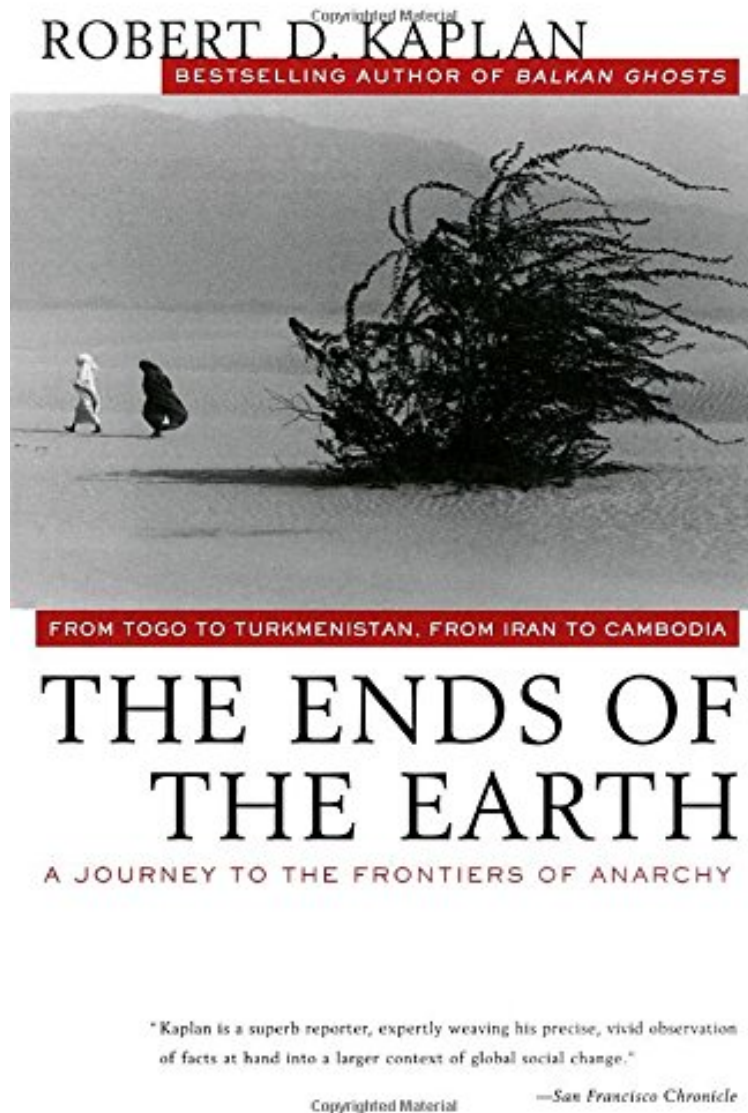


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# The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy

Robert D. Kaplan

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Robert D. Kaplan : The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An expansive, enthralling, highly-competent work of third world travel literature  
By John A. Evicci  
A deep, detailed, analytical journal of a truly monumental trek across a disjointed swath of Africa and Asia in the early 1990s. Part travelogue, part journalistic report, part history lesson, part political/demographic analysis/forecast, this is a very well-rounded and multi-faceted work of travel literature, all presented in extremely well-written, concise, and evocative language. Most impressive to me were the remarkably articulate accounts of the author's personal experiences, impressions, and observations while traveling through some of the most challenging places on Earth. These passages often evoked in me the swelling and intoxicating highs of the wonder, discovery, and mind/soul-expanding effects such travel brings...and, on the flip side, the discomfort, anxiety, and risks that come with visiting such places, which, while being experienced can be unpleasant in the extreme, in retrospect often become key aspects of the journey. The author doesn't waste any words. The amount of detail and information packed into these 440+ pages is overwhelming and frustratingly impossible to fully absorb, but even if a few bits and factoids manage to stick, it's a valuable endeavor. For me, I'm left less with all the specifics and minutiae (of which there is a lot here) and more with an overall sense of these places, how they compare and how they differ. The author does a very good job capturing the essence and "feel" of each new place and region he transitions into, weaving them all into a coherent, flowing narrative. I found it an extremely engaging read and a valuable insight into places I dream of one day having the opportunity to see and experience for myself. In short, a truly impressive and expansive work of travel writing, giving an in-depth glimpse into, and overview of, a slew of important and fascinating lands many of us will unfortunately never get to experience for ourselves. (Countries visited and documented in this book are: Ivory Coast, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo, Ghana, Egypt, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.)

