

"Nobody knows how to explain the importance of geographic literacy to citizens and leaders of the United States better than Harm de Blij. As the NBC News 'geography analyst' explains in his 30th book, 'Why Geography Matters,' geography is much more than memorizing mountain ranges and estuaries."—*Pittsburgh Tribune Review*

"De Blij argues that most people in the United States, including the country's elected officials, are dangerously ignorant of basic geography. The consequence, he writes, is that leaders lack insights to connections in a world facing climate change, overpopulation, and the continuing threat of terrorism."—*Science News*

"If the author did nothing more than evince the extent to which geography is political destiny, he would have accomplished a worthwhile objective. But he succeeds in much more, raising thought-provoking issues on global warming, terrorism, China's ascendancy, Europe's future, Russia's role, and Africa's prospects, issues our legislative and executive branches of government as well as members of the media need to consider in geographic perspective. Every person responsible for making public policy, as well as those who interpret these complex issues for the public, should read this book."—Anthony H. Ewing, former Director of the Committee on Research Coordination for the Science Advisor, Executive Office of the President

"De Blij, an accomplished academic and regular television geography analyst, writes that by gaining a greater working knowledge of geography, Americans will be better suited to deal with the problems facing the country and the world. De Blij makes a good case for geography's importance. [His] treatment of this subject is particularly refreshing."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"If we could mandate reading material for our leaders, [this] would be at or near the top of the list. It provides a plethora of insights."—*Cape Cod Chronicle*

"Harm de Blij packs so much useful information and so many thoughtful insights into *Why Geography Matters* that the book is indispensable to those seeking to understand our complex, changing world. The United States State Department would be well served to make this book required reading for all newly recruited foreign service officers and diplomats—and it is strongly recommended for all citizens. . . . de Blij demonstrates persuasively how the tools and findings of geographers are indispensable in understanding the world today. In its scope, analytical balance, power, originality, and readability, *Why Geography Matters* is a matchless book; the riveting chapter on Africa is the best summation of the continent's past and prospects I have ever read."—Willard DePree, Former United States Ambassador to Mozambique and Bangladesh, On Special Assignment to the Department of State

"De Blij writes from a conviction that not only the American public but also government officials can be dangerously ignorant of basic geography, so to enlighten them he discusses three topics with national security implications. His tour of Islamic radicalism has the most immediate relevance and, buttressed by a profusion of maps, it covers Afghanistan, Iraq, the Islamic 'front' in sub-Saharan Africa, and—Paraguay? Learning the significance of that outlier to the geography of Islamic terrorism (as well as its unappeasable aims) typifies many of de Blij's informational surprises, which are arranged clearly and spiced with the author's allusions to his career and travels."—*Booklist*

## WHY GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

THREE CHALLENGES FACING AMERICA:  
CLIMATE CHANGE,  
THE RISE OF CHINA,  
AND GLOBAL TERRORISM

Harm de Blij

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## WHY GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

Ten years ago it seemed that the world could not possibly change any faster than it had over the previous decade. The Soviet Union had disintegrated into 15 newly independent countries, China's Pacific Rim was transforming the economic geography of East Asia, South Africa was embarked on a new course under the guidance of Nelson Mandela (a new course that relied on the complete reconstruction of its administrative map), NAFTA linked Canada, the United States, and Mexico in an economic union that would change the commercial map of North America, the European Community was renamed the European Union and added three members to its roster to create a 15-nation entity, and Yugoslavia was collapsing amid uncontrolled carnage. All this change in the human geography of the world was matched by permutations of nature ranging from global climate change to local environmental extremes among which the "thousand-year" flooding of the Mississippi-Missouri river systems of 1993 was but one of the many dramatic events. New terms came into general use: ethnic cleansing, greenhouse warming, Gulf War, El Niño.

Yet the pace of change during the decade straddling the turn of the century has not slowed down. The widening circle of international terrorism has invaded the United States in once-unimaginable ways. American troops fought in Afghanistan and invaded Iraq. North Korea and its nuclear ambitions rose to the forefront of international concerns. Almost-overlooked wars in Africa cost millions—yes, millions—of lives, and the growing spread of AIDS cost millions more. Jobs lost by the United States and Canada to Mexico through opportunities created by NAFTA began to siphon off to China. The European Union continued to expand, taking in ten new members in May 2004 and incorporating 25 of Europe's 39 countries with others waiting in the wings. The name Yugoslavia disappeared from the map even as others emerged: East Timor, Papua, Padania, Transdniestria, Limpopo, Uttaranchal. And new terms in common usage reflected the new era: pandemic, *jihad*, War on Terrorism, Sunni Triangle.

Is there a common denominator for all this change? Can our world and its transformations be better appreciated through a particular perspective? This book answers both questions with one affirmation: geography.

In truth, geography itself has gone through several transformations in recent times. When I was a high-school student, learning to name countries and cities, ranges and rivers was an end in itself. Making the connections that give geography its special place among the sciences was not on the agenda. By the time I got to college, geography (in Europe and America at least) had become more scientific, even mathematical. During my teaching career it became more technological, and not for nothing does the now-common acronym GIS stand for Geographic Information Systems. Today geography has numerous dimensions, but it remains a great way to comprehend our complex world.

#### BECOMING A GEOGRAPHER

The other day I read an interview with a prominent geographer in the newsletter of this country's largest professional geographic organization. The editor asked Frederick E. (Fritz) Nelson, now teaching at the University of Delaware, a question all of us geographers hear often: what caused you to join our ranks? His answer is one given by many a colleague: while an undergraduate (at Northern Michigan University) he took a course in regional geography and liked it so much that he decided to pursue a major in the discipline. He changed directions while a graduate student at Michigan State University, but he did not forget what attracted him to geography originally. Today his research on the geography of periglacial (ice-margin) phenomena is world renowned (Solis, 2004).

My own encounter with geography stems from my very first experience with it in Holland during the Second World War, not at school, but at home. With my dad I watched in horror from a roof window in our suburban house when my city, Rotterdam, was engulfed by flames following the Nazi fire-bombing of May 14, 1940 (long-buried feelings that resurfaced on September 11, 2001), and soon my parents abandoned the city for a small village near the center of the country. There they engaged in a daily battle for survival, and I spent much time in their library, which included several world and national atlases, a large globe, and the books of a geographer named Hendrik Willem van Loon. As the winters grew colder and our situation deteriorated, those books gave me hope. Van Loon described worlds far away, where it was warm, where skies were blue and palm trees swayed in soft breezes, and where food could be plucked from trees. There were exciting descriptions of active volcanoes and of tropical storms, of maritime journeys to remote

islands, of great, bustling cities, of powerful kingdoms and unfamiliar customs. I traced van Loon's journeys on atlas maps and dreamed of the day when I would see his worlds for myself. Van Loon's geographies gave me, almost literally, a lease on life.

After the end of the war, my fortunes changed in more than one way. When the schools opened again, my geography teacher was an inspiring taskmaster who made sure that we, a classroom full of youngsters with a wartime gap in our early education, learned that while geography could widen our horizons, it also required some rigorous studying. The rewards, he rightly predicted, were immeasurable.

If, therefore, I write of geography with enthusiasm and in the belief that it can make life easier and more meaningful in this complex and changing world, it is because of a lifetime of discovery and fascination.

#### WHAT IS GEOGRAPHY?

As a geographer, I've often envied my colleagues in such fields as history, geology, and biology. It must be wonderful to work in a discipline so well defined by its name and so accurately perceived by the general public. Actually, the public's perception may not be so accurate, but people *think* they know what historians, geologists, and biologists do.

We geographers are used to it. Sit down next to someone in an airplane or in a waiting room somewhere, get involved in a conversation, and that someone is bound to ask: Geography? You're a geographer? What is geography, anyway?

In truth, we geographers don't have a single, snappy answer. A couple of millennia ago, geography essentially was about discovery. A Greek philosopher named Eratosthenes moved geographic knowledge forward by leaps and bounds; by measuring Sun angles, he not only concluded that the Earth was round but came amazingly close to the correct figure for its circumference. Several centuries later, geography was propelled by exploration and cartography, a period that came to a close, more or less, with the adventures and monumental writings of Alexander von Humboldt, the German naturalist-geographer. A few decades ago, geography still was an organizing, descriptive discipline whose students were expected to know far more capes and bays than were really necessary. Today geography is in a new technological age, with satellites transmitting information to computers whose maps are used for analysis and decision making.

Despite these new developments, however, geography does have some traditions. The first, and in many ways the most important, is that geogra-



phy deals with the natural as well as the human world. It is, therefore, not just a "social" science. Geographers do research on glaciations and coastlines, on desert dunes and limestone caves, on weather and climate, even on plants and animals. We also study human activities, from city planning to boundary making, from wine growing to churchgoing. To me, that's the best part of geography: there's almost nothing in this wide, wonderful world of ours that can't be studied geographically.

This means, of course, that geographers are especially well placed to assess the complicated relationships between human societies and natural environments; this is geography's second tradition. In this arena knowledge is fast growing, and if you want to see evidence of the insights geography can contribute I know of no better book than Jean Grove's spellbinding analysis of what happened when Europe and much of the rest of the world were plunged into what she calls *The Little Ice Age*, starting around 1300 and continuing, with a few letups, until the early 1800s. This is a global, sweeping analysis; other geographers work at different levels of scale. Some of my colleagues study and predict people's reactions to environmental hazards: Why do people persist in living on the slopes of active volcanoes and in the floodplains of flood-prone rivers? How much do home buyers in California know about the earthquake risk at the location of their purchase and what are they told by real-estate agents before they buy? Another environment-related issue involves health and disease. The origins and spread of many diseases have much to do with climate, vegetation, and fauna as well as cultural traditions and habits. A small but productive cadre of medical geographers is at work researching and predicting outbreaks and dispersals of maladies ranging from cholera to AIDS to bird flu. Peter Gould's book on AIDS, which he called *The Slow Plague*, effectively displays the toolbox of geographers when it comes to such analyses (Gould, 1993).

A third geographic tradition is simply this: we do research in, and try to understand, foreign cultures and distant regions. A few decades ago, it was rare to find a geographer who did not have some considerable expertise in a foreign area, large or small. Most spoke one or more foreign languages (this used to be a requirement for graduation with a doctorate), kept up with the scholarly literature as well as the popular press in their chosen region, and conducted repeated research there. That tradition has faded somewhat in the new age of the Internet, satellite data, and computer cartography, but many students still are first attracted to geography because it aroused their curiosity about some foreign place. The decline in interest in international affairs is not unique to geography, of course. From analyses of network news content to studies of foreign-area specialization in United States intelligence

operations, our isolationism and parochialism are evident. But there will be a rebound, probably of necessity more than desire. Geographic provincialism entails serious national security risks.

A fourth tradition geographers like to identify is the so-called location tradition, which is essentially a human-geographic (not a physical-geographic) convention. Why are activities, such as movie industries or shopping centers, or towns or cities such as Sarasota, Florida, or Tokyo, Japan located where they are? What does their location imply for their prospects? Why did one city thrive and grow while a nearby settlement dwindled and failed? Often a geographic answer illuminates historic events. Urban and regional planning is now a key component to many college geography curricula, and many of our graduates find positions in the planning field.

Having said all this, we still don't have a short-answer definition of geography.

#### LOOKING AT THE WORLD SPATIALLY

To pull it all together, we need a word that telegraphs our main geographic preoccupation, and that word derives from space—not celestial space, but Earthly space. We geographers look at the world *spatially*. I sometimes try this concept on a questioner: historians look at the world temporally or chronologically; economists and political scientists come at it structurally, but we geographers look at it spatially. With a little luck my interrogator will furrow his brow, nod understandingly, and take out his *USA Today* and read about the results of the latest geographic literacy test.

Geographers, of course, are not the only scholars to use spatial analysis to explain the workings of our world. Economists, anthropologists, and other social scientists sometimes take a spatial perspective as well although, as their writings suggest, they often lag behind. Geographers were amused (a few were annoyed) when the noted economist Paul Krugman began writing his columns in the *New York Times* and rediscovered spatial truisms that had long since been superseded in the geographic literature. The physiologist Jared Diamond's magisterial book *Guns, Germs, and Steel* was described by *New York Times* journalist John N. Wilford as "the best book on geography in recent years," but geographers noted some significant conceptual weaknesses in it (Diamond, 1997). Mr. Diamond not only took note of these caveats, but acted impressively on them: he joined the faculty of the Department of Geography at UCLA and wrote a successor volume that demonstrates his perception of geographic factors in the disintegration of once-thriving societies (Diamond, 2005).



Diamond, in both of these Herculean works, raises sensitive issues that once lay at the core of geographic research: the role of natural environments in the fate of human societies. Early in the twentieth century, this research led to generalizations attributing the "energy" of midlatitude societies and the "lethargy" of tropical peoples to climate. Such simplistic analyses were not only bound to be flawed, but could be used to give credence to racist interpretations of the state of the world, discrediting the whole enterprise. But the fundamental question, as Diamond asserts, has not gone away. Today we know a great deal more about environmental swings and associated ecological transitions as well as human dispersal and behavior, and the issue is getting renewed attention.

