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# BOOK REVIEW

## THE FUTURE OF GEOGRAPHY: HOW POWER AND POLITICS IN SPACE WILL CHANGE OUR WORLD

By Tim Marshall

Elliot & Thomson, Hardback, 2023, 255 pages, ISBN: 9781783966875

Since the 1960s, when space emerged as the “final frontier”, competition and cooperation in astro-geopolitics have become influential topics in the geopolitical competition. Marked by the general conditions dominating world politics, space has become a domain influenced by the geopolitical order on Earth. Humanity’s story in this final frontier has sometimes been shaped by success stories as in the cases of Yuri Gagarin and Neil Armstrong, sometimes by cases of cooperation based on the Outer Space Treaty, and other times by interest and competition in arms races, space mining, and for achieving geopolitical control. At the precipice of an emerging multipolar order, where numerous actors vie for their shares in this seemingly boundless yet inherently constrained environment of human biology. Tim Marshall’s *The Future of Geography: How Power and Politics in Space Will Change Our World* provide a striking, easy-to-read, timely, and detailed guide to understanding how geopolitics has shaped this exotic and harsh domain.

Starting with an exploration of the early interactions between humanity and celestial objects and systems, the book delves into how space has fascinated and influenced civilizations. Once considered a mythical and inaccessible domain, space has gradually become more tangible with advances in scientific knowledge and technological prowess. The book offers a clear historical perspective, particularly focusing on the competition between Cold War rivals, namely the United States and Soviet Union. *The Future of Geography* provides well-defined explanations of important concepts such as Lagrange Points and significant agreements like the Artemis Accords. This accessibility makes it an easy-to-read guide for individuals who are not specialized in the topic, offering a pathway to understanding complex concepts.

Tim Marshall divides the book into three parts comprising a total of ten chapters. The book begins with an introduction underscoring the importance of space in communication and our daily livelihoods, reflecting the author's individual experiences, and providing a brief introduction to the concept of space exploration. The first part consists of two chapters. The first chapter delves into how space and celestial objects have influenced humanity and different civilizations, from Ancient Greece to Islamic civilizations and the Chinese civilization, in areas such as astrology, philosophy, and mathematics. The second chapter focuses on the Cold War era and the period of space races, beginning with the initial mathematical and physical calculations by pioneers like Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Robert Goddard, and Hermann Oberth. The chapter then progresses to explore the narrative of the Cold War Space Programs as developed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

The second part of the book is titled "Right Here, Right Now" and focuses on current developments in a period defined as the "Era of Astropolitics". The third chapter which is also named as "The Era of Astropolitics" delves into this concept by applying the classical geopolitical theories of Alfred T. Mahan and Harold Mackinder. The author illustrates how states vie for control over certain checkpoints in orbital and lunar space. Titled "Outlaws", the fourth chapter explains efforts towards the creation of a global governance structure, starting from the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and the Moon Treaty of 1979. The chapter explores the gaps within these agreements, creating grey zones for operation. It also discusses the proliferation of anti-satellite technologies and rising tensions between China, Russia, and the U.S., while introducing the growing influence of non-state actors, primarily multinational companies, in space. In the fifth chapter, titled "China: The Long March... Into Space", the book delves deeper into China's recent space endeavors. It begins with an overview of China's initial perspectives on space and its increasing challenge to U.S.-led space dominance. The chapter further explores China's International Space Station Program and its defiance of the Artemis Accords. The sixth chapter focuses on the United States, highlighting challenges in its space program after the space shuttle program. It discusses U.S. efforts to return to the Moon and reach Mars, alongside the increased privatization and militarization of the U.S. Space Program. Titled "Russia in a Retrograde", the seventh chapter examines setbacks in the Russian Space Program following the death of Sergei Korolev. It discusses rising tensions between the U.S. and Russia, decreased space-related cooperation with Russia post the war in Ukraine, and Russian collaboration

with China. It also explores Russia's homegrown revival attempts, hampered by the structural weaknesses of the Russian state. The last chapter of this section, titled "Fellow Travellers", focuses on other significant actors participating in the space race. It discusses the roles of the EU, Japan, India, Israel, the UAE, and the African Union in competing and cooperating with major powers.

The last part of the book is named "Future Past" and begins with chapter nine titled "Space Wars", focusing on the potential violent outcomes of rising geopolitical competition and arms races in space. The chapter begins with a war scenario between China and the U.S. resulting from accidental escalation in space. It then shifts focus to potential strategies for reducing arms races and overcoming challenges in building trust and deterrence. The final chapter, titled "Tomorrow's World", concentrates on current developments in manned space flights and the possible future of exploratory projects by humanity to advance further in this final frontier.

*The Future of Geography*, written by a career journalist, provides a multidisciplinary and interesting look at humanity's relationship with and vision of outer space. Marshall provides a valuable, accessible contribution to understanding current dynamics and the geopolitical situation in outer space. His articulate, clear, and professional prose allows readers to understand and consolidate complex existing literature combined with important up-to-date developments from the media and firsthand resources. The book generates interest in space in conjunction with politics, science, economics, and other interdisciplinary fields.

Marshall provides diverse perspectives from state leaders, notable figures from various countries' space programs, and private company CEOs. The inclusion of Russian and Chinese ambitions and perspectives on both the outer space and current environment gives the reader a chance to understand and compare rival perspectives towards a field that is mostly dominated by the West and especially the United States. Marshall has worked as a reporter in various countries and corresponded from multiple conflict zones, and, as a result, his professional knowledge and insight on conflict contribute to a well-structured and coherent narration of geopolitical conflicts and trends. The use of existing and current news and firsthand documents has helped him substantiate his arguments about rising geopolitical rivalry and arms races in outer space.

Notwithstanding the book's numerous strengths, certain improvements could be made towards boosting its academic merits. The book's selected bibliography mostly consists of online resources and recent news articles. While this is a merit for making the research up-to-date, a more diverse and comprehensive use of various resources to improve our understanding of the existing conceptual framework in outer space. Additionally, closer attention could have been paid to in-text referencing in order to facilitate access to the sources and additional knowledge on the topics. What is more, more information and background could have been provided on existing theoretical approaches to space and astro-geopolitics, alongside a more coherent discussion of militarization and arms control trends, and more detailed, nuanced, and structuralized information about private companies and their role and economic activities in space. A comparison of different countries' visions and programs for outer space would have enhanced the resonance of the conclusion and aided the methodology.

*The Future of Geography: How Power and Politics in Space Will Change Our World* be a timely and thought-provoking examination of the evolving geopolitics of space, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The book is an essential read for anyone seeking to navigate the complex intersection of power, geopolitics, and exploration beyond Earth's atmosphere.

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