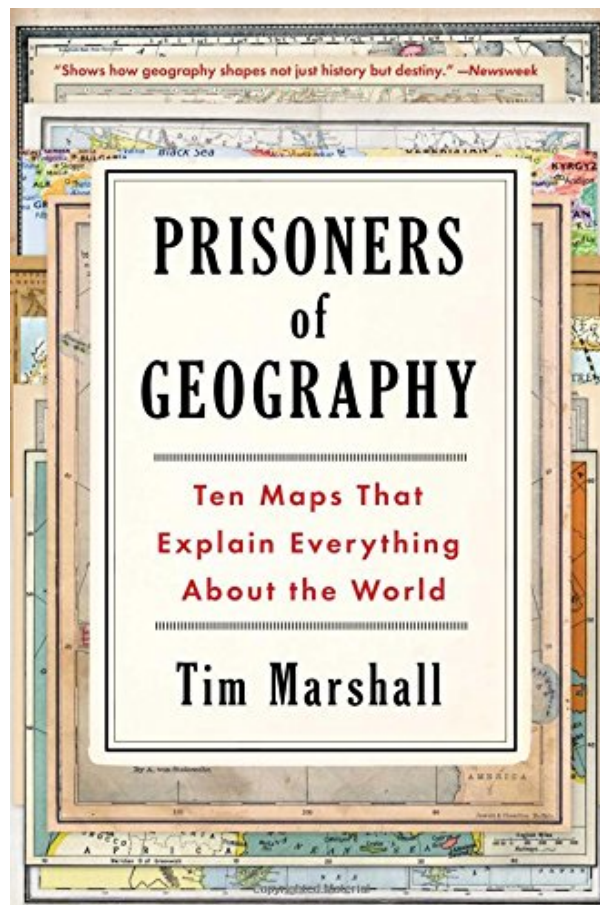
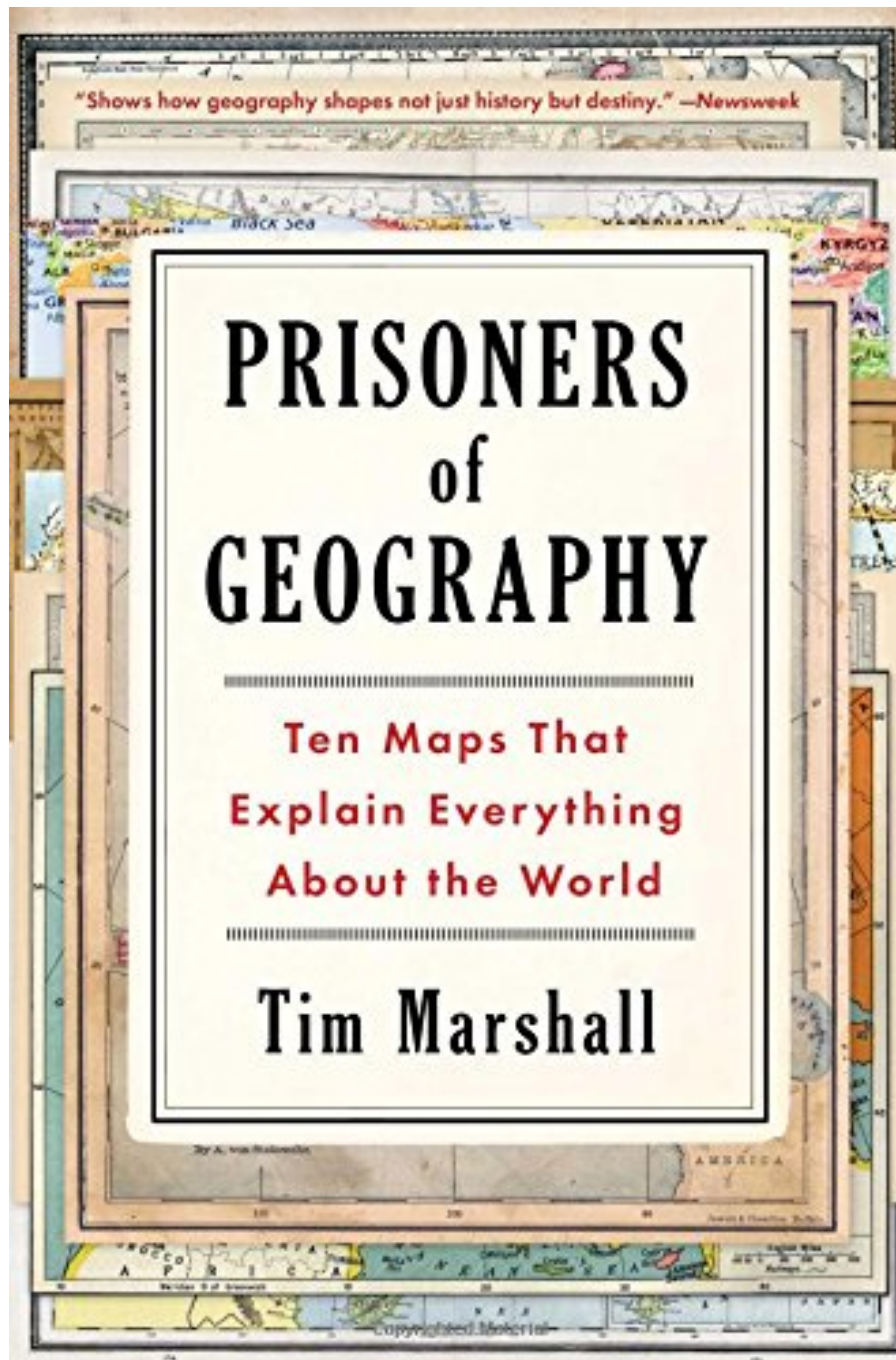


