a federal superpower that may challenge US global dominance. This concept, unimaginable only a few years ago, has already made tremendous progress. Travelers can cross national borders without documentation; about a dozen countries share a common currency, the Euro; the European Parliament and European Commission meet regularly; and the Union is growing, from 15 to 25 members, with new members joining from behind Eastern Europe's former Iron Curtain. Europe's population of 600 million people, twice the size of the US's population, is highly urbanized and old.

Yet, with its varying landscapes, multiple cultures and languages, and huge population, it is surprising that European integration has been successful at all. Even the actual physical area defined as Europe is unclear. Where does the eastern boundary of Europe lie? According to the 8th Edition of the National Geographic Atlas of the World, the eastern edge of Europe runs along the Ural Mountains in Russia, creating a European and non-European Russia. This makes no sense. If Russia is, in fact, part of Europe, then Europe extends to the Pacific Ocean. If not, then Russia's western border is the eastern border of Europe. Russia is 100 times as large (in territory) as Europe's largest country and its import/export base is significantly different than that of European countries. Russian democracy is still wavering and it is not even being considered for admission to the European Union. With these considerations, it seems illogical to include Russia in the European geographic realm.

The European unification movement has been underway since the US initiated the Marshall Plan in 1948. With 12 billion US dollars invested in Europe's post World War II recovery, western Europe set down the road of multinational development and cooperation. In 1957, six of the countries that had received US aid - Italy, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg - sign the Treaty of Rome, which created the European Economic Community. By 1973, with the addition of Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, the six becomes nine and the organization becomes the European Community. Today, the European Union, with its 25 members and Romania and Bulgaria set for admission in 2007, is the new Europe. The member countries of the European Union have made considerable progress, but internal conflict remains. Issues concerning admission standards, relative power, regional control, and the European constitution continue to challenge the Union. With membership for Bulgaria and



Romania pending, questions concerning the eligibility of other eastern European countries have arisen. Croatia is already negotiating membership. Until recently, the prospect of Ukraine joining the European Union were distant, but recent election results indicate the Ukrainian population may lean more towards the European Union than Moscow, opening up the possibility for the Ukraine to be admitted. In 2005, the newly elected government of Ukraine issued an official expression of interest in joining the European Union. Another unexpected interested party is Turkey, which is currently in preliminary discussions with the European Union. This issue has proven to be contentious among member countries. Some believe that Turkey's poor human rights record and its militarized government automatically disqualify the country from consideration. Others, however, feel that bending the rules to include Turkey would be beneficial, especially by building a bridge between the Christian and Muslim worlds.

Europe is already an economic superpower, but not a military superpower. The North American Treaty Organization binds the US and Europe, and ensures that regardless of the European Union's growth, the US and Europe will remain allies. This vital organizational tie is reinforced by the fact that Americans and European share similar hopes for the world, although the means to achieving these goals is different. If Europe's great experiment succeeds, perhaps the question of Europe's eastern border will be resolved through the gradual inclusion of not only Ukraine, but Belarus, Georgia, and ultimately, Russia itself.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

Russia is the world's largest country in terms of territory, and has more neighbors than any other country. With its exclave of Kaliningrad, Russia has Poland, Lithuania, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine as European neighbors, and has issues with nearly every one of them. To the south, Russia shares a border with Georgia and Azerbaijan, two of its former states. These two republics are situated in one of the most political areas in the world, Transcaucasia, where they border several Russian-controlled republics including Chechnya, where the people had hoped for independence in the post-communist era and where some continue to fight for freedom from what they perceive as Russian oppression. Russia also shares borders with four Asian nations: China, Mongolia, North Korea, and Kazakhstan. Even with the loss of 14 of its dependencies, Russia remains the world's largest country based on territory. Russia is nearly twice the size of the next ranking country, Canada, and shares borders with 13 countries. Despite its size, Russia is geographically challenged. Russia is located in higher latitudes, the entire country lies north of Boston, which limits agriculture and livable regions. Most of Russia's 140 million people live in the west and along a narrow stretch of southern Siberia. The country is also landlocked. Its vast geography, however, provides a huge and diverse array of natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, and ore.

