



## Summer work for A-Level geography

This book covers some of the key ideas about countries control and development and their capacity to become a superpower.

Please read the summaries below and create an annotated world map of the key ideas and features of each of the areas/countries.

This is fantastic book so you could always buy and read the whole book!

### Prisoners of Geography – T. Marshall

#### China

Until now, China has never had a naval power with its large land mass, multiple borders and short seas to trading partners. In the past its navy did not seek territory beyond its regions; the cost of patrolling the mighty Pacific and Indian oceans was not worth the effort.

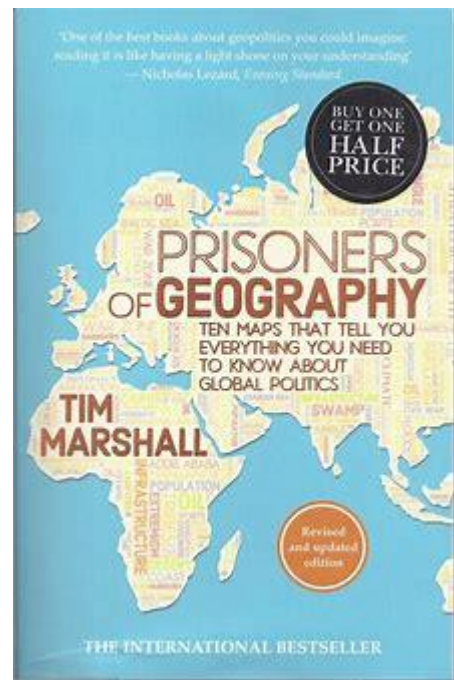
The heartland of China is the **North China Plain** = is a large, fertile plain with two main rivers and a climate that allowed rice and soy beans to be harvested twice a year (double-cropping), which triggered population growth. This heartland is the political, cultural, demographic and agricultural centre of gravity. Approx a billion people exist in this area.

Between 605 and 609CE the Grand Canal – the longest man-made water way – was extended and finally linked the Yellow River to the Yangtze.

**The Long March** – Mao's successors tried to the Long March to victory into an economic march towards prosperity. Deng Xiaoping, in the 1980's, coined the term, 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' which appears to translate as 'Total control for the communist party in a capitalist economy.'

**China (and India) and Tibet** – very little trade has moved between the two nations over the centuries, something that is unlikely to change any time soon. Of course, the border is really the Indian-Tibetan border and this is why the Chinese has long wanted to control Tibet. This is the politics of fear; if China did not control Tibet then India would do so. Tibet is the sources of China's three great rivers: Mekong, Yellow and Yangtze, hence Tibet's label as China's water tower. China uses the same volume of water as the USA, a country with a population five times smaller than China.

**Demographics and geopolitics** are preventing **Tibet's** independence; the Han population are growing in the territory, something that is diluting the local culture and economy. Yet China have but





infrastructure (roads/ railways) which has undoubtedly improved local people's lives. The Chinese are building facts on the ground on the roof of the world.

**Manufacturing** – China's leaders realise that the country must keep producing and selling goods if it is to continue to grow and prevent mass unemployment; such is the reliance on the sector. A failure to do so might have political ramifications: civil unrest and threatening the control of the Communist Party and the unity of China. The deal with the world is: 'we'll make the stuff for cheap, you buy it for cheap'. If this breaks down then the result could be devastating across a number of scales. But with rising labour costs – and the threat of cheaper labour (but not for volume) in SE Asia (Thailand and Indonesia) – it is not a sustainable model. What happened if the resources to build the stuff ran out or if someone got there first, or if there was a naval blockade of your goods....hence the need for a (blue water navy).

**Defence/ Navy**- however, the Chinese are behind in this area – their current navy is a mere green-water (patrolling maritime borders only) it will take them 30 years to build and train up a navy on the same level as the USA. However, in the meantime the Chinese will gradually put more and more vessels off their coast, meaning there will be less space for the Americans.

Between China and the Pacific is the archipelago that Beijing calls the 'First Island Chain'...and then there is the 'Nine Dash Line', which has been turned in the 'Ten Dash Line' to include Taiwan, which China claims is theirs. The dispute over these 200 tiny islands is poisoning China's relations with its neighbours.

The US are committed to defending Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. If Taiwan declares full independence, an act that China would consider a act of war, the US would not intervene. Yet China are determined to have Taiwan but they are not there



militarily, and instead they are using soft power by increasing trade and tourism between the two states (a similar tactic employed in Tibet, where in the flux of Han people and their businesses is slowly changing the culture and tempo of Tibetan life.) The soft-power approach to persuade people of Taiwan that they have nothing to fear in re-joining the 'motherland'.

