

would have reported this as a dominantly rural, farming population, but rapid economic growth and associated urbanization have changed the picture. In China's interior river basins of the Huang (Yellow) and Chang/Yangzi (**B** and **C** on the map), and in the Sichuan Basin between these two letters, most of the people remain farmers. But the booming cities of coastal and increasingly interior China are attracting millions of new inhabitants, and in 2011 the Chinese urban population surpassed the 50-percent milestone.

- **Europe** The third-ranking population cluster, *Europe*, also lies on the Eurasian landmass but at the opposite end from China. The European cluster, including western Russia, counts more than 700 million inhabitants, which puts it in a class with the two larger Eurasian concentrations—but there the similarity ends. In Europe, the key to the linear, east-west orientation of the axis of population (**D** in Fig. G-8) is not a fertile river

basin but a zone of raw materials for industry. Europe is among the world's most highly urbanized and industrialized realms, its human agglomeration sustained by factories and offices rather than paddies and pastures.

The three world population concentrations just discussed (South Asia, East Asia, and Europe) account for just about 4 billion of the world's 7.2 billion people. No other cluster comes close to these numbers. The next-ranking cluster, Eastern North America, is only about one-quarter the size of the smallest Eurasian concentrations. As in Europe, the population in this zone is concentrated in major metropolitan complexes; the rural areas are now relatively sparsely settled. Geographic realms and regions, therefore, display varying levels of **urbanization** [23], the percentage of the total population residing in cities and towns. Some regions are urbanizing far more rapidly than others, a phenomenon we will explain as we examine each realm.

REALMS OF CULTURE

Imagine yourself in a boat on the White Nile River, headed upstream (south) from Khartoum, Sudan. The desert sky is blue, the heat is searing. You pass by villages that look much the same: low, square, or rectangular dwellings, some recently whitewashed, others gray, with flat roofs, wooden doors, and small windows. The minaret of a modest mosque may rise above the houses, and you get a glimpse of a small central square. There is very little vegetation; here and there a hardy palm tree stands in a courtyard. People on the paths wear long white robes and headgear, also white, that looks like a baseball cap without the visor. A few goats lie in the shade. Along the river's edge lie dusty farm fields that yield to the desert in the distance. At the foot of the river's bluff lie some canoes.

All of this is part of Sudan's rural **cultural landscape** [24], the distinctive attributes of a society imprinted on its portion of the world's physical stage. The cultural landscape concept was initially articulated in the 1920s by a University of California geographer named Carl Sauer, who stated that "a cultural landscape is fashioned from a

natural landscape by a culture group" and that "culture is the agent; the natural environment the medium." What this means is that people, starting with their physical environment and using their culture as their agency, fashion a landscape that is layered with forms such as buildings, gardens, and roads, and also modes of dress, aromas of food, and sounds of music.

Continue your journey southward on the Nile, and you will soon witness a remarkable transition. Quite suddenly, the square, solid-walled, flat-roofed houses of Sudan give way to the round, wattle-and-thatch, conical-roofed dwellings of South Sudan. You may note that clouds have appeared in the sky: it rains more here, and flat roofs will not do. The desert has given way to green. Vegetation, natural as well as planted, grows between houses, flanking even the narrow paths. The villages seem less orderly, more varied. People ashore wear a variety of clothes, the women often in colorful dresses, the adult men in shirts and slacks, but shorts when they work the fields, although you see more women wielding hoes than men. You have traveled from one cultural landscape into another, from Arabized, Islamic Africa to animist/Christian Africa. You have crossed the boundary between two geographic realms.



From the Field Notes . . .