In the early years of post-communism Russia, chaos and near anarchy reigns as regional governments run amuck, ignoring national laws while corruption consumes the government. As these problems grow, the situation in Transcaucasia, especially Chechnya, deteriorates. During the Soviet era, Stalin accuses the entire population of Muslim Chechens of collaborating with the Nazis and has all of them exiled to central Asia via railroad car. Many die during the journey, and many more die in the harsh Siberian environment. In 1957, Stalin's successor pardons the Chechens and returns them to their homeland, but not surprising, the Chechens never forget what the Russians did to them. In Muslim Chechnya, the non-Russian majority is determined to win independence. In Grozny, the urban-industrial capital, conflicts between the Russian army and Chechen rebels resemble all out war and Grozny is completely devastated.

With funding and fighters for the Muslim rebels coming from various Muslim strongholds including Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, the battle for independence transforms into an Islamic terrorism movement. Terrorist attacks extend throughout Transcaucasia and eventually reach Moscow. Shamil Basayev, a Chechen who claims to have lost 40 relatives during the Stalin-era exile, joins the ranks of terrorists. Basayev had supported Boris Yeltsin's presidential bid, in hopes that Yeltsin would liberate Chechnya, but when the Russian army bombs his neighborhood, leveling his home and killing his wife, daughters, brother and others, Basayev launches a relentless terrorist campaign in Chechnya, Transcaucasia and Moscow. The rebels drive the Russian army from



Groznyy and the Chechen rebels establish a rogue government in the Chechen-controlled part of the state. When Vladimir Putin replaces Yeltsin as Russia's president, he orders troops back to Chechnya and drives the rebels out to the surrounding mountains.

Russia has undergone significant change in the past ten years. Its struggle to transition from communism to democracy has caused severe economic strains, while multiple efforts for state independence have added to the internal conflict. To make matters worse, Russia is also experiencing a severe population decline. From 1991 to 2005, Russia's population declined by about five million people, despite the fact that several million ethnic Russians emigrated to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia's birth rate, which is slowed by widespread abortion and sexually transmitted diseases, has dropped, while its death rate has soared to 16 per thousand births. Rampant disease including tuberculosis, heart disease and AIDS, and alcoholism, heavy smoking, vehicular accidents, suicide, and murder have had a significant effect on life expectancy among Russian males. In 1991, life expectancy for males in Russia was 71. In 2004, it had dropped to 59. Female life expectancy has also dropped, but not nearly as drastically. If Russia's population decline continues, it may have dire effects on the country's ability to sustain itself. One solution may be increased immigration from East Asia, but this could create severe social problems in a country that already has its share.

As Russia continues to struggle through its transition to democracy, many worry that the country will revert to its authoritarian habits in an effort to restore the control and order that existed in Communist Russia. Although Russia may never be able to recapture its position of global superpower, it will remain an important country with significant influence. Russia is not a member of NATO, yet it is included in the organization's administrative and planning meetings. Russia would also like to be at the table during European Union decision-making, but so far, they have not achieved this right. Russia would also like trade concessions from the European Union and wants visa-free travel between Russia and European Union member countries, among other things. Although there are some signs that Russia is aligning itself with the European Union, some believe it is necessary for Russia to be a counterweight to the European Union with its own economic and political sphere. With its huge population and vast territory, its distinct culture, and its unique history, this is certainly a possibility.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

The African continent, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, is largely forgotten by the US. Although occasional events or issues, such as the AIDS epidemic, bring Africa to the forefront of American consciousness, for the most part, the cradle of humanity is of little consequence to the average American. By any standards - income, nutrition, infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy - Africa is the world's neediest region and it has been this way for centuries. There are many reasons for Africa's dire condition, some geographic, some social, but this condition has developed over 10,000 years of unfortunate events that has left sub-Saharan Africa in a realm by itself. When the Holocene interglacial warming period began about 12,000 years ago, the Sahara, which had enjoyed a cooler, wetter climate during the glaciation, began to warm and dry. By about 5,000 years ago, the region became an enormous desert, creating a natural barrier between north Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. This barrier impedes exchange of innovation and leaves sub-Saharan Africa in isolation. The Holocene also increases temperatures and humidity, which had a tremendous effect on the people of the region. Although agriculture was possible in some areas, it was a challenge in many others. When the rest of the human world begins domesticating animals, Africa's fauna defies domestication, making matters worse for the people of sub-Saharan Africa. The warmer, more humid climate also generates a host of diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. This penchant for hosting new diseases continues today with AIDS developing there in the last century. Sub-Saharan Africa has 70 percent of the world's AIDS cases and 75 percent of its deaths, but AIDS is only the most recent health scourge to strike Africa in its long history.