**Land, territories and resources** - To further its aims, China is using dredging and land reclamations methods to begin turning a series of nee sans atolls in disputed territories into islands. E.g the Spratly Islands is now an island complete with a port and a runway that could host fighter jets, giving China more control of the skies.

China must secure the route through the South China Sea, both for its goods to get to market, and for the items require to makes them – oil, gas and metals – get into China. As such, it cannot afford to be blocked.



Diplomacy is one solution, as is building a navy, but the guarantee is pipelines, roads and ports (to overcome this unfortunate geography). The South China Sea is the Chinese what the Caribbean Sea was to the USA in the early 1900s; The Americans, having consolidated its land mass had become a two-ocean power (Atlantic and Pacific) then moved to secure the seas around them, pushing the Spanish out of Cuba.

China wishes to become a two-ocean power- Pacific and Indian – and to do this it is investing in deep water ports in Burma, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, an investment that buys good relations and a potential to have their navy using the concrete as naval bases. From Burman's west coast China has built natural gas and oil pipelines linking the Bay of Bengal to S.W China, China's way of reducing its precarious reliance on the Strait of Malacca – waterway between Sumatra (Indonesia) and Malaysia, brushing Singapore, where 80% of its energy supplies pass).

**China in Africa** – China is also building ports in Kenya, railways in Angola and HEP schemes. They are also mining nations' minerals to import for their manufacturing sector.

**Democracy** – the Party remains residence to democracy and individual rights: if the population were given the free vote then the unity of the Han might begin to crack or more likely, the countryside and urban areas would come into conflict.

**Human Rights and Freedoms:** The Chinese view on society is very different to the West's: the Western thought is infused with the rights of the individual; Chinese thought prizes the collective above the individual. What the West thinks of the rights of man, the Chinese think of as dangerous theories endangering the majority, something the majority of the population accepts. In short, the extended family comes before the individual. The 'deal' between the Party and the people has always been, "well make you better off, you follow our orders."

When the west question this notion, the Chinese would reply in saying, "why do you think your values would work in a culture you don't understand."

**Demographics** – a growing problem for the Party is the ability to feed its population – hence the anti-natal policies of the past. More than 40% of arable land is now either polluted or has thinning top soil, according to their Minister of Agriculture; this source seems surprising. But their structure of economy prevents the obvious solution from being implemented: it needs to keep industrialising to raise standards of living, something that process if threatening food production: it is a genuine Catch-22 situation. Unbeknownst the many outside China, there are around 500 (mostly peaceful) protests per day across the country over a variety of issues. If you add mass unemployment and hunger then this number and nature of these protests will change dramatically.

**Its future** - China's (tens of millions of) workers are dispersed across the world; the military will follow shortly...after all, with great power comes great responsibility, as the USA are only too aware. If it can avoid conflict with Japan or the USA, then the only real danger is China itself. There are 1.4 billion reasons why the country will succeed and the same number why it won't. A great depression – as per the 1930s one in the USA – could set it back.



## Western Europe

The land of the Enlightenment which gave way to the Industrial Revolution. It has the first industrialised nations and was the first region to host industrial and industrial-scaled wars.

**Politically:** Europe was established, as a group of nation states in an organic way over many millennia and remains divided by its geographical and linguistic regions. Its mountains, rivers and valleys help explain this. This is in stark contrast to the USA which spawned rapidly under one language. The various tribes of the Iberian Peninsula were hindered advancing north by the Pyrenees. France was formed by its natural barriers: the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Rhine and the Atlantic. Europe's rivers do not meet, and act as natural boundaries, hence why there are so many nations in a small area, and why one major city can be found on each river. For example, The Danube basin affects 18 countries and forms a boundary to these states: Slovakia and Hungary, Croatia and Serbia, Serbia and Romania, Romania and Bulgaria. Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade are all on the river. Over 2,000 years ago it was one of the boundaries of the Roman Empire.

