

# **GEOGRAPHY 590/301 Policy Statement-Course Outline**

## **World Political Geography**



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Office Hours: 3pm W&R

**Spring 2016**  
**Mon 430-700**  
Exploratory L004

### **Course Description**

Major political problems of the world as related to geographic factors; regional bloc, strategic areas, disputed zones, and supranational organizations (e.g. Economic Union(EU), Gulf Corporation Council(GCC), North American Treaty Organization(NATO), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), blocked parties under Executive Order (sanctions) and forces of change sweeping the Mideast.

Political Geography concentrates on the geostrategic analysis of major world regions. This course will draw on empirical thought, theories and strategy relative to U.S. national interests both globally and regionally. Included are trends, issues and motivations of nation-states within these regions that are divergent from ours. For example, a deep geopolitical understanding of people, places and motivations might have prevented our initial failures in Palestine, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Somalia, Iraq and Pakistan.

Sun Tzu is the often-studied and frequently quoted 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC military genius. To paraphrase Sun Tzu, to use power effectively in a geopolitical context we must understand both friend and foe." He's also credited with the proverb "Know your enemy". Topical priorities will include organizations and nation-states focused on global terrorism and the geographic shift of U.S. foreign policy focus from the Middle East to East Asia, China and the Pacific Basin.

### **Course Objectives**

By utilizing data bases, maps, and wide range of other information sources:

- To identify geopolitical, social, economic, cultural and historical trends (issues) in major world political regions, as well as underlying reasons of selected inter-state conflict.
- To understand through assessment and research the geostrategic value of these regions to U.S. national interests and foreign policy including offshore geopolitics.
- To examine major global and transnational issues that present major threats to U.S. national security, and political and economic stability of the world family of nation-states.
- To develop your ability to effectively and authoritatively research and present executive summaries of geopolitical trends and issues in the world arena.
- To learn from each other.

### **Information Resources**

- Learning resources will include on-line generated information sources, student generated position papers, and lectures. No textbook will be used. Guest lectures are welcomed. All class material posted on Blackboard.

### **Weekly Research**

Assignment- Two pages plus map double spaced executive summary with at least two sources identified on second page. **Submit print/hard copy only – do not email assignments.**

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### **Document Resource File**

You are encouraged to maintain a file of all your research.

### **Research Assignments: Always Posted on Blackboard**

GMU Library reference staff available to assist in completing weekly assignments.

I may assign weekly topics in class. Details including due dates always posted in advance on Blackboard

I will appoint individuals to present summary findings of their research in class.

I am open to broadening our course objectives and focus in the interest of promoting learning.

### **Examinations, Attendance and Grading Scale**

No exams will be administered. 90%-A 80%-B 70%-C 60%-D

### **Attendance:**

Will affect your grade. Sign in at beginning of each class period.

### **Affirmative Action/Non Discrimination Policy**

GMU is an Equal Opportunity institution, and maintains a grievance procedure incorporating due process available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns. Refer to the current GMU catalog and/or Student Handbook for specific directions. I strongly support the University's nondiscrimination policy.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

All reasonable accommodations will be made. Let me know how I can help you.

### **Academic Integrity**

GMU's Honor Code and policies will be strictly enforced. All members of the GMU community share the responsibility and authority to challenge and make known acts of apparent academic dishonesty. Any person detected participating in any form of academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to actions as described in our Honor Code. Plagiarism is using someone else's words, ideas, or data as your own without giving the owner credit. For example, when writing a paper, the verbatim copying of even a sentence from a book or journal article without acknowledging the source of the information is an act of plagiarism. We are expected to assimilate information and derive our own ideas and words. Because plagiarizing words, data, and ideas is unethical, it will not be tolerated in this class. Anyone caught cheating will be assigned an "F" for the course. Cheating and Plagiarism are defined in other university publications.