The Islamic Front, the separation between Muslim countries, further isolates Sub-Saharan Africa and Christian peoples. This religious division reinforces the natural barrier of the Sahara and further isolates the people of sub-Saharan Africa. The slave trade is another devastating event in the history of Africa. It is estimated that between 12 and 24 million Africans were captured and forced into bondage between 1700 and 1810. At the conservative end, this means that one-sixth of the continent's population was taken to the Americas, which had a devastating effect. Hundreds of thousands of children were orphaned; crops lay unattended and villages abandoned; the entire social order collapsed.

Once the slave trade ends, Europeans are still not finished wreaking havoc in Africa. The colonial period in Africa exploits the people and the natural environment. European "terrorists" subjugate the African people through fear, intimidation, and violence. The Belgian King Leopold II, who receives the territory called the "Congo Free State" during the Berlin Conference, enslaves its population and kills those who do not meet production quotas. By the end of Leopold's reign of terror, as many as 10 million Congolese are murdered. The unnatural ethnic boundaries established through European colonialism prevent ethnic integration and collaboration. Some of the tribal



conflicts that exist in Africa today are a result of the European-imposed boundaries. With the end of World War II, the colonial era ends. Although some European powers have prepared their territories for statehood, others have not. In the Cold War era, African nations become pawns for the two superpowers. The mutual distrust and rivalry between the US and Soviet Union causes both countries to support African tyrants who, despite their despicable behavior, could be trusted to oppose communism or democracy, depending on the case. Destructive, maniacal leaders such as Idi Amin, Haile Selassie and Agostinho Neto are supported by foreign powers at an extremely high cost to the African people. Today, as a new form of "globalization" touches Africa, there seems to be little indication that the people of sub-Sahara Africa will benefit from the process.

In this global village, where one neighborhood suffers disproportionately, a remedy will benefit everyone. Africa has been a valuable member of the global community, mostly for its past exploitability. Africa's well-being is critical to the world, and especially the US. Social stability in Africa is necessary for progress. The greatest risk to stability lies along the Islamic Front. Poverty, vulnerability, frustration, and fear make sub-Saharan Africans susceptible to Islamic proselytism and ideal recruits for Islamic extremists. The matter of agricultural subsidies is also critical in enabling Africa to progress and compete in the global market. African farmers cannot compete with Western farmers who receive subsidies for their produce. According to the World Bank, if subsidies are ended, African farmers will benefit at a rate of \$200 billion a year. Africa's natural resources continue to play an important role in the world, and as other sources of oil and natural gas dissipate, Africa's vast oil and gas reserves will become critical. Instability in the region will limit access to these much sought after resources. If none of these reasons is enough to inspire attention and support from the US, Africa's public health issues, which are actually global health issues, should.

New diseases that appear in Africa are not confined to Africa. In today's highly mobile world, any African disease, as with the case of AIDS, can travel from a remote savanna to a major Western city in a matter of hours. Thus far, the world has been fortunate that a disease far more infectious than AIDS hasn't killed millions. Increasing efforts to combat Africa's public health issues, and to make modern medicine not only available but also affordable, is critical to the future of Africa, and quite possibly, the future of the human race. Africa is also important to the US for another reason. With an African American population larger than all but five sub-Saharan nations, the US has a strong ancestral link with Africa. Americanization has weakened this link, but an intense African American commitment to Africa could be the key to changing US policy. This would be a vital step toward securing the place where it all began for the human race.



