



The 29th
Sol Feinstone Lecture
“The Meaning of Freedom”

Dr. Harm de Blij

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The United States Military Academy is pleased to sponsor an annual lecture series on the Meaning of Freedom. It is significant that this lecture program has been made possible by the generosity of the late Mr. Sol Feinstone, a dedicated American Patriot whose commitment to the ideals of the American Revolution led him to devote many years of effort, as well as considerable personal resources, to the collection of important letters, manuscripts, and books dealing with our heritage of freedom. His donation of these items to libraries and educational institutions ensures that the message which they proclaim will be preserved and transmitted to future generations of Americans.

Mr. Feinstone's abiding faith in the brotherhood of free nations of men has found further expression in several lecture series which he has endowed in order to permit prominent Americans to interpret the Meaning of Freedom.

The United States Corps of Cadets and the staff and faculty of the Military Academy are pleased to recognize the generosity and loyalty of this great American for providing a living endowment in the defense of freedom.

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

**Challenges to America in the
Twenty-First Century**

The Feinstone Lecture

November 7, 2001

General and Mrs. Lennox, General and Mrs. Kaufman, Colonel and Mrs. Palka, Member of the Sol Feinstone Family Dr. Stone, Distinguished members of the United States Military Academy Faculty, and Cadets of the Class of 2003,

It is an honor for me to have been invited to present this 2001 lecture in the Sol Feinstone Series under the title "The Meaning of Freedom," and I salute the Feinstone family for making this annual occasion possible. In the entire history of our country there have not been many more appropriate moments to reflect on this topic, and perhaps none since Pearl Harbor. When Colonel Palka and I discussed this assignment in New York during the past summer, the world, the nation, and the city were different places from what they are today. September 11, 2001, will forever mark a fateful transition in all our lives, and in the life of the country. A crucial dimension of this transition involves our cherished freedom, how we will protect it at home, and what we will have to do to foster freedom abroad.

The dreadful scenes in New York and Washington two months ago evoked personal memories I thought I had laid to rest. On May 14, 1940, the Dutch port city of Rotterdam, in whose suburbs my family lived, was attacked by German warplanes whose aim it was to destroy the historic downtown and to inflict large numbers of civilian casualties.

The larger Nazi objective was to break the resistance the

small but heroic Dutch army was offering the German ground offensive by forcing the government to capitulate. From an attic window my father and I watched as fires set by incendiary bombs consumed central Rotterdam, killing hundreds and tinting the night's low clouds a bright red. I was old enough to remember that scene for life, but too young at the time to understand its implications. By the time Canadian and American troops reached us, five horrific years of Nazi occupation later, I had come to comprehend what that day in 1940 signified. Freedom had become an abstract notion. The reality of daily life was fear.

I have always been, and shall be forever, grateful to the soldiers of the Greatest Generation, for they and their allies rescued my family, community, and country, and indeed the world, from an unimaginable fate. From the day of the Normandy invasion I marked the rumored advance of the Allied forces on a tattered National Geographic map, and spent the cold days of the 1945 Hunger Winter reading about tropical countries and balmy climes. By the time the war drew to a close I was determined to find a way to become a professional geographer.

So please allow me to say a few words about my favorite discipline, because I know not all of you here tonight are Geography majors. In the United States, Geography remains a weak link in our education despite ample evidence that this weakness is costly to the nation. Many Americans, polls

indicate, still equate Geography with product lists and place names, but that is about the same as equating a conjugation table with literature. Like all the sciences, Geography over the past half century has changed and progressed enormously. But there is no doubt about it: the fundamentals are crucial. To be geographically literate, you have to have a fairly accurate mental map of the layout of our world, physiographically and culturally. That is especially important if you are going to represent the United States in some foreign setting, as all of us in this hall already have, or will -- as soldiers, scholars, diplomats, students, even as tourists.

Perhaps some of you remember our national cringe when, in the 1980s, an American President opened a conference in the capital of Brazil, Brasilia, by saying that he was pleased to be in Bolivia (somehow I think there would have been a bit of a hoot from you if I had said that I was pleased to be joining you here in Annapolis). The President's Geographic faux-pas made the front pages of U.S. newspapers, and soon the news media sent out a small army of reporters to query the American public. Some of these reporters even asked people on street corners to identify such locales as the Pacific Ocean on a blank world map or the State of New York on a U.S. map. The results were embarrassing. Almost half of those asked could not find New York. At one prominent college in the Midwest, more than 90 percent of incoming freshmen could not locate Vietnam on a world map – less than a decade after the end of the Vietnam War. There was one infamous report that 58

percent of students in six Southeastern States could not name the country to our south, bordered by the Rio Grande, known for its oil, its corrupt politics, its spicy foods, and its strange tongues. And that made the people very angry, down there in Texas.

But please do not get the wrong idea about Geography. The world is a geopolitical chessboard, and you have to know where the squares and the pieces are. It is also an environmental tangle, and it is important to know the key threads. But all that is only the beginning. What is more important is that Geography helps you make connections between and among apparently unrelated data and phenomena, to understand what we like to call spatial relationships, to navigate your way in this ever-more complicated world. Geographic literacy is also indispensable in the formulation of public policy. I am here to argue that our nation's still-prevailing Geographic illiteracy constitutes a threat to our national security.

