

The Earth and Its Peoples

A Global History

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ORANGE

Around 10,000 years ago (8,000 B.C.E.), some human groups in various parts of the world began to cultivate plants, domesticate animals, and make pottery vessels for storage. One consequence of this shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture was the emergence of permanent settlements—at first small villages but eventually larger towns as well. The earliest complex societies arose in the great river valleys of Asia and Africa, around 3100 B.C.E. in the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia and along the Nile River in Egypt, somewhat later in the valley of the Indus River in Pakistan, and on the floodplain of the Yellow River in China.



Map 3-1
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In these arid regions, agriculture depended on irrigation with river water, and centers of political power arose to organize the massive human labor required to dig and maintain channels to carry water to the fields. Kings and priests dominated these early societies. Kings controlled the military forces; priests managed the temples and the wealth of the gods. Within the urban centers—in the midst of palaces, temples, fortification walls, and other monumental buildings—lived administrators, soldiers, priests, merchants, craftsmen, and others with specialized skills. The production of surplus food grown on rural estates by a dependent peasantry sustained the activities of these groups. Professional scribes kept administrative and financial records and preserved their civilization's religious and scientific knowledge.

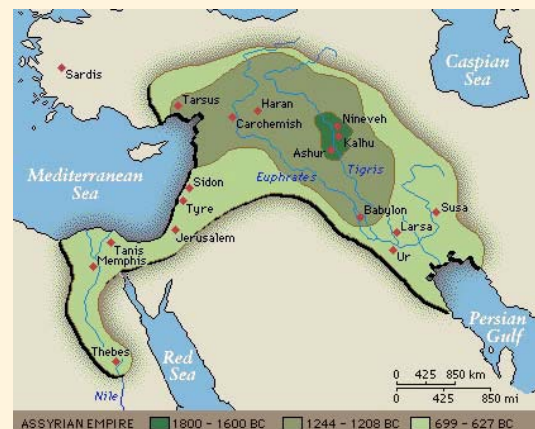
Over time, certain centers extended their influence and came to dominate broad expanses of territory. The rulers of these early empires were motivated primarily by the need to secure access to raw materials, especially tin and copper, from which to make bronze. A similar motive accounts for the development of long-distance trade and diplomatic relations between major powers. Fueling long-distance trade was the desire for bronze, which had both practical and symbolic importance. From bronze, artisans made weapons, tools and utensils, and ritual objects. Ownership of bronze items was a sign of wealth and power. Trade and diplomacy helped spread culture and technology from the core river-valley areas to neighboring regions, such as southern China, Nubia, Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, and the Aegean. In the Western Hemisphere, different geographical circumstances called forth distinctive patterns of technological and cultural response in the early civilizations of the Olmec in southern Mexico and Chavín in the Andean region of South America. Nevertheless, the challenges of organizing agriculture and trade led to many of the same features of complex societies—social stratification, specialization of labor, urbanization, monumental building, technological development, and artistic achievement.

YELLOW

The sixteen centuries from 1000 B.C.E. to 600 C.E. mark a new chapter in the story of humanity. Important changes in the ways of life established in the river-valley civilizations in the two previous millennia occurred, and the scale of human institutions and activities increased. The political and social structure of the earliest river-valley centers reflected the importance of irrigation for agriculture. Powerful kings, hereditary priesthoods, dependent laborers, limited availability of metals, and very restricted literacy are hallmarks of the complex societies described in Part One. In the first millennium B.C.E., new centers arose, in lands watered by rainfall and worked by a free peasantry, on the shores of the Mediterranean, in Iran, India, Southeast Asia, and in Central and South America. Shaped by the natural environments in which they arose, they developed new patterns of political and social organization and economic activity, and moved in new intellectual, artistic, and spiritual directions, though under the influence of the older centers.