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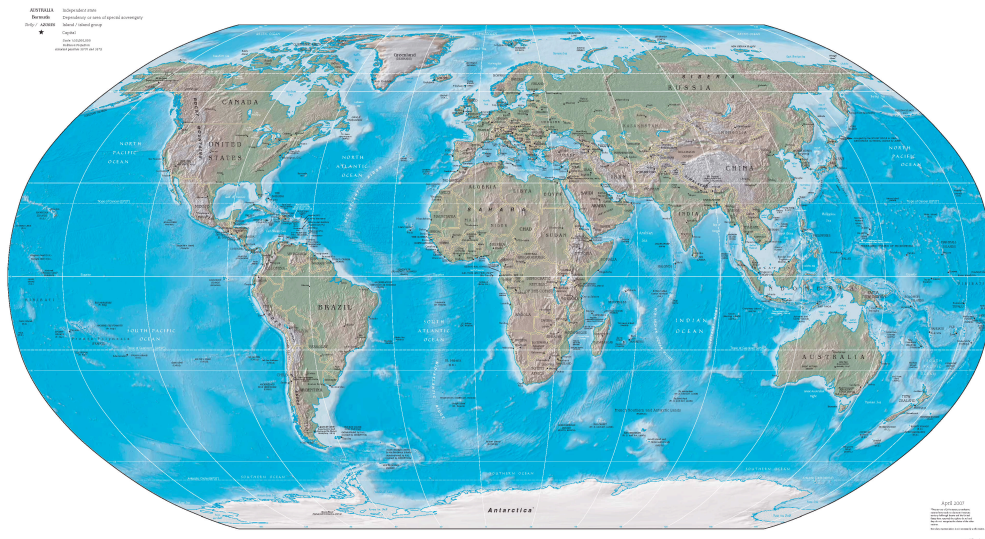


### Focal Points and Criteria for Geostrategic Analysis of Major World Political Regions

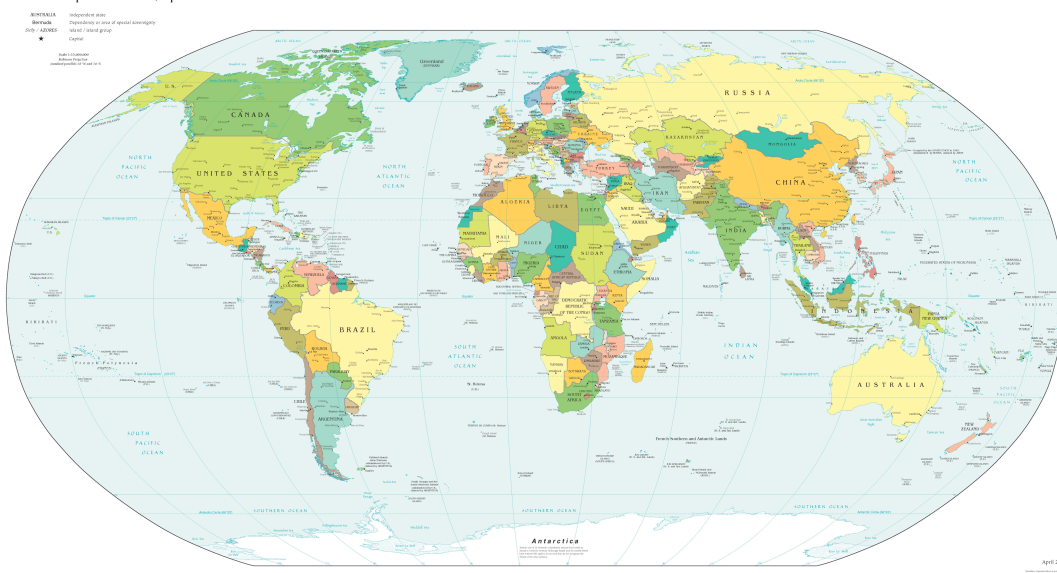
The following represent priority topics for research and discussion each week.

- Present and future U.S. strategic interests and activities (military, economic, political).
- Threats to regional, international and/or U.S. security.
- The *mélange*, or mixture, of current transnational-focused cultural, ethnic, political, military and economic developments now present in the region being studied.

