

APPENDIX D

HISTORY
SOCIAL SCIENCE
FRAMEWORK

FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

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APPENDIX D

Teaching the Contemporary World

This appendix offers some alternative perspectives on the contemporary world. It proposes that students reflect on global themes. These themes cover the period since the Cold War's end (1989–1991), but some take a longer view.

Integration, including the processes of globalization, interdependence, and homogenization, and **disintegration**, meaning the endurance of nationalist, tribalist, and separatist alternatives to globalization, remain distinctive themes in the contemporary world.

The contemporary world is shaped by integration and disintegration. Satellites, jet airliners, shipping containers, and the spread of democratic values since the 1980s have “globalized” the world in many key respects. At the same time, this planet remains politically divided into a patchwork of nations and cultures.

Contemporary nations face challenges and threats that transcend their borders. They include environmental degradation and global climate change; cross-border terrorism and crime, including the illegal trafficking of drugs and human beings; and chaotic instability and enduring inequalities in the world economy. In recent years, governments have devised new frameworks and institutions for promoting cooperation on common dilemmas, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, the European Union,

or the Kyoto Protocol. Yet governments are reluctant to cede governing authority to international bodies. And war and violence, both within societies and between nations, remains an endemic feature of world civilization.

While international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations (U.N.), constitute forums in which nations can address common challenges, the politics of international organizations exhibit disagreement as well as cooperation. Even as societies become bound together by ever-tighter webs of economic, cultural, and social relations, governments work principally to serve their own interests. Students should think about how long-term historical processes (e.g., the industrial revolution and the rise of nationalism) have contributed toward integration and disintegration in the present-day world.

This appendix illustrates the tension between integrative and disintegrative forces in the contemporary world through four themes. The first, “The New Geopolitics,” asks whether the world is becoming more or less peaceful and whether the nature of conflict is changing. The second, “The Impact of Globalization,” highlights processes of economic globalization and asks what benefits they have brought—and at what costs. The third, “Rights, Religion, and Identity,” asks how ideas about universal human rights may relate to other value and identity systems in the contemporary world, including resurgent religiosity. The fourth, “A New Role for the West,” asks whether the Western world, the dominant force in world politics since the late fifteenth century, is in decline today. What is the West’s role now that the colonial era has ended, now that Western prosperity depends on borrowing from East Asia, and now that the international influence of Western powers is being supplanted by rising states, notably Brazil, Russia, India, and China?

This appendix concludes with a list of suggestions for further reading.

The New Geopolitics

Over the past 20 years, the world has oscillated between dreams of perpetual peace and the despair of enduring conflict. A new era began on 11/9 (1989), when the Berlin Wall tumbled, marking the Cold War’s peaceful end—a denouement to a 40-year conflict that few had dared to entertain. That era seemed to end on 9/11 (2001), when 19 terrorists, in an effort to make a political statement, crashed

civilian airliners into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C., murdering almost 3,000 civilians. Since 9/11, the hopes for a more peaceful world that the end of the Cold War spawned have been displaced by a resurgence of international conflict, especially in the Middle East and Central Asia. Although the major powers have avoided war with each other, the tenor of international relations became more hostile after 9/11, as long-standing international friendships (i.e., between the United States and Europe) deteriorated and old animosities rekindled themselves (i.e., Russia and the West).

When the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, what kind of world did it bequeath? Why did the vision of a New World Order that U.S. President George H. W. Bush articulated in 1990—a vision of a world more stable, pacific, and predictable than the world of the past—fail to come to pass? Did 9/11 change everything? Or was the world in the 1990s less stable than it might have appeared at the time? What were some of the perspectives from non-Western commentators and political analysts at this time?

Although the 1990s brought about the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Empire and the reunification of Germany, the decade was marred by enduring conflict in Europe and beyond. The breakdown of the former Yugoslavian Republic into a handful of successor states after 1991 was accompanied by a brutal civil war and waves of “ethnic cleansing.” In East Africa, 1994 witnessed a horrific genocide in Rwanda. Hutu militiamen slaughtered up to a million ethnic Tutsis in a conflict that the Western powers seemed either unable or unwilling to prevent.