Nevertheless, it remains tempting to assign a simple causal relationship to a complex set of circumstances because a map suggests it. Consider the following quote from a lecture presented at the United States Naval War College by another noted economist, Jeffrey Sachs: "Virtually all of the rich countries of the world are outside the tropics, and virtually all of the poor countries are within them . . . climate, then, accounts for quite a significant proportion of the cross-national and cross-regional disparities of world income" (Sachs, 2000). That would seem to be a reasonable conclusion, but the condition of many of the world's poor countries results from a far more complex combination of circumstances including subjugation, colonialism, exploitation, and suppression that put them at a disadvantage that will long endure and for which climate may not be the significant causative factor Mr. Sachs implies. In any case, while it is true that many of the world's poor countries lie in tropical environs, many others, from Albania to Turkmenistan and from Moldova to North Korea, do not. The geographic message does not lend itself to environmental generalizations.

Of course we should be pleased that nongeographers are jumping on our bandwagon, but this does not make our effort to come up with a generally accepted definition of our discipline any easier. In some ways, I suppose, this very difficulty is one of geography's strengths. Geography is a discipline of diversity, under whose "spatial" umbrella we study and analyze processes, systems, behaviors, and countless other phenomena that have spatial expression. It is this tie that binds geographers, this interest in patterns, distributions, diffusions, circulations, interactions, juxtapositions—the ways in which the physical and human worlds are laid out, interconnect, and interact. Yes, it is true that some tropical environs are tough on farmers and engender diseases. Tougher still, though, are the rich world's tariff barriers against the produce of tropical-country farmers and the subsidies paid to large agribusiness. End those practices, and sud-

denly climate won't seem so "significant" a factor in the global distribution of poverty.

So geography's umbrella is large, allowing geographers to pursue widely varying research. These days that includes a lot of social activism and other work that might seem closer to sociology than to geography, but much geographic research remains spatial and substantive. I have colleagues whose work focuses on Amazonian deforestation, West African desertification, Asian economic integration, Indonesian transmigration. Others take a more specific look at such American phenomena as professional football and the sources and team destinations of players, the changing patterns of church membership and evangelism, the rise of the wine industry in this period of global warming, and the impact of NAFTA on manufacturing employment in the Midwest. I'm always fascinated to read in our professional journals what they're discovering, and as I used to tell my students, the Age of Discovery may be over, but the era of geographic discovery never will be.

#### THE SPATIAL SPECIALIZERS

The stirring story of geography's early emergence, its Greek and Roman expansion, its European diversification, and its global dissemination is a saga of pioneering observation, heroic exploration, inventive mapmaking, and ever-improving interpretation, discussed in fascinating detail by the discipline's leading historian (Martin, 2005). Long before European colonialism launched the first wave of what today we call globalization, indigenous geographers were drawing maps and interpreting landscapes from Korea to the Andes and from India to Morocco. Later, geographic philosophy got caught up in European nationalism, and various "schools" of geography—German, French, British—came to reflect, and even to support and justify, national political and strategic aspirations including expansionism, colonialism, and even Nazism. In the United States, geography also generated specialized schools of thought, but the issues that defined (and divided) them tended to be scholarly rather than political. The most prominent of these American schools was based for many years at the University of California–Berkeley, and was dominated by the powerful personality of the cultural geographer Carl Sauer. The core idea of this school was the notion that a society's lifeways would be imprinted on the Earth as a *cultural landscape* that could be subjected to spatial analysis wherever it was found.

Geographers not only take a wide view, but also a long view. We try not to lose sight of the forest for the trees, and put what we discover in temporal as well as spatial perspective. "Geography is synthesis," is one fairly effective

answer to that question about just what geography is. That is, geographers try to find ways to link apparently disparate information to solve unanswered problems. As you will see later, sometimes such daring generalizations can set research off in very fruitful directions.

These days, though, it takes courage to generalize and hypothesize. This, as we all know, is the age of specialization. But specialized research ought to have some link to the big questions that confront us, or you have reason to question its value. Fifty years ago one of my professors at Northwestern University often urged me and my co-students to practice what he called "intelligent dinner conversation" (a quaint cultural tradition, remnants of which are still observable in certain urban settings). "Always be ready to explain in ordinary language to the guest across the table what it is you do and why it matters," he said. Most of us thought that this was not only unnecessary, but also none of "the public's" business. But he was right, and he would enjoy the debate now going on in professional geography, much of which focuses on ways to speak to the general public in plain language about what it is we do.

Specialization in research and teaching occurs at several levels, of course. I have already mentioned that some geographers (fewer than before) still become area specialists or, in another context, regional scientists. Others study urbanization from various spatial standpoints, and their studies range from highly analytical research on land values and rents to speculative assessments of intercity competition. One especially interesting question has to do with efforts to measure the amount of interaction between cities. When two large cities lie fairly close together, say Baltimore and Philadelphia, there will be more interaction (in numerous spheres ranging from telephone calls to road traffic) than when two cities lie much farther apart, for example Denver and Minneapolis. But just how does this level of interaction vary with city size and intercity distance? The answer is embodied by the so-called gravity model, which holds that interaction can be represented by a simple formula: multiply the two urban populations and divide the total by the square of the distance between them. You can use kilometers, miles, or even some other measure of distance, but so long as you are consistent for comparative purposes the model will do a good job of predicting reality. Distance is a powerful deterrent to interaction—geographers call this distance decay—and measuring this factor can be enormously helpful in business and commercial decision making.

Other geographers combine economics and geography, and focus on spatial aspects of economic activities. The rise of the world's new economic giants on the Pacific Rim has kept them busy.

Still others focus on spatial aspects of political behavior. Political scientists tend to focus on institutions, political geographers on political mosaics. Geopolitics, an early subfield of political geography, was hijacked by Nazi ideologues and lost its reputation; but recently, geopolitics has been making a comeback as an arena of serious and objective research. From power relationships to boundary studies, political geography is a fascinating field.

There are literally dozens of fields of specialization in geography, and for students contemplating a career in geography it's a little bit like being in a candy store. Interested in anthropology? Try cultural geography! Biology? There's biogeography! Geology? Don't forget geomorphology, the study of the evolution of landscape. Historical geography is an obviously fruitful alliance between related disciplines. The list of such options is long, and it is still growing. Developments in mapmaking have opened whole new horizons for technically inclined geographers.

Over a lifetime of geographic endeavor, many geographers change specialties, and I'm one of them. I was educated to be a physical geographer, that is, as someone who specializes in landscape study (geomorphology) and related fields. As such, I spent a year in the field in Swaziland, in southern Africa, trying to determine whether a large, wide valley there was a part of the great African Rift Valley system, the likely geographic source of humanity. While I was preparing for this research, however, I met a political geographer named Arthur Moodie, a British scholar who came to Northwestern University as a visiting professor. I took his classes and never forgot them. When I was hired by Michigan State University as a physical geographer, I also continued to read and study political geography. Eventually, I was asked to teach a course in that field, wrote a book and some articles about it, and thus developed a second specialization.

What I didn't realize, at first, was how my background in physical geography would make me a better political geographer. Like geopolitics, environmental determinism had acquired a bad name between the World Wars, and it could be dangerous, professionally, to try to explain political or other social developments as influenced by environmental circumstances. But I knew that, like geopolitics, environmental studies would make a comeback. When they did, I had the background to participate in the debate. That's how, many years later, I was appointed to Georgetown University to teach environmental issues in the School of Foreign Service.

I made only one other foray into a new field, and that was also as pleasant a geographic experience as I've ever had. It all began with a great bottle of wine. A fateful dinner with that bottle of 1955 Chateau Beychevelle so aroused my curiosity that, five years later, I was working on my book entitled *Wine*:

A *Geographic Appreciation*, was teaching a course called The Geography of Wine at the University of Miami, and saw some of my students enter the wine business armed with a background they often found to be very advantageous. Geography has few limits—and specialization does have its merits.

#### BUT IS GEOGRAPHY IMPORTANT?

Remember the bumper sticker, popular some years ago, that said "If You Can Read This, Thank a Teacher"? One day I was driving down one of my least favorite highways, Interstate 95 between Fort Lauderdale and Miami in Florida, when a car passed me whose owner had modified that sticker by inserting the word "Map" after "This" and by pasting a piece of road map at the end of the slogan. I didn't need to ask what that owner's profession was. A geography teacher, obviously.

The fact is, a lot of us cannot read maps. Surveys show that huge numbers of otherwise educated people don't know how to use a map effectively. Even simple road maps are beyond many more of us than you might imagine. People who, you would think, deal with maps all the time and therefore know how to get the most out of them—travel professionals—often have trouble with maps. I live about half the year on Cape Cod, and thus have the dubious pleasure of flying into and out of Boston's Logan Airport, about two hours from home. These days flight schedules are not what they used to be, so when someone arranges my trip I always hope that consideration was given to the other airport about two hours from the mid-Cape, Providence. I've learned not to count on it.

Geography's utility certainly made news shortly after the terrible tsunami of December 26, 2004, when the story of a schoolgirl named Tilly Smith made headlines around the world. Tilly was vacationing in Phuket, Thailand with her parents and was on Maikhao Beach when she saw the water suddenly recede into the distance. She remembered what she had just been taught by her geography teacher, Mr. Andrew Kearney at Danes Hill Prep School in Oxshott, south of London: that the deep wave of a tsunami sucks the water off the beach before it returns in a massive wall that inundates the entire shoreline. Tilly alerted her parents and they ran back and forth, warning beachgoers of the danger and urging them to seek shelter on an upper floor of the hotel nearby. About 100 people followed her advice; all survived. Of those who stayed behind, none did. Britain's tabloids declared Tilly to be "The Angel of Phuket," but give some credit to that geography teacher who obviously had the attention of his students.

Okay, you might say. As an everyday tool to make life a bit more predict-

able and efficient, and as an occasional environmental alert, geography has its uses. But does that make it important in a general sense?

Consider this: a general public not exposed to a good grounding in geography can be duped into believing all kinds of misinformation. Even today, despite the best efforts of the National Geographic Society and its allies, an American student might go from kindergarten through graduate school without ever taking a single course in geography—let alone a fairly complete program. (That's not true in any other developed country, nor in most developing ones. Geography's status is quite different in Britain, Germany, France, and such countries as Brazil, Nigeria, and India.) This means that when a group of scientists decides to scare the beejebers out of the public by predicting imminent glaciation (as they did in the 1960s) or looming greenhouse warming (the concern of the 2000s), far too many people are insufficiently informed to be able to make sense of the debate and, through their elected representatives, may be persuaded to spend billions of dollars better invested in other causes.

When I talk about this issue on the public-lecture circuit, someone in the audience is likely to challenge my point about the state of geographic knowledge. It may be bad, goes the argument, but don't worry, our leaders know what geography they need to know. They deal with the world at large on a daily basis, and they're sure to be adequately informed and prepared.

Well, maybe, although I wonder about those leaders who come from elite universities that do not offer any geography as part of their undergraduate or graduate curricula. Do you suppose that, if former defense secretary Robert McNamara had been able to take just one course in basic regional or human geography at his alma mater (Harvard), his perspective on Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in particular might have been different? I would like to think so, but Harvard University has not offered geography to its students for about a half century. The cost to the country may be greater than we can imagine.

As to our leaders knowing the map they must navigate, consider this little incident in President Nixon's Oval Office, as described by another Harvard figure, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, in his book *Years of Renewal*:

As part of some U.N. celebration, the Prime Minister of Mauritius had been invited to Washington. Mauritius is a subtropical island located in the Indian Ocean . . . it enjoys plenty of rainfall and a verdant agriculture. Its relations with the United States were excellent. Somehow my staff confused Mauritius with Mauritania, an arid desert state in West Africa that had broken diplomatic relations with us in 1967 as



an act of solidarity with its Muslim brethren in the aftermath of the Middle East War.

This misconception produced an extraordinary dialogue. Coming straight to the point, Nixon suggested that the time had come to restore diplomatic relations between the United States and Mauritius. This, he noted, would permit resumption of American aid, and one of its benefits might be assistance in dry farming, in which, Nixon maintained, the United States had special capabilities. The stunned visitor, who had come on a goodwill mission from a country with, if anything, excessive rainfall, tried to shift to a more promising subject. He enquired whether Nixon was satisfied with the operation of the space tracking station the United States maintained on his island.

Now it was Nixon's turn to be discomfited as he set about frantically writing on his yellow pad. Tearing off a page, he handed me a note that read: "Why the hell do we have a space tracking system in a country with which we do not have diplomatic relations?" (Kissinger, 1999)

So don't be too sure about geographic knowledge in Washington, D.C. It's pretty obvious that we were not well enough acquainted with the physical or cultural geography of Indochina when we blundered (McNamara's word) into the Vietnam War, and I am sure that many of us had doubts about our leaders' knowledge of the regional or human geography of Iraq in the winter of 2003—remember those cheering, grateful crowds that would line the roads? I often cite that old canard about war teaching geography, but in our case we must add a word: belatedly.