Physical Map of the World, April 2007



Political Map of the World, April 2007

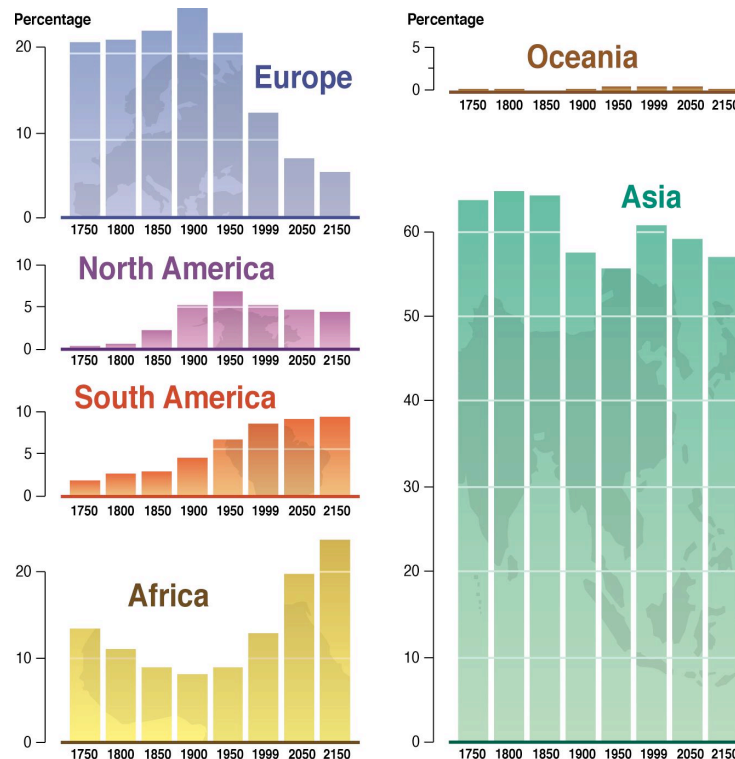


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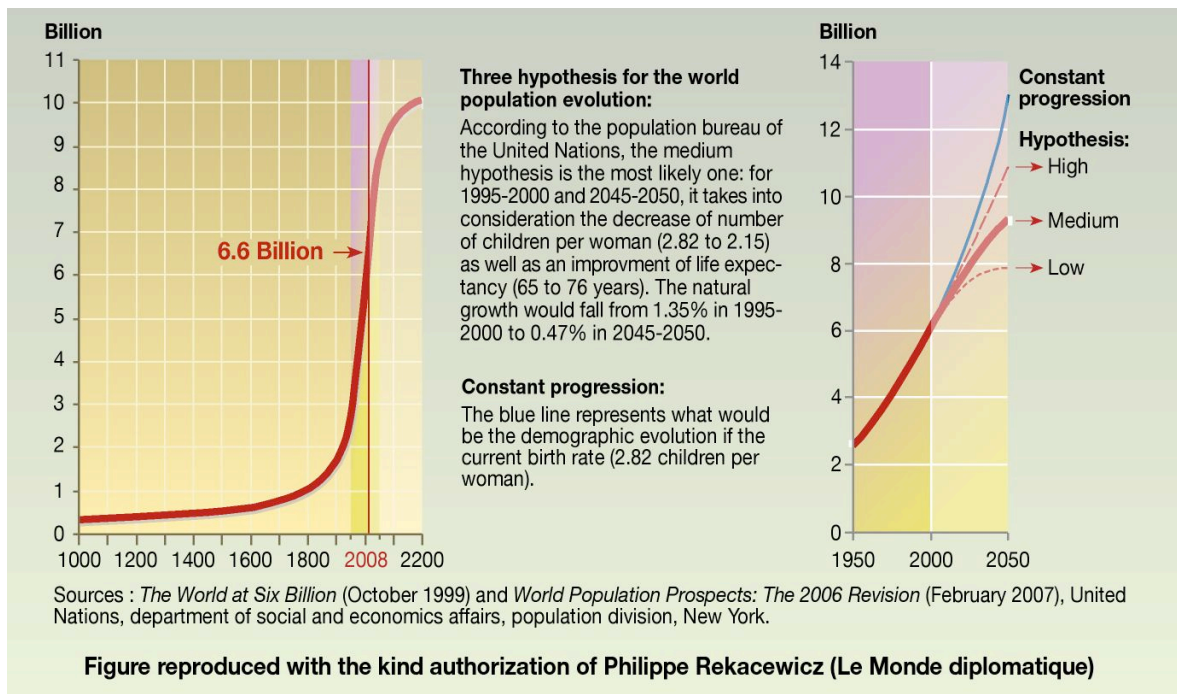
### Population by Continent (1750-2150)