Let me cite just one example of this risk. For a time during and after the Second World War, Geography as a school subject and university discipline experienced a resurgence. College Geography Departments thrived. Numerous Geography graduates worked in some capacity for the government. Some of my own students of the 1950s joined the foreign service. One popular overseas position was that of Geographic Attaché, a Secretary level position in U.S.

embassies. It was the principal responsibility of the Geographic Attaché to identify and acquire, all maps being published by the local government or by private organizations in the country. Such maps often revealed a state's intentions toward its neighbors, for example by showing boundaries to lie inside adjoining territory, presaging border trouble or worse, annexation. Frequently those maps, and the analyses the Geographic Attachés wrote, provided the United States government early warning of problems for which policy could then be formulated in advance.

The Geographic Attaché position became a casualty of Geography's decline during the 1960s (there were other causes, including budget-cutting and rivalry among intelligence-gathering agencies). But I was reminded of this value when, during the last week of July, 1990, I received in the mail from a colleague in Iraq a map published by the Baghdad regime showing Kuwait as its 19th province. An unmistakable case of cartographic aggression, publication of that map coincided with Iraq's massing of troops near the Kuwait border. As it happened, Rep. Dante Fascell, then Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, came to the National Geographic Society to address a group of Geography teachers participating in a summer institute, and I attended the meeting. Afterward, I showed him the map and asked him about the implications; it signaled aggression. Mr. Fascell said that any such map would already be in the hands of our intelligence operations, that our ambassador was monitoring the situation,

and that no aggression was imminent. Two days later, Iraqi troops and tanks poured across the border and seized Kuwait.

The erosion of the nation's Geographic literacy has had catastrophic consequences throughout the second half of the twentieth century. By the time the United States embarked on the Vietnam War, our polity's collective knowledge of Indochina was, to put it mildly, inadequate. An electorate minimally aware of the political and cultural Geography of Southeast Asia allowed a group of civilian leaders representatively uninformed to plunge the nation into a conflict that did this country (not to mention Vietnam) immeasurable damage. Several of these leaders, notably Robert McNamara, graduated from Harvard University, which had some years earlier closed its Geography Department.

You might be tempted to assume that basic Geographic knowledge surely prevails in the highest circles of government, whether officials were exposed formally to Geographic education or not. A reading of political memoirs suggests otherwise. Here is a passage from *Years of Renewal*, a book written by former Harvard Professor Henry Kissinger:

“As part of some U.N. celebration, the Prime Minister of Mauritius had been invited to Washington. Mauritius is a subtropical island located in the Indian Ocean ...it enjoys plenty of rainfall and a verdant agriculture. Its relations with the United States were excellent. Somehow (the National Security)

staff confused Mauritius with Mauritania, an arid desert state in West Africa that had broken diplomatic relations with us in 1967 as an act of solidarity with its Muslim brethren in the aftermath of the Middle East War. This misconception produced an extraordinary dialogue. Coming straight to the point, Nixon suggested that the time had come to restore diplomatic relations between the United States and Mauritius. This, he noted, would permit resumption of American aid, and one of the benefits might be assistance in dry farming, in which, Nixon maintained, the United States had special capabilities. The stunned visitor, who had come on a goodwill mission from a country with, if anything, excessive rainfall, tried to shift to a more promising subject. He enquired whether Nixon was satisfied with the operation of the space tracking station the United States maintained on his island. Now it was Nixon's turn to be discomfited as he set about writing frantically on his yellow pad. Tearing off a page, he handed me a note that read: "Why the hell do we have a space tracking station in a country with which we do not have diplomatic relations?"

If fundamental Geographic knowledge at this level is missing where public policy is made, imagine what the situation is like when it comes to more sophisticated expertise. You have all heard the phrase "war teaches geography," but there is a word missing: "belatedly." Our dismal awareness of the realities of Vietnam is a matter of record, but what did our civilian leaders know about the physiography and cultural

Geography of Afghanistan two months ago? About the Pashtuns and the Tajiks and the Hazaras, about the Hindu Kush, the meltwater caves, the weather extremes? About the Wakhan Corridor and the Khyber Pass? In the global geopolitical contest, you cannot wait “to look it up” when the time for action comes. As the leading nation, we need to be better informed about the world. Geographic literacy is indispensable to public policy.

Geographic knowledge also is an effective antidote to isolationism, and it is probably no accident that the decline of Geography coincided with a rise of isolationist sentiment in this country. As citizens of the sole superpower at this stage of history, we should not be surprised at the envy and hostility that America elicits in some parts of the world. This should not persuade us to close our eyes to the rest of the planet, and yet we have been doing so. A recent study reported widely in the press shows that television's news coverage of foreign places dropped from a total of 4,032 minutes in 1989 to 1,342 minutes in 1999, not a good sign at a time when our awareness of the international scene should be growing.

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When Colonel Palka and I met in New York last summer, he asked me what I thought were the three strongest actual and potential challenges to the United States in the first half of the 21st century. I suggested that each of those challenges has a

Geographic dimension. The first is physical, the second political, and the third cultural.

