

After discussing the nature and production of information, *The Internet on Earth* in chapter six addresses the geography of information transmission, and the physical infrastructure of the wired world. The Internet networks and backbones are often the most tangible element of cyberspace, for they are one of the few components of information society that can be easily mapped and even seen. The following chapter presents data on the leading nations in terms of communications use, and the counterpoint of the digital divide for countries and locations that do not have access to telecommunications and the Internet. Continuing from the discussion of the digital divide is Chapter Eight's analysis of the consumption of information and the different ways that the Internet is used.

The Internet is often analyzed in terms of its ability to minimize the friction of distance, yet this ability should not be confused with a diminution of place. Kellerman shows how the underlying geographical forces of location, movement, physical and political borders, and place all shape the evolution of the Internet and remain powerful forces in its development. Far from being an aspatial phenomenon, the Internet is shown to be very much a product of the geography of its technology and infrastructure, as well as the economic geography of the production and consumption of information. *The Internet on Earth* reminds us of the contribution geography can make to our understanding of contemporary society. Kellerman utilizes the strengths of geographic analysis to explain many dimensions of the Internet at a time when most analysts fail to even recognize the relevance of spatial forces to our understanding of information technologies.

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GEOPOLITICS OF THE WORLD SYSTEM by Saul B. Cohen. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

The study of geopolitics has undergone a renaissance during the past decade. What was once a blackballed and forgotten discipline, due to its past associations with the Haushoferian school of German Geopolitik, has found its way back as a major area of scientific research. This is reflected in the many texts dealing with both Political Geography and Geopolitics which have been published, as well as the growth of international journals in this field of study. These deal with a broad range of topics from the traditional study of geostrategy, the reassessment of classical geopolitical thinkers, such as Friedrich Ratzel and Halford Mackinder (both of whom have regained their scientific legitimacy in their respective centenary years), to the contemporary writings of critical or 'new' geopolitics much of which is based on discourse analysis of governments, foreign policy makers and the ways in which the changing world map is represented through popular images in the media, textbooks and in cyberspace.

One of the few academic practitioners of geopolitical analysis during the period of geopolitical silence was Saul B. Cohen, who has now produced his new volume of *Geopolitics of the World System*. Cohen is well known for his analysis of the world geopolitical system through his focus on shatter belts. These were, so he argued, the critical areas of current or potential global instability which, if not dealt with, would draw world regions back into conflict. His work of the 1960s and 1970s continually reassessed the changing location of these shatterbelts as some underwent a calming influence, while others appeared in new locations. These ideas were summed up in two versions of his book, *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, to which the present book is a worthy successor.

The present book is firmly set in the tradition of geostrategics and would therefore be seen by many of the practitioners of the 'new' school of critical geopolitics as being somewhat outdated in its analytical framework. The opening chapters of the book survey the study of Geopolitics as a discipline from the coining of the term by Swedish academic Rudolph Kjellen in 1899 and through to the contemporary post-Cold War period. In his survey of geopolitical structure, Cohen focuses his attention on world regions as gateways, on shatterbelts and on the processes which bring about equilibrium or turbulence in the world order. His list of geopolitical features are similar to many of those to be found in introductory student texts to Political Geography, noting the importance of such features as core areas, capital cities, boundaries and populated or empty areas.

The final chapter of the opening section of the book deals with the geopolitical restructuring which took place during and after the Cold War. Cohen analyses three distinct periods of the Cold War, 1946–56, 1957–79, and 1980–89, following which he makes some brief comments concerning the post-Cold War era and the subsequent transition into the twenty first century, bringing in the events of September 11th and the subsequent United States led global fight against terror. Given the publication date of this book in early 2003, the comments relating to September 11th were probably added at the last moment and, as such, this subject does not receive the full treatment it deserves in a book on this topic.

The rest of the book is a systematic treatment of the geopolitical structure of the world regions, using the analytical parameters which he identified in his introductory chapters. Beginning with North America, the book then goes on to discuss Maritime Europe and the Maghreb, Russia and Central Asia, East Asia, the Asia-Pacific rim, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Southern Continents. He terms South Asia and the Middle East as the contemporary 'arc of geostrategic instability', still referring to the Middle East as the major world shatterbelt, continuing to threaten regional and global stability. Much of this is a sophisticated analysis of contemporary world affairs and, in his conclusion at the end of each chapter, Cohen points out the possible ways forward in each of these distinct regions, much of which will depend on the changing nature of global economic and political factors.

In his concluding epilogue, Cohen notes the importance of the events of September 11th as just one more factor in what has become an 'increasingly complex geopolitical

world' in which 'power will be even more widely dispersed and hierarchy weaker, so that no single state or realm can expect to be dominant'. Given the growing world hegemony and superpower status displayed by the United States, this last statement is questionable, although it remains to be seen whether a newly empowered Islamic Middle East, or an enlarged European Union will provide new forms of global and geopolitical balance.

This book is an excellent text for students of political geography or international relations desiring to learn about the 'geo' dimensions of world politics and how these factors are undergoing constant dynamic change. It is written clearly and lucidly and displays a common analytical structure in its discussion of each world region. The bibliography is wide ranging, drawing in relevant material from across the disciplinary divide, enabling the interested student to follow up with in-depth readings of the topics and regions discussed in the book. It is descriptive, rather than analytical or critical, in its approach, but given the general lack of global or geopolitical knowledge on the part of the average student, this text provides a wealth of material which should enable students to have a better grasp of the rapidly changing, and interrelated, dimensions of the world political map.

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POLLUTION IN A PROMISED LAND. AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF ISRAEL by Alon Tal. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Love for the land of Israel is a central value found in all forms of Zionism. Yet, this love has not prevented the Israelis from wreaking all sorts of environmental damage and havoc on the land. In this well-written and lively book Tal, a founding director and later chairman of *Adam Teva V-din* (Israel Union for Environmental Defense), describes and traces the origins of the numerous forms of pollution and environmental disruption that have plagued Israel since the 1950s when air and water were reasonably clean.

Tal starts his narrative with an incident that marred the 1997 Maccabiah games. During the opening parade on July 14th, a new bridge over the Yarkon River collapsed, sending the 56 members of the Australian team into the water. The resulting illnesses and deaths forced Israelis to go beyond disbelief and denial of environmental wrongdoing and confront not just how much the environment had been abused but also how little was known about the precise nature of the abuse.

The book is divided into five main sections. Section One includes two chapters devoted to the history of modern Jewish settlement of the land of Israel. Section Two contains five topical chapters that deal with the unintended negative consequences of seemingly beneficial schemes, such as water development, urbanization, the opening of nature reserves, the early stages of the Israeli environmental movement, and