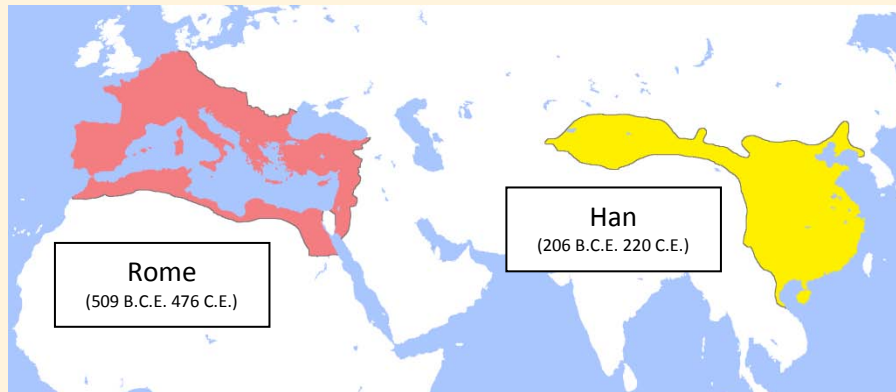


The seafaring Phoenicians

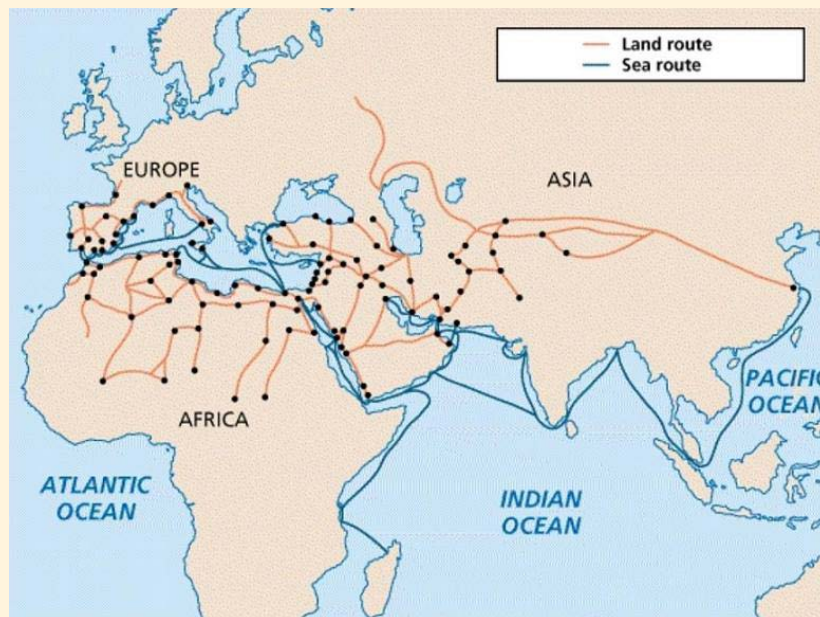


The world's first empire: The Assyrians

The rulers of the empires of this era took steps intended to control and tax their subjects: they constructed extensive networks of roads and promoted urbanization. These measures brought incidental benefits: more rapid communication, the transport of trade goods over greater distances, and the broad diffusion of religious ideas, artistic styles, and technologies. Large cultural zones unified by common traditions emerged. A number of these cultural traditions—Iranian, Hellenistic, Roman—were to exercise substantial influence on subsequent ages. The influence of some—Hindu, Chinese, African, Buddhist—persists into our own time. The expansion of agriculture and trade and improvements in technology led to population increases, the spread of cities, and the growth of a comfortable middle class. In many parts of the world iron replaced bronze as the preferred metal for weapons, tools, and utensils. People using iron tools cleared extensive forests around the Mediterranean, in India, and in eastern China. Iron weapons gave an advantage to the armies of Greece, Rome, and imperial China.



Metal, still an important item of long-distance trade, was available to more people than it had been in the preceding age. Metal coinage, which originated in Anatolia (Turkey), was adopted by many peoples. Metal coins facilitated commercial transactions and the acquisition of wealth along new trade routes crossing the Indian Ocean and Central and Inner Asia.



New systems of writing also developed. Because these systems were more easily and rapidly learned, writing moved out of the control of specialists. The vast majority of people remained illiterate, but writing became an increasingly important medium for preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. The spread of literacy gave birth to new ways of thinking, new genres of literature, and new types of scientific endeavor.

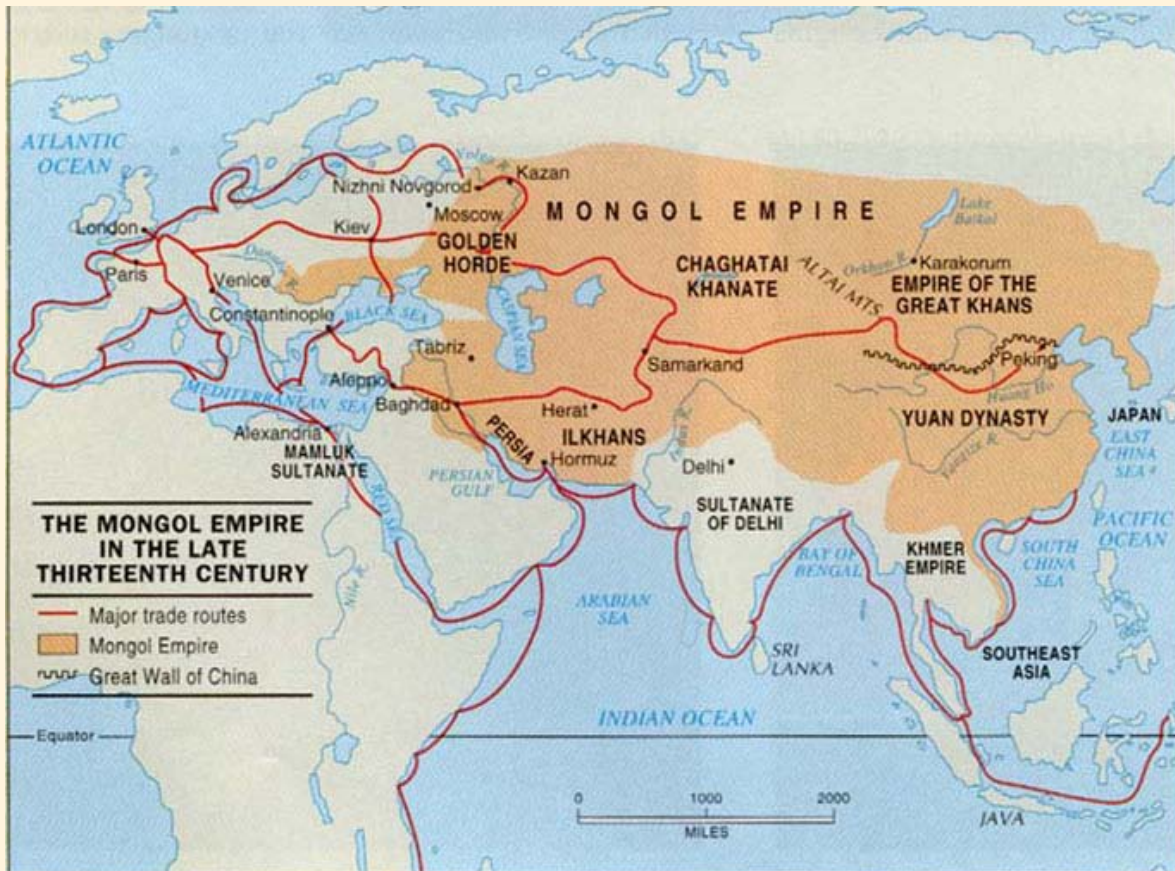
In Europe, missionaries labored to convert the Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic peoples to Christianity. Christian beliefs became enmeshed in new political and social structures. In western Europe, this produced a struggle between royal and church authority. In the eastern Mediterranean, religious and imperial authority came together in the Byzantine Empire, although many eastern Christians lost their imperial connection when Egypt, Syria, and North Africa fell to Arab armies. In Kievan Russia, the Byzantine imperial tradition produced a lookalike offshoot that split the Slavic peoples between Catholics (e.g., Poland) and Orthodox (e.g., Russia).