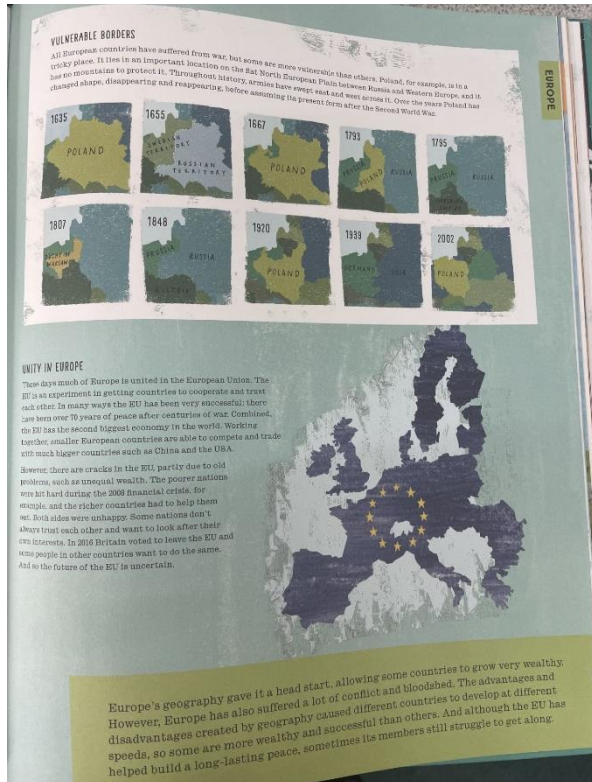
The **Climate**, fed by the Gulf Stream, blessed the region with near perfect growing conditions: ideal rainfall and rich soils supported high yields, which in turn gave way to high population growth. It allowed farmers to work the land all year round – including in the depths of summer and winter. Winters are perfect: cold enough to kill off germs and plagues, but mild enough to exist with comfort. W. Europe has no deserts, frozen waters are confined to a few areas in the north, and natural hazards are rare (tectonic and climatic). The rivers are long, flat and navigable so ideal for trade, and flow into a mass of natural harbours, north, east, south and west.

The northern countries are richer than the southern ones: it industrialised earlier and at roughly the same time, allowing cross-border trade to take place. In contrast, Spain was rather isolated and left behind economically, with its poor soils, short rivers and politics; they were frozen under Franco's region, hence their late membership to the EU in 1986. The north had vast coastal plains and fewer natural hazards. Tourism and financial centres are predominantly located in the north, giving them a higher standard of living. Greece suffers too from its physical geography: most of the coastline is rugged cliffs and there are few fertile plains. Its capital is located on a peninsula, which further hampers trade. Its nearest neighbour to the east is an old enemy which doesn't help. Its 6,000 islands are high maintenance, both economically and militarily, as most navies would struggle to patrol them let alone venture into deeper (blue) waters.

**The EU, NATO and conflict:** the creation of the EU was borne out of an astonishing experiment: they were asked to trust each other. It was set up so that France and Germany could hug each other so tightly that the other one could not lash out.



It has worked particularly well for Germany: rose from the 1945 ashes and used its geography, that it once feared, to send manufactured goods – not armies this time – across its plains to its trading neighbours, making the tag ‘Made in Germany’ something to be proud of. Germany is determined to remain a good European; if the EU fragments then old fears about Germany will resurface: its population is vast (80+ million) and its economy is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest in the world. Yet, its military



activity, as a hang-over to the WWII, in the past three decades remains passive: light touch presence in Kosovo and Afghanistan and nothing in Libya. Germany is noticeably more restraint in its criticism of Russia and the sanctions imposed on them: they need their gas to keep the country going. *While peace has endured for 70 years in Europe, history tells us how quickly things change and geography tells us that if humans do not constantly strive to overcome its 'rules'; its rulers will overcome us.*

The original six nations of 1951 – European Steel and Coal Community – had a founding ideology: 'ever closer union.' This union was made closer by the 19/28 nations signing up to the Single Currency in 1999. All nations, exception Denmark and UK, are obliged to join it once they have met the criteria. Sadly, some of the southern nations were simply not ready and the process was rushed: they were supposed to have levels of

debt, unemployment and inflation within certain limits. Greece, for one, cooked the books and many turned a blind eye; after all the euro is not just a currency it is an ideology. During the financial crash of 2008 it was the donors, from the north, who were asked to bail out some of the southern fellow EU-members, which grated Germany. Cracks are indeed appearing in the edifice of 'Family Europe'. Greece is looking like a semi-detached member, there is conflict in the east, so if peace and unity is to remain then love, care and attention is required. The post-war generation may take peace for granted which might be foolish.

