

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 “blob,” like play-doh of different colors all mushed up.
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.

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

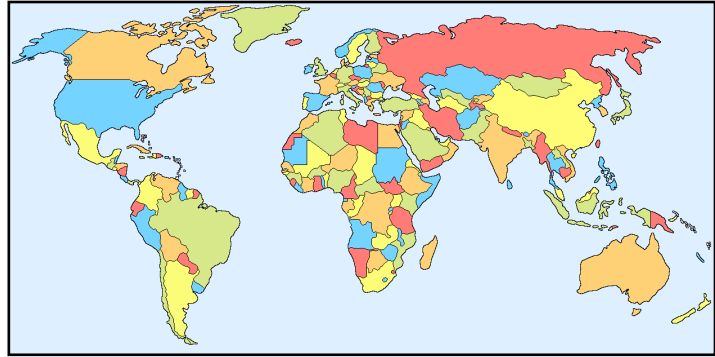
1. To understand the world, we must learn to see it in some more organized manner.
2. Some countries are so historically important that they deserve individual attention when studying history, especially the United States, which is the world’s greatest military superpower by far, and also collectively 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, which creates a special block that can be called the “Russo-sphere”. 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.

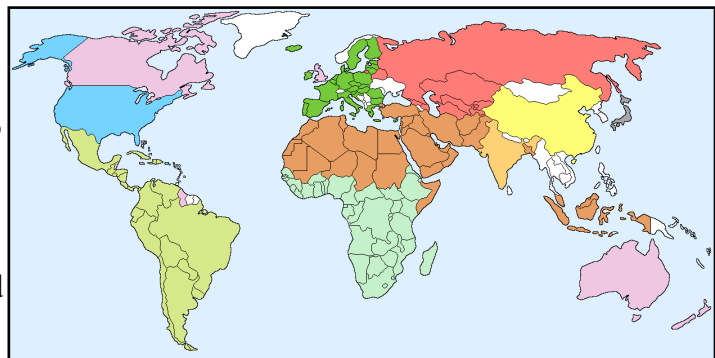
d) Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina make up “Latin America,” or, alternatively, the “Iberosphere” that used to be ruled by Spain & Portugal (together called “Iberia”).

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.



If we settled for thinking about the world in terms of its nearly 200 countries, even the present is too complex to handle—let alone the past!

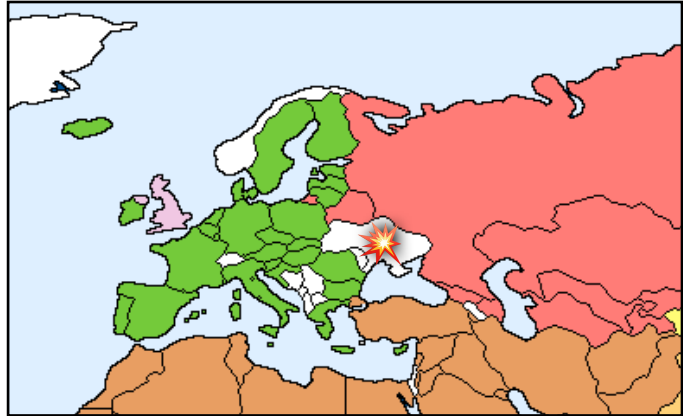


Thinking of the world in terms of “cultural blocks” gives us a much clearer picture. *Cultural blocks* are countries (or closely connected groups of countries) that impart a distinctive thrust to history.

D. Cardinal Cultures

1. To see that the world is an interconnected agglomeration of nearly two hundred countries that are organized into ten major cultural blocks helps us to understand world events. For instance, when we try to understand where the most important war in the world today—the *Russia-Ukraine War*—is located, we see that it is precisely at the interface between two cultural blocks: the *European Union* and the *Russo-sphere*.
3. The reason for such problems is that some major cultures want to—and have the ability to—change the course of history.
4. Such cultures can be called “cardinal cultures,” where the word “cardinal,” means “of highest importance.”
5. Russia and China are the cardinal cultures who are most active in trying to change the world at this time. As most people know, Russia has invaded Ukraine. China, for its part, wants to regain control of Taiwan.

6. Apart from the United States, Russia, and China, the only two other cultural blocks that have created big changes in the world over the past generation are the Islamic World (because of terrorism and wars) and the European Union (which has grown to include many more countries than it started with, although it also lost one member: Britain).
7. Although there are five cardinal cultures, it is clear to everyone that the United States is in a unique position of power and influence. For this reason, we say that America has *primacy* in the world. America's unique power is also visible in the *Russo-Ukraine War*, which was started by the United States inviting Ukraine into NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), which is a military alliance organized (and controlled) by the United States *against Russia*.



Thinking of the world in terms of “cultural blocks” gives us a much clearer picture of history. An excellent example is the *Russia-Ukraine War*, which is located in between the European Union and the Russo-sphere precisely because Ukraine is caught between two *cardinal cultures* that want to control its future.

E. Putting it All Together

When we take all the components that we have identified and put them in a single definition, we get:

The world we live in is an interconnected agglomeration of nearly two hundred countries organized into ten major cultural blocks (and others), mainly controlled by five cardinal cultures, in which the United States has primacy.