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The land on which we live has always shaped us. It has shaped the wars, the power, politics, and social development of the peoples that now inhabit nearly every part of the earth. Technology may seem to overcome the distances between us in both mental and physical space, but it is easy to forget that the land where we live, work, and raise our children is hugely important and that the choices of those who lead the seven billion inhabitants of this planet will to some degree always be shaped by the rivers, mountains, deserts, lakes, and seas that constrain us all—as they always have.

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Individual leaders, ideas, technology, and other factors all play a role in shaping events, but they are temporary. Each new generation will still face the physical obstructions created by the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas, the challenges created by the rainy season, and the disadvantages of limited access to natural minerals or food sources.

I first became interested in this subject when covering the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. I watched close at hand as the leaders of various peoples, be they Serbian, Croat, or Bosniak, deliberately reminded their “tribes” of the ancient divisions and, yes, ancient suspicions in a region crowded with diversity. Once they had pulled the peoples apart, it didn’t take much to then push them against each other.

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All leaders of nations are constrained by geography. Their choices are limited by mountains, rivers, seas, and concrete. To understand world events, news organizations and other authorities often focus on people, ideas, and political movements, but without geography, we never have the full picture. Now, in the relevant and timely *Prisoners of Geography*, seasoned journalist Tim Marshall examines Russia, China, the USA, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Japan and Korea, and Greenland and the Arctic—their weather, seas, mountains, rivers, deserts, and borders—to provide a context often missing from our political reportage: how the physical characteristics of these countries affect their strengths and vulnerabilities and the decisions made by their leaders.

In ten, up-to-date maps of each region, Marshall explains in clear and engaging prose the complex geo-political strategies of these key parts of the globe. What does it mean that Russia must have a navy, but also has frozen ports six months a year? How does this affect Putin's treatment of the Ukraine? How is China's future constrained by its geography? Why will Europe never be united? Why will America never be invaded? Shining a light on the unavoidable physical realities that shape all of our aspirations and endeavors, *Prisoners of Geography* is the critical guide to one of the major (and most often overlooked) determining factors in world history.

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By Autamme_dot_com

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The author sets out with a big challenge ahead of him, namely to explain the geo-political strategies of the world powers with ten maps.

Geography cannot be changed. Political boundaries can be, usually with the aid of the army. Some political groupings may be formed by more peaceable means. Often peace is threatened by geography, however, a small strip of land or sea can be a tinderbox between nations.

In this interesting book, the author looks at Russia, China, the USA, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Japan and Korea, and Greenland and the Arctic and considers how their physical geography can affect their strengths and vulnerabilities and the decisions made by their leaders. All of this is achieved in a fairly neutral tone that seeks to look at the facts, rather than pushing a particular line or agenda, delivering surprising analysis at times. Sometimes we do not know the world as well as we think we might.