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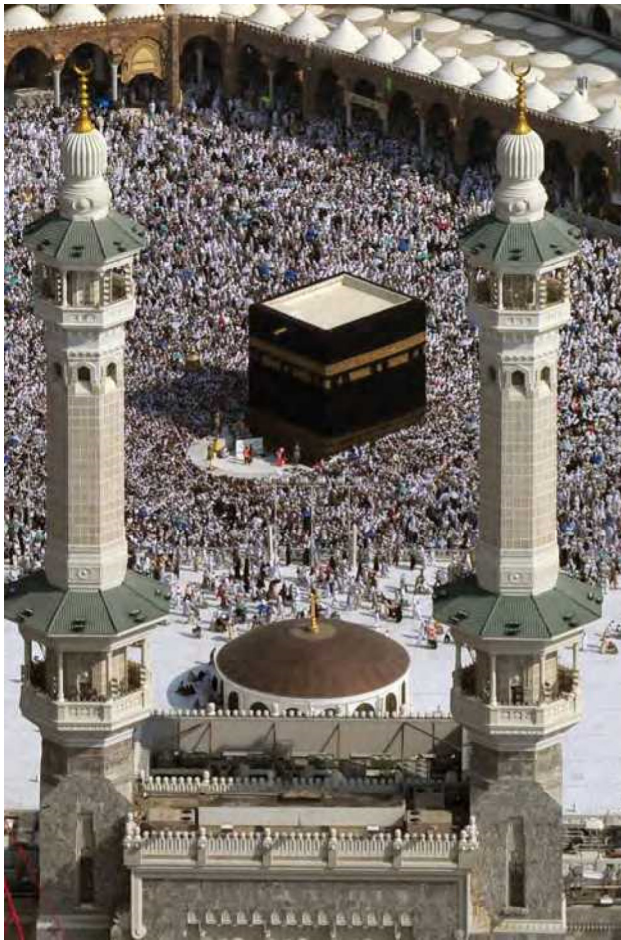
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"The Atlantic-coast city of Bergen, Norway displayed the Norse cultural landscape more comprehensively, it seemed, than any other Norwegian city, even Oslo. The high-relief site of Bergen creates great vistas, but also long shadows; windows are large to let in maximum light. Red-tiled roofs are pitched steeply to enhance runoff and inhibit snow accumulation; streets are narrow and houses clustered, conserving warmth . . . The coastal village of Mengkabong on the

Borneo coast of the South China Sea represents a cultural landscape seen all along the island's shores, a stilt village of the Bajau, a fishing people. Houses and canoes are built of wood as they have been for centuries. But we could see some evidence of modernization: windows filling wall openings, water piped in from a nearby well."

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Mustafa Ozer/AFP/Getty Images, Inc.

The *hajj* is the yearly pilgrimage of Muslims to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrimage is referred to as the fifth “pillar” of Islam, the obligation of every able-bodied Muslim to worship Allah in this holiest of sites at least once in their lifetime. This is the Grand Mosque of Mecca on November 17, 2010, as more than two million Muslim pilgrims launched into the final rituals of this largest religious pilgrimage in the world.

in mistaken attempts to enforce national unity, provoking violent reactions.

In fact, languages emerge, thrive, and die out over time, and linguists estimate that the number of lost languages is in the tens of thousands—a process that continues. One year from the day you read this, about 25 more languages will have become extinct, leaving no trace. Just in North America, more than 100 native languages were lost during the past half-century. Some major ones of the past, such as Sumerian and Etruscan, have left fragments in later languages. Others, like Sanskrit and Latin, live on in their modern successors. At present, about 6800 languages remain, half of them classified by linguists as endangered; some of the “hot spots” are the Amazon, Siberia, northern Australia, and the Andes. By the end of this century, the bulk of the world’s population will be speaking just a few hundred languages, which means that many millions will no longer be able to speak their ancestral mother tongues.