Perhaps the most important byproduct of geographic learning, early or belatedly, lies in its role as an antidote to isolationism. Can there be a more crucial objective than this? In our globalizing, ever more interconnected, still-overpopulated, increasingly competitive, and dangerous world, knowledge is power. The more we know about our planet and its fragile natural environments, about other peoples and cultures, political systems and economies, borders and boundaries, attitudes and aspirations, the better prepared we will be for the challenging times ahead.

From this perspective, geography's importance is second to none.

#### HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?

There's no denying it: for all its putative importance, geography as a school subject and as a university discipline in the United States is, to put it mildly, underrepresented. This wasn't always the case. There was a time when geog-

raphy was well established as a discipline at Harvard and Yale, when geography was also widely taught in America's schools. During and after the First World War, through the interwar period and again during and after the Second World War, geography was a prominent component of American education. In prewar debates, wartime strategy, and postwar reconstruction, geographers played useful, sometimes crucial roles. Geographers were the first to bring environmental issues to public attention. They knew about foreign cultures and economies. They had experience with the workings of political boundaries. They produced the maps that helped guide United States policies.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Americans continued to be well versed in geography. American success during the Second World War had drawn our attention to the outside world as perhaps never before. Maps, atlases, and globes sold by the millions. The magazine with geography's name on it, *National Geographic*, saw its subscription grow to unprecedented numbers. University Geography Departments enrolled more students than they could handle. When President John F. Kennedy launched the Peace Corps, geographers and geography students were quickly appointed as trainers and staffers.

But, as so often happens when social engineers get hold of a system that's working well, the wheels came off. Professional educators thought they had a better idea about how to teach geography: rather than educating students in disciplines such as history, government, and geography, they would teach these subjects in combination. That combination was called social studies. The grand design envisioned a mixture that would give students a well-rounded schooling, a kind of civics for the masses, which implied that school teachers would no longer be educated in the disciplines either. They, too, would study social studies.

Prospective teachers from the School of Education had been among my best and most interested students at the University of Miami during the early 1970s. They registered in large numbers in two courses: World Regional Geography, which was an overview of the geography of the wider world, and Environmental Conservation, a course that was years ahead of its time, and to which even the Department of Biology sent its students. But when the social studies agenda took effect, the student teachers stopped coming. They now had other requirements that precluded their registration in geography.

We geographers knew what this would mean and what it would eventually cost the country. The use of, and knowledge of maps would dwindle. Environmental awareness would decline. Our international outlook would erode. Our businesspeople, politicians, and others would find themselves at

a disadvantage in a rapidly shrinking, ever more interconnected—and competitive—world. Many of us wrote anguished letters to government agencies and elected representatives, to school district leaders and school principals. Fortunately, many private and parochial schools continued to teach geography. But for public education, the die was cast.

#### REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

This set of educational circumstances in little more than a decade produced exactly what geographers had predicted: an evident and worsening national geographic illiteracy. All of us who were teaching at the time have stories of students' disorientation, some of them amusing, most of them worrisome. By its very name, the catch-all social studies rubric excluded the elementary but crucial physical geography (including basic climatology) topics that had been part of the high-school geography curriculum. This was the one subject in which students got an idea of the importance of understanding human-environment interactions as well as the workings of climate and weather, and it was a huge loss. When these students got to college and enrolled in a first-year geography course, they were at an enormous disadvantage: they simply did not know these basics.

Some university faculties recognized this situation and decided to do something about it. Georgetown University was one of them, and I saw the results firsthand while I was on the faculty of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service from 1990 to 1995. Every incoming student was required to take a course called Map of the Modern World, a one-credit course offered by the noted political geographer Charles Pirtle. In one semester, students were expected to become familiar not only with the layout of the political world, but also with general patterns of geopolitical change, general environmental and climactic conditions, and resource distributions. It was a tall order, but here is what impressed me most: at the end of their four-year degree program, Georgetown students are asked to list the course that pushed their knowledge forward more than any other. Map of the Modern World, a freshman geography course you would think most students had long forgotten, led the rankings year after year. It was a tribute to Charlie Pirtle, to be sure—but it also said something about the relevance of geography in the opinion of these capable students.

Unfortunately the Georgetown remedial model was (and still is) a rarity, not a commonplace. The geographic illiteracy of entering freshmen lowered the level of academic discourse in many an introductory class, and faculty devised various ways of dealing with it. Some professors were, shall we say,

more sensitive to students' problems than others, and occasionally stories leaked out about embarrassing moments in the classroom. One of these stories involved a colleague of mine at the University of Miami who liked to start his class by asking students to identify a number of prominent geographic locations on a blank map of the world's countries. The results were always abysmal, and they grew worse as time went on. The good professor would grade the class as a whole and, reportedly with biting sarcasm, would announce the large percentage of participants who could not locate the Pacific Ocean, the Sahara, Mexico, or China.

Early in the fall semester of 1980, the student newspaper, the *Miami Hurricane*, got hold of the test, a summary of test results, and the professor's witty commentary. The paper's front-page story on this tale of "geographic illiteracy" was picked up by the major news media. NBC's *Today* show appeared on campus. ABC's *Good Morning America* invited the principals to New York, but the segment was too brief to throw real light on the problem.

The news, however, had spread throughout the country, and while officials at the University of Miami fretted about what the story might do to the university's reputation, teachers elsewhere tried their own tests on their students. We are all too familiar with the results. At one Midwestern college, only 5 percent of the students could identify Vietnam on a world map. At another college, only 42 percent correctly named Mexico as our southern neighbor. Specialists, including some of the very educators who had helped engineer the demise of school geography, claimed to be "dismayed" at such results. While geographers were not surprised, the question was: how would we reverse this ignominious tide of ignorance?

#### ENTER THE SOCIETY

Tales of on-campus geographic blindness soon led to newspaper stories of public illiteracy as well. Journalists took to the streets with outline maps of the United States and of the world, asking people at random to identify such features as New York State and the Pacific Ocean and (so it seemed) gleefully reporting the embarrassing tallies. Their stories, however, were usually buried among marginalia.

But then something happened to change the picture quite radically. President Reagan, upon arriving in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, to open an important international conference, pronounced himself pleased to be in . . . Bolivia. This caused quite a stir in Brazil, and his faux pas made the front page of *USA Today*, which busied itself identifying similar gaffes by other politicians. Now geographic illiteracy suddenly was headline news, and there

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television networks fell over themselves covering it. One of them, ABC-TV, called the University of Miami, which relayed the call to me at a hotel in Baltimore where I was attending a meeting. That call led to my first appearance on *Good Morning America*, and the response to my segment (from the Netherlands) generated a week-long geography series a few months later and my six-year appointment to the *GMA* staff as geography editor subsequently.

But it would take more than the support of *GMA*'s perceptive executive producer, Jack Reilly, to make a real dent in our national geographic illiteracy. As it happened, however, I had a parallel opportunity through my appointment as an editor at the National Geographic Society in 1984. In 1980 I had had the good fortune of being invited to join the Society's Committee for Research and Exploration, and I began almost immediately to discuss ways of involving the Society in the campaign. The Society's president, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, was sympathetic to the idea. He seemed to be galvanized by a Society-commissioned Gallup Poll that proved without a doubt that American students had fallen far behind their European and other foreign contemporaries in terms of their geographic knowledge. When I joined the NGS staff full time in 1984 for a six-year editorial term, I was able to help mobilize a crucial alliance.

To most observers, it would have seemed natural for an organization known as the National Geographic Society to come to the aid of the discipline. But it was not so simple. For many years, the Society and the discipline had not enjoyed good relations. To the Society and its leadership, professional geographers seemed snobbish, insulated, and often unimaginative. To professional geographers, the Society's popularization of its magazine and the rubric of geography was inappropriate and misleading. "There's precious little geography in *National Geographic*," said my professor at Northwestern University when I arrived there as a graduate student in 1956. "If you're going to subscribe, you'd better have the magazine sent to your home. Not a good idea to see it in your department mailbox here."

That amazed me. In fact, when I was living in Africa during the early 1950s, *National Geographic* was my window to the world, its maps a source of inspiration. I had written its president, Gilbert H. Grosvenor, in 1950 to tell him so. He sent a gracious letter in response, urging me to continue my interest in geography and inviting me to visit the Society's headquarters "if [I] were ever to come to the United States." But as a graduate student, I soon realized that the National Geographic Society and its publications were generally not held in high esteem among "professional" geographers.

Grosvenor's grandson, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, however, was not one to let such bygones get in the way. He launched a massive financial and educational

campaign in support of geography at the school level, realizing better than most of us that the schools and their teachers were the key to the future of the discipline. High-school students, he knew, were not coming to college in any numbers intending to major in geography, because they never saw geography as an option when they graduated. The social-studies debacle had pretty well depleted the ranks of geography teachers, so the first order of business was to prepare large numbers of teachers to teach a geography curriculum. Since the geography curriculum itself had atrophied, Grosvenor appointed a prominent specialist in geographic education, Christopher "Kit" Salter, to resurrect it. Salter, in consultation with the half dozen or so geographers on the Society's staff, developed a spatially and environmentally based framework that would come to be known as the "Five Themes" of geography. In 1986 the Society printed several million copies of an annotated map in full color titled "Maps, The Landscape, and Fundamental Themes in Geography," providing every school in the country with as large a supply as needed.

Meanwhile, Salter under NGS auspices organized a nationwide network of so-called Geographic Alliances representing every State in the Union. These alliances consisted of geography teachers supported by the Society in various ways. Representatives of each alliance were invited to Society headquarters in Washington, D.C. for instruction in geographic education; they would in turn assemble teachers in their home States to convey what they had learned. Thus the number of teachers competent to teach geography increased exponentially, as did grass-roots support for the revival of the subject in schools all over the country.

Grosvenor raised significant funding for the project, testified on Capitol Hill on behalf of geography as an essential component of national education standards, buttonholed politicians, and crisscrossed the country speaking for geography. Not everyone on his staff in Washington was enthused by, or even supportive of, all these efforts, and not all professional geographers ensconced in their academic departments appreciated what he did. But the leadership of the Association of American Geographers had the good sense to extend formal recognition to him for a campaign that closed the book on old, painful disharmony between Society and discipline.

So where are we today? I wish I could report that all the foregoing drastically altered the level of exposure of elementary and high-school students to geography. But the road back will be long and hard. The best assessment is that when the Society's campaign began, about 7 percent of American students were getting some geography; today, after nearly 20 years and an estimated investment of \$100 million, the figure is still below 30 percent. We have a long way to go.



### WILL GEOGRAPHY BE HISTORY?

Some of my colleagues take a dim view of the future of geography as a discipline. Yes, the United States Congress endorsed the establishment of National Geography Week every November, and the winner of the annual National Geography Bee, modeled on the famous spelling bee, gets television coverage every spring. Largely due to the National Geographic Society's efforts, geography was designated as one of the five cornerstones of American education during the tenure of (then) education secretary Lamar Alexander in the first Bush administration (geography did less well in the "No Child Left Behind" program of the second Bush administration).

But against these promising developments in the public arena stand some worrisome negatives, two in particular. Ours is a history-obsessed culture. From archeology to geology and paleontology to linguistics, we tend to focus on the temporal. In higher education, spatial science gets short shrift just as geography still does at the school level. To Americans it is inconceivable that a university or college, whether prestigious or unpretentious, could exist without a history department. No basic curriculum, whether at Harvard or at a Midwest community college, would exclude a history component. The same cannot be said for geography.

And professional geographers, as we have noted, are divided on the substance of their discipline. It's probably a healthy debate, it isn't the first time, and it goes on in other disciplines too. But it can be confusing to college and university administrators who read our scholarly journals and aren't sure just what our consensus is. History, anthropology, and biology are more clearly defined—they think.

I take a fairly Neanderthal view of this issue. Our basic, common ground, I feel, lies in regional geography, human-cultural geography, and physical (environmental) geography, along with the analytical tools students will need as they begin to specialize even at the undergraduate level, ranging from statistical analysis to Geographic Information Systems. Beyond this, the tie that binds us—but need not constrain those who go off in other directions—is the spatial perspective and spatial analysis. To those who doubt geography's disciplinary future I say that our great opportunity lies at the interface of environment and humanity. We have been at this for the better part of a century and we were ahead of our contemporaries for much of that time. We should reclaim our position.

As to geography becoming history, I must tell you that I admire and envy the way historians have made their case to the general public as well as academically. Every time I turn on my television I seem to find some "presidential historian" commenting on good deeds and misdeeds of former

presidents. And I agree: it is true that we should be reminded now and then of what President Nixon knew about Watergate and when he knew it. *When*, after all, is history's key question. But more recently we had a president who evoked the question: what did the president do and *where* did he do it? That's geography! We need a presidential geographer! My proposals to this effect have, for some reason, been ignored by the networks.