**The UK:** is well positioned: good farmland, decent rivers and fine access to the seas and fish stocks, and easy access to the markets. UK gives thanks to this as wars and revolutions swept over its neighbours. In fact, it has experienced more freedom than most and has fewer requirements for 'strong men' despots. Its democratic roots were well set in the Magna Carta (1215) and Provisions of Oxford (1258) – Britain's first constitution. In terms of development, the UK had it all: hard woods to build a large navy, economic conditions and raw materials to spark an industrial revolution, which in turn funded a global empire. Its location gives it further advantages: within the GIUK (Greenland, Iceland and UK) gap, a choke point of world sea lanes. Any Russian naval ship coming from the Arctic has to pass this lane. This is why an independent Scotland – and the loss of its coastlines - would have serious military implications for Westminster. The UK remains within the EU yet outside it. The large waves of refugees from the Middle East and Africa has driven anti-EU feelings within the UK, while in continental Europe the rise of right-wing political parties serves to further fragment the EU. The Schengen Zone, which comprises 26 nations is creating tensions amongst some neighbours: Denmark has closed its borders with Germany.



**Demographics:** yet Europe needs immigration. Its greying, predominantly white, population needs an injection of young, working people, a fact that has eluded many anti-immigration voters. The cultural and religious characteristics of the migrants is what troubles many Europeans; strong anti-Muslim feelings are growing as debates about women's rights, blasphemy laws and freedom of speech are brought into sharp focus.

**Poland's position** – between France/ Germany and Russia - explains its tricky history: the North European Plain is at its narrowest between Poland's Baltic Coast and the Carpathian Mts in the south. This is where Russia might look to exploit. This might explain Poland's eagerness to keep Germany's membership of both the EU and NATO. The US, in turn, were keen to make Poland a member, as it meant the NATO alliance could be within 400 miles from Moscow.

The **Balkan's** mountains might explain the emergence of so many countries. With the 1990s war over, most of the former Yugoslav nations are looking westwards, but in Serbia with its Orthodox religion and Slavic peoples looks east. The region remains an economic and diplomatic battleground.

**France:** is the real estate – in terms of natural geography – dream: it is both a northern and a southern power. It has the largest fertile plain in Europe and many rivers connect; one travels to the Atlantic (Seine) while the other to the Mediterranean (Rhône). This helped Napoleon unify regions and centralise power.

**Germany:** has always had bigger geopolitical problems than France. The North European Plain gave it two reasons to be fearful: France in the west and Russia in the east. The German coastline has not always served it well: for example, in the turn of the century the British navy could blockade their access to both the North Sea and Atlantic. In both world wars, their solution was to attack France first.

**Religion:** There are some unprovable theories regarding the harder working Protestants (in the north) Vs Catholics (in the south), but it seems Germany (30% Catholic) and Bavaria (entirely so) spoils this theory, home to BMW, Siemens and Allianz.

## USA

**Location, location, location...**when it comes to real estate the USA is a millionaires dream. Even though it is made up of 50 different states it more of one nation that the 28 EU members could ever dream of.

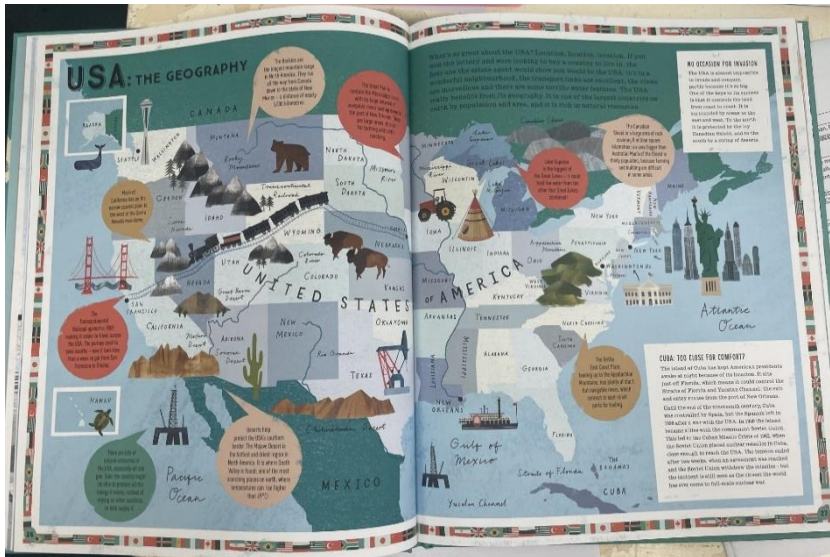
Its geography is ideal: The **East Coast Plain** leading to the Appalachians: area is well watered by short but navigable rivers and with fertile soils. The first settlers first recognised that the east coast was 'virgin' packed with **natural harbours** and **fertile soil**. In the early days of the colony – from Massachusetts to Georgia – was bounded by the Atlantic and the Appalachians. The British forbade settlement to the west of these mountain as it wanted to ensure that trade, and taxes, remained on the Eastern Seaboard.