Source: *The World at Six Billion* (October 1999), United Nations, New York ; *Africa Development Indicators (ADI) 2007*, World Bank, Washington DC.

PHILIPPE REKACEWICZ  
FEBRUARY 2008

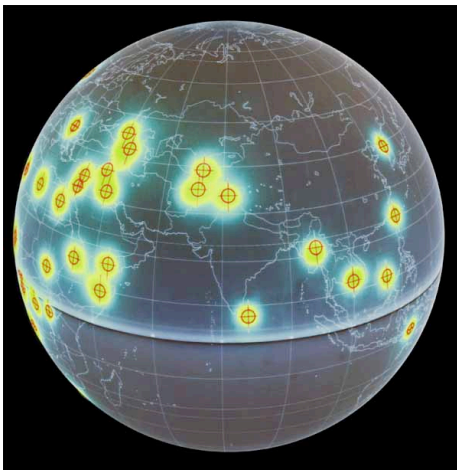
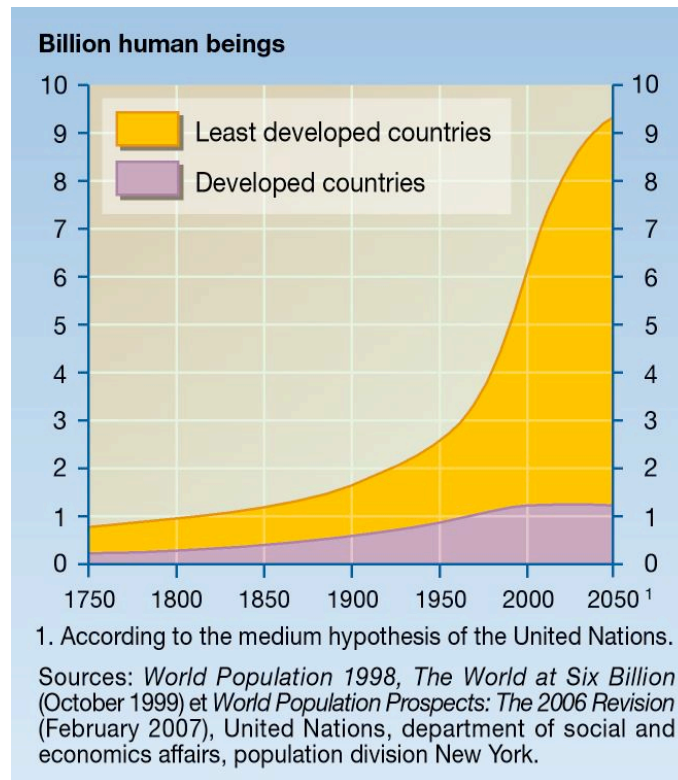
Figure reproduced with the kind authorization of Le Monde diplomatique (Paris)





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### Crisis Zones

Highlighted areas indicate where political crises have developed military aspects.

Source:  
<http://www.worldprocessor.com/catalog/world/mainframe.html>

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### **Week 1 & 2 The geostrategic context. Why are regions important?**

Geostrategic analysis of world political regions. Mideast, North Africa and South Africa.

