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Book Review

THE POWER OF GEOGRAPHY: TEN MAPS THAT REVEAL THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD

by Tim Marshall, Elliott & Thompson Limited, 2021, pp. 432,
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The Power of Geography: Ten Maps that Reveal the Future of Our World by Tim Marshall, Elliott & Thompson Limited, 2021, pp. 432, ISBN 9781783966028

Reviewed by: Nimmy Rose Jacob, Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi.

The Power of Geography: Ten Maps That Reveal the Future of Our World by Tim Marshall is a captivating evaluation of how geography shapes global politics in our ever-changing world. In this sequel to his earlier work, *Prisoners of Geography*, Marshall delves into ten regions that significantly impact global affairs. The ten chapters or ten maps that he talks about are:

1. Australia: Discover why its geography plays a crucial role in shaping its future;
2. The Sahel: Explore this region's challenges and how they affect global dynamics;
3. Greece: Uncover the historical and geographical factors influencing Greece's position;
4. Turkey: Learn about its strategic location and its impact on regional stability;
5. The UK: Understand how geography continues to shape Britain's choices;
6. Iran: Explore the complexities of this nation's geography and its implications;
7. Ethiopia: Delve into the role of geography in Ethiopia's development and challenges;
8. Saudi Arabia: Consider the impact of deserts, oil, and geopolitics on Saudi Arabia's future;
9. Spain: Learn about its unique position at the crossroads of Europe and Africa;
10. Space: Even outer space is a battleground, and Marshall explains why.

Marshall's lucid writing and insightful analysis make this book a must-read for anyone interested in geopolitics and global affairs. Despite the book's extensive research, we never feel overpowered by the information. Every chapter is the same, with Tim Marshall examining each area's history, the significance of its location, and its potential involvement in the event of a global battle. The chapter about Australia addresses its distinct geographic location. Australia is more than 2,500 miles from New Zealand, its purported neighbour, 5,000 miles from Africa and nearly 7,000 miles from South America. Due to its remoteness, Australia was able to keep a tiny White settler population and wage mostly covert genocidal wars against Indigenous peoples. The chapter also examines Australia's place in the world's geopolitics, considering its difficult balancing act between maintaining tight ties with the United States and not provoking China.

Spain's location on the Iberian Peninsula has shaped its history, culture, and interactions with neighbouring regions. As a natural barrier, the Pyrenees Mountains separate Spain from France, influencing trade routes, migration patterns, and historical conflicts. Moreover, Spain's historical legacy as a colonial power—particularly its impact on Latin America—continues to resonate globally. In contemporary times, Spain's membership in the European Union and NATO positions it strategically. Challenges related to regional autonomy (such as Catalonia) and separatist movements add complexity to Spain's internal dynamics. Lastly, its Mediterranean coastline connects it to North Africa and the Middle East, fostering cultural exchange and trade.

Very interestingly, there is a chapter on even outer space. It refers to outer space as being "Prime Real Estate Beyond Earth"; this chapter delves into the evolving perception of celestial bodies—such as the moon and various meteorites—as valuable resources. These extra-terrestrial assets are no longer mere scientific curiosities; they are increasingly viewed as prime real estate. However,

rather than cooperating for the collective benefit of humanity, countries are engaging in a competitive race to secure these extra-terrestrial territories. The stakes are high, and the implications extend far beyond our planet. Also, the Earth's Atmosphere is explained as a battleground. Through this, Marshall highlights a critical shift: our planet's atmosphere is poised to become the next geopolitical battleground. It is not just about the vastness of outer space; it is about the thin layer of air that envelops Earth. Within this atmospheric arena, several intersecting issues come into play such as climate change where the delicate balance of our atmosphere is under threat due to human-induced climate change, rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise, all of which have global implications. Marshall also explores Satellite Technology. The proliferation of satellites—essential for communication, navigation, weather forecasting, and surveillance—has turned the Earth's orbit into a crowded and contested space. In summary, the chapter on space underscores the immense potential and complex challenges associated with our cosmic surroundings. It invites us to consider the vastness of the universe and the delicate balance of our biosphere.

This is an easy-read that is packed with fascinating, and sometimes, scary material. For instance, Spain is a country with mountains. Its mountainous terrain has created several areas home to ethnic groups with unique dialects or languages. A “nation-state composed of nations” is what it is. Spain's Basque and Catalan areas still hold separatist ideologies that may make Spanish and EU politics and policy more difficult if they spread.

Whether it is a seasoned scholar or a curious reader, *The Power of Geography* offers valuable perspectives on humanity's past, present, and future. Understanding geopolitics is crucial for several reasons. In our interconnected world, decisions made by one country can have ripple effects across borders. Geopolitics helps us comprehend how nations interact, cooperate, or compete on trade, security, and climate change issues. It also influences resource distribution. Access to vital resources like oil, water, and minerals impacts a nation's economic stability and security. Understanding these dynamics helps policymakers make informed decisions. Geopolitical knowledge allows us to identify potential sources of conflict. We can work toward preventing or mitigating conflicts by analysing historical rivalries, territorial disputes, and power struggles. Geopolitics shapes trade agreements, alliances, and diplomatic relations. Knowing different countries' interests and priorities helps negotiate beneficial deals and maintain peaceful relations. Geopolitics informs defence strategies. Nations must assess threats, military capabilities, and vulnerabilities to safeguard their citizens and interests. Understanding geopolitical contexts helps organisations allocate resources effectively during crises, natural disasters, and humanitarian emergencies.

Businesses operate in a global landscape. Geopolitical factors impact investment decisions, market access, and supply chains. Being aware of geopolitical risks is essential for sustainable business practices. Marshall has been careful to combine all of the essential points while narrating beautifully the history of the land and the present conditions, taking the readers on a journey. The moon and several meteorites appear to be excellent real estate in the fascinating section of space. However, it is also somewhat disheartening since nations are attempting to seize resources for their own purposes rather than working together in space for the sake of humanity. Indeed, nations may have a significant military edge by dominating the low earth orbit. In the future, Astro politics will become significant.

The book holds immense significance for understanding global politics and international relations. The book provides insights into how geography shapes nations' behaviour, conflicts, and alliances. Examining ten critical regions highlights the impact of physical features, borders, and resources on political dynamics. Marshall emphasises the strategic importance of specific areas, such as Australia in the Indo-Pacific, Turkey as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and Saudi Arabia due to its oil reserves. These locations influence regional stability and global power dynamics. Each chapter delves into historical events and their geographical context. For instance, understanding Greece's past sheds light on its current geopolitical role. The book predicts how geography will continue to shape our world by analysing maps and trends. It explores topics like space exploration and the Sahel region's challenges.

Having said it all, the author does try to oversimplify the topic for a wider reachability. It is not to be forgotten that it is the second book in the series, and international politics and geopolitics scholars would be keen to have a more nuanced and in-depth analysis of the topic. Also, the author faces a paucity of space regarding regions and their intricacies. While the author has done excellent work by looking at some parts of the world which otherwise would not have garnered such attention, scholars would be interested in a deeper analysis. Also, some might suggest that the author is biased towards European nations as the book revolves around those areas. However, we should not forget the contribution the work makes to our knowledge and the maps that have awakened interest in geography.

The book's main topics are geographic variables, geopolitical dynamics, and how these affect world politics. It does not explicitly address inclusion but shows how geographic characteristics influence the ways in which communities, economies, and governments behave. A few interviews or additional data showing the effect on local communities' life and livelihood would have given a book a new direction. However, the author seems to be content with focusing only on geopolitics.