Scholars have tried for many years to unravel the historic roots and branches of the “language tree,” and their debates continue. Geographers trying to map the outcome of this research keep having to modify the pattern, so you should take Figure G-9 as a work in progress, not the final product. At minimum, there are some 15 so-called *language families*, groups of languages with a shared but usually distant origin. The most widely distributed language family, the Indo-European (shown in yellow on the map), includes English, French, Spanish, Russian, Persian, and Hindi. This encompasses the languages of European colonizers that were carried and implanted worldwide, English most of all. Today, English serves as the national or official language of many countries and outposts, and remains the *lingua franca* (common second language) of government, commerce, and higher education in many multicultural societies (see Fig. G-9 inset map). In the postcolonial era, English became the chief medium of still another wave of ascendancy now in progress: globalization.

But even English may eventually go the way of Latin, morphing into versions you will hear (and learn to use) as you travel, forms of English that may, generations from now, be the successors that Italian and Spanish are to Latin. In Hong Kong, Chinese and English are producing a local “Chinglish” you may hear in the first taxi you enter. In Lagos, Nigeria, where most of the people

No geographic realm, not even the Austral Realm, has just one single cultural landscape, but cultural landscapes help define realms as well as regions. The cultural landscape of the high-rise North American city with its sprawling suburbs differs from that of urban South America; the organized terraced paddies of Southeast Asia are unlike anything to be found in the rural cultural landscape of neighboring Australia. Variations of cultural landscapes within geographic realms, such as between highly urbanized and dominantly rural (and more traditional) areas, help us define the world’s regions.

The Geography of Language

Language is the essence of culture. People tend to feel passionately about their mother tongue, especially when they believe it is threatened in some way. In the United States today, the English Only movement reflects many people’s fears that the primacy of English as the national language is under threat as a result of immigration. As we will see in later chapters, some governments try to suppress the languages (and thus the cultures) of minorities

LANGUAGE FAMILIES OF THE WORLD

Majority Speakers

- INDO-EUROPEAN
- AFRO-ASIATIC
- NIGER-CONGO
- SAHARAN
- SUDANIC
- KHOISAN
- URALIC
- ALTAIC
- SINO-TIBETAN
- JAPANESE AND KOREAN
- DRAVIDIAN
- AUSTRO-ASIATIC
- AUSTRONESIAN
- TRANS-NEW GUINEA AND AUSTRALIAN
- AMERINDIAN
- OTHERS
- UNPOPULATED AREAS

Modified from Hammond World Atlas, 1977.

0 1000 2000 3000 Kilometers
0 1000 2000 Miles



FIGURE G-9

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are culturally and ethnically Yoruba, a language called “Yorlish” is emerging. No map can keep up with the constant evolution of language.