Competition between Islam and Christianity climaxed in the Crusades, which also opened contacts between western Europe and lands to the east after centuries of isolation. The development of a significant level of trade across the Sahara desert brought sub-Saharan Africa into contact with some of these developments. The Muslim principalities in North Africa that pioneered the trade also began the long process of converting sub-Saharan African peoples to Islam. Other North Africans maintained close contact with Muslim Spain and other parts of southern Europe.

By the end of the period, the major cultural regions in Europe, North Africa, and Asia had come into a substantial degree of contact. The knowledge that increasingly circulated about distant lands contributed to the first era of world encompassing political and economic development after 1200. Unexplored seas still separated the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. The European voyagers who would find their way across the Atlantic Ocean in the ensuing period would encounter developed urban and agricultural civilizations in the Andes, the Yucatán lowlands, and the central plateau of Mexico as well as less intensely developed areas of settled agricultural life in parts of North America.

In Eurasia, overland trade along the Silk Road, which had begun before the Roman and Han empires, reached its peak during the era of the Mongol empires. Beginning in 1206 with the rise of Genghis Khan, the Mongols tied Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and East Asia together with threads of conquest and trade centered on Central and Inner Asia. For over a century and a half, some communities thrived on the continental connections that the Mongols fostered, while others groaned under the tax burdens and physical devastation of Mongol rule. But whether for good or ill, Mongol power was based on the skills, strategies, and technologies of the overland trade and life on the steppes.



The Mongols extended their hegemony over a major part of the Eurasian landmass, from the Danube to the Pacific for the better part of two centuries.

The impact of the Mongols was also felt by societies that escaped conquest. In Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean coastal areas of the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Japan, fear of Mongol attack stimulated societies to organize more intensively in their own defense, accelerating processes of urbanization, technological development, and political centralization that in many cases were already underway.

BLUE

By 1500, Mongol dominance was past, and new powers had emerged. A new Chinese empire, the Ming, was expanding its influence in Southeast Asia. The Ottomans had captured Constantinople and overthrown the Byzantine Empire. And the Christian monarchs who had defeated the Muslims in Spain and Portugal were laying the foundations of new overseas empires. With the fall of the Mongol Empire, Central and Inner Asia were no longer at the center of Eurasian trade. As the overland trade of Eurasia faded, merchants, soldiers, and

explorers took to the seas. The most spectacular of the early state-sponsored long-distance ocean voyages were undertaken by the Chinese admiral Zheng He. The 1300s and 1400s also saw African exploration of the Atlantic and Polynesian colonization of the central and eastern Pacific. By 1500 the navigator Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, had reached the Americas; within twenty-five years a Portuguese ship would sail all the way around the world. New sailing technologies and a sounder knowledge of the size of the globe and the contours of its shorelines made sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Ocean, Asia, Europe, and finally the Americas more accessible to each other than ever before.

The great overland routes of Eurasia had generated massive wealth in East Asia and a growing hunger for commerce in Europe. These factors animated the development of the sea trade, too. Exposure to the achievements, wealth, and resources of societies in the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia enticed the emerging European monarchies to pursue further exploration and control of the seas.