- Political Geography of:
  - Arab-East Oil and Islam's role in state development.
  - Mahgrib (North Africa)
  - Southwest Asia; Iran, Central Asia: Trade bridge with East and South Asia.
  - Choke points (strategic strait or canal that could be closed or blocked to stop sea traffic ) of the tri-continental junction of the Mideast.
- Nation-state development issues and off-shore political geography.
- Trans-boundary resource development issues and off-shore political geography.
- Asymmetric threats to U.S. Security; Arab-Israel conflict; Islamic national movements in Israel.
- Boundary disputes in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.
- Islamic Revival Organizations: al-Qaeda, HAMAS, Hizbollah: their origin and purpose.
- Arabian Peninsula- ethnicity and state development: the case of Iraq.
- Subsaharan Africa (colonial period, priority focus of China)
- Sanctions, Office of Foreign Asset Control, Syria, Libya and Iran.

### **Week 3 & 4 Mid Eurasia (including Inner-Asia)**

- Central Asia and New Silk Road (Eurasian Corridor)
- Geopolitical value of Afghanistan; Pathan Homeland; Durand Line; Pipeline Crossroads.
- Heartland and Rimland: Siberia, the Caucasus, and Sino-Russian political geography (Fortress Russia).
- Analyzing the power potential of Eurasia using geographical position, area, and physiography.
- Choke points: Kyber Pass, Bolens Pass, Chumbi, Roof of the World, Great Northern Wall.
- Himalayan Watershed (Mother of all the great rivers of South, Southeast and East Asia).
- Boundary disputes in South Asia- India, Pakistan and China (Kashmir; Sino-Indian Frontier).
- The Geopolitical School of Nicholas Spykman; U.S. Foreign Policy Basis of Eurasia for 50 years.

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### **Maritime Choke Points**

**Gibraltar**



**Panama Canal**



**Strait of Magellan**



**Strait of Malacca**



**Bosporus & Dardanelles**



**Suez Canal**



**Strait of Hormuz**



**Bab el Mandeb**



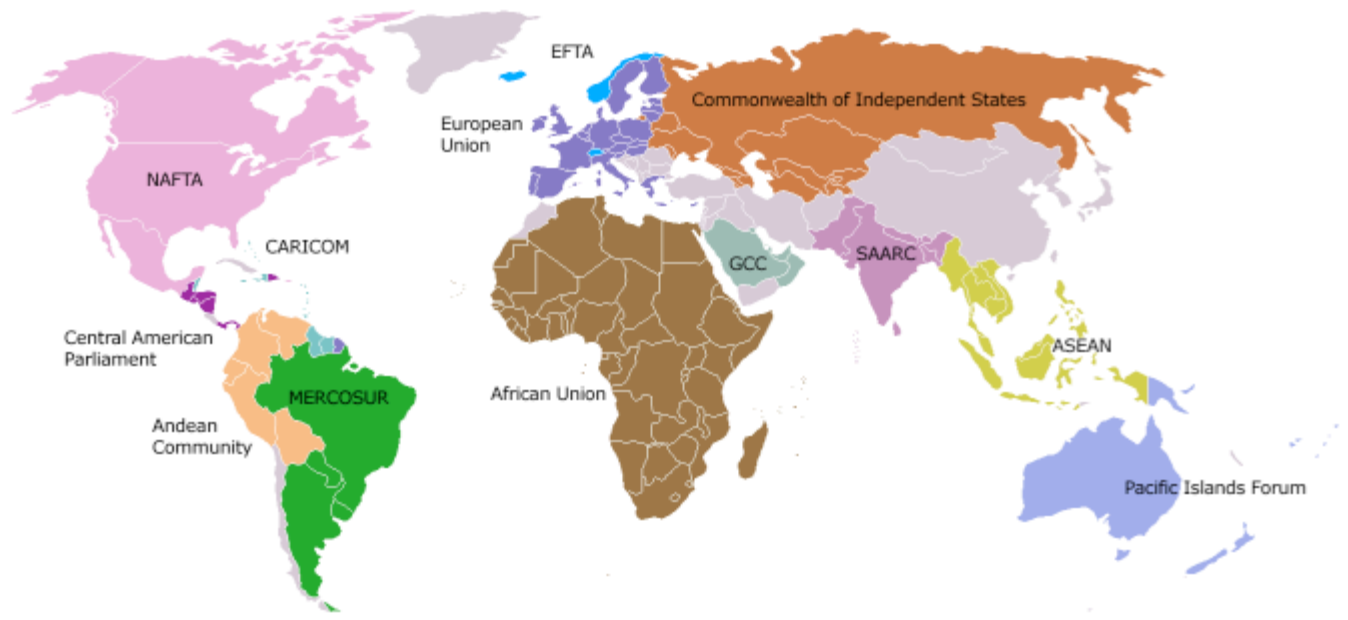
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### **Week 4 Supranational organizations in shifting world power cores**