# Characters

**Usama bin Laden**

**Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab**

**Mao Zedong**

**Deng Xiaoping**

**Sir Halford Mackinder**

**John Snow**

**George Marshall**

**Shamil Basayev**

**Gilbert M. Grosvenor**

**Gerardus Mercator**

**Alfred Wegner**

**Boris Yeltsin**

**Vladimir Putin**

**Robert McNamara**

**Richard Nixon**

**Ronald Reagan**





# Objects/Places

## Afghanistan

Nearly the size of Texas, Afghanistan contains a rough and rugged landscape making it an ideal place for terrorists to live in isolation. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in an attempt to install a secular government. The US forced the Soviets out of Afghanistan. In the aftermath, the country was left with a huge assortment of weapons that enabled the Taliban - an Islamic extremist group - to take control of the country. At the turn of the century, Afghanistan ranked lowest in the world in infant and child mortality, life expectancy, income, education, medical facilities and services, and nutrition.

## Iraq

Iraq is one of three countries US President George W. Bush labeled as the "Axis of Evil." The US invaded Iraq in March of 2003 to end of the cruel dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and rid the country of Saddam's sons; to develop a system of representative government; and to leave behind a reconstructed, democratic, economically functioning democracy.

## Chechnya

Chechnya is a republic under the control of Russia. After the Soviet collapse, Chechnya claimed its independence but was denied it by the Russian government. The Russian Army has battled with Chechen rebels since 1990, and some Chechen rebels have resorted to terrorist activities. Thousands of Chechens and Russians have died in these conflicts.

## Russia

Russia is the world's largest (territory) country and shares borders with more countries than any other country. Formerly the administrative center of the USSR, Russia became an independent state in 1999. Most of Russia's 140 million people live in the west and along a narrow stretch of southern Siberia.

## Sunni Triangle

The Sunni Triangle is the Sunni Muslim stronghold in Iraq, and includes the cities of Ramadi, Fallujah, Baghdad and Tikrit.



## **Triple Frontier**

The Triple Frontier is the area where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay converge. The area has become a South American base for Islamic terrorists.

## **Islamic Front**

The Islamic Front is the area in Northern Africa that separates predominantly Muslim countries from predominantly Christian and animistic countries.

## **European Union**

The European Union is a group of 25 European nations (with more being added regularly) - a supranation - with shared governmental decision-making.

## **Al-Qaeda**

Al-Qaeda is the terrorist network established by Usama bin Laden in Afghanistan.

## **Cenozoic Ice Age**

The Cenozoic Ice Age, one in a series of ice ages that have occurred on Earth, began 36 million years ago. Earth remains in the Cenozoic Ice Age, although it has been experiencing a warming period for the past 12,000 years.

## **Holocene Interglacial**

The Holocene interglacial is the most recent period of warming during the Cenozoic Ice Age. For the past 12,000 years, the Earth has been experiencing the Holocene interglacial.

## **China**

With 1.3 billion people, China is the world's most populated nation. In the past 25 years, China has emerged as an economic powerhouse, a nuclear superpower, and a nation with great global political influence.

## **Iran**

Iran is one of three countries US President George W. Bush labeled the "Axis of Evil."



## **North Korea**

North Korea is one of three countries US President George W. Bush labeled the "Axis of Evil." In recent years, the country has set its sites on developing nuclear weapons capabilities.

## **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was one of Chairman Mao Zedong's initiatives in China. The Revolution was designed to purge China's Communists of any "contamination" from Russian Communists. The Revolution formed young Chinese into the Red Guards who were charged with ensuring bourgeois elements did not infiltrate Chinese society. Millions of people were tortured and killed during the Revolution.

## **Great Leap Forward**

The Great Leap Forward was one of Chairman's Mao Zedong's initiatives in China. The Great Leap Forward was designed to transform China into an agricultural powerhouse by forcing subsistence farmers and other peasants onto collective farms. When crops failed, millions died from starvation.

## **Marshall Plan**

In 1947, during a speech at Harvard University, Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a huge US investment in Europe's recovery from World War II. The Marshall Plan stimulated the European economy and sowed the early seeds of today's European Union.