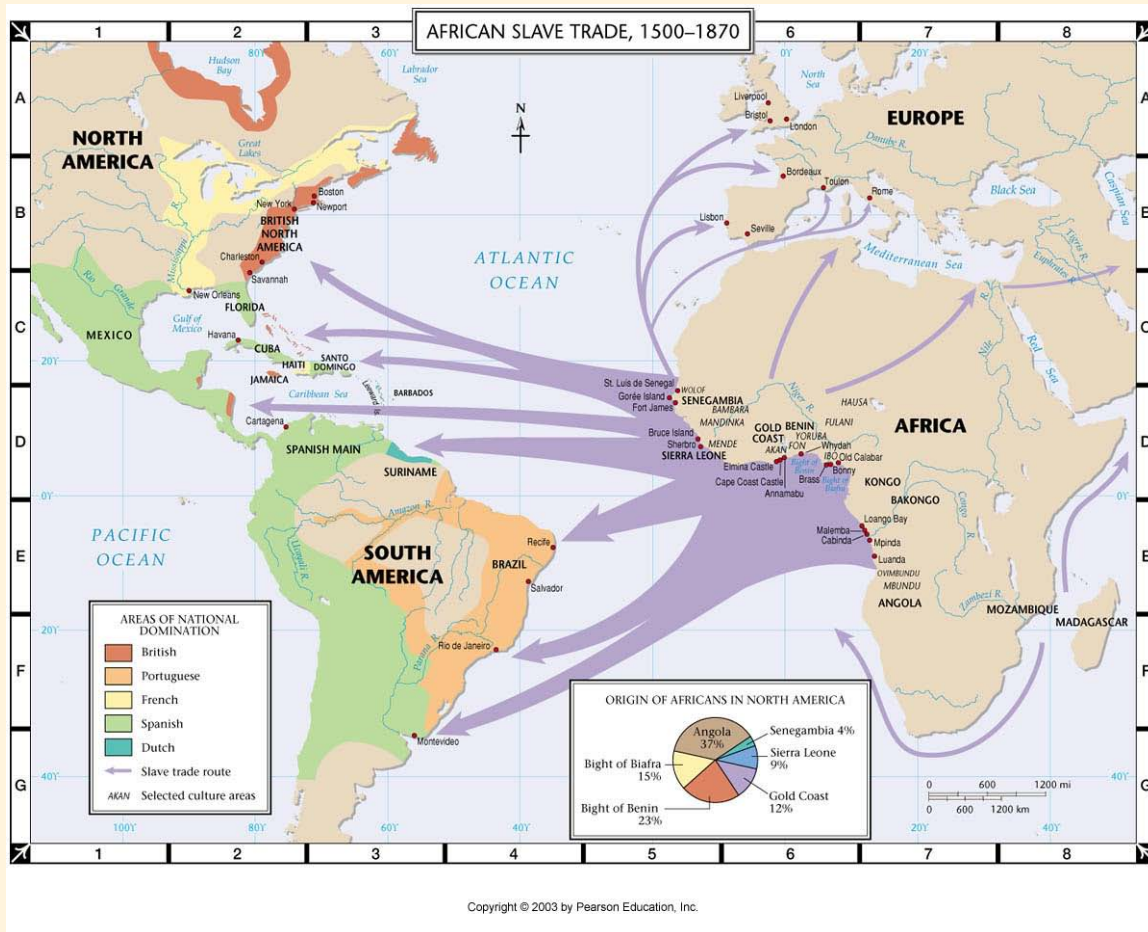


Map 13-5
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While the Spanish in the Americas were able to conquer unsuspected natives with disease and superior weaponry, the Portuguese were trying to dominate an area that was already an established trading zone.

The decades between 1500 and 1750 witnessed a tremendous expansion of commercial, cultural, and biological exchanges around the world. New long-distance sea routes linked Europe with sub-Saharan Africa and the existing maritime networks of the Indian Ocean and East Asia. Spanish and Portuguese voyages ended the isolation of the Americas and created new webs of exchange in the Atlantic and Pacific. Overland expansion of Muslim, Russian, and Chinese empires also increased global interaction. These expanding contacts had major demographic and cultural consequences. In the Americas, European diseases devastated the Amerindian population, facilitating the establishment of large Spanish, Portuguese, French, and British empires. Europeans introduced enslaved Africans to relieve the labor shortage. Immigrant Africans and Europeans brought new languages, religious practices, music, and forms of personal adornment.



In Asia and Africa, by contrast, the most important changes owed more to internal forces than to European actions. The Portuguese seized control of some important trading ports and networks in the Indian Ocean and pioneered new contacts with China and Japan. In time, the Dutch, French, and English expanded these profitable connections, but in 1750 Europeans were still primarily a maritime force. Asians and Africans generally retained control of their lands and participated freely in overseas trade. The Islamic world saw the dramatic expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and the establishment of the Safavid Empire in Iran and the Mughal Empire in South Asia.

The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals weren't the only Muslim empires. Prior to the Songhai existed Mansa Musa's Islamic Empire of Mali (it existed during the time of Europe's revival and the Mongols). However, whereas before the non-European empires held an upper hand, now the land-based empires to the right were being surpassed by the growing sea powers of Europe.



Map 13-4
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In northern Eurasia, Russia and China acquired vast new territories and populations, while a new national government in Japan promoted economic development and stemmed foreign influence.



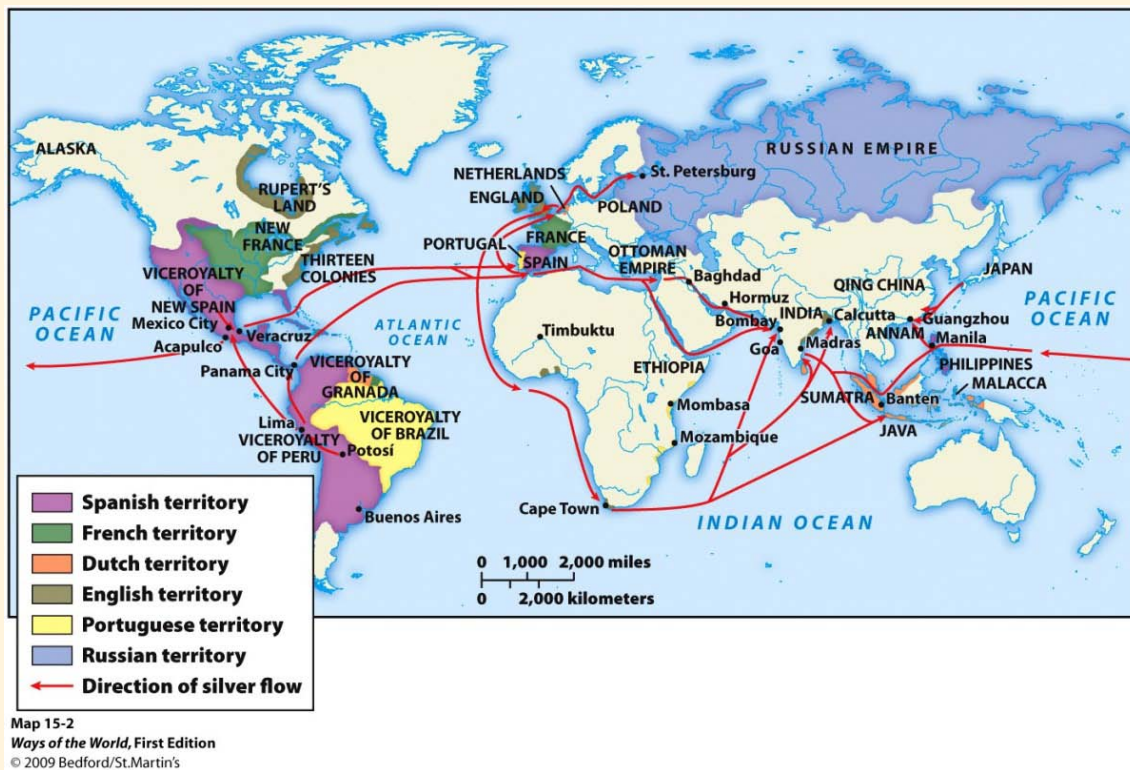
Ecological change was rapid in areas of rising population and economic activity. Forests were cut down to meet the increasing need for farmland, timber, and fuel. Population growth in parts of Eurasia placed great strain on the environment. On a more positive note, domesticated animals and crops from the Old World transformed agriculture in the Americas, while Amerindian foods such as the potato became staples of the diet of the Old World. New goods, new wealth, and new tastes from overseas transformed Europe in this period. Global and regional trade promoted urban growth, but conflict was also rife. States spent heavily on warfare in Europe and abroad. The printing press spread new religious and scientific ideas, and challenges to established values and institutions.