The Physical-Geographic challenge lies in global and regional climate change, its causes, prospects, and remedies. Long after we have learned to live with, and perhaps deal with terrorism and associated mayhem, the United States will still confront the hazards of rapid environmental change. These hazards range from dislocation in coastal zones resulting from accelerated global warming to energy shortages arising from rapid global cooling. I mention these two opposite extremes because each remains in the realm of the possible. Geographers have been studying the relationships between human societies and natural environments since the days of a scholar named Ellsworth Huntington, who argued three generations ago that prevailing climate "determined" the fate of nations. Huntington was unaware of the regional and temporal vicissitudes of climate, and his theory of environmental determinism was not only discredited, but gave Geography a bad name. But another kind of determinism has now taken over. Today the synonym for global climatic change is global warming, a scientific bandwagon that speeds down a single track. But when I was a graduate student at Northwestern University in the 1950s, it was global cooling, not global warming, that was the presupposition. Have a look at back issues of the journals *Science* and *Nature* of the 1950s and 1960s, and you will find a steady stream of extrapolations based on the cooling phase that had set in around 1940 and

which seemed to forecast a renewed glaciation. That cooling phase lasted until about 1970 and thus occurred during the final, worldwide stage of the global diffusion of the Industrial Revolution. If cooling could persist even as heat-trapping pollutants were being spewed into the atmosphere in unprecedented quantities, full-scale glaciation surely lay ahead, went the argument.

Today the opposite reasoning prevails. Since the 1970s a warming phase has been in progress, and now the dire predictions are of melting ice, rising sea-levels, coastal inundations, and destructive tropical storms. The new bandwagon forecasts sustained global warming for at least the next half century, and attributes the cause to human activity in generating "greenhouse" gases. Limit those emanations, the argument goes, and global warming will ameliorate. Public policy should conform to such objectives, and, the majority of scientists are arguing today, the United States should sign and ratify the Kyoto protocols.

Not all Physical Geographers subscribe to this majority view, however. Regional and long-term perspectives have become casualties off the track of the bandwagon, but these should not be lost. The indisputable reality is that we are living in an Ice Age today, an Ice Age in which the warmth of the Holocene is an exception, not the rule. This Late Cenozoic Ice Age began during the Oligocene Epoch, some 40 million years ago (although global cooling had begun more than 10 million

years earlier). The telltale Antarctic Ice Sheet emerged about 37 million years ago; high-mountain glaciers became permanent during the Miocene, and North Polar ice became permanent during a precipitous cooling some 12 million years ago. Early hominids appeared just before the opening of the Pliocene, six million years ago, only to be greeted by another sharp drop in global temperatures. By the time our epoch, the Pleistocene, commenced less than two million years ago, the Earth was in the grip of the coldest conditions yet produced by the Late Cenozoic Ice Age. Many of our potential ancestors succumbed, unable to adapt to the frigid cycles of Pleistocene weather. As anyone who has taken a basic course in Physical Geography knows, the temperature variations of the Pleistocene are producing a series of long-lasting glaciations interrupted by short-term warming periods known as inter-glaciations. Over the past 300,000 years, the glaciations have lasted about 90,000 years each and the inter-glaciations about 12,000. The last major glaciation, the Wisconsinan, ended a warm phase like the one we are enjoying today, about 90,000 years ago. Importantly, those glaciations not only pushed huge ice sheets over high- and middle-latitude landmasses; they also enlarged the Antarctic Ice Sheet and magnified mountain glaciers around the world, even in Equatorial Africa and New Guinea. This in turn produced massive changes in vegetation and indeed in the overall environments where hominids were living. One of their adaptations was migration. Although the story of hominid emigration from Africa into Eurasia and its relationship to Pleistocene climate change still needs to be

illuminated, it is clear that environmental change was a driving force.

The present inter-glaciation began when the Wisconsin ice sheets that had covered North America deep into the U.S. Midwest and Eurasia into its midsection receded rapidly from about 18,000 years ago. By about 13,000 years ago, global climate had warmed significantly, although ice still covered much of Canada. Then something dramatic happened: temperatures dropped back to glacial levels almost instantly during an event called the Younger Dryas. Apparently a large sheet glacier slid from the northeastern part of the North American landmass into the North Atlantic Ocean cooling its waters deeply and returning much of the Northern Hemisphere to Ice-Age conditions. But, as the record shows, this was not the end of the current inter-glaciation. The North Atlantic warmed again, the recession of the ice continued, and global climates began to approach current conditions. Another spectacular event, about 7500 years ago and possibly related to one last glacial surge, raised the level of the Mediterranean Sea and breached the barrier to the Black Sea, then a comparatively small (and populated) lake basin. The water level of the Black Sea rose rapidly, driving the inhabitants away and giving rise, perhaps, to biblical legends of the great flood. By 6000 years ago, global climate was pretty much as it is today. Sea-level rise due to glacial melting had stopped; large parts of the Earth's continental shelves lay under water. Barrier islands pushed landward during this rise now stopped moving.

Poleward-shifting vegetation assemblages started stabilizing. *Homo sapiens*, having perhaps made its appearance during the pre-Wisconsinan inter-glaciation and having overpowered its hominid contemporaries, began to make technological and organizational progress. Plant and animal domestication and state formation occurred during the Post-glacial optimum, and the first empires arose during the Medieval Optimum beginning some 2500 years ago in western Eurasia (Greece and Rome) and East Asia (China).