In 1803 the US bought control of the entire **Louisiana Territory** from France, an area equivalent to Spain, France, Italy, UK and Germany combined. For \$15 million, the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the US....'never did the US get so much for so little.' The US now had geographic depth, a massive fertile plain and an alternative to Atlantic ports.



The Great Plains, further west, stretch all the way to the Rockies, with the Mississippi basin with its vast network of **huge navigable rivers** that flow into the Mississippi River all the way south to the Gulf of Mexico, an area sheltered by Florida and islands to the south. This basin has more navigable miles of river than the rest of the world put together. To boot, the land is relatively flat so engineering costs were minimal. And so a vast trading conduit was established on the water, a cheaper version to roads.

And there is the natural **defence network that protect the USA**: to the north, near the Great Lakes, the Canadian Shield provides a barrier to human settlement; the south-west is desert. The huge border with Canada, one power with a similar culture and language, and a trading partner, provides a safe guard from invading powers from the north.



you were poor from Germany, Scandinavia, Italy why go to Latin America (where you would become a surf) ...go to the US where you would be a free land-owning man.

1867 – **Alaska** was bought from Russia for \$7.2 million (or 2 cents/ acre) – at the time the press accused the government of purchasing snow but quite soon gold was discovered and then an abundance of oil.

1869 – the **transcontinental railroad** was opened which allowed people to cross the country in a week.; previously it had taken several hazardous months.

As the country became more connected, it grew in prosperity- and then it developed a Blue Water navy. In 1903 America signed a treaty leasing it exclusive rights to the **Panama Canal**. Trade was booming.

Apart from a late entry into WW1, 20<sup>th</sup> century America **managed to avoid entanglements and alliances** until 1941. WW2 changed everything when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour (after the US had imposed economic sanctions that would have brought the country to its knees).

**After the war** it was a case of the **US being the land man standing**. The Europeans had exhausted themselves and their economies and cities lay in ruins, Japan was crushed (and at war with China) and the Russians were too absorbed in their own Soviet game. As such, the US were eager to keep the peace, gain control of the world's sea lanes and get the goods to market.

To allow this to happen the US learnt from the UK's expansionist methods of old (oversea naval bases and coaling stations) and they duly acquired them (for exchange for warships which the British were short of). In 1940 the '**Destroyers for Bases Agreement**' was passed which gave control to most of the UK's bases in the Western Hemisphere.



As it proved, it was all about **concrete** – concrete in building ports, runways, hardened aircraft hangars, fuel depots, dry docks and Special Forces training. In the East, after the defeat of Japan, America seized the opportunity build the above all over the Pacific. They had Guam – now they had bases all the way up to the Japanese island of Okinawa in the East China Sea.

In 1949 – **Washington led the formation of NATO** which assumed command of the Western world's surviving military might. While the civilian head of NATO is placed on rotation (UK, France, Belgium) the military commander is always an American, as illustrated during the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956, when the British/ French were compelled by American pressure to cease their occupation of the canal zone, losing most of their influence in the Middle East.

The founding member of NATO (Iceland, Norway, UK and Italy) all granted the USA access and rights to their bases which meant they dominated the N. Atlantic and the Mediterranean. By 1951 they had formed alliances with Australia and NZ.

Meanwhile, in 1991 **Russia's threat** has been seen off due to their economic incompetence. In 2004 President Obama described Russia as 'no more than a regional power'....with the rise of cyber warfare he may be proved wrong. Yet while the USA care about (in a pre-Trump era, anywhere) Europe – they were partially behind the 2014 change of government in Ukraine, as they wanted to extend democracy and move the Ukraine more away from Russian influence – they see Russia as a European issue, albeit one to keep an eye on. Yet, **Russia took advantage of the US's collective distractions** of Afghanistan and Iraq and quietly seized territory in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine (Crimea).

But **China** is rising but not as fast as most commentators think – T. Marshall believes they will take a decade before they become the world's leading superpower. Economically, they are on track but militarily they are decades behind. China does not have enough naval bases to exert a global influence yet.

Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, S Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia have all been keen to cosy up to the USA in response to their anxiety about China's rise. The US have exerted '**soft power**' in the region (through trade and investment in manufacturing) in what Hilary Clinton (Sec of State, at the time) described as '**the pivot to Asia**'. Many foreign policy strategists are persuaded that the history of the 21st century will be written in Asia and Pacific – after all, half the world's population lives there.