Religious wars (such as the Thirty Years War – see map to the left for the new boundaries created after the conflict), territorial wars, and competition in the New World caused the reins of power to shift hands not only between Catholics & Protestants, but also between the Spanish (1500s), the Dutch (1600s), and France & England (1700s).

The Peace of Westphalia, 1648, recognized the new boundaries of European states that included an independent Portugal and United Netherlands. It also recognized the growth of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans.

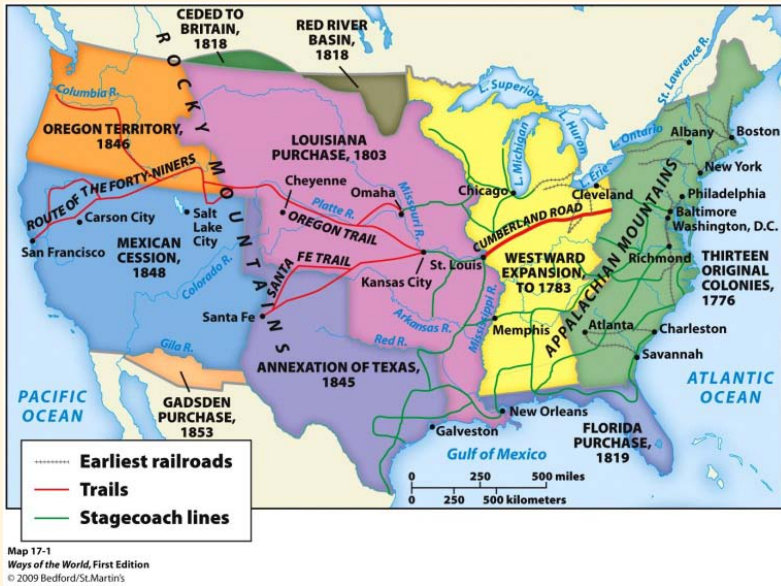
By 1750 the balance of power in the world had begun to shift from the East to the West. The Ottoman, Mughal, and Chinese empires had declined in relative strength compared to the much smaller but technologically more sophisticated states of northwestern Europe.



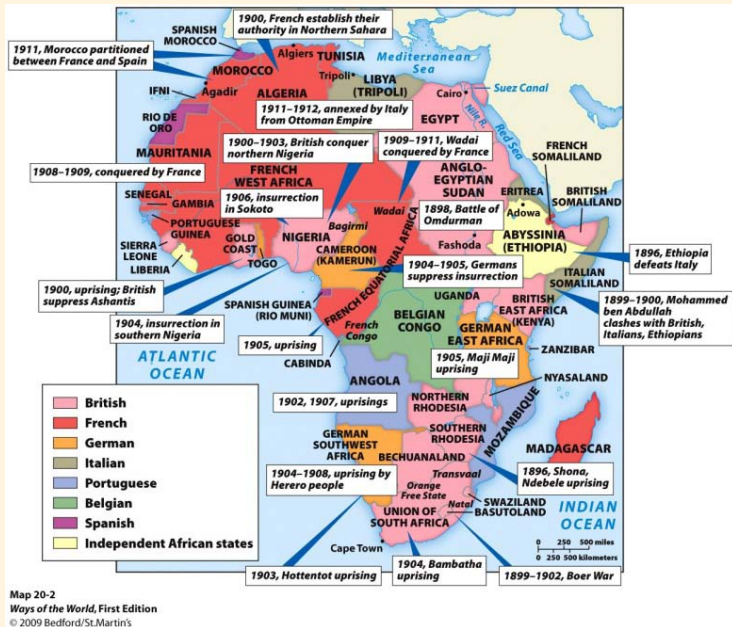
GREEN

Between 1750 and 1870, nearly every part of the world experienced dramatic political, economic, and social change. The beginnings of industrialization, the American and French Revolutions, and the revolutions for independence in Latin America transformed political and economic life in Europe and the Americas. The most powerful nations challenged existing borders and ethnic boundaries. European nations expanded into Africa, Asia, and the Middle East while Russia and the United States acquired vast new territories. The American, French, and Latin American revolutions created new political institutions and unleashed the forces of nationalism and social reform. The Industrial Revolution introduced new technologies and patterns of work that made industrial societies wealthier, more fluid socially, and militarily more powerful. Western intellectual life became more secular as the practical benefits of science and technology became evident. Reformers led successful efforts to abolish the Atlantic slave trade and, later, slavery itself in the Western Hemisphere. Efforts to expand voting rights and improve the status of women also gained support in Europe and the Americas.

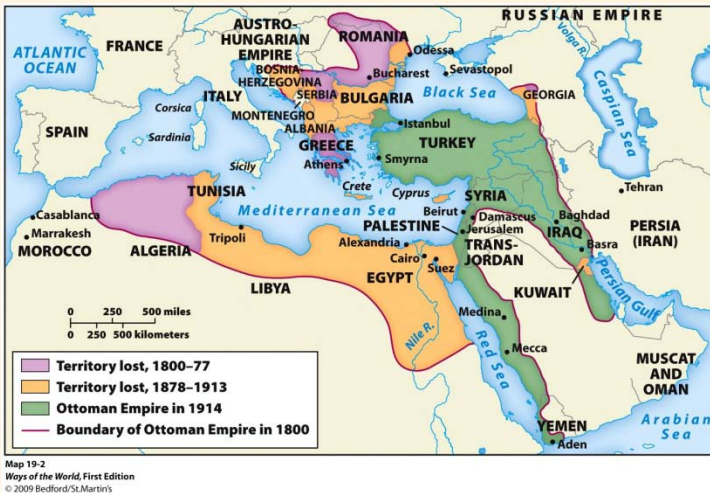




European empires in the Western Hemisphere were largely dismantled by 1825. But the Industrial Revolution led to a new wave of economic and imperial expansion. France conquered the North African state of Algeria, while Great Britain expanded its colonial rule in India and established new colonies in Australia and New Zealand. Of these, India alone had a larger population than that of all the colonies Europe had lost in the Americas. Throughout Africa, European economic influence greatly expanded, deepening the region's connection to the Atlantic economy and generating new political forces. Some African states were invigorated by this era of intensified cultural exchange, creating new institutions and developing new products for export.

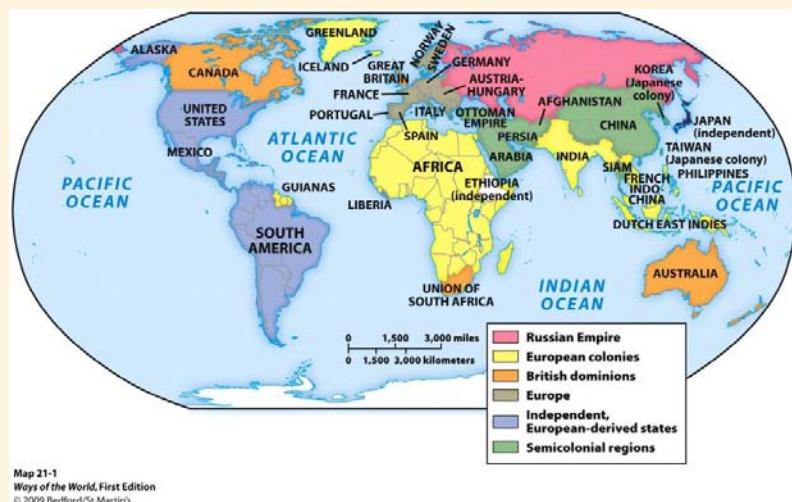


The Ottoman Empire and the Qing Empire were also deeply influenced by Western expansionism. Both empires met this challenge by implementing reform programs that preserved traditional structures while adopting elements of Western technology and organization. The Ottoman court introduced reforms in education, the military, and law and created the first constitution in an Islamic state. The Qing Empire survived the period of European expansion, but a series of military defeats and a prolonged civil war severely weakened the authority of the central government.



Russia lagged behind Western Europe in transforming its economy and political institutions, but military weakness and internal reform pressures led to modernization efforts, including the abolition of serfdom. The economic, political, and social revolutions that began in the mid-eighteenth century shook the foundations of European culture and led to the expansion of Western power around the globe. Some of the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America resisted foreign intrusions by reforming and strengthening their own institutions, forms of production, and military technologies. Others pushed for more radical change, adopting Western commercial policies, industrial technologies, and government institutions. But after 1870, all these states would face even more aggressive Western imperialism, which few of them were able to resist.

In 1850, despite centuries of global contacts, the world still embraced a huge diversity of societies and cultures and of independent states. During the century that followed, much of the world came to be dominated by a few European nations, along with the United States and Japan. After 1870, the industrializing nations used their newfound power to dominate Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific in a wave of conquest we call the New Imperialism. Their domination was more than military or economic, for their agents—soldiers, administrators, missionaries, teachers, and merchants—tried to convert their new subjects to their own cultures, business practices, and ways of life. They were partly successful, as the spread of Western religions, languages, clothing, and political ideas testifies.



PINK

By 1900, Europe had been largely at peace for almost a century. As memories of war faded, the rise of nationalism and the awesome power of modern armies and navies made national rivalries dangerously inflammable. Germany, a latecomer to national unity, found its imperial ambitions frustrated by the earlier conquests of France, Britain, and Russia. Mounting tensions between the great powers led to the devastating Great War of 1914–1918. Far from settling issues, this war destabilized the victors as much as the vanquished. Russia and China erupted in revolution. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the emergence of modern Turkey, while its Arab provinces were taken over by France and Britain.



The end of WWI saw the creation of many new nations, the conflict also helped transform Russia into the communist Soviet Union.

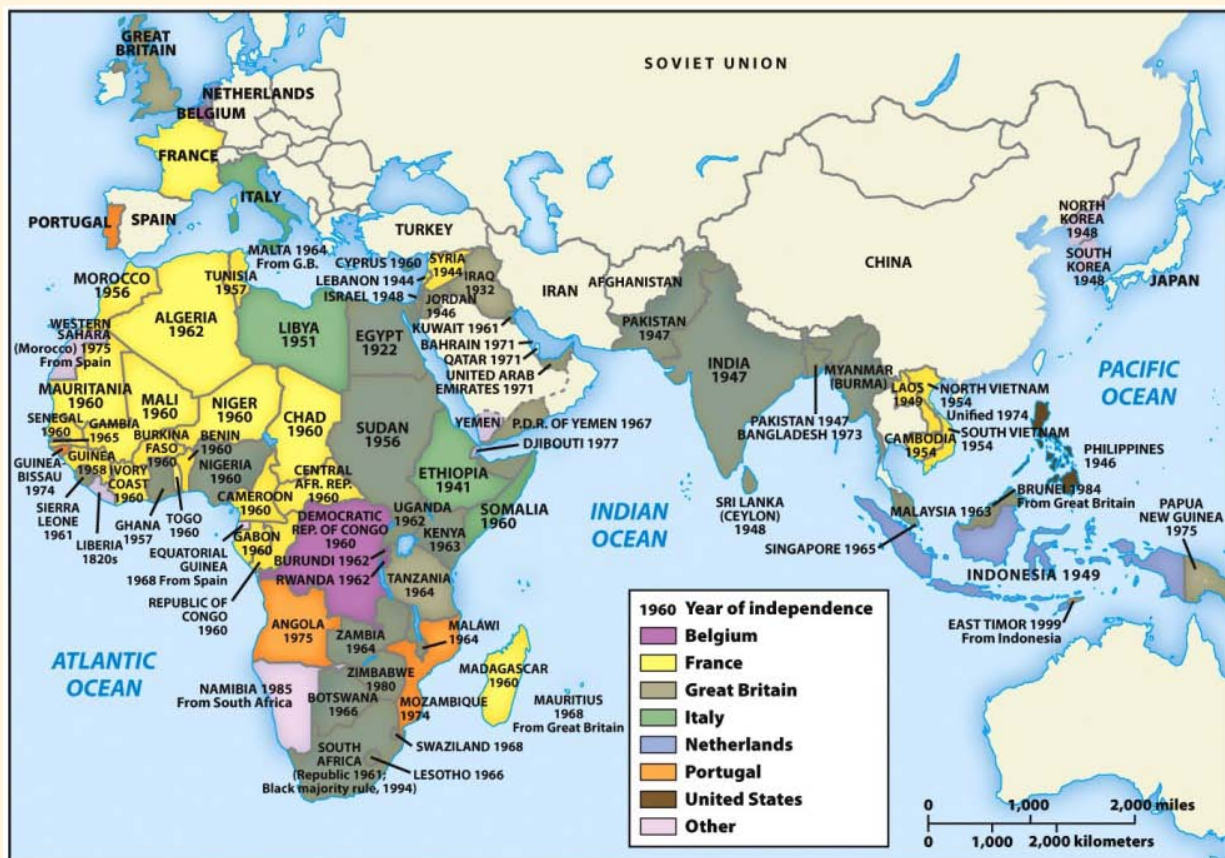


In the 1920s, the European powers struggled to maintain a precarious peace. By the 1930s, the political and economic system they had crafted after the Great War fell apart. While the capitalist nations fell into a deep economic depression that their governments seemed helpless to stop, the Soviet Union industrialized at breakneck speed. Social disruption in Germany and Japan brought to power extremist politicians who sought to solve their countries' economic woes and political grievances by military conquest. Nationalism and industrial warfare assumed their most hideous forms in World War II, leading to the massacre of millions of innocent people and the destruction of countless cities.



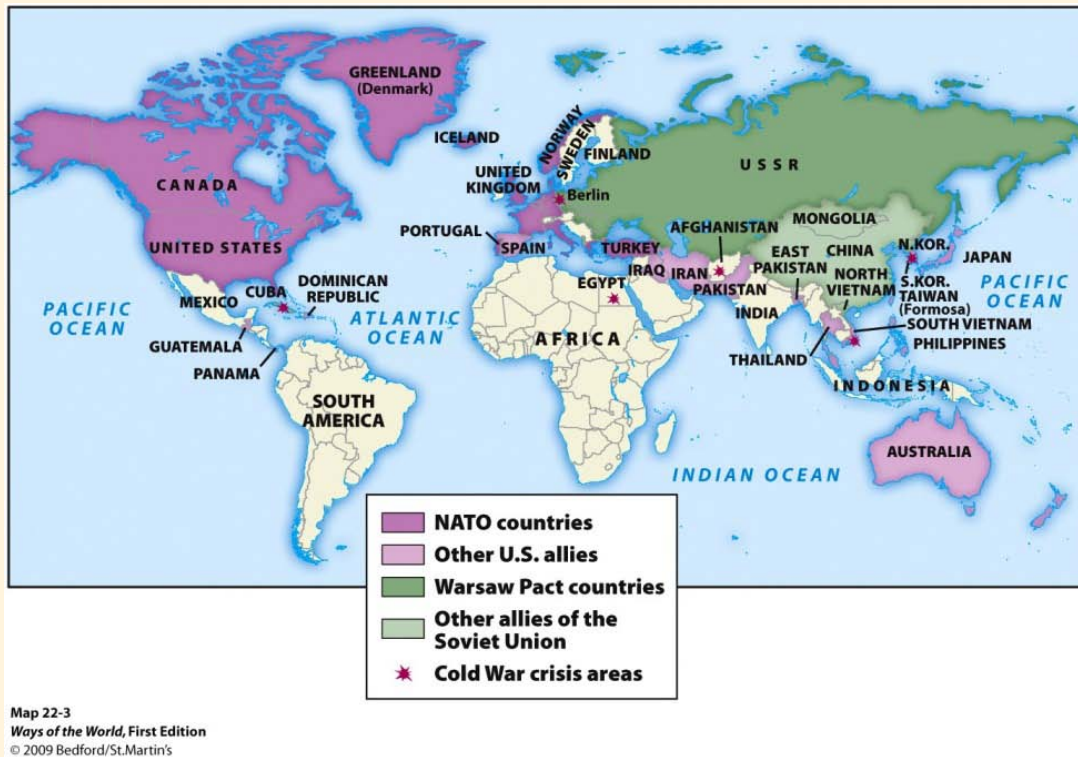
World War II weakened European control of their overseas empires. Leaders of liberation movements in Asia, Latin America, and Africa were inspired by Western ideas of nationalism and communism and by the desire to acquire the benefits of industrialization. After decades of struggle India gained its independence in 1947. Two years later, Chinese communists led by Mao Zedong overthrew a government they viewed as subservient to the West. In Latin America, leaders turned to nationalist economic and social policies. Of all the once great powers, only the United States and the Soviet Union remained to compete for global dominance. In the face of their military and economic might, other nations continued to assert the diversity of their cultures and political aspirations.

The years after World War II brought many promising changes to an increasingly interconnected world. Major efforts were made to promote peace and international cooperation, and most countries agreed to human rights standards to be enforced through the United Nations. Colonized peoples in Asia and Africa gained their independence, and expanding global trade offered the hope of economic growth.



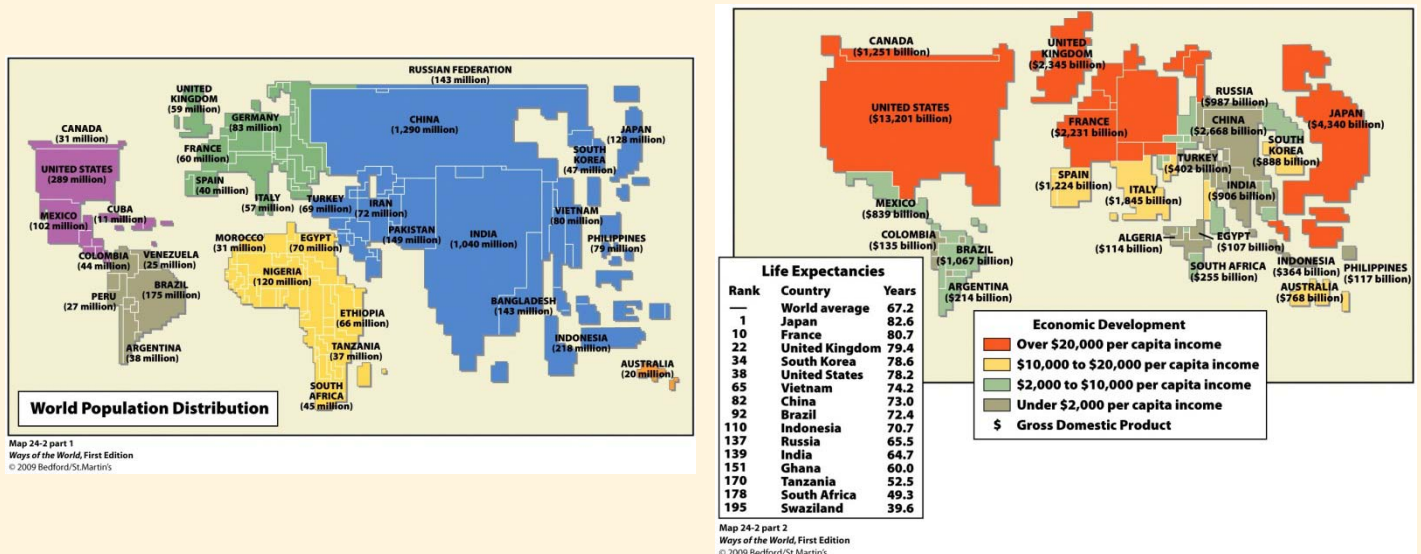
Map 23-1
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However, these decades also saw major threats to peace, prosperity, and the environment. A Cold War of rhetoric and frayed nerves between communist and anticommunist states disrupted dreams of a new era of international peace and cooperation. The Iron Curtain divided Soviet-dominated eastern Europe from American-supported western Europe. Regional wars in Korea and Vietnam pitted the United States and its allies against communist regimes. Cold War rivalries sometimes provided a windfall of aid for new states but also intensified civil conflicts in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere.



Tensions eased in the 1970s, and the United States and the Soviet Union signed agreements to curtail nuclear arms and testing. With the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War finally ended. The United Nations and other multinational organizations moved to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction and promote global justice and equality. As the sole remaining superpower, the United States had a unique capacity to act globally and a unique burden of suspicion of its motives. Economic promises and perils also abounded in the post-war world. The wartime victors experienced rapid economic recovery, as did Germany and Japan, but in less developed lands prosperity came slowly or not at all. Global markets seemed to favor the industrialized nations.

After 1975 a number of countries, including China, South Korea, Brazil, and Argentina, made dramatic strides in industrialization. But less developed nations had to struggle, and rapid population growth often offset their economic gains. The divide between rich and poor nations remained—or even widened.



Economic development meant new possibilities and perils for the environment. In the 1960s, the Green Revolution in agriculture greatly increased food supplies in Asia, and in the 1990s genetic engineering advances produced plants that yielded more food and were resistant to disease, drought, and insect damage. But industrial growth added immeasurably to the pollution of water and land. Atmospheric pollution increased exposure to harmful ultraviolet rays and led to increased global temperatures. Over-fishing and over-hunting imperiled many animal species, while thousands of acres of tropical forests were cut or burned for timber and farmland. Finally, growing global interconnectedness held its own promises and perils. Many welcomed the emergence of English as the global language and the rapid spread of news, money, and ideas via the Internet. Others feared that Western material values and political and economic dominance posed a severe threat to cultural diversity around the world. A dangerous few reacted with violence.