The Medieval Optimum was a crucial period in the historical Geography of the Western world. The northward march of global warming was accompanied by the northward migration of the centers of power, from Egypt to Minoan Crete to Greece to Rome and, eventually, across the Alps to the states and empires of Western Europe. It was not climate alone that fired the *Energy of Nations*, as S. F. Markham proposed in a book that borrowed many of Ellsworth Huntington's ideas. Climate and other factors of physiography created combinations of ecological opportunity that endowed those human communities present in favored areas with potential others did not have. Environmental determinists argued that mid-latitude climates bequeathed racial superiority on certain nations. Today we know that whoever benefited from nature's opportunities -- Asian, African or European -- would have translated them into progress and power.

But global warming's favors in some areas were matched by

despoilment in others. The northward march of global warming desiccated much of North Africa into what is today the Sahara, severing the evolving links between the culture hearth of ancient Egypt and Nilotic and Bantu Africa. Its southward march in the Southern Hemisphere placed the semi-permanent Subtropical High pressure zone over the heart of Australia, where human habitation had begun under very different circumstances more than 60,000 years ago.

In Europe, however, the Medieval Optimum foreshadowed an age of expansion and imperialism yet to come. So warm was England that the Romans succeeded in establishing a wine industry there. So calm were the waters of the North Atlantic that Scandinavian sailors and settlers reached Iceland, Greenland, and North America around one thousand years ago. (It is noteworthy that, in the Southern Hemisphere, Maori canoeists who had been plying Pacific waters in lower latitudes for thousands of years did not set-foot in New Zealand until very nearly the same day Leif Eriksson reached North America, perhaps enabled to do so by the same salubrious environmental conditions). So rapid was soil development and so moist and mild was continental Europe's climate that the agricultural frontier moved steadily northward across Germany and deep into Scandinavia. Alpine mountain glaciers were melting and receding and farms and pastures ranged up slope.

At the other end of the Eurasian landmass, the Medieval Optimum saw China's rice and wheat cultivation expand

significantly, and during the period of Mongol rule (1264-1368) its population exceeded 100 million. The succeeding Ming Dynasty, still benefiting from favorable environmental conditions, was a golden age. Large fleets of Chinese ships, far superior over anything yet produced in Europe, sailed into the Indian Ocean and reached East Africa as well as Arabian shores of the Red Sea. But then the Medieval Optimum came to an end, and quite suddenly. In her book *The Little Ice Age* Jean Grove describes the dislocation wrought by weather extremes, frigid winters and torrid summers, violent storms and searing droughts that marked the transition from warming to cooling. The agricultural frontier was driven hundreds of kilometers southward in Western Europe; the wine industry of England was extinguished in little more than one generation; Settlements in Iceland and Greenland were vanquished, sea lanes closed. By the beginning of the Fourteenth Century it was clear that this was no temporary interruption of the optimal conditions of several centuries. What came to be known as the Little Ice Age (a better term would be Little Glaciation had Europe in its grip. After a huge drop in temperatures during the late 1400s, Alpine glaciers began a relentless advance that engulfed villages and farms. Whole landscapes changed from productive farmland to barren wasteland ill a single lifetime. And it got colder still. Between 1660 and 1710 Europe experienced the coldest half-century since pre-Roman times.

But this was not merely a regional phenomenon. Climatic conditions worsened in Ming China too, and the emperor,

faced with famines and restive subjects, ordered an end to the country's maritime explorations. The great ships were burned, and only barges capable of carrying rice from central China to the hungry north via the Grand Canal were now built. The Little Ice Age ended what might have been China's quest to reach and conquer Europe.

After a promising warming spell during the first half of the Eighteenth Century, still another cooling phase, again marked by glacial advances not just in Europe but in North America and New Zealand as well, signaled a continuation of the Little Ice Age. As Brian Fagan notes in his book (also called *The Little Ice Age*), the rigors of this cold spell had much to do with the conditions that forged the French Revolution, and affected Napoleon's campaigns as well. Not until the middle of the Nineteenth Century, some 650 years after it began, did the Little Ice Age come to an end.

The warming phase that may be called the Industrial Optimum has coincided with the Industrial Revolution and the Population Explosion, and was interrupted only during the period from about 1940 to 1970, as noted earlier. Global temperatures since the late 1980s are reported to have been higher than at any time since thermometer records have been kept. Whether temperatures today are in fact higher than they were during the Medieval optimum is likely to remain a matter for conjecture, and in the perspective of the Postglacial and Medieval Optima the post-1970 warming phase is but brief. A

related caveat has to do with the regional nature of "global" warming. While *average* global temperatures have risen over the past 30 years, and many glaciers are again in a recessional mode, it is now clear that certain areas of the world are more strongly affected by warming than others.