The issue of **not losing face** is not just an Asian cultural maxim but a global one – being seen to back down will always be viewed as weak, a way of thinking that will always engender conflict.

As China's thirst for oil and gas grows, so that of the US decline (fracking will allow them to become self-sufficient by 2020), something that will have a huge impact on its **foreign relations** with the **Middle East**. The flow of oil/ gas in the Gulf will be less important as will the alliances with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar – should they be left alone or is the issue of Iran still an issue?

The **relationship with Israel** is an interesting one – as the **US's demographic change** (many more Hispanics and Asians) so will the international perspective – Panama Canal will be important as will Cuba, as seen with the recent investment there (tourism).

America's **experiment with nation-building overseas** appears to be over: in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the US underestimated the mentality and strength of small powers and of tribes – these regions have long held strong suspicions of 'the other', even within their own areas, hence the local tensions Sunni V Shia, Kurd V Arab, Muslim Vs Jew/ Christian, and so.





It has been popular to think the **US is experiencing an ongoing decline** but why? The world's most successful nation is about to become self-sufficient in energy, it outspends most superpowers on military R&D (and in tech in general) and it does not have an ageing population, as seen in Europe, Japan. 17 of the top 20 universities in the world are in the USA. And people are still voting with their feet - the first choice of all people globally hoping to emigrate is the USA (Gallup poll).

Bismark once said, **“God takes special care of drunks, children and the USA.”**

## Africa

**It is all about its geography** – Africa has great beaches but **terrible harbours**; amazingly dramatic (lots of waterfalls) rivers but they are **unnavigable**, so trade and transport opportunities are hampered. Simplistic as it may sound but this is the reason why Africa is technologically and politically poorer than W. Europe and N. America. “It is the opposite of what one would expect from the first runner off the block” ... c.8,000 BCE.

Zambezi River may be Africa's 4<sup>th</sup> longest (1,600 miles)- and have stunning tourist value (Victoria Falls) but as a trade route it has little value: it flows through six countries, dropping 5,000 feet! In contrast, the Danube and the Rhine flow in a more sympathetic way (wide, deep, slow) so easily connect people, goods and ideas. **Africa's other great rivers** – Niger, Congo, Nile – don't connect and this disconnect has a human factor. While vast areas of Russia, Canada/ USA and China speak a unifying language (which assists trade) in Africa thousands of languages exist and no one culture emerged to dominate areas of a similar size. Europe had a 'lingua franca' through which to



communicate and a landscape that encouraged interaction. Despite this, some African empires did emerge – Mali (C13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>); city state of Great Zimbabwe (C11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>), but they were too small and isolated to dominate.

**But some rivers have brought life and power** – the Nile in Egypt. The vast majority of its 90

million population live within a few miles of the river. Its empire grew due to its natural boundaries – Sahara desert to the west and south and the Red Sea to the east – but it never became a true global entity due to its lack of trees. Without them, one cannot build a navy from which to exert power and defend your coastline. Modern engineering has helped them be a powerful military presence (aided by US aid) as the Suez Canal but brings influence and riches: 8% of the world's trade passes through it daily, alongside 3% of the world's oil. Closing the canal would add 15 days of transit time to Europe and then to the USA. Despite the troubles that exist in the north (in the Middle East) the next conflict Egypt will have will be with Ethiopia, over water. Ethiopia, known as Africa's water tower,



due to its high elevation, is the source of the Blue Nile. Its government announced in 2011 that a massive HEP scheme will be built near the Sudan border and will be completed in 2020. The dam will secure water and power to the nation – it will store a year's supply – and thus restrict the flow to the south. Ethiopia's population is now larger than Egypt, and its army is expanding, so they hold great potential power in the region. In addition, destroying the dam would flood Sudan and Egypt. In short, **water wars are the future.**

**Harbours do not exist too readily** in Western Africa as European explorers discovered as the coastline is too smooth – in Europe much of the coasts are jagged and deep (from glaciation?, JHC) – and the interior (beyond 100km inland) hard to penetrate due to river rapids/ waterfalls and difficult climate/ disease.

European and Arab traders mainly kept their **technology** to themselves and took away whatever they found of value (people and resources).