Many questions are asked. Some deep and meaningful, others more abstract yet interesting nonetheless. This is one of those books that you probably don't go out looking for, but should you stumble across it or receive it as a gift you will be very happy with it. Geography, politics and elements of the news cycle can be brought to life with this book. You just need an open mind.

Christmas is coming. This could be an ideal book for the curious reader. You might need two copies though, as if you start leafing through it there's a big danger you will be hooked.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

How geography explains much of what happens on Planet Earth

By James Denny

Using physical geography with a bit of climatology thrown in, author Tim Marshall explains Planet Earth's geo-politics in a refreshing and stimulating way. His structure is to lay out ten maps of continents and countries and to delve into the specifics of oceans, rivers, mountains, deserts and climate to explain how some countries have expanded greatly (Russia), others not at all (Korea) and why certain places in the world lend themselves to strife and conflict, while others lead to greater economic opportunity, cooperation, trade and stability.

"Prisoners of Geography" is a bold work. Some readers may think that Marshall's approach is reductionist in a 19th century sort of way, that everything can be explained by geo-determinism. I found it quite the opposite. Marshall's analysis of Japan and Korea (one of his ten maps) and of India and Pakistan (another of the ten) explain how in these situations, two different nation-states and cultures butt-up against each other and unfortunately are stuck in a permanent dance pose that neither wants to be in.

His map of Africa with its current political boundaries resulted when six 19th century European colonial powers in the second "Great Game," arbitrarily drew lines on a map. A century later, the post-WWII drive to independence among these weak colonies resulted in several dozen new nation states most of which lack a well-defined cultural, linguistic and religious, as well as a primary tribal or ethnic identity. Most of these new African nations are destined to continue as weak nation-states for the immediate and foreseeable future, "prisoners of geography" as Marshall would say. They are highly vulnerable to being led by despotic leaders, African "Big Men" types who through force of persona, if not outright corruption and abuse somehow manage to stay in power to rule a disparate lot.

Marshall uses geography to explain why the United States is highly defensible while Russia despite its vast size is not. He explains why China's Han people have for centuries been dominating and absorbing minorities on their periphery. China's most recent effort to occupy and neutralize Tibet is but the latest

chapter in a long history of occupation and take-over.

In other examples, Marshall explains why Iran is highly defensible as a state while neighboring Iraq is not.

Perhaps the map that came as the biggest surprise was Marshall's last map, his map of the Arctic. The Arctic region is one of the last great, uncharted and unoccupied areas on the planet. The Arctic lacks a coherent strategy for settlement, exploitation of resources, nautical travel and military defense. (Marshall explains that in contrast, the Antarctic has an abiding agreement in force for a number of decades making it available to a wide variety of nations, primarily for scientific research). The Arctic region, however, borders on five modern nation-states which have big differences in opinion as to how the region should be managed, "who owns what" and because of its strategic significance to many different nations and spheres of influence, is a region very much in play.

24 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Delve into the world of geopolitics.

By Paul Tognetti

Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective Recently, I read Thomas Sowell's outstanding new book "Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective" in which the author argues passionately and convincingly that it is geography and not the so-called evils of capitalism that accounts for much of the economic disparity in the world today. Thus, when I spotted Tim Marshall's new book "Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World" I decided to take my investigation into this subject to a whole other level. This definitely proved to be time very well spent.

According to some in the media with a political ax to grind, we in the developed world are something akin to vultures swooping down intent on robbing third world nations of their wealth and natural resources. This is the constant drumbeat. Rarely do the reporters who cobble together these stories take the time to consider why these countries have been unable to mine or extract these assets themselves. What you will discover in this book is that it all too often boils down to impediments caused by geography. Economic development in Africa has been stymied for centuries by a number of factors such as a lack of deepwater harbors, rivers that are simply not navigable and tropical diseases. It is much the same story in Latin America where mountainous terrain, jungles and a lack of deep harbors restrain development. You will discover that save for certain geographic obstacles the nation of Brazil would already be an economic powerhouse.

Meanwhile, geography has implications for rich and powerful nations as well. Russian foreign policy is necessarily shaped by the fact that the country still lacks a warm water port. In the chapter on "The Middle East" we discover that many of these countries were arbitrarily created by Europeans drawing lines on maps of faraway places that they knew precious little about. The implications of these actions are far-reaching and continue to be felt many decades later.