The key, still unanswerable questions are these: what percentage contribution does anthropogenic warming make to the overall temperature increase? And what are the prospects for a reversal in current warming? While the - global-warming debate has become politicized at virtually every level, governments should act to restrict the emanation of greenhouse-enhancing gases, even if only as a matter of atmospheric cleansing. What the world should *not* expect, however, is a planetary reward in the form of cooling temperatures (but not too much, of course). In response to the second question, it is relevant to compare the duration of our current, Holocene warm phase to the inter-glaciations of earlier Pleistocene times. Warming began about 18,000 years ago; the last glacial surge was 12,000 years ago. Despite what you read in some scholarly journals, there is no evidence that the Late Cenozoic Ice Age ended with the onset of this particular warming period. The Pleistocene record suggests that we may already be on borrowed time, and that we should be prepared for unimaginable global transformation at a time when our human numbers have never been greater. No contribution of ours is likely to make any crucial difference. The Geographic

evidence suggests that nature, not humanity, still drives the cycles of environmental change.

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The second of the three challenges I foresee is geopolitical. During this Twenty-First century the United States will find itself in a contest with the world's most populous nation; what form that contest will take depends on many factors, including its timing and the status of China's Pacific and Asian neighbors when the time comes. Consider how that center of power (or quest for power) that I described environmentally and latitudinally a few moments ago has become longitudinal. Among European imperial powers, Britain came closest to world domination during the Nineteenth Century. Germany twice challenged for world power during the Twentieth, followed still farther eastward by the Soviet Union. In an extraordinary article published nearly a century ago, a British Geographer named Halford Mackinder anticipated this transition of power from Eurasian maritime periphery to continental core, setting off a debate that is summarized in his book *Democratic Ideals and Reality*. That debate focused on the power potential of Eurasia's interior as opposed to its margins, and one of Mackinder's critics, Nicholas Spykman, more than fifty years ago coined the term that has recently gained currency: the Pacific Rimland.

Before you dismiss such Historic- Geographical disputes as

irrelevant in today's world of high-tech weaponry, let me suggest that some valuable insights can still be derived. In that inexorable eastward march of power, note that the population numbers of the challengers (Britain, Germany, Russia) consistently increase. Along this transect, China will have what none of its predecessors did: a significant segment of the world's population. Unlike Britain's fragmented empire and the Soviet Union's near-landlocked situation, China is a compact state with a lengthy coastline facing a major ocean.

On that point, the rise of China marks the coming paramouncy of the Pacific and its polar flanks in the geopolitical, as well as the economic affairs of the world. The Eighteenth Century was the century of the North Sea; the Nineteenth Century was the century of the Atlantic Ocean; in the Twentieth Century, the Atlantic Rim began to yield to a Pacific Rim. During the 1990s, for the first time in the history of the world, the volume and value of goods crossing the Pacific exceeded that crossing the Atlantic. A global shift in centrality is under way.

That shift in activity is partly due to the fast-growing economic interconnection between China and the United States, so one might conclude that it is in both powers' interest to avoid geopolitical confrontation. But the United States has a vested interest in the status quo while China is an emerging power, an asymmetry that manifests itself politico-geographical in several ways. The United States is on China's

doorstep from Korea to Taiwan to the South China Sea. China is not on ours -- at least not yet. China's claim to the bulk of the waters of the South China Sea will begin to matter more when Chinese naval power, still very limited, projects itself onto the full range of the Western Pacific. On Geographic issues ranging from Tibet to Taiwan and from the Spratly Islands to the Paracels, China and the United States differ. On questions such as the status of North Korea and the remilitarization of Japan, nuclear armaments and human rights, Chinese and American interests and views diverge. Within a few years, China will revive the space race and, in all probability, make moves to establish a permanent manned station on the Moon, very likely reviving the fears that arose in America after the Soviets took the lead in space following the Sputnik launch.

Polls and surveys indicate that, as a nation, Americans know even less about China than we did about Vietnam 40 years ago. Chinese, especially Pacific-Rim Chinese, on the other hand tend to be remarkably well-informed about the United States, as I have learned during my visits to China every year (except 1990) since 1981. Audiences of hundreds in educational and non-educational settings know enough English not only to follow a rapid-fire lecture but also to join in the vigorous debate that often follows. Bookstores carry English-language books and magazines. No Chinese city or town seems to be without a language institute. How many Americans do you know personally who speak and read Chinese?

This is another aspect of the asymmetry in the relationship between present and future superpower. It is quite natural that Chinese citizens who hear Americans express opinions about China want to question those Americans about their knowledge of China, and it reflects an important episode in contemporary Chinese life: the rise of nationalism. United States (and official Chinese) actions have contributed to surges of nationalist fervor, for example following that unbelievable error when U.S. planes bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade because they had an outdated map on their screens, and subsequently following the surveillance-plane incident off Hainan Island. But Chinese nationalism is on the rise in any case, a response to the penetration of Western ideas, fears of globalization, resentment at American arrogance. Chinese governments alternately encourage expressions of nationalism and suppress them in their controlling tradition, but with or without government intervention, nationalism is becoming a force in China's ascent.

This combination of circumstances raises the prospect that China and the United States will find themselves in a Cold-War confrontation that is likely to be more difficult to manage than the one between the United States and the Soviet Union. When the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in that global contest, there were bases for mutual understanding and restraint that allowed proxy wars to continue from Afghanistan to Angola without the risk of their spinning out of control. It was an *intracultural* Cold War, and for all the damage it did to

smaller countries caught up in the ideological struggle, it was never likely to destroy the world, even during the Cuban Missile Crisis. But a confrontation between China and the United States would constitute the first *intercultural* Cold War, with all this implies for misunderstanding and perhaps uncontrollable conflict. This is one crucial reason why we Americans, as a nation, must do much more to familiarize ourselves with Chinese Geography, history and culture. Mutual understanding (if not fondness) can mitigate the risks our relationship will inevitably entail.