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining and Thought-Provoking  
By TigerTCR  
Robert Kaplan's "The Ends of the Earth: From Togo to Turkmenistan, from Iran to Cambodia, a Journey to the Frontiers of Anarchy" is an excellent and insightful travelogue of Robert Kaplan's journeys in Africa, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, in 1994. The reader accompanies Kaplan as he tries to understand the cultures and societies he visits. One drawback of a book like this is that it's dated. The world that Kaplan traveled in is 17 years-old. This is the pre-9/11 world with a burgeoning AIDS epidemic, not the world of today. Still, this is an excellent and fascinating book. Kaplan travels light and, although sometimes he stays with or socializes with Western diplomats, most of his travel is done at ground level, on local buses and trains, as he tries to find the true culture of the places he visits - the soul of the people he meets on the street corners, in the hotels, and on the buses. Kaplan focuses on a few themes - the increasing urbanization of these societies and the environmental cost of population increases. When he travels, he not only sees the history of the place and how it has shaped the present, he also sees the ethnicity and culture - and he tries to see the future based on the present and the past. In hindsight, his insights are interesting. In Egypt, he accurately predicts that the Muslim Brotherhood as the future of Egypt. However, when traveling through Iran, he believes that it is a sophisticated country moving toward democracy, that it is inevitable that it will one day be on good relations with the US, and that the Islamic revolution was a temporary "Islamicization" of Iran and just a sidetrack on its march to modernity. Although this may ultimately prove true (as the events of 2009 hint), the Iranian government has moved the country farther and farther away from western influence. Kaplan's story, even if dated, is fascinating and entertaining read. Ultimately, Kaplan sees the central power of states weakening in much of the world as ethnic and religious ties amongst its people strengthen.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting but has some lulls  
By E. Sire  
I got some Robert Kaplan books at the recommendation of a few people. He has an interesting perspective and I plan on reading some later books of his as well. I figured it would be best to start with one of his earlier books. It is interesting to read now with some of his predictions coming true, some not, and others possibly yet to come. He gives his reasoning for everything as well and the ideas seem to be well thought out. He doesn't seem to have a specific left/right slant and kind of floats along the line of having a western perspective, but is more sympathetic to non-western ideas. Sometimes his reasoning can seem a little paternalistic towards non-westerners or even looking down on them. Yet, he usually has specific reasons for his thinking that can make one think a little further past the immediate PC kneejerk response. Those views still may not coincide with yours but at least he has some reasoning and it isn't some racists or "tame the savages" type reason. I would recommend this for anyone interested in a new perspective on places that many have probably never read about in detail.

Author of *Balkan Ghosts*, Robert D. Kaplan now travels from West Africa to Southeast Asia to report on a world of disintegrating nation-states, warring nationalities, metastasizing populations, and dwindling resources. He emerges with a gritty tour de force of travel writing and political journalism. Whether he is walking through a shantytown in the Ivory Coast or a death camp in Cambodia, talking with refugees, border guards, or Iranian revolutionaries, Kaplan travels under the most arduous conditions and purveys the most startling truths. Intimate and intrepid, erudite and visceral, *The Ends of the Earth* is an unflinching look at the places and peoples that will make tomorrow's headlines--and the history of the next millennium. "Kaplan is an American master of...travel writing from hell...Pertinent and compelling."--*New York Times Book Review* "An impressive work. Most travel books seem trivial beside it."--

## Washington Post Book World

.com "The future here could be sadder than the present," writes Robert Kaplan in a chapter about the African nation of Sierra Leone. From Kaplan's perspective, the same could be said of virtually the entire Third World, which he spends the bulk of this book visiting and describing. Kaplan, an acclaimed foreign correspondent and author of *Balkan Ghosts*, is congenitally pessimistic about the developmental prospects of West Africa, the Nile Valley, and much of Asia. This traveler's tale offers dire warnings about overpopulation, environmental degradation, and social chaos. We should all hope that Kaplan's forecast is wrong, but we ignore him at our peril. From *Scientific American* Kaplan is a superb reporter, expertly weaving his precise, vivid observation of facts at hand into a larger context of global social change. From the *Inside Flap* Author of *Balkan Ghosts*, Robert D. Kaplan now travels from West Africa to Southeast Asia to report on a world of disintegrating nation-states, warring nationalities, metastasizing populations, and dwindling resources. He emerges with a gritty tour de force of travel writing and political journalism. Whether he is walking through a shantytown in the Ivory Coast or a death camp in Cambodia, talking with refugees, border guards, or Iranian revolutionaries, Kaplan travels under the most arduous conditions and purveys the most startling truths. Intimate and intrepid, erudite and visceral, *The Ends of the Earth* is an unflinching look at the places and peoples that will make tomorrow's headlines--and the history of the next millennium. "Kaplan is an American master of...travel writing from hell...Pertinent and compelling."--New York Times Book "An impressive work. Most travel books seem trivial beside it."--Washington Post Book World