For those who are sincerely interested in educating themselves about these monumentally important issues then "Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World" would be an excellent place to start. I thought that the 10 regional maps presented at the beginning of each chapter were extremely helpful in understanding the issues being discussed by Tim Marshall and I found myself referring to them frequently. What a neat idea! This is a must read for those interested in economics, geography and foreign policy. Highly recommended!

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PRISONERS OF GEOGRAPHY: TEN MAPS THAT EXPLAIN EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WORLD BY TIM MARSHALL

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Review

"[Q]uite simply, one of the best books about geopolitics you could imagine: reading it is like having a light shone on your understanding." (The Evening Standard)

"In an ever more complex, chaotic and interlinked world, *Prisoners of Geography* is a concise and useful primer on geopolitics." (Newsweek)

"Marshall is excellent on some of the highways and byways of geo-politics." (Financial Times)

"Fans of geography, history and politics (and maps) will be enthralled." (Fort Worth Star-Telegram)

"This is not a book about environmental determinism – the geography of a region is never presented as fatalistic; but it does send a timely reminder that despite technological advances, geography is always there, often forcing the hand of world leaders." (Geographical Magazine)

"Lively and perceptive political and historical analyses are frequent. The chapter on China is excellent; the chapter on Africa combines geography and history in a convincing way; the chapter on Western Europe...is a brilliant narrative of European relations, particularly between France and Germany. The superb chapter on the Middle East makes for a clear indictment of the Sykes–Picot agreements and of their tracing of artificial borders. The chapter on the Arctic is precise and informative ...A very lively, sensible and informative series of country reports in which geography occupies its rightful place along with shrewd historical reminders and political judgments." (Survival: Global Politics and Strategy)

"Marshall's insistence on seeing the world through the lens of geography compels a fresh way of looking at maps—not just as objects for orientation or works of art, but as guideposts to the often thorny relations between nations." (New York Times Book Review)

"This book is especially timely...Landscapes, rugged or otherwise, and what the land holds in resources, exert their own kind of sway that no one, not even a Putin, can surmount. This book grabbed me because of its enormous relevance to our world today." (Booktrib.com)

“A convincing analysis of Russian geopolitical thinking....Also makes clear the terrible price the world has had to pay because European officials decided to create nation-states with borders that completely ignored cultural geography.” (Washington Post)

About the Author

Tim Marshall, a former foreign correspondent for Britain’s Sky News television, has reported from thirty countries, including the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. More recently he covered what he considers to be the misnamed “Arab Spring,” reporting from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. After twenty-five years of front line reporting, he now edits the website TheWhatAndTheWhy.com and lives in London.

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Prisoners of Geography INTRODUCTION

Vladimir Putin says he is a religious man, a great supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church. If so, he may well go to bed each night, say his prayers, and ask God: “Why didn’t you put some mountains in Ukraine?”

If God had built mountains in Ukraine, then the great expanse of flatland that is the North European Plain would not be such encouraging territory from which to attack Russia repeatedly. As it is, Putin has no choice: he must at least attempt to control the flatlands to the west. So it is with all nations, big or small. The landscape imprisons their leaders, giving them fewer choices and less room to maneuver than you might think. This was true of the Athenian Empire, the Persians, the Babylonians, and before; it was true of every leader seeking high ground from which to protect their tribe.

The land on which we live has always shaped us. It has shaped the wars, the power, politics, and social development of the peoples that now inhabit nearly every part of the earth. Technology may seem to overcome the distances between us in both mental and physical space, but it is easy to forget that the land where we live, work, and raise our children is hugely important and that the choices of those who lead the seven billion inhabitants of this planet will to some degree always be shaped by the rivers, mountains, deserts, lakes, and seas that constrain us all—as they always have.

Overall there is no one geographical factor that is more important than any other. Mountains are no more important than deserts, nor rivers than jungles. In different parts of the planet different geographical features are among the dominant factors in determining what people can and cannot do.

Broadly speaking, geopolitics looks at the ways in which international affairs can be understood through geographical factors: not just the physical landscape—the natural barriers of mountains or connections of river networks, for example—but also climate, demographics, cultural regions, and access to natural resources. Factors such as these can have an important impact on many different aspects of our civilization, from political and military strategy to human social development, including language, trade, and religion.

