

# BRATISLAVA LAW REVIEW

PUBLISHED BY  
THE FACULTY OF LAW,  
COMENIUS UNIVERSITY  
BRATISLAVA

ISSN (print): 2585-7088  
ISSN (electronic): 2644-6359

## MARSHALL, TIM: PRISONERS OF GEOGRAPHY: TEN MAPS THAT TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GLOBAL POLITICS. ELLIOTT AND THOMPSON, 2015 / Klára Jelínková

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### Suggested citation:

Jelínková, K. (2023). Marshall, Tim: Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics. Elliott And Thompson, 2015. *Bratislava Law Review*, 7(2), 243-246. <https://doi.org/10.46282/blr.2023.7.2.768>

**Submitted:** 03 December 2023

**Published:** 29 December 2023

Tim Marshall's *Prisoners of Geography*, published in 2015, is an in-depth examination of the influence that geographic features exert on the geopolitical strategies, international law, historical trajectories, and socioeconomic events of nations. Marshall is an experienced foreign correspondent, drawing on his extensive experience and knowledge of world history and geopolitics.

In his volume, the author analyses the geographic location of countries and regions – using ten selected, geographically interesting areas that are significant for their importance in the terms of historic events and global politics – to discuss how the geographic conditions of those specific areas define and influence the international relevance of individual states.

The book finds arguments in favour of a theory advocating that the decisions the countries make, as well as the behaviour and aspirations of nations, are conditioned and determined by their geographical location. Marshall's work addresses the complex dynamics of global politics and international relations through the prism of geography, providing a comprehensive examination of key regions.

One of the book's strengths is undoubtedly the way it is written; despite dealing with complex geopolitical concepts, the author expresses his theses clearly, in an exciting way that holds the attention of the reader. He presents arguments while combining historical events, current world events, and personal anecdotes. Each chapter is a scholarly exposition, offering readers an understanding of the significance and interconnections between terrain, climate (and climate change), and national aspirations.

The author raises issues of national development and international status, considering advantages and obstacles of their geographic position.

Inter alia, he explores historical reasons of the UK's isolation leading to the creation of liberal democracy. How Russia's quest for access to a warm water port was a major reason for the annexation of Crimea. In the context of China, the author focuses on the strategic importance of Tibet, whose plateau is the source of both of China's major rivers. He discusses the United States territories that provide a competitive advantage in terms of access to oceans and its navigable inland rivers. Author also examines Cuba's proximity to the United States, as a possible gateway for Florida's enemies.

Publication further discusses the role of geography in ongoing conflicts, showing how geography has shaped their dynamics, and affected the complexity of their solutions. Book intuitively discusses national rivalries (such as India vs. Pakistan; Korea vs. Japan; etc.) and describes their origins, as well as the long-term strategic the states apply to deal with them.

Moreover, the geographical analysis gives us a view of the different continents and addresses distinguished issues. Western Europe is described as an area that has benefited from favourable weather, inland rivers, the transfer of knowledge across the Eurasian peninsula, and from the access to warm-water ports.

The territory of Africa is analysed within its isolation, that is the cause of its current economic position. The Sahara Desert, in the north, is the reason for just a few natural ports and a lack of unnavigable inland rivers creating only weak inland connections. Given geographical characteristics of the continent have contributed to its territorial isolation and hindered a key development of society: the mutual and cross-territorial exchange of ideas. Attention is paid to the colonisation by Europeans, who neglected the development of the inland territories, that resulted in a phenomenon causing that, after reaching their independence, the African nations have built the states out of flawed institutions and structures.

Following analyses of the Middle East, the book focuses on the disputes arising within society. The chapter also describes the advantages and disadvantages of the region in terms of its size, pointing out that the large part of it is made up of The Arabian Desert, that has displayed people to settle closer to the coastal areas. In addition to the country's unfavourable topography, its situation is exacerbated by differing religious views, conflicts, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Central and South America is also under analysis. Like Africa, its political crisis has mostly been the result of isolation and its origins. The coastal cities were populated by European settlers who, while contributing to better connecting the coastal regions, neglected to connect the inland regions with each other. European settlers controlled much of the land, created serfdom, and dominated the majority of indigenous population. The history of the continent, combined with its complicated geographical situation, has created the Latin America of today.

In his publication, Marshall not only describes the geographic constraints, but he also considers how peoples navigate and transcend these constraints. He illustrates how countries use the political, human, or natural resources at their disposal to break free from the geographical restrictions. This approach further deepens the scholarly analysis of the subject and goes beyond its own deterministic view of geography and geopolitics.

The academic significance of the book is enhanced by its serious outlook. Currently, the planet is suffering from global warming, desertification, deforestation (not only) of the Amazon region, increased flooding, and the melting of the Arctic. These factors might be possible future triggers for the global and regional conflicts, as well as the cause of possible mass migrations.

The author encourages readers to consider how nations might strategically adapt to changing global dynamics, offering a perspective based on historical precedents and geopolitical theory. He argues that geography will continue to play a central role in the decades to come.

The main weakness of the book is the huge scope of the issues it focuses on. The problematics would probably deserve a much deeper elaboration and therefore a more extensive treatment. Given its broad scope, its content may seem too brief.

Tim Marshall views geography mainly from the perspective of conflict potential, overlooking other factors that are crucial from the perspective of geopolitics and international relations, such as economic or social aspects. He also omits pressing security challenges concerning modern times, for example drones, disinformation, and cyber security.

In conclusion, the book is very enriching, offering a new more informed understanding of geography's role in shaping our contemporary world. Its content emerges as a slick scholarly contribution to the field of geopolitical analysis and complex international relations. Academic maturity coupled with appealing stylistics ensure that the book is accessible to a broad audience as well as a valuable resource for scholars seeking a sophisticated understanding of the complex interplay between geography, international relations, and global politics.

