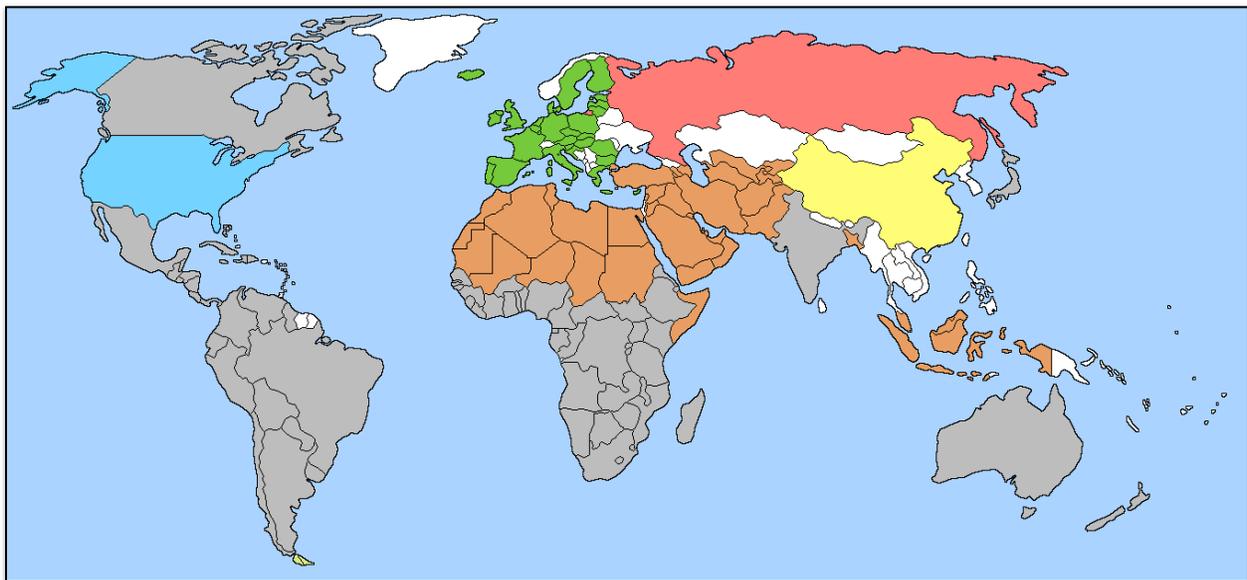


II. Preparing to Study Asia and Africa as Parts of the World

A. One More Step: Identifying the Cardinal Cultures

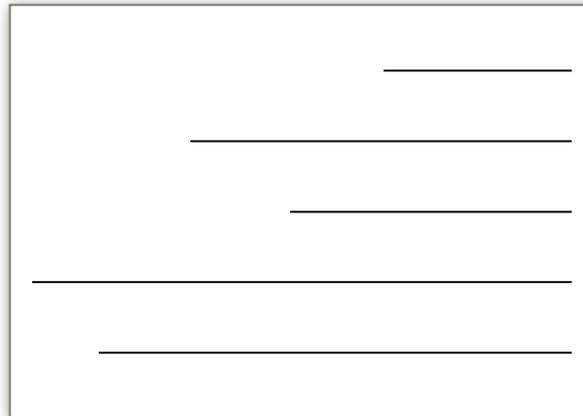
1. Taking the world's nearly two hundred countries and organizing them into *ten* major cultural blocks is a useful way to prepare for the study of history. It makes the world a much more manageable sum. But which ones matters *most of all*?
2. The history of the world *hinges* on certain countries and blocks. Their actions determine the way the world evolves. These are the world's "cardinal" cultures. (The word "cardinal" means "of prime importance," and is derived from the Latin root word "cardo," meaning "hinge.")
3. The *United States* is the country with the most military power, the largest economy, and the greatest cultural influence on others. It is in a leadership role in the world.
4. The other cardinal cultures (of lesser, but still cardinal influence) are the *European Union*, *China*, *Russia*, and the *Islamic World*.
 - a) Europe's culture is the reason why European languages are the most widespread around the world, and why European forms of government are in use in countries as different as America and China.
 - b) China is a country that has undergone a radical change in recent times. Forty years ago, it would not have been a cardinal culture. It would have struggled to make the list of major cultures. But now just about everything seems to be "Made in China."
 - c) Russia is the only country other than the United States that has a powerful military that it uses to try to shape history, as it is doing in Syria today. It is also a cardinal culture because it regularly aligns itself *against* the United States.
 - d) The Islamic World is the only cultural block in the world defined by a religion. It is also a *cardinal* culture because of the presence of terrorism within its culture.



The United States (blue), the European Union (green), Russia (red), China (yellow) and the Islamic World (brown) play an indispensable role in shaping the history and are thus "cardinal" cultures.

B. A Model of the History of the World

1. The final step in preparing to study the major cultures of Asia and Africa to see how they fit into the world is to create a timeline of world history based on the cardinal cultures.
2. Here is the basic diagram as it looks on a standard 8.5"x11" page turned on its side:



3. Using approximately the same color-coding from the maps above to symbolize the major blocks as lines, the diagram represents the history of each block as a “time line,” where the length of the line tells us the relative length of the history of each block. The modified diagram on the next page also has a couple other modifications...



1. From top to bottom, the timelines of the diagram represent: the *United States*, *Europe*, *Russia*, *Islamic World*, and *China*. The arrows point from the past to the present (and the future).
2. The one additional feature of this diagram is that the timeline of the Islamic World is split basically into two parts, because ancient Egypt & Mesopotamia came before.