The physical realities that underpin national and international politics are too often disregarded in both writing about history and in contemporary reporting of world affairs. Geography is clearly a fundamental part of the “why” as well as the “what.” Take, for example, China and India: two massive countries with huge populations that share a very long border but are not politically or culturally aligned. It wouldn’t be surprising if these two giants had fought each other in several wars, but in fact, apart from one monthlong battle in 1962, they never have. Why? Because between them is the highest mountain range in the world, and it is practically impossible to advance large military columns through or over the Himalayas. As technology becomes more sophisticated, of course, ways are emerging of overcoming this obstacle, but the physical barrier remains a deterrent, and so both countries focus their foreign policy on other regions, while keeping a wary eye on each other.

Individual leaders, ideas, technology, and other factors all play a role in shaping events, but they are temporary. Each new generation will still face the physical obstructions created by the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas, the challenges created by the rainy season, and the disadvantages of limited access to natural minerals or food sources.

I first became interested in this subject when covering the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. I watched close at hand as the leaders of various peoples, be they Serbian, Croat, or Bosniak, deliberately reminded their “tribes” of the ancient divisions and, yes, ancient suspicions in a region crowded with diversity. Once they had pulled the peoples apart, it didn’t take much to then push them against each other.

The River Ibar in Kosovo is a prime example. Ottoman rule over Serbia was cemented by the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, fought near where the Ibar flows through the city of Mitrovica. Over the following centuries the Serb population began to withdraw behind the Ibar as Muslim Albanians gradually descended from the mountainous Malesija region into Kosovo, where they became a majority by the mid-eighteenth century. Fast-forward to the twentieth century and there was still a clear ethnic-religious division roughly marked by the river. Then in 1999, battered by NATO from the air and the Kosovo Liberation Army on the ground, the Yugoslav (Serbian) military retreated across the Ibar, quickly followed by most of the remaining Serb population. The river became the de facto border of what some countries now recognize as the independent state of Kosovo.

Mitrovica was also where the advancing NATO ground forces came to a halt. During the three-month war, there had been veiled threats that NATO intended to invade all of Serbia. In truth, the restraints of both geography and politics meant the NATO leaders never really had that option. Hungary had made it clear that it would not allow an invasion from its territory, as it feared reprisals against the 350,000 ethnic Hungarians in northern Serbia. The alternative was an invasion from the south, which would have gotten them to the Ibar in double-quick time; but NATO would then have faced the mountains above them.

I was working with a team of Serbs in Belgrade at the time and asked what would happen if NATO came: “We will put our cameras down, Tim, and pick up guns” was the response. They were liberal Serbs, good friends of mine and opposed to their government, but they still pulled out the maps and showed me where the Serbs would defend their territory in the mountains, and where NATO would grind to a halt. It was some relief to be given a geography lesson in why NATO’s choices were more limited than the Brussels PR machine made public.

An understanding of how crucial the physical landscape was in reporting news in the Balkans stood me in good stead in the years that followed. For example, in 2001, a few weeks after 9/11, I saw a demonstration of how, even with today’s modern technology, climate still dictates the military possibilities of even the world’s most powerful armies. I was in northern Afghanistan, having crossed the border river from Tajikistan on a raft, in order to link up with the Northern Alliance (NA) troops who were fighting the Taliban.

The American fighter jets and bombers were already overhead, pounding Taliban and al-Qaeda positions on the cold, dusty plains and hills east of Mazar-e-Sharif in order to pave the way for the advance on Kabul. After a few weeks it was obvious that the NA were gearing up to move south. And then the world changed color.

The most intense sandstorm I have ever experienced blew in, turning everything a mustard-yellow color. At the height of the storm you couldn’t see more than a few yards ahead of you, and the only thing clear was that the Americans’ satellite technology, at the cutting edge of science, was helpless, blind in the face of the climate of this wild land. Everyone, from President Bush and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the NA troops on

the ground, just had to wait. Then it rained and the sand that had settled on everything turned into mud. The rain came down so hard that the baked-mud huts we were living in looked as if they were melting. Again it was clear that the move south was on hold until geography finished having its say. The rules of geography, which Hannibal, Sun Tzu, and Alexander the Great all knew, still apply to today's leaders.