I cannot leave the topic of U.S.-Chinese geopolitics without referring to two environmental events during the second half of the Twentieth Century that had major impacts on the course of human events. In 1976, China lay spent and dislocated from the "Cultural Revolution" Mao Zedong and his henchmen had foisted on the country. But the regime might have survived in some form were it not for the most deadly natural disaster of the century: the Tangshan earthquake of 28 July, killing more than 700,000 people. So inept was the rescue effort and so ineffective the Communist Party's response at every level that revulsion was widespread, and not just in the area most severely hit (the damage even reached Beijing). That calamity helped speed the transition to a more pragmatic China.

During the late 1980s, resentment was rising in the Philippines against the military presence of the United States and its installations at Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay

Naval Station. In 1990 the Philippine Senate began a debate as to whether the U.S. should be asked to leave. Diplomatic efforts by Washington to negotiate a treaty extension were not going well when, in mid-June, 1991, nearby Mount Pinatubo erupted with tremendous force, burying Clark Air Base under a deep layer of ash and damaging Subic Bay as well. The United States decided to abandon Clark altogether, and when the Philippine Senate rejected a proposed treaty to continue U.S. use of the Naval base, the military complex was vacated entirely. Two months later, the Chinese began building permanent structures on Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands, staking their claim to the far western reaches of the South China Sea hundreds of kilometers beyond their territorial sea and on the Philippines' doorstep. The last lines have not yet been drawn on the geopolitical map of the Western Pacific.

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The third challenge to the United States in the Twenty-First Century is Cultural-Geographic. It has been growing for decades and was alluded to by Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, a concept that gained currency on September 11, 2001. Industrial America's insatiable demand for oil from states with Islamic regimes, political America's historic support of Israel, and Christian America's uneasy relationships with other faiths, and especially Islam, create a combination of circumstances that presages a collision of cultures of the kind Huntington forecast.

It is a clash that is likely to affect if not dominate our lives for decades to come, even as environmental hazards and the Chinese challenge come at us from other directions.

Islam today is the fastest-growing religion by far, its adherents poised to surpass 1.1 billion in this decade even as the number of Christian faithful declines past 1.6 billion. Islam dominates the daily life of its believers in ways almost no sect of Christianity does, and that 1.6 billion Christians includes tens --perhaps hundreds --of millions who rarely or never see the inside of a church. Some scholars are describing Europe, supposedly still the Christian heartland, as having entered a Post-Christian era. Immigrant workers and refugees from Asia and Africa have brought the energy of Islam to this core of Christianity, and Europe's cultural landscapes are changing. A 1999 survey of religious adherence in Amsterdam reported Islam as the leading faith; nonbelievers had a plurality.

Geographically, what we are witnessing today is the third upsurge of Islam since its founding in the Seventh Century A.D. Its first, accompanied by a magnificent flowering of culture and science, spread the faith from Arabia to Andalusia and from Jerusalem to Java. The second forged an empire that reached from the port of Aden to the portals of Vienna, an Ottoman Empire of which Turkey is the modern-day remnant. And now the third Islamic resurgence is in progress, spreading the faith anew through contagious as well as relocation diffusion, driven in part by resentment and anger.

Western views of Islam tend to be formed by what are perceived to be the excesses of Islamic minorities that have taken control of government in places like Syria, Libya, Sudan, and Afghanistan. The persistence of slavery in Sudan, the persecution of Jews, Christians, and Bahais in Iran, the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia, and the destruction of ancient Buddhist monuments in Afghanistan are taken as representative of the entire Muslim world and are enough to convince many Westerners that coexistence with Islam is impractical.

But let us inject some Historical Geography into the equation. As a belief system, Islam is six centuries younger than Christianity. At the time of its cultural zenith, it faced the Christian crusades and massive destruction of its material culture. At the time of its second resurgence it sustained the impact of European colonialism. And today Islamic societies cope with globalization and the penetration of Western perversion. Even as Muslim religious scholars debate the tenets of their faith, they see the cultural values of Islam corrupted by Western ways, dominated of course by American norms. Many of them teach in their mosques that coexistence with aggressive Christian (and Judaic) societies is impossible.

Thus the prospects for accommodation with Islam are not encouraging, nor is the outlook for conciliation *within* Islam. Like other religions, Islam is a faith divided into sects and cults, and has a history of costly conflict. The war between

Shi'ite Iran and Sunni-dominated Iraq of the 1980s took an estimated 1 million lives. The Palestinian Hamas movement takes its name from the Syrian town of Hama, where a rebellion by the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood was ruthlessly put down by the minority Alawite regime that rules the country; the toll is estimated to have exceeded 25,000. From Algeria in the west to Aceh in the east, the Muslim world is in frequent internal as well as external turmoil.