- European Union and U.S. Trade Priorities and UN Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011)
- North American and Mexico Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)— North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Organization
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC and Arabian Gulf States)
- North American Treaty Organization (NATO)  
Expansion into the Heartland of Asia and global peace keeping operations
- World Trade Organization (WTO)  
Big Emerging Markets, the Chinese Economic Area and its role.
- Organization of the Islamic Conference (largest world religious organization)
- League of Arab Nations
- Politics of Globalization
- Trans-Atlantic Alliance and anti-Americanism of Europe.







**Week 5**

**Maritime Political Geography**

**Offshore Political Geography and Natural Resources**

- Atlantic Ocean—Atlantic Community Majority of world's shipping and trade.
- Pacific Ocean—Majority of world's population and land area (Pacific Basin).
- C. Indian Ocean—Geopolitically hot (Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, and Arabian Sea).
- South China Sea—Flash point involving Vietnam, China, Indonesia, and Philippines (especially the Spratleys and Pescadores); East China Sea, Yellow Sea.
- Choke points
- Hainan Island PRC EEZ versus U.S. EEZ
- Lines of Maritime Jurisdiction (3 mile, 12 mile, right of passage, military control, etc.) and the Law of the Sea.
- PRC in Panama and the Panama Canal.

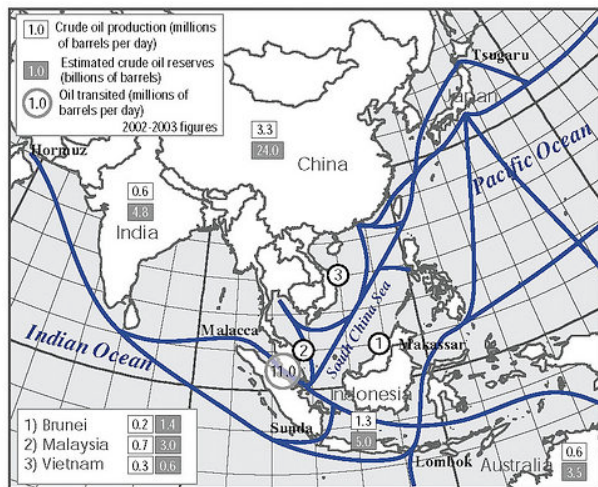
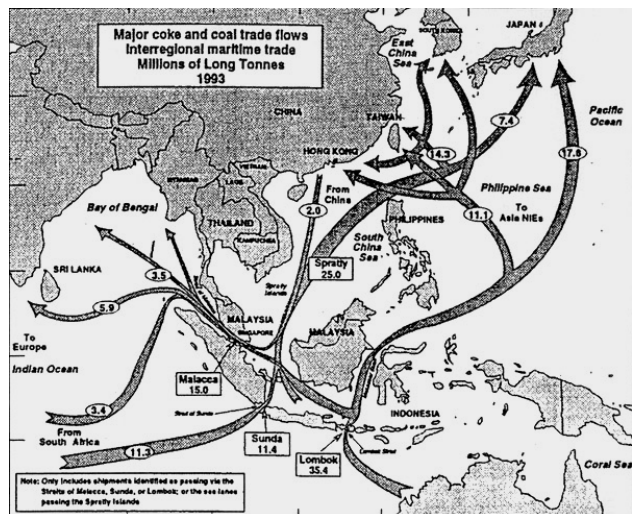
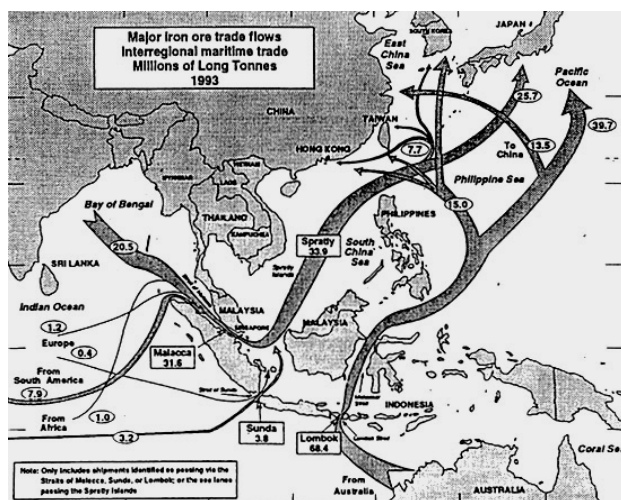
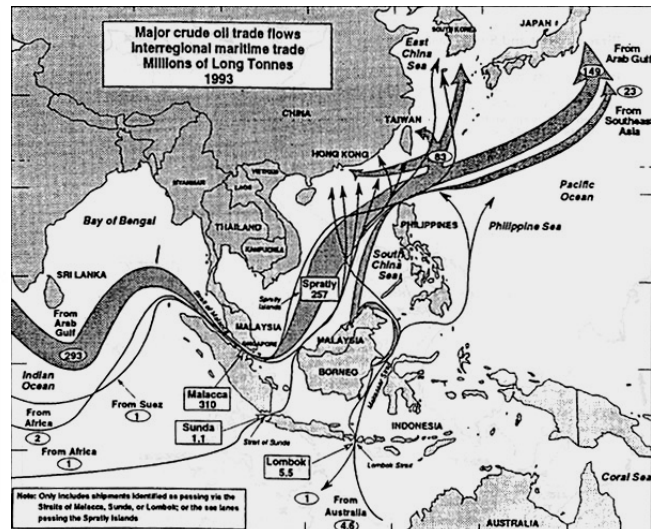


