

***The Power of Geography: Ten Maps That Reveal the Future of Our World*, Tim Marshall, (London: Elliot and Thompson Limited, 2021), 339**

The Power of Geography: Ten Maps That Reveal the Future of Our World by Tim Marshall is the prequel of his book *Prisoners of Geography*. The book highlights the power of geography. It draws reader's attention to the role played by mountains, rivers, and the sea routes to understand geopolitical realities of a state. The book has ten chapters eight of these are dedicated to different states. The starting point of discussion on every state is its location in relation to its neighbours and its natural resources. Furthermore, it discusses how geopolitics had left a deep impact on nations politics, defining where their borders fall, where empires had expanded and where their ambitions rested. The geography of the nations has also been discussed along with their history. That helps in understanding each state's present geographical layout, and political preferences. Tim Marshall also looks at some of the events and conflicts that have emerged in the twenty-first century which may have far-reaching consequences in a multipolar world.

Tim Marshall is a leading voice on foreign affairs with more than 30 years experience of reporting from forty countries. These included conflict zones in Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Israel. He was the diplomatic editor at Sky News, and before that was working for the BBC and LBC/IRN radio. He is the author of the *Prisoners of Geography*, a must read for students of international relations. He is also the founder and editor of the current affairs site *TheWhatandtheWhy.com*.

The book under review comprises ten chapters covering eight separate nations including Australia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UK, Greece, Turkey, Ethiopia, Spain and a chapter each on vast arid areas of Sahel, and space. In each case, the author has examined in some detail how location, terrain, and climate of these countries have shaped their destinies. Space is the last chapter and one that is particularly interesting. The analysis of each chapter starts with discussion of the key geographical characteristics of the country that are helpful, and those

which create hindrance in the expansion of their power. Then, brief history of the region in which a particular country is located is discussed, and how the existing territory of the state has affected its geopolitics in the perspectives of the decisions made by its leaders. All this discussion leads to prognosis of likely future course a country may take in the backdrop of Covid-19, climate change, technological development, energy, and globalisation.

The book begins with discussion on the state of Australia followed by chapters on other states, Sahel, and on space. Australia today is territorially huge having connections by air and sea routes. It is sitting between the two great water bodies i.e., Indian Ocean to its west and the Pacific to its east, and the rising power of China to the north. It has become a bulwark since it finds itself caught between the two most powerful states i.e., US and China. Australia in author's opinion, will try to forge a constructive dialogue with China with one eye on its economy and maintaining defence and political ties with the US. It will, however, 'play it tough, all the way'.

Iran is protected by mountains which form a ring of crust on most of its borders (making it a fortress). It has huge salt desert areas in-land, and has widely dispersed population. This dispersal of population favours ethnic and cultural diversity, which hinders spread of fundamentalist ideology in the young population. The Strait of Hormuz enables Iran to have significant influence in the region as the Strait can be easily blocked at its narrowest point. This chokepoint has helped it to gain influence in the region as other countries including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait are dependent on the Strait for exporting oil.

Saudia Arabia was created in the 20th century using transport and communication technologies, but the geography of the state defines differences in the region. Oil is the major driver of its economy, and the US its major ally and protector. But, as the demand for oil declines and the US becomes more energy-independent, the Saudi leadership has to build new society with new economy and a functioning military.

Talking about UK, Marshall observes that UK will try to develop friendly relations with other states in post-Brexit time. It is still a major global financial powerhouse and an influential state which will be seeking new alliances. However, the consequences of Brexit would cause greater

damage to the international standing of UK. One of the oldest nations of Europe is Spain which is the fourth-largest country on the continent of Europe behind Russia, Ukraine and France, with which it shares border. Spain also faces the threat of breakup from regional nationalism. It will continue to face external pressures, but its main challenges come from within. The origin of these challenges can be traced to its geography.

Greece has become an important piece of real estate for foreign powers as its geography has placed it at the international geopolitical front. It can be a secondary defensive position if a hostile Russian navy tries to break out of the Black Sea. It is on the front line of Europe's migrant crisis and the effects of the new waves of migration can already be felt there. The discovery of undersea gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean looks destined to become a source of conflict between Greece and Turkey. Gas has also been found in Egypt, Cyprus and Israel but not in Turkish waters. If and when gas starts flowing from these fields, these countries will become competitors for Russia's supply of gas to Europe. While, Turkey has much wider ambitions as it is also flexing its muscles in the East Mediterranean. With its agenda of 'neo-Ottomanism', Turkey has sought to turn into a stand-alone power that is playing all the sides. In the multipolar world, Turkey has become a major player among the numerous actors that have undermined the post-Second World War order.

On to Ethiopia where water defines its geopolitical position and importance. It has twelve large lakes and nine major rivers, most of which provide water to its neighbours, giving Ethiopia enormous political leverage over them, particularly Egypt. However, this is not an option in many other parts of Africa like Sahel.

The final chapter of the book is titled 'Space'. An intense geopolitical confrontation between major powers can be seen in space, something that Marshall argues, has every chance of developing into a threat to the planet, similar to the nuclear arms race in the cold war period. Getting out there in space has become cheaper and within the reach of private companies, so we can expect competition for the moon's resources as well. The expeditions to the moon, and vast amount of data on space now available to the scientists helps us stretch our minds further into the space.

Marshall's book presents a thoughtful introduction and a detailed account of crucial concepts of international politics. The writer has decades of experience of working in several regions and has read deeply about the histories and geopolitics of each region besides keeping a close eye on internal political changes in each country. His deep knowledge and first-hand experience have helped him understand the national and political histories, current international clout and likely future scenarios of each country. Surveying the ten regions of the world, the author concludes that the demographics, economics and geopolitics of different states have greater impact on the future of the planet than the decisions of the individual politicians. *Power of Geography: Ten Maps That Reveal the Future of Our World*, is as impressive as author's other book *Prisoner's of Geography: Ten Maps that Explain Everything About the World*.

Reviewed by Ms. Amna Saqib, Research Officer, Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad.