

LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

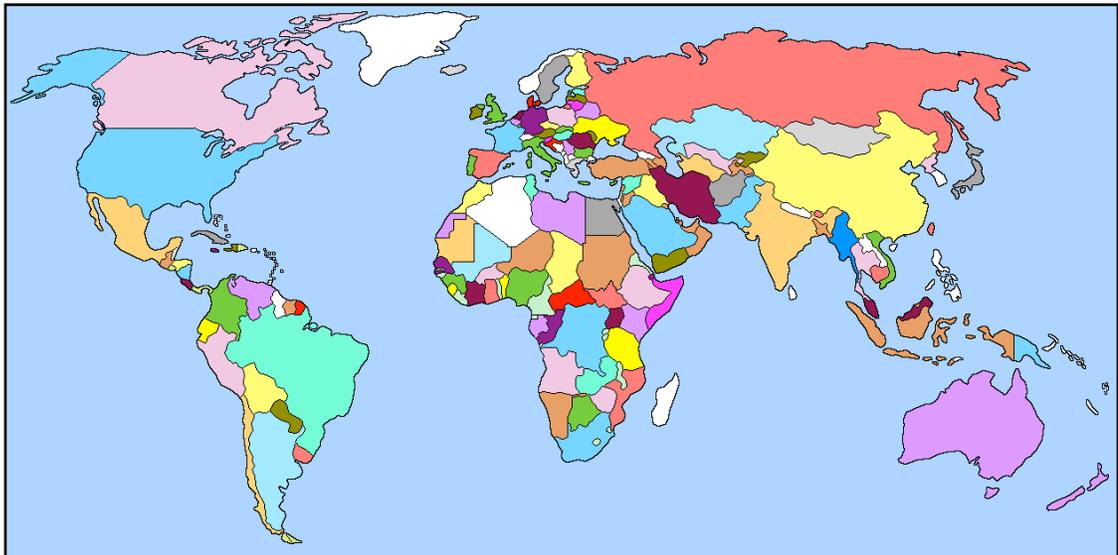
I. A New Approach to History

A. What is history?

1. People usually think that history is “the study of the past.” No wonder most people don’t care about it. *We don’t live in the past!* We live in the present.
2. The definition of history used in *History At Our House* is: **“History is the revelation and explanation of the world we live in.”**
 - a) We usually only see what is right around us, especially when we are young, because our parents are taking care of us. We need the world *revealed* to us beyond that comfortable space, so we can get ready to live in *the world*.
 - b) The second part of this definition is “explanation.” Why is the world the way that it is? Well, it became what it is *in the past*. History shows us the events that shaped the world into what it is—so that we can make sense of the world we see around us.

B. The Challenge of Connecting Past and Present

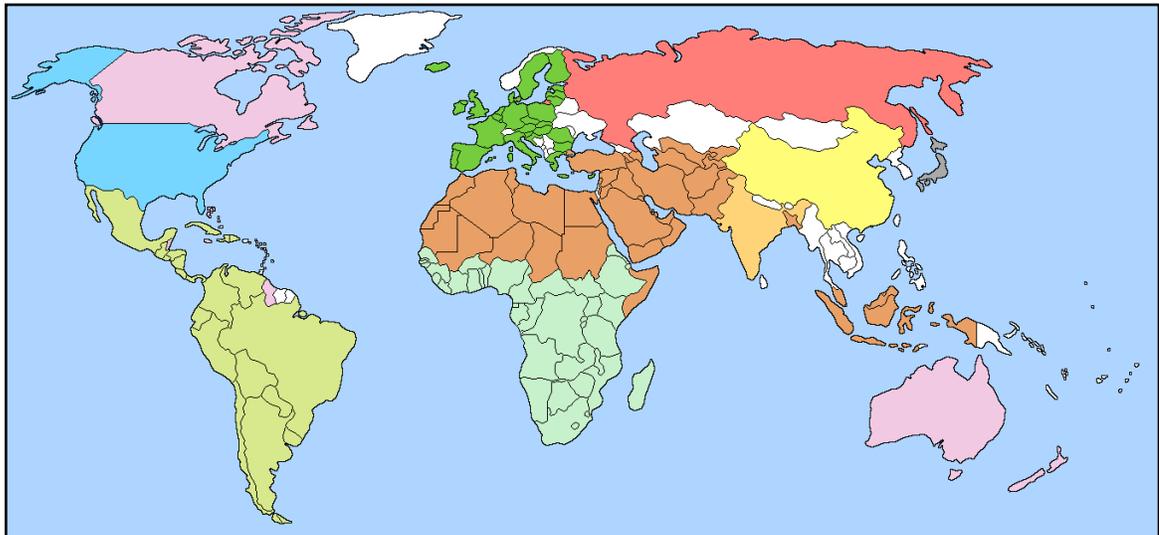
1. One of the challenges of seeing how history explains the present is that the world we live in is organized into *countries*. This is a challenge, because there are simply too many!



The pattern of the world’s countries today is too complex to use as a base for learning about history.

C. Making The World Knowable: Seeing The Ten Major Cultural Blocks

1. Very few countries are important enough to affect the course of history today as individual nations. In fact, there are only five:
 - a) **The United States** - the world's greatest military superpower by far, and also the world's richest and most influential country
 - b) **China** - an ancient nation that is very populous and now important because so much is "Made in China"
 - c) **Russia** - a large former communist country that is anti-American and has a very large military
 - d) **Japan** - an island nation that once tried to create a massive empire, but was stopped by the United States and is now an American ally
 - e) **India** - a very populous nation following its own religion called "Hinduism"
2. Most countries, like most people, do not change history by themselves. But when they participate in alliances or associations, they can achieve more together than they could apart. We can call these "cultural blocks," of which there are five major ones:
 - a) The **European Union** includes Germany, France, and Britain, who used to fight wars against each other, but now are partners trying to create a "United States of Europe."
 - b) Northern Africa, the Middle East, and southern Asia make up the **Islamic World**. All the people in this block follow the religion of Islam, and they are struggling to decide how to live side by side with the other cultural blocks. Most want peace, but others want "jihad" ("holy war") against non-Muslims, and use terrorism.
 - c) Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (along with a few smaller countries) make up the non-American, non-British **Anglosphere**. They are allies with the United States.
 - d) Another group of former European colonies that is now independent is the **Iberosphere**. Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina are the main members of this block of nations once controlled by Spain & Portugal (together known as "Iberia").
 - e) The final major cultural block in the world is **Sub-Saharan Africa**. Its nations are poor and still struggling to develop stable governments. They are distinct from northern Africa by the wide acceptance of Christianity and European culture.
 - f) Not all the countries of the world fit into a model with ten major blocks. This does not mean they are of no interest. It simply means that they do not affect history on the same scale. But they can change how the major blocks act and interact.



Thinking of the world in terms of historical building blocks gives us a much clearer picture. Some of the cultures that direct the course of history today are countries. Some are collections of countries that affect the world in combinations that can be called “cultural blocks.”