Figure 7 Shipping Lanes and Strategic Passages in Pacific Asia



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### Week 6 & 7 East Asia- Sun Tzu; *Little Red Book* (MAO)

- The PRC: Hot conflict based Foreign Policy (1950, 1951, 1962, 1969, 1979- Tibet, Korea, India, USSR and Vietnam). The modern P.L.A.
- Historic China: Opium War, Fists of Righteous Harmony, Chinese Civil War (Communist versus Nationalist China).
- U.S. – Taiwan: Mutual defense?
- China as long-term strategic threat to U.S. (Africa: Sudan, Nigeria and Angola)
- South Korea- U.S. strategic interests
- Who was Sun Tzu? Master of Demon Valley, Others.
- Applications of Sun Tzu: select one current issue focusing on a single political region.
- North Korea: Korean War, DMZ and WMD.
- Guam: military build-up in the Pacific
- China in Africa: geopolitical and foreign policy priorities. Focus: Sudan oil and the creation of the state of South Sudan.



Left: Cartoon depicting China's ambition in Africa.

Source: <http://codrinarsene.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07...>; accessed February 2, 2009.

Right: Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo with Chinese President Hu Jintao at the opening of the China-Africa summit in Beijing.

Source: <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol20no4...>; accessed February 2, 2009.

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### **Week 8 & 9 Southeast Asia—Role of ethnicity and the Colonial Era on modern Political Geography**

- Colonial Period: Dutch, French, British, Portuguese Political Geography and history of SE Asia.
- First Indochina War 1947-1953 (Bernard Fall)
  - Street Without Joy-Highway 1
  - *Hell in a Very Small Place*—the siege of Dien Bien Phu
  - Mobility versus physical geography (climate and terrain)
  - Who won and why
- Second Indochina War 1957-1975
  - Physical Geography and Mobility (climate and terrain)
  - Population Geography
  - Who won and why
- Ethnic Based National Movements and Wars
  - Malaya: Chinese versus colonial British
  - Burma: Shan and Karen Revolts; Kachin and Chin tribal areas
  - Philippines: Moslem Revolt; Islamists
  - Boundary disputes
- The Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, and China)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and U.S. trade policy
- Cambodia and Thailand boundary conflict and war.