The years between 11/9 and 9/11 saw few conventional wars, with the prominent exception of the Gulf War in 1990. The 1990s nonetheless saw many incidences of state failure and localized conflict in the developing world. Indonesia waged a bloody war against insurgents in East Timor (a conflict that ended with East Timorese independence in 2002), while Russia waged a long and brutal conflict against Chechen nationalists. Elsewhere, the retreat of Soviet power led to the collapse of former client regimes such as Yemen and Afghanistan. Under its Taliban regime, which finally ousted the old Soviet-sponsored government in 1996, Afghanistan became a haven for the Al Qaeda terrorist network that attacked the United States on September 11, 2001.

But if the world in the 1990s was hardly as peaceful as President Bush’s proclamation of a New World Order implied, the decade was blessedly free of conflict between the major powers. Perhaps most strikingly, Russia and the United States forged a peaceful and cooperative relationship, symbolized by Russian participation in the annual meetings of the Group of Eight industrialized countries from 1997 and bilateral cooperation to decommission and dismantle nuclear weapons.

During the 1990s, some observers, such as the journalist Thomas Friedman, asserted that war was becoming obsolete thanks to the spread of democracy and processes of globalization that bound individual nations together in webs of economic interdependence. Students may reflect on Norman Angell’s *Great Illusion* of 1911, which argued that war between Britain and Germany was impossible because of their close economic ties. The spread of democratic governments in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and East Asia from the mid-1970s—what political scientist Samuel Huntington characterized as a “third wave” of democratization—brought liberal reforms to over 60 formerly authoritarian countries and seemingly confirmed that the international future would be more peaceful than the Cold War’s past.

Every bit as dramatic as the post-communist transition in Eastern Europe, the 1990s brought the end of apartheid in South Africa and the inauguration in 1994 of the freedom fighter and former political prisoner Nelson Mandela as president of that country’s new “rainbow democracy.”

The terrorist attack of 9/11 seemed to mark the shuddering end of the hopeful 1990s. Since Al Qaeda’s attack on New York City and the Pentagon, the world has experienced a resurgence in conflict and a greater awareness of existing conflicts whose origins antedate 9/11. The United States led a coalition of countries in the invasion and occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan. In the early 2000s, the tenor of Russian interactions with the West deteriorated sharply, as former Cold War adversaries engaged in a bitter war of words. While the U.S. condemned the deterioration of Russia’s democracy, Moscow accused the United States of acting as a global vigilante.

More substantively, the struggle for control over precious natural resources—from oil and rare minerals to fish and Arctic shipping lanes—became an

increasingly prominent theme in world politics, eerily reminiscent of the colonial era's scrambles for territory. China, though it practiced a cautious diplomacy, became more assertive in the new millennium as it searched for raw materials to fuel its booming economy. The struggle that the nuclear powers (led by the United States) waged to prevent the international proliferation of nuclear weapons remained an urgent dilemma, especially after a standoff between nuclear armed neighbors India and Pakistan in 2001–2002 raised fears of an atomic exchange.

Whether 9/11 marked the “return of geopolitics”—that is to say, a return to the patterns of the early twentieth century in which world politics were dominated by a handful of great powers—or whether the hopeful future that 11/9 hailed might still transcend the troubled first decade of a new millennium remains to be seen. Students should ask whether they think the New World Order of the 1990s was simply a fleeting interlude or whether the world really has changed in ways that make conflict between the powers less likely than in the past. They should explore this same period from the perspectives of various world and regional players, both among the major powers and those in the developing world.