The politico-geographical map of the Islamic world underscores this Geographic realm's intense political fragmentation; no Islamic state can lay claim to leadership here. Nor can a single Islamic state claim to be a genuine democracy; many are medieval autocracies. In such social environments, fundamentalists (revivalists, as Muslims prefer to call them) find fertile ground. When royal or military regimes invite foreign infidels into their midst, the seeds of terrorist response are sown.

It is also worth looking at the map of the Islamic world in environmental context. The strictest and harshest forms of the faith seem to coincide spatially with the most severe environmental conditions: Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are austere in both respects, as are Sudan and Iran. Moderation seems to come where desert and steppe yield to milder and moister environs as in Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Other factors, including the nature of Islam's diffusion, may have been decisive in forging this pattern, but tolerant Islam

has long been a phenomenon of the realm's margins, not its core.

But now moderate Islam is under pressure. The Taliban movement pacified fractious Afghanistan with Pakistani acquiescence and American Cold-War-era arms, imposed brutal rule over the population and mistreated women and children in ways unseen for centuries, and then capitalized on its cave-riddled physiography by accommodating the leadership of a terrorist network that would retaliate against the West. That campaign had notable successes in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Yemen, and on September 11, 2001 it struck America itself. The inevitable American and allied response will undoubtedly be followed by further terrorist acts, but the Islamic extremists have already achieved one of their goals: the radicalization of Islam in moderate countries.

Two of these countries are of particular concern. One is Indonesia, already combating Islamic revivalism and separatism in the north-Sumatran province of Aceh. As the world's fourth most populous nation and its largest Muslim state by far, Indonesia's comparative moderation has been a beacon of hope in the Islamic world. But Muslim-Christian conflict had been intensifying for several years before the turn of the century, in part because of the government's transmigration policy of relocating Javanese Muslims to

Christian-majority islands in the Sundas, Malukus, and also to Kalimantan and in part because of the political crises in Jakarta, which gave radical Muslim movements an opportunity to increase their influence. That influence has been evident in the post-September 11 period, when Indonesia's President has had to retract her early support for the American campaign in Afghanistan.

The other country giving rise to concern is Africa's most populous state, Nigeria. Here, too, Islamic fundamentalism had been rising before the current crisis arose, but it is noteworthy that some of the biggest celebrations following the September 11 attack occurred in Northern Nigerian cities. Nigeria on paper is a federation of three dozen States, twelve of which, all in the north and containing close to half its population, have in recent years proclaimed *sharia* Islamic law. Christian minorities objected and rioted, and an exodus of non-Muslims followed, deepening the politico-geographic schism between North and South. Southern newspapers described the "Talibanization" of northern Nigeria and chronicled the cruel public punishments meted out, often to women, under *sharia* law. In the aftermath of the September 11 attack and the Muslim jubilation, riots broke out in which hundreds, perhaps thousands, were killed and numerous churches and mosques destroyed. The future of Nigeria, cornerstone of West Africa and one of America's largest oil suppliers, is in doubt.

Thus the cultural challenge the United States faces is as global as the environmental and political ones identified earlier. If I may be permitted a personal observation, this country has perhaps never in its history functioned better or more honorably than in the aftermath of the September 11 provocation. Betrayed by supposed allies in the Muslim world as well as Europe (notably Belgium) and hectorred by enemies at home, government and nation proved to the world that America's values are more than window dressing. There are more Muslims in this country than in a dozen Islamic states, and a few of them made outrageous statements following the September 11 massacre. But no mosques were burned and no prominent religious figures assaulted. In a population of 285 million, the number of incidents of misguided violence against Muslims was minimal. Protesters who in many Islamic countries would have been hauled away felt free to state their case. President Bush and other government leaders used the media to remind Americans that the actions of a terrorist movement under the guise of Islam does not represent the norms of Islam. This society has come a long way since it incarcerated ethnic Japanese in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. No freedoms are at risk.

But the fact remains that Islam and the West --and perhaps Islam and the rest --are on a collision course, and while the short-term challenge is to impede terrorists and radical secession movements, the long-term challenge is to find

solutions to the entanglements that worsen the scenario. The two key issues, of course, are Israel and oil. The Political Geography of Israel and its neighbors needs to be restructured; Israeli settlements should be removed from Gaza and a Palestinian state established. Jerusalem should be internationalized under U.N. and perhaps N.A.T.O auspices, and construction of West Bank settlements --and the demolition of Arab homes there --should be stopped. But make no mistake: if all these conditions could be met tomorrow, it would not end all violence. Many Muslims will continue to demand nothing less than the elimination of Israel. What such moves might achieve is a lessening of the furor.

And when it comes to oil and energy, the United States needs a second Manhattan Project (what a felicitous name, under the circumstances) to speed our technology toward options that will lessen our dependence on culturally incompatible sources. This is not a matter of drilling in Alaska or buying on spot markets: for its national security, the country needs an energy revolution. We have allowed ourselves to be restrained from converting more substantially to nuclear power for electricity (largely on the grounds of risk, but tell that to the thousands of miners in Africa and Asia who die each year in mines producing coal for those "safe" power plants). From automobiles to airplane engines, we need alternative energy of the kind that would please the signatories to Kyoto.