### GEOGRAPHIC LITERACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Geographic knowledge is a crucial ingredient of our national security. We have crossed the threshold to a century that will witness massive environmental change, major population shifts, recurrent civilizational conflicts, China's emergence as a geopolitical as well as an economic superpower, unifying Europe's transformation into a major player on the international stage—among other developments yet unforeseen. Among my colleagues are geographers who conduct research on the likelihood of coming energy crises and how to forestall them, on the risks of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) dissemination and how to mitigate them, on the impact of global climate change in especially vulnerable areas and how to confront it. These are serious issues indeed, and while geographic knowledge by itself cannot solve them, they will not be effectively approached without it. WMD diffusion, for example, is driven by technology as well as ideology. The technology is the stuff of other disciplines, but ideology has significant geographic ramifications. Extremism of the kind that propelled the Taliban movement to power in Afghanistan from its bases in mountainous and remote western Pakistan tends to fester in isolated locales, and there is nothing uniquely Islamic about this. States that fail, at dreadful cost to their inhabitants, tend to lie segregated from the mainstreams of global interaction and exchange. From Somalia to Afghanistan, from Cambodia to Liberia, from Myanmar to North Korea, their peoples pay a terrible price.

Geography is a superb antidote to isolationism and provincialism. Some specialists in geographic education argue that our persistent national geographic illiteracy results from our own "splendid" isolation between two oceans and two nations, but we are learning that this spatial solitude means little in a fast-globalizing world. During the Vietnam War, there were politicians who advocated "bombing the North back to the Stone Age," and the United States had the power to do so. What the United States was unable to do was to persuade tens of millions of Vietnamese to change their ideology. More recently in Iraq, military intervention proceeded quickly and efficiently, leading to premature assertions that the war was won. But the

real war, for Iraqis' hearts and minds, still lay ahead and entailed a costly insurgency that devastated the country's heartland and whose end is not in sight. The United States and its coalition had equipment and ordinance, but could not prevent the alienation of a growing minority of mostly Sunni citizens. Too few Americans know the region, speak the languages, comprehend the faiths, understand the rhythms of life, realize the depth of feelings. And even as the campaign in Iraq continues, other dangers loom. Among these, the most significant in the long term is the coming contest with China—but how much more does the general public in America know about China today than it (or its leaders) knew about Southeast Asia four decades ago?

If there was a way to mobilize it, I would not only reinstate departments of geography in our "elite" universities but also resurrect regional studies in all such departments, old and new, to ensure that, once again, a growing cadre of field-experienced, language-capable, locally connected scholars would populate government, intelligence, and other national agencies whose efforts will be at least as important as high-altitude weapons delivery, satellite imagery, and GIS scrutiny. Geography, unlike its public image, is an entertaining as well as enlightening field, but what follows is also serious—dead serious.

## 2

## READING MAPS AND FACING THREATS

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If that is true, then a map is worth a million, and maybe more. Even at just a glance, a map can reveal what no amount of description can. Maps are the language of geography, often the most direct and effective way to convey grand ideas or complex theories. The mother of all maps is the globe, and no household, especially one with school-age children, should be without one. A globe reminds us of the limits of our terrestrial living space when about 70 percent of its surface is water or ice, and much of the land is mapped as mountains or desert. A globe shows us that the shortest distance between the coterminous United States and China is not across the Pacific Ocean but over Alaska and the Bering Sea. A globe tells us why Northern Hemisphere countries dominate the affairs of the world: most habitable territory lies north of the equator.

Cartography, the drawing of maps, has come a long way since ancient Mesopotamians 5,000 years ago scratched grooves in moist clay to represent rivers and fields and let the sun bake it into clay tablets. The evolution of cartography is a stirring story well told by John N. Wilford in *The Mapmakers* (Wilford, 1981), and the saga continues. During the first period of the still-continuing age of discovery, explorers, mercenaries, speculators, and adventurers sailed from Europe into the unknown, and those who survived brought back pieces of the great global puzzle for cartographers to fit into their maps.

Magellan and his crew were the first to circumnavigate the world (1519–1522), building on Cabral's impressions of the coast of Brazil and proving the vastness of the Pacific; the Italian Battista Agnese's 1544 map of the world was soon renowned for its beauty as well as its novelty; and the Flemish mathematician and cartographer Gerardus Mercator formulated a grid for the evolving map of the world that allowed navigators to plot a straight-line compass bearing, the Mercator Projection (1569). This was a momentous innovation, and the name Mercator remains famous to this day—as well as another of his inventions, the concept of the atlas (which he named after a Greek titan) as a collection of maps.

and from the terrorist bin Laden to the tyrant Saddam. It exposed the limitations of even a superpower in conducting simultaneous operations in separate and different theaters. It generated a counterinsurgency that attracted thousands of foreign fighters and provided them a training ground Usama bin Laden could only have dreamed of. It revealed disqualifying miscalculations on the part of planners who should have known their political and cultural geography better.

## 10

## EUROPEAN SUPERPOWER?

For centuries, Europe lay at the heart of the human world. European empires spanned the globe and transformed societies far and near, for good or ill. European capitals were the nodes of trade networks that controlled distant resources. Millions of Europeans migrated from their homelands to the New World as well as the Old, creating new societies from America to Australia. Long before globalization became equated with Americanization, it was a process of Europeanization.

In agriculture, industry, and politics, Europe generated revolutions—and then exported those revolutions throughout the world, consolidating the European advantage. Yet during the twentieth century, Europe twice plunged the world into war. In the aftermath of the Second World War (1939–1945), Europe's weakened powers lost the colonial possessions that for so long had provided wealth and influence. European countries were threatened by communist parties and movements, and an ideological Iron Curtain from the Baltic to the Adriatic split the continent apart. East of it, Soviet communism dominated from its headquarters in Moscow. To the west, liberal democracy and market capitalism prevailed, but with crucial help from Washington and not before a few dreadful dictators left the scene (Hitchcock, 2002).

Western Europe's economic recovery and Eastern Europe's eventual rejection of communism were this realm's dominant events over the last half century, but another story continues to make the headlines. Europe's countries are engaged in an unprecedented experiment in supranationalism, a process of international unification and coordination in numerous spheres ranging from the economic to the political. It is an experiment that some leaders hope will ultimately lead to the formation of a United States of Europe, a federal superpower that will constitute a counterweight to the global dominance of the United States of America.

Ordinary Europeans, perhaps a majority of them, do not always share this enthusiasm for unification. But the process has gone further than could have



been imagined 50 years ago. Europeans can drive from Lisbon to Vienna without showing their passports at national borders. They can use the same currency, the euro, in a dozen countries that had their own money just a few years ago. A European Commission meets in Brussels to administer the multinational system and a European parliament sits in Strasbourg to draft European laws. And the European Union (EU) continues to expand. In 2004, it grew from 15 countries to 25, reaching far into the Eastern Europe that, until as recently as 1990, lay isolated by the Iron Curtain and encumbered by the inefficiencies of Soviet communist rule.

### ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Will Europe achieve its supranational and superpower ambitions? Look at the map, and Europe appears to be a mere protrusion of peninsulas extending westward from the great landmass of Eurasia. Read the scale, and you see how small Europe is territorially, not much larger than the United States west of the Mississippi (Texas is almost twice as large as Germany; the United Kingdom is about the size of Oregon). And Europe's territory is anything but compact. Peninsulas and islands large (by European standards) and small are flanked by seas wide and narrow. Europeans gazed at each other across straits and channels, bays and rivers from the day they settled here.

That settlement came in waves from the east as intermittent warming during the Wisconsin Glaciation enabled the first modern humans to survive the rigors of Europe's variable climates. This invasion started slowly, but *Homo sapiens* could do what their Neanderthal predecessors could not: mix their hunter-gatherer existence with the pursuit of migrating reindeer, and adapt when the climate turned colder. Modern humans have been in Europe for more than 40,000 years, moving into Iberia and Italy during the coldest times and spreading northward when it got warmer. But the real population expansion came during the current interglacial warm period, starting about 12,000 years ago and interrupted only by the brief Younger Dryas cold spell. Wave after wave of immigrants moved from Eurasia's interiors toward the warmth of the west and the isolated security of peninsulas and islands along its coasts. They brought with them their diverse cultures and varied languages, of which the earliest are remnants now along Britain's and Ireland's western shores (Fig. 10-1). To this day some of the routes taken by these early arrivals are uncertain; no one knows, for example, how the Basques reached their present homeland on the Spanish-French border because their language has no links to any other. The Hungarians, Estonians, and Finns also arrived from yet-unknown sources and planted their languages in Europe.



Fig. 10-1

At least their familial relationships are clearer—although a recent study suggests a link between these Uralic languages and . . . Japanese.

The dominant languages of Europe today, including English and German, Spanish and French, Polish and Ukrainian, belong to the several branches of the Indo-European language family, and from their present distribution you can infer their genesis. The speakers of the Germanic languages, also including Dutch and the Scandinavian tongues, spread westward across the North European Lowland, the vast plain that extends from the shores of the North Sea into Russia between the Alps to the south and the Baltic Sea to the north (Fig. 10-2). They invaded Britain and Ireland and displaced the older Celtic-speakers there; as Europe warmed, they settled in Scandinavia and even Iceland. The Romance languages, including modern Italian and Romanian, evolved from the Latin spoken by the Tiber Valley peoples who founded and forged the Mediterranean-encircling Roman Empire and who welded their language to the tongues of its provinces. And the Slavic languages, including Czech and Bulgarian, are the languages of the east, latecomers in the Roman-Mediterranean sphere but long established in neighboring Russia.

Superimpose Europe's language map on its map of physical landscapes, and you see one major reason why this realm remains a Tower of Babel. The gentle relief of the North European Lowland (which extends into Britain as well) facilitates movement and interaction, and here lie the three historic powers and modern economic powerhouses of the realm: the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. But even here, real life is more complicated than the map suggests: major languages are not mutually understandable and minor tongues (such as Frisian) and strong dialects inhibit comprehension and reciprocity. Where the relief is higher, notably where the Alpine System prevails, physical barriers to interaction contribute to isolation and pervasive cultural fragmentation. Before its disastrous disintegration, the former Yugoslavia, about the size of Wyoming, had 24 million inhabitants who spoke 7 major and 17 minor languages. Peoples living in adjacent valleys often had no effective contact with each other, separated as they were by mountain spurs, language, and tradition.

Seen in this context, it is amazing that European integration has proceeded as far as it has. But Europe's cultural diversity is more than matched by its natural diversity, and whereas the former is a challenge, the latter presents opportunity. From the flat coastlands of the North Sea to the grandeur of the Alps, and from the moist woodlands and moors of the Atlantic fringe to the semiarid prairies north of the Black Sea, Europe contains an almost infinite range of natural environments. The insular and peninsular west contrasts strongly with the more continental, interior east. Dry-summer Medi-



Fig. 10-2



terranean climate in the south yields to year-round moisture on the North European Plain and cold-winter regimes in Scandinavia. Crops change from oranges and olives to fruits and vegetables to grains and potatoes. Atlantic warmth and moisture lose their effect into the continental interior, where the crop pattern changes again. Europeans have been trading for millennia; the Romans made their Mediterranean Sea an avenue of commerce.

There is more. Europe may be small, but the range of its mineral and energy resources is large. A backbone laden with raw materials extends across middle Europe from the coalfields of England to the iron ores of Silesia, propelling the Industrial Revolution when the time came (Fig. 10-3). And, as the ancient Romans already knew, there are pockets of valuable minerals ranging from copper to gold in the highlands and mountains from Spain to Scandinavia. For centuries, individual places on the European map were known for their specialized products, often based on such locally available resources. We still carry our idiomatic coal to Newcastle and advertise Italian marble in luxury homes; Sheffield was long known for steel the way Detroit was for automobiles. From resources below and atop the ground Europeans made products that were peerless on world markets: Swiss watches, Dutch cheese, Irish linen, French wines, Swedish furniture, Finnish electronics. Europe's domestic heavy industries produced trains and ships, cars and planes, trucks and tanks.

The European stage on which all this happened may be small, but it is very crowded—even after the departure of millions of emigrants headed for the New World. Americans tend to be surprised when they discover that Europe's total population is about double that of the United States, nearly 600 million in 2005. This has obvious and serious economic implications should Europe's political integration continue and its economy prosper. So far, the European economy has struggled in large measure because of the poor performance of its key component, Germany, which never fully recovered from the cost of the reattachment of former communist-ruled East Germany and also suffers from ineffective policies. As a whole, Europe's economy will also go through a difficult period following the 2004 expansion of the European Union, again involving ex-communist countries. But in the long term, Europe has the potential, at least in the economic sphere, to achieve the superpower status its leaders seek.