## **Islam**

Islam is the predominant religion of the Middle East and North Africa. Followers of the religion are called Muslims. In recent years, the Islamic faith has been associated with global terrorism.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is a Middle-Eastern country with a strong Sunni Muslim following. In Pakistan, schools (madrassas) to indoctrinate Islamic extremists were established. These students later created the Taliban government in Afghanistan.



## Taiwan

Taiwan, formerly a Chinese province, is an island off the coast of China where Mao Zedong's communists drove Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists following the Second World War. Chiang Kai-Shek and his followers seized power and established Taiwan as the "Republic of China." Taiwan continues to claim independence while China claims authority over the island.

## Taliban

The Taliban is a Sunni Islamic movement that assumed control of Afghanistan after the US forced the Soviets out. The Taliban's rule was strict with severe punishment.



# Themes

## Global Terrorism

In recent years, global terrorism has dramatically increased and is cause for great concern. Although terrorism has existed for ages, the new form of terrorism, especially Islamic extremist terrorism, is more frightening. In the past, most terrorists had clear goals and objectives, but the goal of today's Islamic terrorists' seems to be terror itself. Without clear objectives, other than to rid the world of non-Muslims, an end to the terror is difficult to conceive. Terrorism breeds in states that are failing or malfunctioning, and as the number of these states continues to rise, the number of terrorists and the extent of terrorism will also increase. There is already cause for alarm as the number of Islamic extremists in Middle and South America, as well as North Africa, continues to grow. An effective means to preventing successful recruiting of new terrorists is for the global community to work together to stabilize failing and malfunctioning states in order to create situations where people will not resort to terrorism. The question of national alliances, particularly those of the US, should also be questioned. Because of a national dependency on Saudi Arabia's oil, for instance, the US government consistently turns a blind eye to connections between global terrorism groups such as al-Qaeda and the Saudi royal family. The US and the global community should not tolerate these double standards.

## Climate Change

Global climate changes have been occurring on Earth for millions of years and some have had a dramatic impact on the development of the human race. As climates change, agricultural regions become deserts, deserts become rain forests, and snow-covered mountains become temperate forests. In the 1950s, "global cooling" was of great concern. Today, global warming is the buzzword of the 21st Century. One cannot escape hearing about it from politicians, environmentalists, and coffee house patrons. Global warming is not a new phenomenon. In fact, global warming has been regularly occurring on Earth for the past 12,000 years.

Although the Earth is currently experiencing the Cenozoic Ice Age, the planet has been under the influence of the Holocene interglacial for about 12,000 years. During an interglacial period, the Earth warms up considerably for a geologically brief time (thousands of years), allowing life to flourish. Eventually, the interglacial will end and the ice will return to cover most of the planet. This warming and cooling cycle has been going on for millions, maybe billions, of years on Earth. Scientists recognize the signs of the interglacial, but it is difficult to determine just when the warming period will end and the ice will return. Although scientists do know roughly how long previous interglacials have lasted, the effect of human activities on the normal glacial cycle is unknown. It is important that humans control activities that may cause unnatural changes in the climatic cycle; however, it is rather arrogant to believe that whatever efforts humans



may attempt to alter the natural environment will have any power against the forces of nature.

## China

China is the oldest civilization on Earth and in recent centuries has been rather isolated. In the 1970s, when the US opened the lines of communication with China, it awakened a sleeping giant. That giant, with more than 1.3 billion people, is now a major player in world affairs. China, with its vast population, has extensive consumer power and is an economic powerhouse. The nation is also capable of using nuclear weapons and has a substantial military. These features have put China in a unique position, well on its way to becoming the next global superpower.



# Style

## Perspective

Author Harm de Blij is a professor of Geography at Michigan State University. He has also been a professor at various other universities and was the Geography editor for the "Good Morning America" television series for seven years. His extensive background in geography provides him with the knowledge and credibility to both educate and persuade the reader. Although De Blij has spent most of his adult life in the US, he was born in the Netherlands and lived near Rotterdam during the Nazi invasions, and has studied and lived in various locations around the globe. The fact that he is Dutch, rather than American, gives him an interesting and unbiased perspective on issues involving the US and its foreign policy. Although some of his opinions are quite strong, he is able to convey his views in a non-prejudice manner and comes across as a concerned, extremely sincere individual.