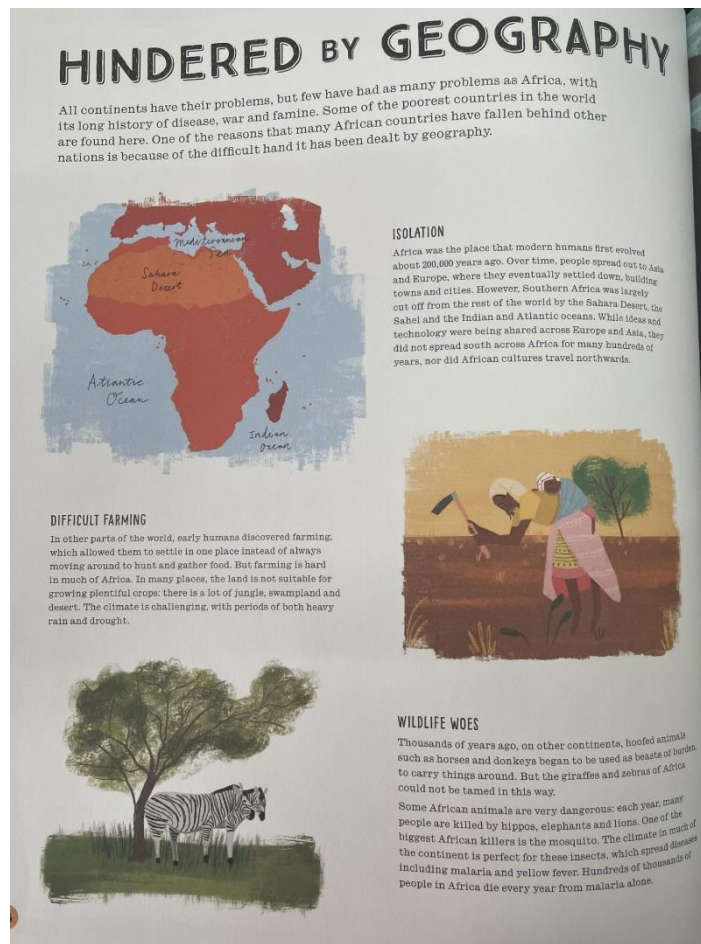
However, the **Sahara Desert** and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans separate Africa from 'everyone else'. As such, the entire continent developed in isolation from the Eurasian land mass, where ideas and technology were exchanged from east to west, and west to east but not north to South.

The **world's idea of African geography is flawed**. Few people realise just how big it is – most of us use the Mercator world maps – hence what an achievement navigating the Cape was and how important the Suez Canal is. Africa is actually x3 the size of the USA (inc. Alaska).

The most basic way to divide **Africa is in terms of the top third and the bottom two-thirds**. The top third – North African Arabic-speaking – faces north to Europe, hence its more developed economy, and is cut off by the Sahara and the Sahel to the south, a semi-arid strip of 3,000 miles (from Gambia to the Red Sea). Sahel comes from the Arabic word *Sahil*, meaning coast, for this is how the people of the region see it as, as the vast shoreline of the Sahara Desert. The bottom two-thirds is more diverse in most things: the land is more temperate and green (jungle in the Congo); vast lakes in Uganda and Tanzania and deserts in Namibia and Angola, and Mediterranean at the Cape.

The **vegetation** (swamp, desert, steep-sided plateau) **does not lend itself to growing rice or wheat** while rhinos, gazelles and giraffes stubbornly refuse to be beasts of burden. As the National Geographic put it, "*History might have*

*turned out differently if Africa armies, fed by barnyard-giraffe meat and backed by waves of Calvary*





*mounted on huge rhinos, had swept into Europe to overrun its mutton-fed soldiers on puny horses.”* It's climate holds it back further as a virulent set of diseases (malaria, yellow fever, AIDs, Tsetse fly) thrive in the heat and (now) over-crowded living conditions and poor health infrastructure.

**European powers** (in the C16<sup>th</sup>) **mapped Africa** by its rivers and called them countries (“Middle Congo”). The lines on the maps were more about how far explorers, military forces and businessmen had advanced rather than what people, who lived between these lines, saw themselves to be, or how they wanted to organise themselves. As such, many Africans were prisoners of the political geography, alongside their own physical geography.