The Impact of Globalization

Globalization has become a buzzword of the post–Cold War era, but this is not the first era to have experienced significant economic, social, and cultural integration. During the late nineteenth century, the transatlantic economy was at least as globalized as it is today, with capital and goods flowing freely across the ocean and labor moving between countries without the legal barriers that restrict immigration today. The world since the 1970s has experienced a return to the globalizing patterns of the past. The advent of electronic communications, the dramatic decline in international transportation costs associated with containerized shipping, and the deregulation of markets have led to economic integration among nations and even convergence in social trends, cultural patterns, and consumption habits. In part because of the processes known as globalization, as a new range of nonstate or “transnational” international actors—including multinational corporations, offshore banks, and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—have come to coexist, sometimes uneasily, with the nation-states that remain the dominant elements of international society.

Economists generally credit economic globalization with having increased the world's overall levels of wealth and well-being. Globalization has brought about an international recognition of the existence of Indigenous Peoples in many nation-states and sought to establish some international standards for their relationship with settler governments and their status before international bodies.

Yet globalization has not necessarily reduced economic inequalities among societies. In part, this is because the mobility that capital (i.e., money) and goods enjoy in a globalized economy is not fully shared by labor. Although manufacturers in a high-wage country, like the United States, can now easily relocate production for the American market to a low-wage country, like Mexico, in order to reduce costs, it is much more difficult for Mexican workers to immigrate legally to the United States and vice versa. These differences in the treatment of capital, goods, and labor may explain why globalization in the contemporary era has not reduced income inequalities among nations as effectively as it did in the late nineteenth century, when mass migration diminished transatlantic income inequalities.

Although globalization has increased overall global wealth, it has also bred discontent. Critics in the industrialized world blame globalization for “exporting” jobs, and in the developing world, critics accuse multinational corporations of exploiting low-wage and child laborers, proliferating slums, polluting local ecosystems, and sustaining an Americanizing consumer culture.

Economic globalization has complicated the making of national economic policy. As international integration has intensified, the economic fortunes of nations are increasingly bound together. The portfolios of Western investors rise or fall, depending on the performance of companies listed on stock exchanges in developing markets. The amount of work available to factory workers in Shanghai depends on how much money American consumers can borrow from their credit-card lenders and home equity loans. Although individual countries have quite different relationships to the globalizing international economy—the United States borrows money and imports goods, while China exports goods and loans money—processes of globalization have bound the fortunes of societies together as never before.

To accommodate this new situation, governments in the industrialized world began in the mid-1970s to coordinate their economic policies in order to manage

international economic developments. Today, such international cooperation takes the form of regular annual meetings of heads of state (e.g., the G-8 and G-20 summits of leading industrial powers) and virtually constant consultation among national central banks and finance ministers.

Although globalization has bound societies together in ties of mutual interdependence, it has also involved the spread of multinational corporations whose activities far transcend the jurisdictions of individual nation-states. These corporations include some of the most iconic and successful companies in the world today. Although the history of the multinational corporation reaches back to the Dutch and English East Indian trading companies of the seventeenth century, what makes the modern multinational distinctive is its capacity to spread out the productive process across different countries. Apple's iPod, for example, is designed in northern California and assembled in China, from components that originate in Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and many other countries. A leading example of "modular" production, the iPod reflects the cosmopolitan origins of consumer items in the integrated twenty-first century economy.

Globalization does not only affect production, it has also shaped the tastes and expectations of consumers. The ascent of multinational business and new marketing techniques in the second half of the twentieth century have contributed toward the convergence of consumer tastes and preferences, often around instantly recognizable "global" brands. Such transformations have led some critics to argue that globalization displaces local cultures with a single, homogenizing fashion.

Yet globalization, as most social scientists understand the term, involves more than simple economic integration. It implies the convergence of societies around a common version of modernity; it suggests that the world is shrinking and the peoples who inhabit it are becoming more like one another. Globalization empowers big, multinational business, but it has also brought the rise of transnational organizations. These include both activist networks, such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, and more troublingly, criminal and terrorist organizations that work across national borders.