The intended audience for this book is the millions of Americans, most Americans in fact, who have very little knowledge of geography and its critical role in world affairs. Americans score dismally in knowledge of geography. De Blij clearly blames the US government and American public schools for the lack of geographic knowledge among Americans and is greatly concerned about its effect. De Blij sees geography as the key to understanding the past, present and future of life on Earth.

## Tone

The overall tone of this book is one of concern for the future of the human race as well as the planet Earth. Although some of De Blij's observations and revelations are frightening, scaring the reader does not seem to be his intent. De Blij is genuinely concerned about the future and has enough education, information, and sense to realize there is reason to be concerned. De Blij is simply conveying what he believes to be the facts, but because the subject matter is so critical, the truth, unfortunately, is quite frightening. De Blij includes numerous bits of personal experiences that add to his credibility and makes the book more personable.

The book contains a huge amount of statistics and data to support his theories and observations, which causes the reader even greater concern. In this book, De Blij deals with a number of religious and political issues that could easily be manipulated to persuade the reader in one direction or another. De Blij's ability to limit his personal opinion, whether explaining the reasons for Islamic resentment toward the West or discussing US involvement in Afghanistan, and provide the facts, is vital to the effectiveness of this book. His objectiveness toward American policy is also refreshing and extremely valuable.

## Structure

The 282-page book is divided into 12 chapters and includes a short epilogue. Each chapter is about 25 pages long and includes a variety of maps that are extremely valuable in understanding the topics discussed. De Blij refers to the maps throughout the chapter and ensures that the reader reviews the map in question multiple times. In the subtitle, *Climate Change, the Rise of China and Global Terrorism*, the author clearly outlines the focus of the book and the book follows this format

The book's structure is straightforward and very easy to follow. Although the book deals with some rather complicated issues, the information is conveyed simply and clearly so that the intended reader, the non-geographer American public, can easily grasp the topic. Probably from years of teaching, De Blij has learned to get the "student's" attention and keep it, without resorting to sensationalism. His style is casual and conversational which makes it easy to read and comfortable, despite the extremely serious subject matter.



## Quotes

"Geography is a superb antidote to isolationism and provincialism." Chap. 1, p. 21.

"When Ronald Reagan was asked, following the disastrous attack on the marines near Beirut in 1992, why the United States had so many troops in Lebanon, he answered 'we're there because of the oil.' But there was no oil in Lebanon." Chap. 2, p. 50.

"One year from now, the room in which you are reading this will be about a half inch (13 mm) from where it is today, assuming you are somewhere in North America." Chap. 3, p. 56.

"With our human numbers approaching 7 billion and global warming opening the last niches for habitation, the question is: what happens when the ice returns, as it has more than a dozen times during the Pleistocene?" Chap. 3, p. 73.

"The people of the cyclonic regions, rank so far above those of other parts of the world that that they are the natural leaders. . . [they lead in terms of productivity, but] their greatest products are ideas and institutions to which these give rise. The fundamental gift of cyclonic regions is mental activity." Ellsworth Huntington, 1942. Chap. 5, p. 87.

"Combine a shrinking population with rising life expectancy, and the economic and political consequences are alarming. In Europe, there are currently 35 people of pensionable age per 100 people of working age. By 2050, on present demographic trends, there will be 75 pensioners for every 100 workers; in Spain and Italy, the ratio will be 1:1." Charlemagne "Economist," 2003. Chap. 5, p. 95.

"Lately, the American public has begun to worry about these issues, and the immigration question is moving higher up on the national agenda. The overwhelming approval of Proposition 187 in California during the November 1994 elections reflected a rising anti-immigrant feeling - in a nation forged of immigrants." Chap. 5, p. 101.

"Napoleon, who knew a thing or two about empires and imperialism, is supposed to have remarked that China was a giant asleep, and that whoever woke it up would regret doing so." Chap. 7, p. 125.