Crowded Europe also is one of the world's most highly urbanized realms, especially in several countries of the west where 90 percent or more of the population lives in cities and towns. Europe's great cities, from London to Rome and Paris to Athens, carry the imprints of Europe's turbulent past and tumultuous present in their historic centers, clustered, space-

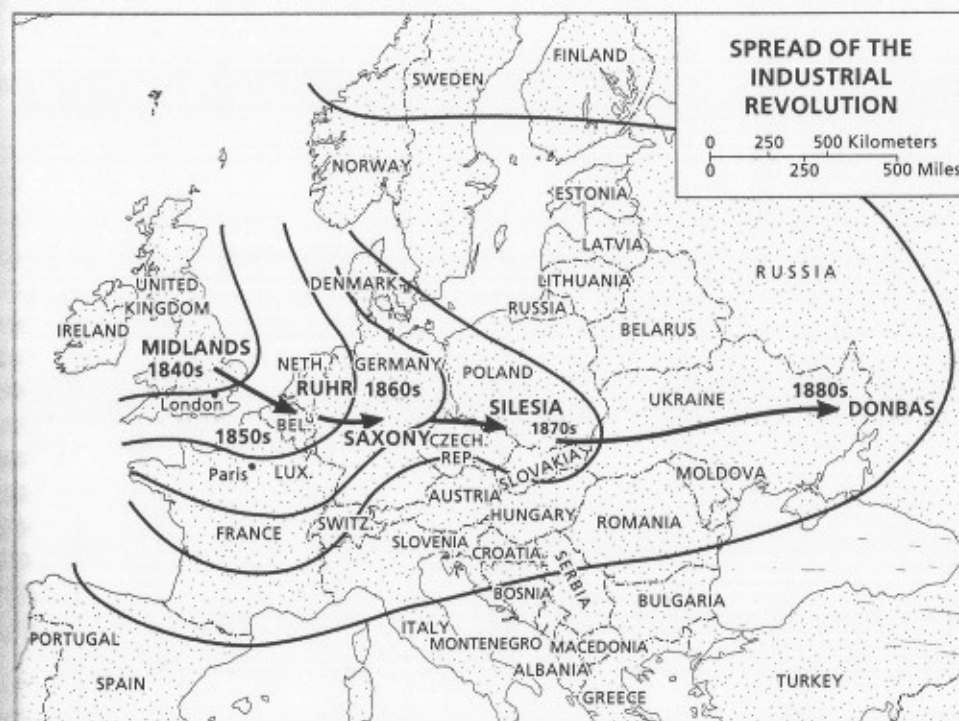


Fig. 10-3

conserving neighborhoods, and immigrant-laden outskirts. They do not display the profligate suburbanization of American cities, so that sprawl is comparatively limited and public transport more effective. But internal circulation is hampered by old, inefficient street patterns and narrow roadways. As a result, highways linking major urban centers are the scenes of some of the world's longest traffic jams. Where the modern highway meets the clogged arteries of the historic city, the slow dispersal of arriving vehicles can back up traffic for dozens of miles.

Europe's population is not only highly urbanized; it is also old. The populations of nearly half of Europe's countries are shrinking, and those of most others are growing very slowly. People living in crowded cities tend to have fewer children than their rural counterparts, but other factors also contribute to Europe's population stagnation. Later marriage, high unemployment, the cost of child rearing and other financial uncertainties, and the breakdown of religious strictures on family planning all play their role (Italy, of all countries, has zero population growth today). The implications of this for Europe's future are troubling: younger taxpayers must pay for the social



services required by older citizens, and the shriveling of that taxpayer base confronts European governments with some difficult options. Combine this with the continuing influx of immigrants from all over the world, and you can see why Europe's prospects are mixed.

#### WHERE AND WHAT IS EUROPE?

Silly question, it might seem. Europe, of course, is the British Isles and Scandinavia and Greece and Poland . . . but maybe not Moldova or Belarus?

Welcome to a long and probably endless geographic debate. The location of the eastern boundary of Europe has been the subject of argument for many years. The key issue has always been whether Russia is part of Europe or not. When the Soviets made satellites out of much of Eastern Europe, Russia was seen by many Europeans as an external colonizer, especially when communist and noncommunist Europe went vastly different ways politically as well as economically. When the Soviet empire collapsed and Russia emerged as a fledgling democracy, there were visions of a Europe from Madrid to Moscow and beyond.

But that's just the problem. If Russia is a European state, does Europe therefore extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from London to Vladivostok? Not according to the cartographers who worked on the eighth edition of the *National Geographic Atlas of the World* (National Geographic Society, 2005). On page 71 their map of Asia shows a green line (a "commonly accepted" boundary, a note states) running along the Ural Mountains, then cutting across western Kazakhstan, across the Caspian Sea to turn westward along the Caucasus Mountains, and then across the Black Sea to the Bosphorus. Europe's eastern border, according to this convoluted construction, largely coincides with the Ural Mountains, and there is a European Russia and a non-European Russia. It must seem rather strange for the people of the city of Ufa, just west of the Urals, to know that they live in Europe—while their compatriots in Chelyabinsk, just down the road, live in Asia.

The *National Geographic Atlas* has a lot of geographic clout, and millions of readers must have taken this notion seriously. But this version of Europe's dimensions makes no sense. If Russia is part of Europe, then Europe extends all the way to the Pacific, from Scotland to Sakhalin. If it is not, then Europe's eastern border coincides with Russia's western one.

There are many reasons to adopt this last solution. Make a list of Russia's geographic properties, and the differences between it and its European neighbors leap from the page. Russia is 100 times as large territorially as the average European country. Russia's population is nearly twice as large

as Europe's largest. Russia's mainly energy-export economy is unlike that of Europe (you are unlikely to find Russian specialty products among your purchases). Russian democracy is still rickety, and two neighbors in which Moscow has residual influence, Ukraine and Belarus, retain authoritarian habits, although Ukraine is showing signs of reorientation. Russia is not even being mentioned as a potential member of the European Union. Certainly Russia's cities and cultural landscapes have European overtones, but that is not enough to conceive of Russia as a functional part of a European geographic realm.

Since we're talking about regional boundaries, what about Europe's southern border? It seems logical to regard the Mediterranean Sea as Europe's southern limit, but that's only because of what happened after Roman times. Some of the westward migrants who arrived in this part of the world took a southerly route around the Mediterranean and ended up in what is today North Africa. There they were overpowered (or ousted) by the Romans, whose provincial administrations transformed the area and integrated it into the European orbit. Rome's collapse might have merely delayed North Africa's Europeanization except for one crucial event: the arrival of Islam and the reorientation of North Africa to Mecca. By the time the French, Spanish, and Italians arrived to colonize North Africa, the Mediterranean—once Rome's *Mare Internum*—represented an unbridgeable cultural chasm.

Does all this matter? Absolutely. To be part of Europe means that a country can hope for access to Europe's many international economic and financial organizations, for representation in Brussels and Strasbourg, for mutual security, and for many other advantages resulting from cooperation among neighbors. The name Europe today stands for far more than a continent or a geographic realm. It also represents international opportunity and progress. Few countries would forgo the chance to join (the Norwegians and the Swiss are in a tiny minority), and some with only the remotest chance of eventually being considered for admission, such as Georgia and a potentially independent Kosovo, are among aspiring hopefuls.

Indeed, Europe has been redefined. It's no longer just a geographic locale. It's a functioning complex of countries (Fig. 10-4). How it got there is the story of this chapter.

#### FRACTIOUS EUROPE

In July 2003 I was asked to give a talk about Europe in England before an international audience of several hundred consisting of about an equal number of Europeans and Americans. I spoke about Germany's economic



Fig. 10-4

problems, France's quarrel with the United States over Iraq, prospects for the euro and EU enlargement, and the issue of a European Constitution, then very much in the news while it was being prepared, a momentous event in the EU's history. I went on too long and left no time for a Q&A session, but asked anyone with comments to come up to the lectern afterward. Soon a group of about a dozen listeners converged on me, and I could see that some of them were quite angry. "You were unfair to Germany's government!" shouted a man in the middle of the pack. Before I could answer, someone started a bitter complaint about my view of the French. "No," said the vociferous German, "he was quite right about you French. You want to run the European Union, but the British won't let you do it." In a few moments the Europeans among the group were in a shouting match with each other, no longer interested in arguing with me. When I left the room the dispute continued undiminished.

When I look at the fractured political map of Europe these days that episode comes to mind. If you don't count Europe's microstates (such as Monaco, Andorra, San Marino) or nonstate territories like Gibraltar and Kosovo, there still are 40 countries in Europe, a jumble of states creating as complex a political mosaic as any in the world. In some parts of the realm, for example along the Dutch-Belgian border, small parcels of land belonging to one country are completely surrounded by territory of the other. Europe's political map is a legacy of centuries of conflict and adjustment.

And the conflicts are not over. Basques in Spain kill members of government, judges, and policemen to stake their claim for independence. Several hundred thousand people died during the 1990s as Christians and Muslims, Serbs and Croats destroyed much of Yugoslavia's historic heritage. Until just a few years ago Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland fought and died as though the sixteenth century never ended. Corsicans use terror to promote their cause against the French. Other movements, many of them regional in nature, have the potential to engender strife. In February 2005, Montenegro launched a bid to negotiate secession from Serbia. Tensions over political status, cultural issues, or historic injustices (often in some combination) afflict many European countries (Fig. 10-5).

Europe has long been a crucible of culture, but it is also a cauldron of conflict. Twice in the twentieth century, Europe plunged the world into war, leading the use of weapons of mass destruction both times (gas in the first, atomic bombs in the second). Twice the combatants came out of the conflict saying "never again." But when Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, and Europeans had the opportunity to prove that they meant it, they failed. In Europe, never say never.





market for coal and steel among the six member states. When the Marshall Plan phased out in 1952, the momentum toward European integration never slowed. By 1957 six of the seventeen aid recipients were ready to ratify the Treaty of Rome that, in the following year, launched the European Economic Community (EEC), the so-called Common Market or "Inner Six."

Why only six? It was the old story of European divisiveness. While France, Italy, (West) Germany, and the three Benelux countries were ready to take the next step, the British felt that their future was more closely linked to the Commonwealth and they did not want to risk those ties by joining the EEC. On the other hand the British did want to keep a stake in Europe, and so they founded an organization to parallel the EEC consisting of the United Kingdom, the three Scandinavian countries, the two mountain states (Austria and Switzerland, the latter an unlikely joiner), and Portugal. This group was known as the European Free Trade Association or "Outer Seven," but it was no match for the powerful six of the Common Market. The leadership of the EEC was, to put it mildly, not pleased with this initiative. When the British changed their minds and applied for membership in the EEC, France vetoed their application. It was, so it appeared, European business as usual.

While all this wrangling was going on, certain European leaders wanted to remove the "economic" qualification from the EEC name. Europe should aspire to be more than an economic community of states; there would be other arenas of integration. And so, in 1967, the organization got its second name: European Community (EC). In 1968 the six EC members eliminated all internal customs duties and erected common external tariffs. This got the attention of the old EFTA group, and most of them, led by Britain, again applied for admission. This time the French held their fire, and in 1973 the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark joined, while the Norwegian people rejected membership by referendum. The Inner Six had become "The Nine."

Behind the scenes, the fabric of the European Community got ever more intricate. The old OEEC was extended, and in effect superseded, by a broader, more international organization that now includes not only European countries but also the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand: the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Agreements were drawn up among EC member states ranging from agricultural policy to human rights and from monetary policy to labor regulations. One of the most important of these agreements had to do with subsidies: the richer members were obliged to help the poorer ones by contributing to a fund established to reduce inequalities within the EC. On the political front, the year 1979 saw the first elections to the European Parliament that, in that year, had 410 members charged with legislative and consultative tasks.

And the EC continued to grow. Greece was admitted in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986 and, after the organization was renamed once more, this time to the current European Union, Austria, Sweden, and Finland entered in 1995. Momentous meetings in prominent and not-so-prominent locales achieved ever-closer integration on numerous fronts: the Charter of Paris (1990), when East Germany was formally admitted as part of newly reunited Germany, the Maastricht Agreement (1991), charting the overall future of the EU including monetary union, the Treaty of Nice (2000), opening the door to the climactic incorporation of ten additional members in 2004 (Fig. 10-5). Now with 25 members, and with Romania and Bulgaria in negotiations to join in 2007, the European Union truly has become the New Europe.

#### TOO FAR TOO FAST?

You don't have to be a specialist in international affairs to realize that the expansion of a supranational organization across countries with ever-greater disparities in wealth and income, not to mention dimension and demographics, requires relaxation of the rules of membership. The old Common Market consisted of six fairly similar societies (well, five of them at least, and half of the sixth), and even the admission of the next three members kept the range of indices pretty narrow. But when Greece, Portugal, and Spain joined, the picture changed quite drastically. Not all the senior members of the EU were pleased, but soon funds were flowing from Brussels to Athens, Lisbon, and Madrid under the terms of the EU's program to help poorer countries and regions improve their infrastructures. Portugal built bridges and highways. Spain constructed a high-speed rail link between Madrid and Seville in poverty-stricken Andalusia. Greece erected a new airport near its capital.