As globalization has limited the autonomy of nations and has empowered nonstate actors, it may have troubling implications for the modern nation-state. As students will have learned in grade ten, the nation-state grew in the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries in response to larger modernizing changes. Industrialization, class conflict, and the business cycle in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries all contributed to the expansion of state authority, as governments assumed responsibilities for the well-being of their citizens and the stability of national economies.

In the contemporary world, however, the authority of the nation-state appears increasingly feeble in relation to the globalization of economic and other activities, all of which raises challenging questions about the future of governance in an integrating global society. The U.N. resembles an international forum rather than an international government, and its ability to impose standards (such as environmental regulations or consumer protection law) on its own members remains very limited. Students should be able to identify a range of issues, including sustainable development, that could be described as “transnational” in scope. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the U.N. when it comes to dealing with problems (whether economic, criminal, or environmental) that cross international borders?

Rights, Religion, and Identity

The authority of the nation-state in the contemporary world is in question. Historically, the state’s legitimacy has derived, as sociologist Max Weber proposed, from its monopoly on the use of “legitimate violence.” That is to say, the nation-state in the modern era was the only institution with the legal right to use force, whether against adversaries (i.e., in war) or its own citizens. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the authority of the nation-state became an important tenet of international law, and nonintervention in the “internal” affairs of other states developed into standard diplomatic practice. The convention that neither foreign states nor transnational actors (whether the Roman Catholic Church or Amnesty International) should meddle in the “internal affairs” of sovereign countries was codified in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.

During the Enlightenment, as students will have learned, the proponents of “natural rights” argued that all human beings enjoyed inalienable freedoms—including the freedom to oppose oppressive governments. This claim was enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Assembly’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, certain rights-based protections for civilians and for

those injured in warfare became codified both in the United States (Lieber Code, 1863) and in Europe (First Geneva Convention, 1864).

Yet the Enlightenment's vision of universal natural rights was not incorporated into international law until 1948, when an upsurge in concern for human rights associated with the Second World War led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration affirmed a broad range of freedoms belonging to all individuals regardless of their citizenship, ethnicity, or gender. These rights fell into two broad categories: legal rights, including freedom from persecution and bodily harm; and social and economic rights, including rights to material sustenance and to gainful employment.

Yet the Universal Declaration, for all the nobility of its sentiments, was largely subordinated during its first decades to the convention of state sovereignty. In this respect, the limits of the Universal Declaration mirrored those of the U.N.: while it asserted human rights accruing to all men and women, regardless of their citizenship, the Universal Declaration had no mechanisms to compel recalcitrant governments to respect the rights of their citizens.

From the 1970s, concern for human rights began to rise. In part, the ascent of ideas about human rights had to do with nongovernmental organizations such as Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, and Doctors Without Borders. Such groups publicized human rights abuses perpetrated by both right- and left-wing regimes. Their work was facilitated by innovations in communications technologies, including satellite broadcasting, which made the abuse of human rights more visible to the public in foreign countries than had previously been the case. From this perspective, the growth of concern for human rights in the contemporary era was part of a larger globalizing process.

At the same time, the emergence of human rights as a major foreign policy concern for the United States and other Western countries also had to do with the Cold War. From the 1970s, the U.S. and its allies promoted human rights as a way to attack the legitimacy of the authoritarian Soviet Union—a country that routinely abused its own citizens. The tactic enjoyed considerable success, and human rights activists such as Lech Walesa (Poland), Vaclav Havel (Czechoslovakia), and Andrei Sakharov (Russia) played an important role in eroding the legitimacy of communist rule, helping to bring the Cold War to an end.

Since the Cold War's conclusion, the politics of human rights has become a central though contested issue in international relations. During the 1990s, some East Asian countries challenged the universal applicability of human rights, arguing that the doctrine remains culturally specific and ill-suited to non-Western contexts. The People's Republic of China often rejects Western criticisms of its internal policies on the basis that any oversight of its domestic affairs is an illegitimate intrusion into national sovereignty.