* * *

I have not forgotten that Mr. Feinstone made this lecture series possible in order to keep us all alert to the concept and reality of freedom, and my predecessors have spoken eloquently about freedom's role in this remarkable country of ours. I wondered if there was anything new I could possibly say to honor Mr. Feinstone's dictum when it occurred to me that the word FREEDOM, as an acronym, represents the elements of its own conception.

The F in Freedom stands for something needed now more than ever: fortitude. It requires courage, patience, tolerance, strength and endurance.

The R stands for a requirement imposed by the very existence of freedom: responsibility. It demands good judgment, honesty, accountability.

The first E in Freedom represents what it takes to maintain it: effort. Freedom requires nurturing, protection, and a striving by all to maintain it.

The second E symbolizes something we fortunate Americans owe those less well-off: empathy. We should show support and understanding for those under the heel of repressive regimes.

The D in Freedom marks the very requirement for liberty: democracy. Representative government ensures a measure of freedom; without it, freedom withers.

The O reminds us that, in a democracy, each of us has an obligation to play a role in the process. We must respect the law, vote, serve, and otherwise do our duty as citizens.

And the M in freedom stands for --you guessed it -- the military that protects and defends us. Freedom still is a fragile commodity in this turbulent world, and open and free societies are vulnerable to assault.

Let me conclude by elaborating briefly on this last point. Were it not for the military forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, freedom's flame would have been extinguished in the 1940s. Were it not for the military capacity of the United States, the Cold War would have ended quite differently, and liberty would have been the victim. In open democracies, governments and their military branches get a lot of scrutiny and are often taken to task. And indeed, all governments and all militaries make mistakes, from cozying up to dictators and thus contradicting their own principles to indiscriminately killing civilians and burning villages, as we were recently reminded. Again today the U.S. military is being accused of unselective action in Afghanistan, complete with videotape on the Al-Jazeera TV station. But when historians of the distant future come to reflect on the state of the world at the turn of this century, they will conclude that the world was fortunate that, out of the power struggles of the Twentieth Century, it was not some eugenic European colonial power, not the Nazis of Germany, not the communists of Moscow, not the imperialists of Tokyo -- but a relatively benign, non-colonial,

altruistic, multicultural, democratic United States that came not to dominate, but to lead the world toward the freedoms we take for granted.

H. J. de Blij
Michigan State University
November 7, 2001

Books Mentioned in This Lecture

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H. J. de Blij



Geographer, Author, professor, and television personality H. J. de Blij (pronounced *duh Blay*) for seven years was the popular Geography Editor on ABC's "Good Morning America." In 1996, he joined NBC News as Geography Analyst. His Geography series "The Power of Place" aired for several years on PBS. In his role as television's geographer he has appeared from locations

throughout the United States and around the world, using his trademark maps to explain the geographic background to major events.

He has published more than 30 books, including scientific, educational and trade titles, and over 100 articles in the

scholarly and popular literature. Several of his books have achieved multiple editions and have spent years on the bestseller lists. His publishers include the Smithsonian Institution, the National Geographic Society (of which he is an Honorary Life Member), Rand McNally, and John Wiley and Sons. Dr. de Blij's books have been translated into foreign languages including French, Italian, Russian and Chinese.

Dr. de Blij has a unique range of educational experiences. Born in the Netherlands, he received his early schooling in Europe (part of it during the Second World War as recounted in his memoir Wartime Encounter with Geography), his college education in Africa, and his higher degrees in the United States. He holds a doctorate in geography from Northwestern University and has been awarded honorary degrees in the humanities as well as the sciences. His television work earned him a share in an Emmy Award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 1993.

He specializes in geopolitical and environmental issues. A member of the Association of American Geographers and Honorary Fellow of the American Geographical Society, he was elected in 1980 to the National Geographic Society's Committee for Research and Exploration. He was the founding editor of the Society's scholarly journal, *National Geographic Research*.

Dr. de Blij has held several academic positions, including that of George Landegger Distinguished Professor of Political

Geography in Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, Presidential Professor at the Colorado School of Mines, and John Deaver Drinko Professor of Geography at Marshall University. His advocacy of geography on the public lecture circuit has taken him to virtually all corners of the United States; his work in research, teaching and television has spanned the globe.

He is an avid wine collector and has written three books on this pleasant (and very geographic) topic, including Wine: a Geographic Appreciation, which won the 1984 medal of the O.I.V. in Paris, France. Dr. de Blij also is an amateur violinist, and continues to play chamber music whenever the opportunity arises.

Harm de Blij and his wife, Bonnie, maintain homes in Boca Grande, Florida, and Chatham, Massachusetts.

SOL FEINSTONE'S CREDO

DEDICATED TO

The Judeo-Christian commitment of self-sacrifice for peace on earth, and the brotherhood of free nations of free men;

The Spirit of '76, a struggle of free men to remain free

The immigrants who came after the revolution and helped build our country in freedom;

The underprivileged of all races who, by uplifting themselves, will raise all mankind to a higher humanity.

MY DEFINITION OF FREEDOM

In the beginning there was a void of sameness; the spark of life made everything different.

The stamp of sameness is the stamp of death.

Freedom to me means a social order based on individual freedom to live differently and to dream differently. I dream of a Brotherhood of Free Nations of Free Men.

SOL FEINSTONE

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- 1999 – Ross Perot
- 2000 – Dr. Michael Eric Dyson