The issue of depth versus breadth nevertheless roiled EU discussions. The longstanding objectives of the organization transcend economic integration and include common policies in foreign affairs and defense, and these seemed imperiled by enlargement. In practical terms, how could decision-making procedures originally devised for a supranational community of just six states, and modified only slightly since, function adequately for a union of 25 or more? How could the economies of poor countries such as the Baltic states be expected to meet the responsibilities and costs of EU membership after joining a fraternity organized for the wealthy? How many decades would it take for the new members to catch up with the old ones, given current economic growth rates? How much more difficult would it be for Europe to speak and act as one in the international arena when so many more voices—and votes—must be heard and heeded?

Other concerns focused on the prospect that huge numbers—perhaps millions—of workers would cross the old EU borders from the new member states and create labor troubles in the process, and again the issue split the old EU. Germany and Austria, adjoined by new members, led moves to restrict such immigration, but the United Kingdom and Ireland, more remote, opened their labor markets quickly. There was rather more unanimity on the problem of migrants seeking state benefits in the richer countries: all of the older members wanted to control this. Of particular concern were the eight million Roma (Gypsies) living in extreme poverty and facing discrimination in Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, most of whom are unemployable and some of whom have already arrived as asylum-seekers in the West. While all the recipient countries wanted to find ways to restrict this movement, it was also agreed that the best way to do so would be to alleviate poverty in the source areas, through redirected EU subsidies. The Roma problem will arise again when Romania, home to a substantial Roma minority, joins the EU later in this decade.

A key issue confronting the EU following its 2004 enlargement centered on the way expansion affected states' relative power. The ten countries joining in 2004 had some 75 million inhabitants, of which Poland had nearly 40 million and Malta only 0.4 million—a smaller population even than Luxembourg. The issue was how to assign votes in the European Council when the largest state has more than 200 times as many people as the smallest? The older, larger members were reluctant to yield some of their power and influence to the smaller, newer upstarts, but a method had to be found to satisfy all. An early plan, hammered out in Nice, gave the two midsize countries, Spain and Poland, almost as many votes in the European Council (the EU's key governing body) as Germany, more than twice as populous. But during the drafting of the European Constitution in 2003, that plan was dropped in favor of one called the "double majority," which gave more votes to the more populous countries but required any legislation to be approved by (1) a majority of votes and (2) a majority of member countries, 13 or more until 2007 and over 14 after the pending admission of Romania and Bulgaria. When this proposal met further objection, a new plan defined a majority as consisting of at least 55 percent of member states representing 65 percent or more of the EU's population. This model would accommodate any expansion (or shrinkage) of the Union, and it satisfied all involved.

The same cannot be said for the European Constitution as a whole. Late in 2001, the then-15 EU leaders proclaimed a European Constitution desirable because, as the momentous 2004 expansion approached, the EU stood at a crossroads, a defining moment, in its history. One dimension of this

defining moment was the introduction of the EU's own currency, the euro, to replace the venerable *valutas* of Europe's individual countries. Perhaps some readers will recall the amusing 1960s movie about some American tourists traveling by bus across Europe called *If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium*. Well, on Monday they were spending guilders in the Netherlands, on Wednesday they were paying with francs in France, and on Thursday it was lira (by the thousands for a small lunch) in Italy. The European Monetary Union (EMU) was designed not only to facilitate the flow of money across the EU, but also to end this fiscal fragmentation. Many observers wondered if the member states' commitment to unity would extend to the abandonment of their familiar bills and coins, but the great euro experiment succeeded—to a point. Among the 15 EU members at the time the euro was introduced, 12 adopted it including all the major countries except the United Kingdom, which retained its pound sterling, and Denmark and Sweden, where voters rejected the initiative (Fig. 10-5). Now you can take your Euros from France to Spain to Italy to Germany, even to Finland and Greece. And after a slow start, the euro gained ground against the United States dollar so that, after being worth less than 90 cents following its introduction in 2002, it exceeded \$1.30 by the beginning of 2005, and was poised to go even higher.

Shortly after the adoption of the euro, when the currency sank against the dollar, Europeans fretted about its weakness. But when it rose dramatically in 2004, they worried even more. This caused the prices of European products to rise on the American market, lowering sales; back home it hurt the tourist industry, slowed economic growth, and drove up unemployment. Europeans resented America's readiness to let the dollar drop, but the Europeans themselves failed to take appropriate action. The European Central Bank failed to intervene, and European leaders failed to reform their stagnant economies.

But how soon, and under what terms and conditions, should the ten new member states be offered the opportunity to replace their currencies with the euro? This was one of those "crossroads" issues that impelled EU leaders to begin constructing a European Constitution that would codify not only social but also financial responsibilities of membership. It is another one of those "breadth or depth" issues: the mostly poor new members cannot be expected to be able to adhere to the stringent fiscal EMU rules, but the core members of the Union do not want to relax these regulations (despite occasionally violating some of these themselves, as Germany did in 2003 when it exceeded EU debt limits). So the euro is likely to remain an entitlement of the "original" 15, and a distant objective for the new members.



### A FEDERAL EUROPE?

The drafting of the European Constitution highlighted the divisions of opinion among EU leaders. A majority, at least among the pre-2004 membership, favors the strengthening of the powers of the European Commission and the European Parliament, a weakening of the powers of individual member states to veto EU decisions, the primacy of "European" laws over national ones, especially in the criminal justice and immigration arenas, a legally enforceable charter that guarantees a broad range of human rights, and a coordinated EU foreign policy that would serve to counter United States policies where EU and non-EU (read American) interests diverge.

The Germans and French have long been committed supporters of moves toward a federal "United States of Europe," but British leaders have been less enthusiastic. Yet although the "founding fathers" favor ever-stronger unity, they also seem reluctant to yield much of the power inherent in their countries' long-term dominance in EU decision making. French and German politicians have carried the ball: Giscard d'Estaing wrote the Constitution's lengthy and turgid preamble. But when it came to the voting system that would give all EU countries a measure of power in the EU, the heavyweights were careful to protect their turf. This gave the minority "Euroskeptics" some ammunition in their efforts to protect the powers of national governments. Self-interest, they argued, was alive and well even among avowed federalists.

To American observers, the EU's efforts to achieve consensus on something as far-reaching as a Constitution held much interest. The United States Constitution holds a special place in American life, and to witness historic allies struggle to achieve a consensus of this kind in modern times was fascinating. Quite apart from its practical side—the bureaucratic arrangements necessary to allow the EU to function through its expansion—the EU Constitution also, and more controversially, addresses sensitive issues ranging from the character of "European civilization" to Europe's "religious heritage." The draft text described the former as having "gradually developed the values underlying humanism: equality of persons, freedom, respect for reason," a construction unlikely to provoke much debate. But how to refer to Europe's religious heritage prompted much acrimonious discussion. In an earlier draft, the writers deleted specific references to Christianity as well as Greek and Roman civilization and even the Enlightenment in a compromise that sought to eliminate allusions to both religious and secular foundations of European civilization. Later, the word "religious" was inserted in a sentence that describes the "cultural, religious, and humanist inheritance" of Europe. That was not enough for representatives from Italy, Ireland, and Spain among older members and Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic

among the new ones, all of whom wanted some reference to Europe's Christian (or Judeo-Christian) heritage in the preamble. In truth, however, Europe, especially older Europe in EU terms, is increasingly secular; church attendance is declining and you see frequent references to "post-Christian Europe" in writings about the realm. Some framers of the European Constitution argued that the vigor of Islam in present-day Europe and Islam's historic invasions of Europe in Iberia and the Balkans justified the inclusion of "Judeo-Christian-Islamic heritage" as a defining feature of European culture, if there was going to be any reference to religion at all.

The European Constitution will have to be approved democratically by all 25 members to take effect, a process that will take time and persuasion. The British, among others, have been reluctant to put the Constitution to this test, because failure would mean a severe setback for the entire Union initiative. In late 2004 European newspapers were arguing that a "no" vote in any of the member countries might mark the beginning of the end of the whole supranational project, the first irreparable crack in an edifice that reached its apogee with the expansion just achieved. Far from moving farther toward the federal ideal, many editorials suggested, Europe was taking a huge risk in its effort to achieve consensus over its controversial Constitution (*Economist*, 2004a).

### EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

The European Union's system of governance has evolved into a complex, overlapping set of structures sometimes referred to as the "four pillars" (and occasionally called something rather less constructive). The European Commission (EC), Council of Ministers, the European Council, and the European Parliament (EP), all play roles that have changed as the EU has expanded and matured. The European Commission is the EU's executive body, long consisting of 20 members appointed by member governments for five-year terms. Its chair has the title of president; responsibilities include the formulation of legislation to be considered for approval by the second ruling body, the Council of Ministers. This council is made up of representatives from every member country and it too has a presidency—but one that rotates every six months. Many members feel that such a system of rotation may have made sense when there were six members, but not when there are 25 or more. The smaller and newer members do not want to change it (the proposed European Constitution includes a clause stipulating a 30-month presidency, however). Besides acting on legislation proposed by the EC, the Council of Ministers approves the EU budget and thus combines features of



an executive as well as legislative body. Then there is the third body, the European Council, not to be confused with the Council of Ministers. The European Council consists of the heads of state of all the members, and meets twice a year. This body is needed because such items as monetary policy (including monetary union) can only be approved by the elected leaders of the states affected.

Then there is the fourth governmental organization, the European Parliament, with limited law-giving power but a huge membership set to grow even more upon further EU expansion: 732 parliamentarians in 2005 representing parties that range from Europhilic to Euroskeptic. Yes, there are elected members of the European Parliament who would, given the chance, scuttle the whole European Union project.

EU countries have "blocs" of seats in the EP reflecting their comparative populations (Germany has the largest, with 99 members). When voters in individual member states elect representatives, they can send a message to their domestic governments by voting against the incumbent party, as happened notably during the June 2004 elections. Nationalists, "greens," communists, and others with strong viewpoints can warn their domestic leaders that the next domestic election could be difficult. In 2004, for example, an anti-Union outfit called the UK Independence Party took 12 seats and 16 percent of the British vote, a warning for No. 10 Downing Street.

But the EP does not as yet have a great deal of power. Its sessions can be rowdy and contentious, but the laws it promulgates do not become EU legislation automatically. In a few areas, such as business, the environment, and budgetary matters, the European Commission has agreed to adopt EP-negotiated laws, but in general, domestic laws in the member states continue to prevail over EP legislation. In this sense, the European Parliament remains more symbol than substance.

On the other hand, the EP does reflect European organizational incoherence, the stuff of much sarcastic commentary in national media. For one thing, it meets in two places, Brussels and Strasbourg, the latter once proclaimed as Europe's future legislative capital. Visit the EP's sprawling, modernistic, mazelike building in Strasbourg and you will likely find it empty, or nearly so, since the parliament uses it only four days per month. The majority of its time is spent in its vast complex in Brussels—but the Strasbourg visits do have their purpose. Members pocket generous travel expenses and other perks, per diems for days not spent in Strasbourg, and other fringe benefits; the exposure of these practices has caused the occasional uproar. But the real budgetary excess has to do with the entire monthly intercity migration, a process many Europeans say should be scrapped.

It is thus obvious that the EU, the Commission, Council, and Parliament are parts of a work in progress, a set of structures in need of coordination and refinement. The miracle, given Europe's cultural and social fragmentation and Europeans' historic and persistent fractiousness, is that the supranational project has advanced as far and as deeply as it has.

#### A GEOGRAPHIC PARADOX

Even as European states converge and cooperate on their historic supranational journey, seeking the centripetal ground to cement their unification, other, centrifugal forces drive them apart. To assess the magnitude of the challenge still ahead, it is useful to see Europe's hierarchy of political entities in a seven-rank perspective (Table 10-1). The 25-member, still-expanding European Union sits atop this political-geographical ladder; such still-troublesome entities as Gibraltar, Kaliningrad, Northern Cyprus, and Ceuta and Melilla rank lowest. Between these extremes of success and failure lie five levels of formal and informal power and jurisdiction, all of which the EU must eventually accommodate.

The size and diversity of the states now comprising the EU are greater than ever, and any map showing the "new" Europe as extending from Ireland to Cyprus and from Estonia to Portugal conceals the range of economic, social, and political conditions now incorporated under the EU banner. Inevitably this leads to an "in-group" of leaders and an "out-group" of followers, a core of original states whose cooperation has advanced furthest and a periphery of countries not able to meet the same criteria of membership (Rachman, 2004). This core, however, shows its own cracks: the map might suggest that France, Germany, Benelux, and the United Kingdom should form all or most of the in-group, but in fact the British have been sufficiently ambivalent about EU participation that France and Germany have become the Union's driving force. The Schengen Agreement, for example, an early five-country multilateral treaty to drop border formalities and ease travel restrictions, included Germany and France but not the United Kingdom.

The power of the core group of states vis à vis the latecomers was evident in 2003 and 2004, when both Germany and France failed to adhere to the economic rules (in context of the growth and stability pact, limiting national debt to 3 percent of GDP) but avoided—in fact, simply voided—the associated penalties. This enraged not only the latecomers but also smaller, less powerful charter members such as the Dutch. There is no doubt about it: the EU is driven by the formidable insiders (Kagan, 2004).