Western countries, for the most part, tend to have more complex relationships with the idea that human rights have become an international concern. Most Western countries now describe the promotion of human rights in foreign countries as a central objective for their own foreign policies, even though most of them face criticism from groups such as Amnesty International for conditions at home (e.g., overcrowded prisons, wrongful convictions, or the death penalty). Some Western societies still struggle with areas of civil rights that remain unresolved, such as marriage rights, nondiscrimination protections, and other issues of equality for their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender citizens, but they can still provide leadership in applying global pressure against regimes that even in the twenty-first century mandate harsh penalties and sometimes even death against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Much like “democratization,” the politics of global human rights has become a central preoccupation in the post-Cold War world. This is the case even though understanding of the doctrine's meaning—and of the ways that governments should promote it—varies widely among societies.

If the campaign for human rights is a universalizing movement that asserts the basic similarity of human expectations across time and place, the contemporary era has also witnessed a dramatic movement toward diversity in the form of a worldwide religious revival. Reflecting on the history of modern nationalism, students may perceive some similarities in the ways in which both human rights and religion assert the existence of authorities higher than national governments, whether in the form of “natural law” or holy law. Both religious leaders and human rights activists affirm that the individual is not only a citizen of his or her country: he or she may also be a member of an “identity community” far larger than the nation-state, whether the entire human race or a community of religious believers spanning many different countries.

The global revival of religiosity has been a defining characteristic of the times. It is also a development that would have surprised academic theorists of secularization in the 1960s and 1970s who argued that religion was in irrevocable decline. Reflecting the resurgence of religion in many parts of the world over the past 30 years, politics has become increasingly infused with the language of faith. The revival of religion has, in some respects, created new cleavages in world politics, both within and among societies.

Anti-Western violence perpetrated by the followers of a fundamentalist version of Islam has contributed to the appearance of deep conflict between the Islamic and Western worlds, especially since 9/11. Historical memories of earlier conflicts, such as the Crusades, have inflamed a contemporary “clash of civilizations.” In numerous societies, such as Nigeria, the Sudan, and India, the revival of religion—and of religion as an expression mode of political identity—has bred tension and even outright violence between members of neighboring religious communities.

The proponents of religious orthodoxies have found themselves in conflict with secularists in societies, whether in battles over headscarves in Istanbul and Paris or over prayer in American schools. While the resurgence of religion has been a transnational phenomenon affecting many different countries, students ought to be aware that it has been less pronounced in some areas of the world, notably Western Europe and China, than in others. Students may investigate if the world is becoming more or less religious and what the implications of religion are for international relations and for domestic politics in the United States and other societies. Why has Western Europe (so far) seemed to remain apart from this global trend?

A New Role for the West

Perhaps the most dramatic story of the second millennium (1000–1999 CE) was the rise of Europe—a remote, salty, and windswept corner of Eurasia—to global dominance. The “Rise of the West” was a transformative movement in world history, and it brought tumultuous consequences to the entire world. Students should have studied the reasons for Europe’s rise to dominance in the early modern era, from the growth of the seaborne trading companies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the spread of colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth. Have Europe and its Western offshoots, including the United

States, now entered a phase of relative historical decline? This is a historical transformation that students should consider carefully, especially insofar as it relates to the “rise” of new powers such as India and the People’s Republic of China and the more ancient history of these “new” world powers as global and regional leaders.

Dominant at the century’s beginning, Europe’s eclipse was a central theme of the twentieth century. Exhausted by the century’s two world wars and unable to hold back powerful nationalist movements in the colonial world, the European colonial empires collapsed in the 30 years after 1945. Simultaneously, the major west European countries created among themselves a novel confederal apparatus—the European Union—to integrate their economies and to provide a modicum of political unity. As an economic initiative, the European Union has been highly successful: per capita incomes in Europe remain very high, and the west European region has enjoyed an unprecedented phase of peace and cooperation. Yet Europe remains dependent on U.S. commitments to NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) for its military security, and even the leading European powers are now unable or unwilling to exert significant military force beyond the European continent.