### **Week 10 Balkans and Eastern Europe**

- Conflict of Empires—Ottoman Turk and Austro-Hungarian; Religion and Ethnicity.
- Land of South Slavs—Yugoslavia- Break up and new political geography. Serbia and Russia.
- Origins of East European Political Geography.
- Modern Political Geography and Strategic Alliances of Balkans and Eastern Europe (Key to Russian Heartland)
- Boundary disputes (Romania and Russia-Bessarabia; Poland and Germany; Hungary and Serbia; Kosovo)

### **Week 11 European Community: Small but Diverse**

- NATO Expansion and Russian Geopolitical concerns
- Strategic links: Colonial Era, African natural resources and European Economic Unions' Lome, Conversions
- Pan-Germanism and modern political geography of Europe.
- Boundary disputes (especially in regards to Pre-WWII political geography)

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### **Week 12 Middle America**

- The Caribbean: Political Geography and U.S. strategic concerns
- Mainland Central America: The PRC, Panama Canal and the U.S. two ocean navy
- Mexico and the U.S.: Strategic concerns and political history
- Mexico: Immigration; Drugs and International Relations
- Organization of American States (OAS)
- Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) political basis of modern Mexico

### **Week 13 South America: Foreign Policy**

- History of U.S. intervention and Middle America
- Mexico as Gateway; Central America as Bridge
- The Southern Cone: A Geographical Triangle (Chile-Argentina-Brazil)
- National rivalries and South America's traditionally strong military forces
- Maritime South America: The 3 Gateways of Atlantic Brazil, Pacific Chile, Rio De La Plata
- The ABC Pact (Argentina, Brazil and Chile)
- Asymmetric threats: Columbia and narcoterrorism—global links
- The Environment: A transnational political and resource utilization issue
  - Amazon
  - Atacama desert
  - Coastal Peru Current and Law of the Sea (EEZ)

### **Week 14 North America**

- U.S. civil infrastructure and global asymmetric threats  
Geopolitical-based foreign policy priorities
- Does U.S. political and military power continue to be inversely related to distance?
- Counter-terrorism: resources and methods
- Changing demographics and American political geography

### **Week 15 Summary and Conclusion**



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### **Landlocked Nations**

These countries have one territorial condition in common: no access to the world's oceans. This has a fundamental impact on economics, social behavior, and perspective on the world. Many of the republics of the former Soviet Union are landlocked.

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### **On-Line Resources**

#### **US Census Bureau**

##### **Foreign Trade Statistics 2010**

[www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics)

##### **US Imports — All countries from 2001 to 2011**

<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/product/enduse/imports/index.html>

##### **US Exports — All countries from 2001 to 2011**

<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/product/enduse/exports/index.html>

#### **US Central Intelligence Agency's**

##### ***The World Factbook 2010***

[www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook)

#### **US Digital Map Library**

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/maps/>

#### **US Library of Congress**

##### **Research Centers - Country Studies**

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>

#### **US State Department**

##### **Background Notes**

[www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn)

#### **The World Bank**

##### **Countries & Regions: Data & Research**

[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

#### **Michigan State University**

##### **Center for International Business Education and Research globalEDGE™**

<http://globaledge.msu.edu/ibrd/ibrd.asp>

#### **University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

##### **J. Murrey Atkins Library**

##### **VIBES - Virtual International Business & Economic Sources**

<http://library.uncc.edu/vibes/>

#### **University of Texas at Austin**

##### **Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection**

##### **General Map Sites**

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/iraq.html>

#### **Maps on Other Web Sites**

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/map\\_sites/map\\_sites.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/map_sites/map_sites.html)

#### **GeoHive** (Web site dedicated to population statistics and demographics)

<http://www.xist.org/earth/statorgz.aspx>