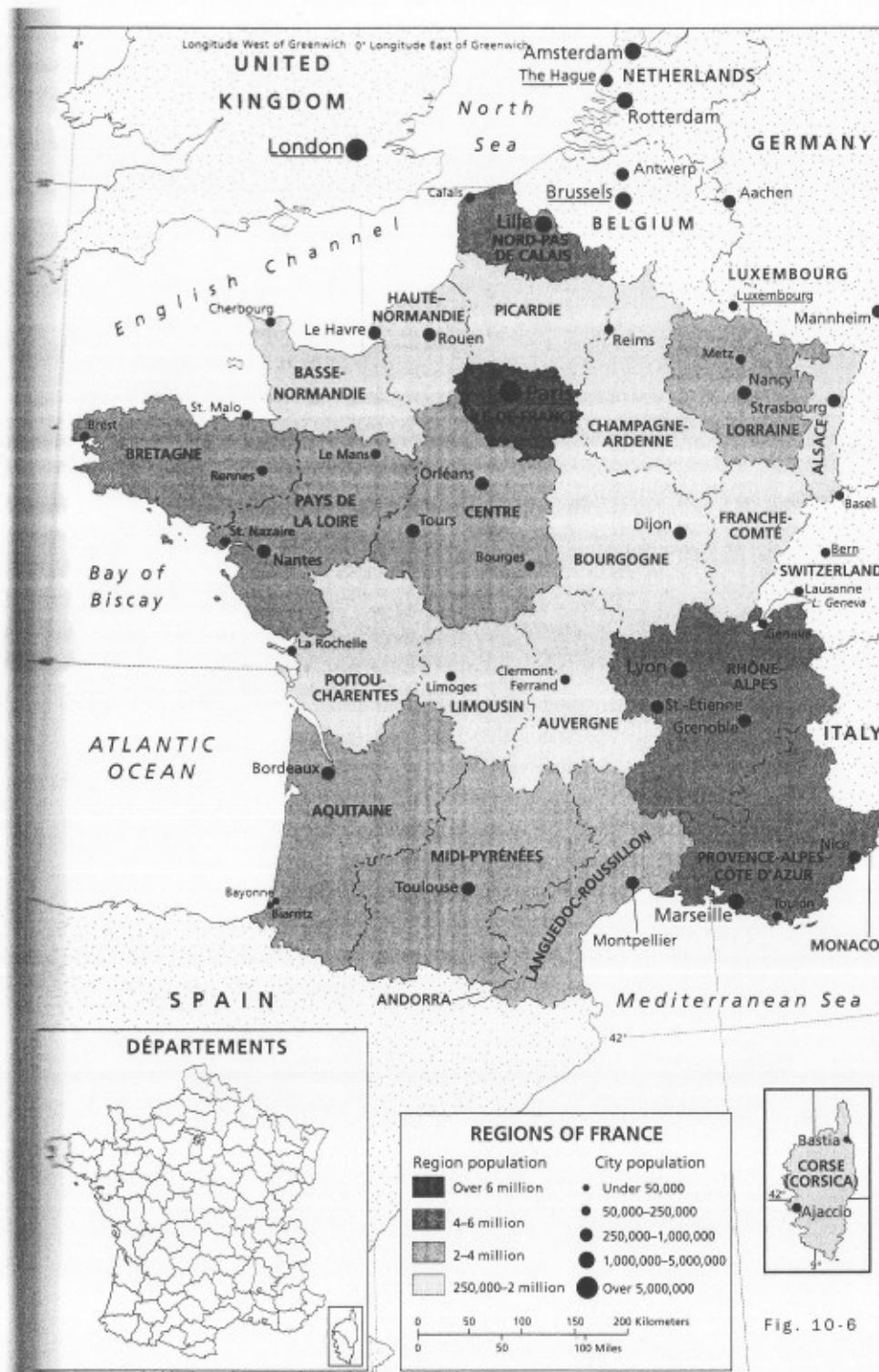
The third tier consists of states that are not members of the EU, including

ENTITY	WHO THEY ARE	OTHERS
European Union	The 25	
Leaders (Core)	France, Germany	U.K., Spain
Followers (Periphery)	Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic	Baltics, Malta, Cyprus
Outsiders	Norway, Switzerland, Iceland	Ukraine, Serbia
Regions	Baden-Württemberg, Lombardy, Rhône-Alpes	Andalusia, Bretagne, Saxony, Tuscany
Devolutionary Pressures	Catalunia, Basque Country, Corsica, Kosovo	Scotland, Flanders, Montenegro
Fragments of History	Gibraltar, Kaliningrad	Andorra, San Marino, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Ceuta and Melilla

Table 10-1

several with strong links to the organization and others less connected. The former include Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland, all qualified but choosing to decline membership; the latter comprising an outer periphery extending from sclerotic Belarus and Moldova to Serbia and Bosnia. This outer periphery contains three candidates with prospects for EU admission before the decade ends: Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

Now the geographic plot thickens. Even as states vie for admission to EU membership, the governments of many of those states are in the process of yielding various forms of authority, notably in the economic arena, to provinces, "regions," or other internal divisions. This process has been in progress for decades, and it has changed the map of Europe. France, for example, until after World War II was divided into nearly 100 *départements*, most dating from Napoleonic times (Fig. 10-6). Each *département* had representation in Paris, but political power was concentrated in the capital and France was a highly centralized unitary state. But today, France is decentralizing. The old framework has been replaced by 22 historically significant provinces, groupings of old *départements* now called regions (Fig. 10-6). These regions, though still represented in the Paris government, have substantial autonomy in such areas as taxation, economic policy, and development spending. The cities that anchor these regions, such as Lyon, headquarters of the region called Rhône-Alpes, benefit from policy because their administrations can control investment, not only within France but also from abroad. In short,





some regions like Rhône-Alpes in France, Baden-Württemberg in Germany, Lombardy in Italy, and Catalonia in Spain (all decentralizing countries as well) have become self-standing economic powerhouses with huge concentrations of growth industries and multinational firms, and have become driving forces in the European economy.

However, such autonomy can lead to friction with the central government, which takes us to the next level of the European political hierarchy. Catalonia, among other regions and provinces in Europe, has a sometimes prickly relationship with the central government, in its case in Madrid (Fig. 10-7). With 6 percent of Spain's territory and 16 percent of the country's population, Catalonia produces 25 percent of all Spanish exports and 40 percent of all of its industrial exports. Yet Madrid had not always treated Catalonia well: no high-speed railway has ever been built to link its capital, Barcelona, to Madrid, and for some time around the turn of the century the Spanish government planned to divert water from the vital Rio Ebro away from the region toward the parched south—without adequate consultation. This angered locals and their representatives, and revived Catalan nationalism and separatism, never far from the surface.

The story of Catalonia is repeated in many European subnational regions and provinces where productivity tends to translate into political power and in turn into separatist sentiments. But there are places where the situation is worse—far worse. Whereas mild forms of separatism in Catalonia, Scotland, and northern Italy could be negotiated (in the case of Scotland, the government in London offered the Scots their own parliament with tax-raising powers), there are places where violence accompanies separatist demands. Where this happens, as in the Basque country of Spain and on the island of Corsica in France, the process of devolution becomes menacing and destructive.

As we saw, a map of Europe showing the presence of secession-or-autonomy-minded peoples (peaceful or otherwise) is a bit unnerving. Dark rumblings from separatists in northern Italy even produced a prospective name for a putative country, "Padania." Belgium, whose capital serves as the EU's headquarters, is regionally and notoriously divided between Flemish and French speakers, the former fostering an angry Flanders-based nationalist movement. In the United Kingdom, demands for greater autonomy in Scotland and Wales led the London government to prevent the issue from spinning out of control by giving both regions the opportunity to vote on it in a referendum. Both Scots and Welsh favored the establishment of their own assemblies with limited but significant powers, and devolution was kept on a peaceful track. The aftermath of the collapse of Yugoslavia leaves major cultural-political mismatches in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Al-



Fig. 10-7

bania; secessionist movement in Montenegro may yet lead to a breakaway from Serbia. The Frisians in the Netherlands, the Saami in Norway, and the Hungarians in Slovakia are among peoples who feel that their cultures are threatened by dominant national governments. As Fig. 10-5 shows, both EU and non-EU countries in Europe are affected, from Galicia to the Crimea.

This devolutionary spirit among so many of Europe's minorities, at a time when the countries of the continent are trying to unify, seems to amount to a paradox, a contradiction of the advantages of supranationalism. I raised that question with my hosts during the height of the surge of Scottish nationalism in the 1980s, when the Scottish National Party pushed for autonomy and



demands for outright independence filled editorial pages and meeting rooms (Fig. 10-8). The answer was always the same, and it was directly related to the EU project. Scotland was an important component of the United Kingdom, a second-ranking entity with much cultural identity and adequate representation in London. But with the UK becoming just another "region" of the European Union, Scotland would sink to a lower status, with no representation of its own in a European Parliament, diminished local powers, no way to resist the imposition of unacceptable EU laws. Why should the Danes, with similar numbers and no greater cultural identity than the Scots, sit at the table in Brussels when the Scots were about to be demoted? So in a perverse way, European supranationalism served to activate Scottish nationalism.

The British government's skillful accommodation of Scottish and Welsh nationalism, and the reasoned way the Scots and Welsh accepted the government's terms, could serve as a model for other, less conciliatory separatist movements and the national administrations with which they struggle. The intractable problems of Northern Ireland, the death and destruction sowed by Basque nationalists in Spain and by Corsicans in France, the continuing violence in the Balkans and the recurrent threat of it in Cyprus all underscore the European paradox of still-intense localism against a backdrop of cooperative internationalism.

This leaves us with the lowest rung on the European political-geographical ladder: the territorial fragments of history. For all their supranational collaboration, Europeans can be awfully petty when it comes to what would seem to be minor irritants of long standing. I got a reminder of this when I was aboard a cruise ship in May 2004 after a Transatlantic crossing. I had presented a seminar on European geopolitics and the ship, after docking at Southampton, had the British colony of Gibraltar next on its itinerary. The Spanish government, in a snit over some argument with the British involving this 2.5-square-mile piece of rock with 30,000 people, refused to allow the ship to pass through its territorial waters on the way to the dock, and so the visit was scrapped. It reminded me of a time some years ago when, after visiting Taiwan on a ship, we had to sail in a raging storm to the Japanese-held Senkaku Islands before being allowed to enter the Chinese port of Xiamen. We shook our Western heads about this silly, foolish attitude, evidence, surely, of China's immature political behavior.

The imperial remnant of Gibraltar has been a bone of contention between Britain and Spain for a very long time. Its inhabitants have voted against independence and against incorporation with Spain; the Spanish have blocked Gibraltar's airport and shut its border gates. Contrary to popular impression, Gibraltar does not overlook the narrowest part of the strategic Strait



Fig. 10-8

of the same name: it is situated off the western entrance. Prosperous and multicultural, the locals are understandably reluctant to change the status quo, and the British give them the last word. Spain's bottom line is that it wants Gibraltar returned to Madrid's jurisdiction. The standoff, punctuated by quarrels arising over minor incidents, roils relations between the two EU members and affects cooperation involving much bigger issues such as fishing regulations and security.

Spain has reason to view Gibraltar as an anachronism in modern Europe, but the Spanish have their own outposts, Ceuta right across the Strait of Gibraltar and Melilla across the Alboran Sea, along with several small islands off the Moroccan coast. Talk about Spain yielding these exclaves to Morocco, and you hear echoes of British colonial policy. The locals should decide, and they prefer to stay with Spain.

The nominal independence of the tiny entities (microstates) of Monaco, Liechtenstein, San Marino, and Andorra (which is larger than Malta, a full-fledged member of the EU, go figure) precludes similar jurisdictional problems arising from these fragments of history, but there is one territory that does have the potential to cause difficulties in the future: Kaliningrad. The map of Europe shows this exclave of Russia, about the size of Connecticut, facing the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania. Centered on the fortified city founded in 1255 named Königsberg, that joined the Hanseatic League in 1340 and became the residence of Prussian dukes after 1525, Kaliningrad got its new name and regional borders after 1945 as part of the Potsdam Agreement following World War II. The then-Soviet Union's communist regime expelled the German population, gave Kaliningrad the status of oblast, and made this strategic corner one of the most heavily militarized and industrialized components of the U.S.S.R. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia inherited an irrelevant military complex, failing manufacturing plants, inefficient collective farms, a rusting fishing fleet, a bleak "socialist" city and a number of stagnant district capitals.

Kaliningrad, however, may not be so immaterial in the future. It still gives the Moscow government a warm-water outlet to the Atlantic; it now lies between two new members of the European Union, its population of about 1 million includes a substantial Lithuanian minority, and were it not for the Potsdam Conference, Poland would undoubtedly have been given all or most of Königsberg as part of its award of East Prussian territory at the end of the war. While neither Poland nor Lithuania is likely to lay claim to any part of Kaliningrad, the map suggests another possibility: that Russia will seek a route of egress via Belarus and either Lithuania or Poland. The northwest corner of Belarus lies only about 60 km (40 mi) from the south-

east corner of Kaliningrad, and there has been talk of a corridor or transport artery along the Lithuania-Polish border. Russia's troubled relations with the autocratic regime of Belarus, however, have not been conducive to such a prospect. Nevertheless, Kaliningrad has the potential to create friction (Stanley, 2001).