More recently, in 2012, I was given another lesson in geostrategy: As Syria descended into full-blown civil war, I was standing on a Syrian hilltop overlooking a valley south of the city of Hama and saw a hamlet burning in the distance. Syrian friends pointed out a much larger village about a mile away, from where they said the attack had come. They then explained that if one side could push enough people from the other faction out of the valley, then the valley could be joined onto other land that led to the country's only motorway, and as such would be useful in carving out a piece of contiguous, viable territory that one day could be used to create a mini-statelet if Syria could not be put back together again. Where before I saw only a burning hamlet, I could now see its strategic importance and understand how political realities are shaped by the most basic physical realities.

Geopolitics affects every country, whether at war, as in the examples above, or at peace. There will be instances in every region you can name. In these pages I cannot explore each one: Canada, Australia, and Indonesia, among others, get no more than a brief mention, although a whole book could be devoted to Australia alone and the ways in which its geography has shaped its connections with other parts of the world, both physically and culturally. Instead I have focused on the powers and regions that best illustrate the key points of the book, covering the legacy of geopolitics from the past (nation-forming); the most pressing situations we face today (the troubles in Ukraine, the expanding influence of China); and looking to the future (growing competition in the Arctic).

In Russia we see the influence of the Arctic, and how it limits Russia's ability to be a truly global power. In China we see the limitations of power without a global navy. The chapter on the United States illustrates how shrewd decisions to expand its territory in key regions allowed it to achieve its modern destiny as a two-ocean superpower. Europe shows us the value of flatland and navigable rivers in connecting regions and producing a culture able to kick-start the modern world, while Africa is a prime example of the effects of isolation.

The chapter on the Middle East demonstrates why drawing lines on maps while disregarding the topography and, equally important, the geographical cultures in a given area is a recipe for trouble. We will continue to witness that trouble this century. The same theme surfaces in the chapters on Africa and India/Pakistan. The colonial powers used ink to draw lines that bore no relation to the physical realities of the region, and created some of the most artificial borders the world has seen. In the Middle East, an attempt is now being made to redraw them in blood.

Very different from the examples of Kosovo or Syria are Japan and Korea, in that they are mostly ethnically homogenous. But they have other problems: Japan is an island nation devoid of natural resources, while the division of the Koreas is a problem still waiting to be solved. Meanwhile, Latin America is an anomaly. In its far south it is so cut off from the outside world that global trading is difficult, and its internal geography is a barrier to creating a trading bloc as successful as the EU.

Finally, we come to one of the most uninhabitable places on earth—the Arctic. For most of history, humans have ignored it, but in the twentieth century we found energy there, and twenty-first-century diplomacy will determine who owns—and sells—that resource.

Seeing geography as a decisive factor in the course of human history can be construed as a bleak view of the

world, which is why it is disliked in some intellectual circles. It suggests that nature is more powerful than man and that we can go only so far in determining our own fate. However, other factors clearly have an influence on events, too. Any sensible person can see that technology is now bending the iron rules of geography. It has found ways over, under, or through some of the barriers. The Americans can now fly a plane all the way from Missouri to Mosul on a bombing mission without needing to land to refuel. That, along with their great aircraft carrier battle groups, means they no longer absolutely have to have an ally or a colony in order to extend their global reach around the world. Of course, if they do have an air base on the island of Diego Garcia, or permanent access to the port in Bahrain, then they have more options; but it is less essential.

So airpower has changed the rules, as, in a different way, has the Internet. But geography, and the history of how nations have established themselves within that geography, remains crucial to our understanding of the world today and to our future.

The conflict in Iraq and Syria is rooted in colonial powers ignoring the rules of geography, whereas the Chinese occupation of Tibet is rooted in obeying them. America's global foreign policy is dictated by them, and even the power projection of the last superpower standing can only mitigate the rules that nature, or God, handed down.

What are those rules? The place to begin is in the land where power is hard to defend, and so for centuries its leaders have compensated by pushing outward. It is the land without mountains to its west: Russia.

This *Prisoners Of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About The World By Tim Marshall* is very proper for you as beginner user. The readers will constantly start their reading practice with the preferred motif. They might rule out the writer as well as author that develop the book. This is why, this book *Prisoners Of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About The World By Tim Marshall* is actually right to check out. However, the idea that is given up this book *Prisoners Of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About The World By Tim Marshall* will certainly show you several things. You could start to like also reviewing until the end of the book *Prisoners Of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything About The World By Tim Marshall*.