

LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

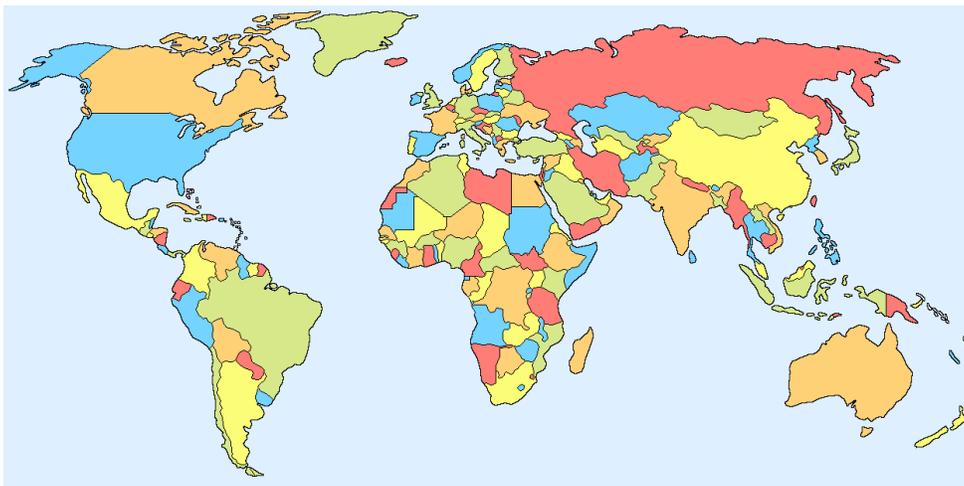
I. A New Approach to History

A. What is history?

1. The modern view is that history is “the study of the past.” But if history is about *the past*, and we live in the *present*, what does it have to do with “real life”?
2. The goal of *History At Our House* is to show you a different way of thinking about history. The definition of history used in this program is: “History is the revelation and explanation of the world we live in.”

B. Making The World Knowable: The World as an Interconnected Agglomeration

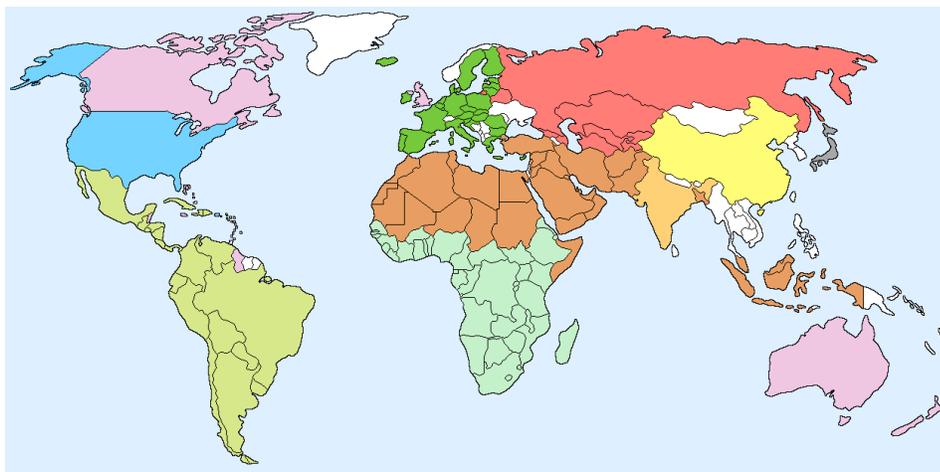
1. A big part of the challenge of studying history as a way to understand *the world* is how complicated *the world* is to begin with!
2. There are nearly two hundred countries in it, in a strange and confusing arrangement. Some are huge. Some are tiny. Some have multiple parts, sometimes separated by other countries. Some are inside of others! The pattern can only be described as an “*agglomeration*,” which means a “jumbled cluster” (like a blob of play-doh of different colors).
3. The Internet connects all the parts of the world in one communication network. Modern air travel allows us to reach any country in the world within a day. We trade with other countries using supertankers and massive cargo ships that move goods from one corner of the globe to the other. Because we are connected like this in so many ways, we say the world is “interconnected.”
4. It’s an *interconnected agglomeration* of nearly two hundred countries.



The pattern of the world’s countries today is too complex to use as a base for learning about history.
We need to learn to see the world in a more organized way.

C. Making The World Knowable: The World Understood in Terms of “Cultural Blocks”

1. To understand the world, we must learn to see it in some more organized manner.
2. Some countries are so historically important that they deserve individual attention when studying history, especially the United States, which is the world’s greatest military superpower by far, and also collectively the world’s richest and most influential country. Other countries, like China and Japan produce many goods and are economically important. Russia, for its part is militarily powerful, and thus dominates many of its neighbors. India is large, populous, and has a highly independent culture.
3. Most countries only influence history through alliances or associations where they can achieve more together than they could apart. We will use the term “cultural block” to refer to such groupings, of which there are five major ones:
 - a) The European Union, composed of Germany, France, Italy, and many others.
 - b) The Islamic World, composed of countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Indonesia which all share the same religion (Islam).
 - c) Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (along with a few smaller countries) make up the Anglosphere.
 - d) Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina make up “Latin America,” or, alternatively, the “Iberosphere” that used to be ruled by Spain & Portugal (together called “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 influence of European culture upon them instead of Islam.
 - f) Not all the countries of the world fit into a model with ten major blocks. They just aren’t important enough by themselves, or part of a really important group. It doesn’t mean that we can or should ignore them. It just means they don’t fit in with a world divided into cultural blocks.



Thinking of the world in terms of “cultural blocks” gives us a much clearer picture. *Cultural blocks* are countries (or closely connected groups of countries) that affect history together.