Uncertainty also surrounds the future of Cyprus. In early 2005, this island in the eastern Mediterranean, much closer to Turkey than to Greece but with a Greek majority, remained divided between the legitimate (in the eyes of the international community) Republic of Cyprus, on the south side of the island, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, with under 200,000 inhabitants and 40 percent of the territory, in the north. When Cyprus joined the European Union in May 2004, only the south side with its 900,000 residents was admitted. A last-minute effort by the United Nations and European intermediaries to reunite the two sides in a loose confederation collapsed, in large measure because of a dismal failure of leadership on the Greek side resulting in a defeat of the plan. The notion of a Turkish minority being part of a country's accession to the European Union was attractive to European leaders who saw this as a step toward the eventual admission of Turkey itself. Instead, the problem of a divided Cyprus festers, and the risks this entails are serious. Here is another of Europe's trouble spots, where violence has accompanied the evolution of the cultural landscape.

#### THE PERILS OF EXCLUSION

When the European Union expanded to 25 members in 2004, a new geographic boundary appeared on the European map. From the shores of the Gulf of Finland, where Estonia meets Russia, to the head of the Adriatic Sea, where Slovenia borders Croatia, extends an old-style boundary of the kind no longer seen within the EU itself, with visa requirements, passport controls, checks on cargo, and sometimes time-consuming legal paperwork. This intra-European boundary separates fortunate Europeans, ensconced in the EU, from outsiders wanting, in most cases, to get in. It is a boundary set to change: Romania and Bulgaria were in accession discussions even as the 2004 expansion took place, and Croatia was trying to start negotiations as well. But in other areas, this is a tough, divisive line. Where the EU boundary separates Belarus and Poland, it truncates the hinterlands of places like Hrodna and Brest. The boundary between Ukraine and Poland partitions a historically integrated region that encircles the Ukrainian city of Lviv. Travel from southeastern Poland into western Ukraine and you are likely to see few reasons why Poland should be "in," and Ukraine "out." Go farther east, however, and



the causes are clearer. The government in Kiev and its eastern Soviet-era economic and political baggage make accession a distant prospect.

But there is another side to this. Poland's entry into the EU makes it vulnerable, from a corporate viewpoint, to wage increases not occurring in Ukraine. Already, some German firms are opening factories on the Lviv side of the border, where per-hour labor costs are one-fourth of those in Poland. Foreign investment in the Lviv area is rising faster now that EU boundary controls keep workers from crossing it, ensuring a steady labor supply. Even in Belarus's town of Brest, the Minsk government has set up a so-called economic free zone in recognition of its location on the most direct road and rail routes from Warsaw to Moscow. EU companies see not only low wages but also the open border between Belarus and the large markets of Russia, so they view Brest as a potential profit center. But the regime in Minsk makes matters difficult, to say the least, for private enterprise, putting strict limits on the number of workers a private company may employ and altering tax rules overnight.

Belarus appears destined to remain on the "wrong" side of the EU boundary for a long time to come, as does Moldova, wedged between Ukraine and Romania, and by many criteria the poorest country in Europe. But in the autumn of 2004, a crucial sequence of events changed the political landscape in Ukraine, raising the previously unthinkable prospect that this, territorially the largest of all European states, may eventually join the EU. Industrialized eastern Ukraine has a large Russian minority and is closely linked to Moscow; more rural western Ukraine is the cultural heartland of the Ukrainian nation. In an election for president, a pro-Russian candidate (supported on the stump by Russian president Putin himself) initially defeated an opponent who had strong support in the west, but the election was fraudulent and crowds took to the streets of the capital to demand a repeat under international supervision. In the rerun, the more nationalist candidate won, but the electoral map had ominous overtones: the pro-Russian candidate won in all districts in the east, and his opponent in all of the west. The prospect arose of a split of the kind that happened in the former Czechoslovakia, but the new president moved quickly to restore relations with Moscow and to reassure the eastern part of the country that its concerns would be addressed. Nevertheless, it was immediately clear that Ukraine would tilt more toward Brussels than Moscow, and early in 2005 its government issued an official expression of interest in future discussions with the European Union over "issues of mutual interest."

If Romania and Bulgaria can be admitted to the EU, as they are scheduled to be before the end of this decade, then Ukraine certainly has a case. When this happens, Greece, long the geographic EU outlier, will finally be land-connected to the organization of which it is a member. This realignment will define much more clearly the Balkan group of outsiders hoping to join the EU some day: the



Fig. 10-9

remnants of the breakup of Yugoslavia (Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia-Montenegro, Macedonia, and the in-limbo territory of Kosovo) plus Albania (Fig. 10-9).

In this cluster of Balkan countries the EU will face what may well be the most difficult of all challenges in bringing coordination and stability to its ever-widening circle of member states. Ethnic and cultural tensions run deep here; devolutionary pressures persist; a major Muslim presence creates particular problems; poverty and distrust go hand in hand. Neighboring EU countries have strong interests in the course of events: the Hungarians in



Serbia, where there are substantial Hungarian communities, the Greeks in Macedonia, historically a Greek sphere of influence. The peace of Europe has foundered before in this fateful mosaic of cultural discord, and it is by no means certain that even the EU will mitigate these enmities.

#### AN ISLAMIC EU MEMBER?

Long before the momentous expansion of 2004 took place, still another neighbor on the outside of the EU boundary signaled its interest in joining: Turkey. Indeed, when Turkey made its first request for accession talks, it was joined by Morocco and the EU was still called the European Community. Morocco's request was quickly denied, but Turkey's representatives were invited to begin preliminary discussions. Nearly 20 years later, discussions are still going on, but unlike Romania and Bulgaria, Turkey has been given no target date for membership.

Turkey's candidacy has, in fact, divided EU members and leaders for many years. If the EU does not include Ukraine or Serbia, should it incorporate Turkey? If criteria for membership include the humane treatment of minorities and the absence of a military role in government, how can Turkey even be considered? If one country defies the entire international community and recognizes a "republic" established by force of arms, should that country be allowed to apply for EU membership?

On the other side are those who are prepared to bend the rules for Turkey because its membership would confirm the capacity of the EU to encompass even greater cultural diversity than Europe itself contains, put an end to allegations that the EU is a "Christian Club," and create a bridge between the European and Islamic worlds. There are also hopes that Turkish involvement in the EU would help integrate Islamic (many of them Turkish-Kurdish) communities into the mainstream of European life (*Economist*, 2004b).

The discussions relating to Turkey's candidacy have already had major results in Turkey itself, ranging from enhanced freedoms for the country's Kurdish minority to reduced military involvement in government, from the abolition of the death penalty to increased legal protection for women. But, as Turkey's long-dubious Greek neighbors like to point out, the Turks have a long way to go. In the EU itself, Turkey's improving prospects are cause for some introspection as well. Turkey's population of 70 million would rank it second in the EU; its growth rate (1.5 percent in 2004) is faster than the world average at a time when Europe's overall population is declining, so that by the end of the next decade Turkey would be the EU's most populous state, having overtaken Germany. "The Islamic tail wagging the Christian

dog," wrote an observer of Turkey recently, but the fact is that European Christianity itself is declining even as Islamic fervor is strengthening. To many Europeans, the entire initiative involving Turkey is further evidence that the bureaucratic elite of the EU is out of touch with the people in general, but barring some catastrophic failure of the EU itself, Turkey appears to be headed for incorporation (*Economist*, 2004c). Look at the map and marvel: "Europe" would then adjoin Iraq, Syria, and Iran.

#### ALLY OR ADVERSARY?

To answer our original question, Europe is a superpower already—an economic superpower. The EU's giant economy is a formidable competitor for the United States; the European market (the continent as a whole or the EU only) is much larger than that of the United States if not as rich per capita, and barring poorly governed Germany, the European economy has continued to grow at a healthy rate. Add Turkey to the mix, and the "European" population is over 650 million, more than twice as large as America's.

But Europe is no military superpower. European investment in the armed forces remains comparatively small. Europeans have been content to let the United States dominate NATO (which also expanded in 2004, though far more quietly than the EU: in March of that year, no fewer than seven countries joined NATO including the three Baltic states, Romania, and Bulgaria). Europe's dismal failure to stop the genocide in collapsing Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was followed by joint American-European intervention, chiefly in the form of high-altitude bombing, in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999, without the kind of UN Security Council authorization Europeans soon thereafter sought so fervently in the case of Iraq. Throughout the Cold War the Europeans were content to leave their security in the hands of the United States, and NATO was the bulwark of that security. After the Soviet threat dissipated, Europeans began to complain about United States hegemony and unilateralism. Europe's military impotence was starkly clear during the Serbia campaign, when American intelligence, equipment, and strategy determined the course of action and the European contribution was little more than symbolic. Surely this was to be expected: Europeans had the luxury of their political realignments and economic successes without having to worry about—or finance—a military apparatus that would give them the power to match the Americans and to influence policy.

So now the Europeans want a counterweight to American military power, but their only recourse is through international institutions and alliances among EU members to obstruct United States unilateralism and hegemony.

Germany and France sought to obstruct American policy toward Iraq by using the same United Nations they had—jointly with the United States—circumvented in Kosovo. This led a frustrated American defense secretary to complain impolitely that an “Old Europe” was impeding policies a “New Europe,” such as Poland and Romania, would recognize as salutary. In 2003, United States–European relations approached a low ebb, with the United States president declining to meet the German chancellor and anti-French jokes becoming the grist of the American comedy mill.

Clearly, Europe is not on the way to becoming a military superpower to challenge or influence United States dominance, and European actions were born of frustration as much as perceived moral certitude. In the constitutional discussions, Europeans even had difficulty agreeing on the portfolio of an EU foreign secretary, an equivalent to the American secretary of state to coordinate EU foreign policy; the notion of a potent all-European armed force under some form of joint command remains a mirage. The EU includes nuclear powers (the UK and France) and a wide range of national militaries, and the NATO treaty is what binds them. The United States continues to be that organization’s paramount power. Only the dissolution of NATO would change this landscape.

It is therefore evident that Europe is and will be America’s ally, not a military counterweight. For all the divisive language heard (and actions taken) during the past half decade, the United States and Europe have far more in common, in shared global objectives as well as cultural foundations, than divides them. Indeed, cultural and political divisions within Europe, and within America, in some ways appear stronger than those separating us from each other. When Europeans and Americans are asked to summarize the goals they have for this world, their responses are remarkably similar. The difference lies in the ways to achieve those goals.

In this context it is worth revisiting the geographic issue of Europe’s borders. Surely Americans and Europeans share the hope that Europe’s great experiment will succeed, that its internal boundaries will soften further and that the EU’s external border will move inexorably eastward to incorporate not only Romania and Bulgaria but also a progressive Ukraine, a democratic Belarus, a stable Georgia and, ultimately, a reformed Russia, so that the argument over Europe’s geography may be settled by a simple, hopeful phrase: Europe reaches across Eurasia from Atlantic to Pacific.

## 11

### RUSSIA: TROUBLE ON THE EASTERN FRONT

In this fast-changing world, what a difference a decade makes. In the late 1980s the Soviet Union still was one of the world’s two superpowers, a colonial empire extending from the Baltic Sea to Central Asia, a communist enforcer in control of most of Eastern Europe, a nuclear-armed behemoth capable of global destruction. Ten years later, its empire disintegrated, its ideology discounted, and its army in disarray, Russia, the imperial cornerstone, was struggling to reorganize as a democracy and to reestablish a position of consequence on the world’s geopolitical stage. But by the middle of the first decade of the new century, Russia’s major contest was not with other giants on that stage, but with tiny Chechnya within its own borders. What remained of its armed forces were not at war in some remote Asian frontier but inside Russia itself. Thousands of Russians had died violently, many in terrorist attacks in the capital, Moscow. The cost of this tragedy far exceeded the lives lost and property destroyed. It also compromised Russians’ efforts to sustain their march toward democracy, openness, and the rule of law, and brought widespread fears of a return to the authoritarianism that had marked Russian and Soviet governance for so long. Yet a Russia with representative government, whose armed forces are under civilian control and whose laws function effectively, is key to the stability and future economic and political integration of Eurasia.

#### GEOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS OF A TERRITORIAL GIANT

Not only is Russia the world’s largest country territorially: it has more neighbors than any other state. Geographically, nothing is simple when it comes to Russia, and so it is with this set of neighbors (Fig. 11-1). By virtue of its exclave of Kaliningrad, Russia has Poland and Lithuania as European neighbors, as well as Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine. That makes seven neighbors in Europe alone, and Russia has issues with almost all of them. In the case of Lithuania, Russia wants free transit for Russian freight