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World Geography 2

Ch 21-22 Response

Simply put, building, living, and working gets far harder when it is *hot* - this does much to explain why the Sahara and Sahel regions are underdeveloped and largely impoverished. Water is the fundamental building block of life, and civilizations have been built around it entirely until about 100 years ago. The Sahara and Sahel regions are largely devoid of water, and the water that is there is often not potable. This makes it very difficult to build and maintain infrastructure, and to grow food.

Climate change is only making this worse, as the region has already shown a frightening increase in temperature and shrinkage in arable land. This is a problem that will only get worse, and becomes  $\$worse^2\$$  as the population of the region grows. Egypt, which borders the Sahara, is over a hundred million people crammed mostly into a less than 100 mile wide strip of land 1,000 miles long. This kind of population density is only possible because of the fertility of the Nile and its delta, and they are feeling significant pressure from climate change. When you have no great river to help you build a civilization, you are in a very tough spot.

I don't have a solution here--let them move elsewhere as a huge source of labor for the rest of the world? Pipe in water from the Mediterranean and desalinate it? That former solution, while great is a non-starter, and the latter is pretty much impossible--but this problem isn't going away. Even if we reached net zero emissions tomorrow, it is still *HOT* in the Sahara and Sahel. Just because things stop getting worse doesn't mean that the reasons it was hard to build a civilization there 1,500 years ago will go away. I know that this is a somewhat downbeat response for me, I am generally an optimist, but the Sahara and the Sahel are just hard places to live. When mass-scale geoengineering becomes your best bet, that says something about the problem.