The **ethnic conflicts** that exist within South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Angola, Somalia, DRC, Mali (and so on) are evidence that the European idea of geography did not fit the reality of Africa's demographics. There may always have been conflict between the Xhosas and Zulus but colonialism forced these differences to be resolved in an artificial state. The modern civil wars may exist because the colonial ruler told the different tribes that they were one nation in one state, and then after independence, one tribe dominated over the others and the violence ensued. Libya is a good example: at the first test (fall of Col Gadhafi) it fell apart into its previous incarnations as three distinct regions: West around Tripoli (three cities) which looked north and northwest; East around Benghazi to the Chad border (formerly Cyrenaica in Greek and Roman times) which looked to Egypt and Arab lands and the southwest in a region called Fezzan which looks south towards nomadic lands. The latter has very little in common with the other two.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** is another victim of ‘line drawing’ (on a map). As Joseph Conrad described in his *Heart of Darkness* the country is plagued by internal conflict and a blundered mineral wealth. Its civil war was the most under-reported catastrophe of the C20<sup>th</sup>: 6 million died. The DRC is not developing (as economists label this continent), as it is neither a democracy nor a republic. Its 80 million people are spread across a land bigger than Germany, Spain and France combined, and are divided into >200 ethnic groups, with the Bantu being the most dominant. The Belgian colonial rule was harsher than the UK and French as the King Leopold used the mineral wealth to line his own pockets. When the Belgians left in 1960 the country had little infrastructure. The civil wars were inflamed by international intervention – the US and the Soviets as part of the Cold War – while in ‘peace time’ the world wanted DRC's resources but their own governments have never been robust enough to defend their precious metals. First it was rubber and now coltan, zinc and copper – China now imports 50% of it. The country is also bordered by 9 powers, and the bordering tribes that exist on these lines complicate the landscape further, as illustrated in the Rwandan Civil War of 1994. The UN's longest and most expensive mission to date was in DRC – now the job is not to put Humpty Dumpty together again, because the DRC was never a whole. It is simply to keep the pieces apart until a way can be found to join them sensibly and peacefully. The European colonists created an egg without a chicken, something that continues to haunt the continent.

But the blame cannot solely lie in the past. **Current political leaders** often refuse to step down when their terms end. Some leaders can be heard saying, “I am the only person who can hold this nation together.” If that is true, then that leader has truly failed to build a state.

The **Chinese are everywhere in Africa**. 1/3 of African oil goes to China (most still to Europe) and most of the continent's iron ore, copper and cobalt head east. These are vital exports, as are the investment, by the Chinese, in infrastructure projects: Mombasa's port and railways. The China Road and Bridge Corporation invested in \$15billion in improving trading time from Mombasa to Nairobi, from 36 hours to 8 hours which will cut 60% in transport costs. Nairobi will become the regions powerhouse with plans to link the city to South Sudan, Uganda and Rwanda. At present Kenya



accounts for 40% of the regions economy. In Angola the Chinese are building a new international airport; alas most of the workers are Chinese (150,000 to 200,000 to be exact). Chinese involment is an attractive proposition for many African government – Beijing and the big Chinese firms do not ask difficult questions (regarding human rights), or demand economic reform, or interfere with the politics or question the leaders with regards their overseas assets. This influence can be seen beyond trade; China regularly protects Sudan’s wanted leader, Al-Bashir – the International Criminal Court have issues a warrant out for him – in UN meetings. All the Chinese want is the oil, the mineral and the markets.

**South Africa** is the China’s second largest trading partner in Africa. It has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy in the continent and is a relative powerhouse in terms of its GDP, population and military might. Overall, it is the most developed nation in Africa thanks to its locatrion at the very south with access to two oceans, large silver, coal and gold reserves and a climate and land to allow for large-scale farming. Its latitude and plateaus also mean it is one of the few African nations not to suffer from malaria, as mosquitoes find it difficult to breed there. This allowed the colonists to push further inland than other malaria-riddled nations, which allowed for small-scale activities to develop, including new farming techniques, industry and specific services.

**The future...the good news:** The Africa of the past was given no choice – its geography shaped it – and then the Europeans engineered most of today’s borders. Now, with its booming populations and developing mega-cities, it has no choice but to embrace the modern globalised world to which it is so connected. Despite this, it is making huge strides. The same rivers that hampered trade are now being harnessed for HEP. The earth that struggled to sustain large-scale food production have yielded wealth from minerals and oil, making some nations wealthy, even if the wealth is poorly distributed. In most, however, poverty levels have fallen, and healthcare and education level have risen. Most countries are English-speaking which is a big advantage, and the improvements in infrastructure is helping Africa be connected and play a role in global trade. And, **the bad news,** however, economic growth is dependent on global prices for minerals and energy. Countries whose budgets are predicated on receiving over \$100/ barrel of oil have little to fall back on when prices fall to \$80-\$60/ barrel. In some countries, population increases are holding growth back – Africa’s population is said to double in the next 30 years. And manufacturing levels have not increased since the 1970s while corruption remains rampant across the continent, and conflicts rage across many nations.

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