"While the politicians and military strategists were plotting, the cultural doors never closed: Americans audiences listened to the music of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, watched Russian ballet, and read Tolstoy and Pasternak even as the Soviets cheered Van Cliburn, read Hemingway, and lionized American political dissidents. In short, this was an intracultural Cold War, which reduced the threat of calamity. A cold war between China and the United States would involve far less common ground, the first intercultural cold war in which the risk of fatal misunderstanding is incalculably greater than it was during the last." Chap. 7, p. 149.

"One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter." Chap. 8, p. 151.



"Undoubtedly the costliest impact of the divisive Islamic Front has been in Sudan, whose Muslim government waged a decades-long, bitter war against the three southern provinces where African Christian and animist communities are in the majority." Chap. 9, p. 183.

"European enthusiasm for the Marshall Plan grew from the realization that it would have political as well as economic consequences. By enmeshing all major European states in this multinational scheme, the risk of a third world war would be minimized, and Europe could set about its recovery under the security of the military North Atlantic Treaty Organization." Chap. 10, p. 209.

"The peace of Europe has foundered before in this fateful mosaic of cultural discord, and it is by no means certain that even the EU will mitigate these enmities." Chap. 10, p. 228.

"President reiterated his doubts about democracy; he cited America's Electoral College as evidence that American democracy has its own contradictions. The election of regional leaders in Russia, he argued, was no less democratic." Chap. 11, p. 251.

"Originally, we are all Africans, and to know ourselves better we should reconnect with the source." Chap. 12, p. 256.

"In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the United States, with its WMD capacity, was in a position to impose its will upon the world. It did not do so, but it is difficult to imagine another power with similar advantage acting with similar restraint. Instead, the United States enabled European countries to reconstruct their economies even as it promoted the deconstruction of the colonial empires, it brought federal democracy to Germany even as its forces occupied that defeated enemy, and it introduced representative government while guiding economic recovery in Japan only four years after the Pearl Harbor attack often cited in the context of 9/11. One of America's proudest traditions is its ability to ignore the painful past, eschew revenge, and build for the future." Epilogue, p. 276.

"Most of all, the US must lead by example, by adhering scrupulously to its own principles and traditions and by taking actions to conform to its words. Compromise is unavoidable in a complex world, and it would be impractical to terminate all contact with dictatorial regimes. But it would be indeed possible to eliminate all remaining tariffs, subsidies and quotas and thus to live up to the free-trade ideals Washington so vocally embraces." Epilogue, p. 280.



## Topics for Discussion

Describe the four traditions of geography and the significance of these traditions in today's world.

Global warming is a highly debated topic, but according to the author, it is not a new phenomenon. Discuss the significance of global climate changes throughout Earth's history and the implications this has for present day concerns.

During the 1950s through the mid-1970s, Chinese society existed under the rule of Chinese Communist Chairman Mao Zedong. Describe the short- and long-term impact of Mao's policies and initiatives on the Chinese people and China's economy.

In the post-Mao era, China grew into an economic superpower with significant political influence. Explain China's ascent and what it means for the future of China and the world.

Population is the key to a successful society. Explain the importance of population balance, the role of immigration in maintaining this balance, and the dangers of a declining or soaring population. Cite specific examples of countries addressing population issues today and the global ramifications of failure.

Terrorism is not a new concept, nor is it the sole property of Islamic extremists. Describe how terrorism has been used as a political tool across the ages, citing specific examples. Is Islamic terrorism any different than other forms of terrorism? If so, describe the differences and what this means to the global community.

Islamic terrorism originated in the Middle East, but has spread throughout the world. It is active in Africa, Middle and South America, and Europe. Describe the Islamic terrorist movements in these geographic realms, using specific examples of terrorist activities. Include details about funding and organizational connections on a global level.

Describe how the European Union has evolved into a powerful global force and the outlook for its future. What challenges do the EU member countries face and how will this emerging economic superpower effect other countries and regions of the world?

Sub-Saharan Africa is important to the world, and particularly to the US. Discuss the reasons why the US should take a more active role in aiding Sub-Saharan Africa. What are the risks for Africa, the US, and the global community if US involvement continues along the current path of disinterest and minimal investment?

European colonialism has a tremendous effect on the continent of Africa. Discuss how Europe's involvement changed the face of Africa and how those effects are still being felt today.