Although the United States, in contrast to Western Europe, remains the most powerful state in the international system, it faces similar challenges. Like Europe, the United States is committed to large welfare and social security programs that may prove difficult to fund in the future, as the postwar “baby boomers” retire and the country’s working population shrinks relative to its large number of retirees. In the world economy, the United States appears less dominant than it once was. No longer a net exporter of manufactured goods to the rest of the world (as it was from the 1890s to the 1970s), the U.S. runs trade deficits and borrows from foreign countries to finance its imports. Its position in the global economy has become that of a consumer of last resort, a role that it can sustain for only so long as others remain willing to extend financial credit to cover its deficits.

China has come to play a very different kind of role in the international economy. Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the reforms initiated by his successor, Deng Xiaoping, China has embraced market-oriented growth. Exports have driven Chinese growth, as American shoppers who find “Made in China” stickers on merchandise ranging from electronics to kitchen gadgets may attest.

Overseas markets have been even more vital to the growth of smaller “Pacific Rim” economies such as Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s.

In contrast to China’s experience, economic growth and market reforms in these countries coincided with political reform. While China’s commitments to economic reform and political authoritarianism may seem contradictory, even paradoxical, to outsiders, especially in the context of domestic protests such as the 1989 demonstrations at Tiananmen Square, double-digit growth rates have arguably helped the Chinese Communist Party to maintain its control on power.

Not only a major industrial power, China has also become a major player in the world’s financial system. With high domestic savings rates and a favorable balance of payments, China found itself since the mid-1990s making far more money from its exports to foreign countries than it was able (or willing) to spend on imports. Thanks to these large surpluses, China developed a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States whereby it loaned money to the United States (mainly by purchasing U.S. Treasury Bills), thereby enabling the U.S. to maintain its trade deficit and, by implication, its substantial purchases of Chinese exports.

So entangled had the U.S. and Chinese economies become by 2009 that the economic historian Niall Ferguson proposed that they had become an integrated unit that he called “Chimerica.” China’s economic transformation from the late 1970s has thus been a central element of larger economic globalization. Already the world’s most populous country, China is projected to overtake the U.S. as the largest economy by the middle of the twenty-first century. China’s resurgence may thus prove to be a central element in the West’s relative decline.

At some point during the twenty-first century, India will overtake China as the world’s most populous country. Although India has not enjoyed the kind of spectacular industrialization that China has experienced since the 1990s, India has enjoyed steady economic growth since its leaders undertook major market reforms. India has carved out a particular niche as a supplier of technology services, from software engineering to telephone call center services.

Most importantly, India—in contrast to China—maintains a functioning democracy. Economists disagree whether India will overtake Chinese growth rates during the twenty-first century, but these two powers have become the dominant economic forces in the Asian mainland. Together with Japan, a country whose

remarkable postwar recovery in the 1950s and 1960s made it a leading economic power, it seems clear that Asia will be the center of global economic activity in the twenty-first century.

Contemporary trends—the diversification of economic power and the globalization of production, Europe’s military decline, and a shift in the world’s demographic center of gravity away from the North Atlantic—are finally reversing what historians have called the “Great Divergence” of the eighteenth century: a shift in which European growth rates leaped ahead of Asian ones. Among the most significant developments of this era, then, has been Asia’s return to the leading position in the world that it occupied before the rise of the West. Exacerbating the West’s relative decline, oil-rich states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Venezuela control the energy supplies on which their prosperity depends. Elsewhere, regional powers such as Brazil have broken out of former patterns of Cold War subservience and economic dependency to become dominant regional and, increasingly, global powers. Even Russia, handsomely endowed with natural gas reserves, has rebounded in influence and wealth in recent years, following a difficult decade after the Cold War’s end. The present global scene now appears less predictable, less hierarchical, and—potentially—less stable than in past centuries.

Suggested Readings

The New Geopolitics

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