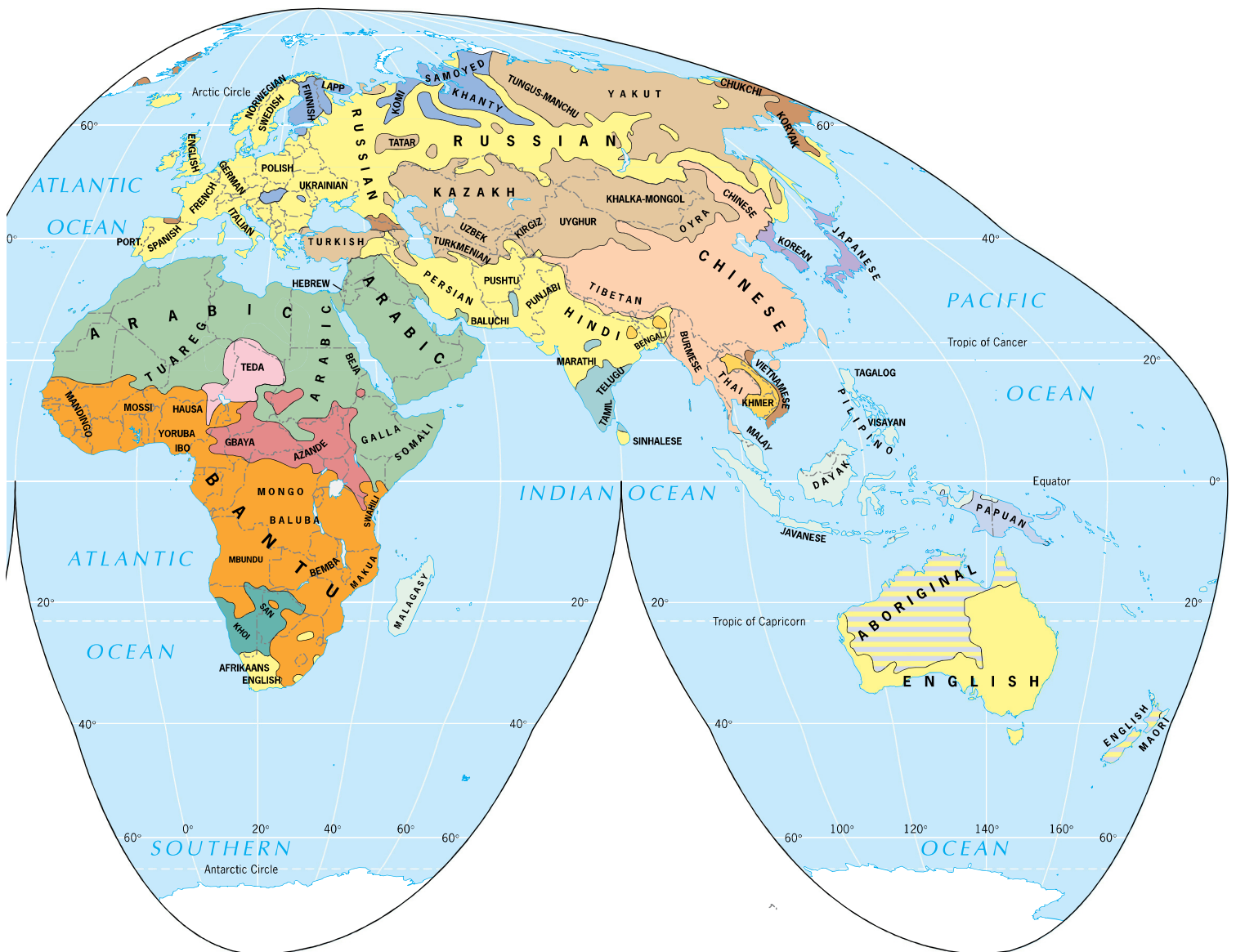
Landscapes of Religion

Religion played a crucial part in the emergence of ancient civilizations and has shaped the course of world history. Hinduism, for example, was one of the earliest religions that helped shape an entire realm (South Asia). Later, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam emerged as major belief systems, often splitting up into various branches stretching across realms and regions. Figure G-10 shows the current distribution of world religions. Our world has become a more complicated place in recent times, and its patterns of religion are increasingly diffuse and dynamic. But today,

still, we find that geographic realms are often dominated by a single religion or family of religions: Christianity in Europe and the Americas, Islam in North Africa/Southwest Asia, Hinduism in South Asia, and Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia. But the boundaries tend not to be very sharp and usually take the form of transition zones (e.g., between North and Middle America, or between North and Sub-Saharan Africa).

A WORLD OF STATES

Ours is a world of about 200 countries or **states** [25]. The political territorial organization of the world within a system of states hinges on the notion of **sovereignty** [26]. It is a concept from international law which means that the government of a state rules supreme within its borders.



Normally, states recognize each other's sovereignty, but this becomes a matter of contention at times of conflict and war.

In the tens of thousands of years of human history, the modern state is a relatively recent invention, and so is the international system of which it forms the cornerstone. The modern state emerged from other kinds of politico-territorial organization that have existed since the beginnings of complex civilizations. In the study of ancient history, scholars sometimes use the term polity or proto-state to indicate the difference. Ever since farm surpluses enabled the growth of large and prosperous towns, this was accompanied by the more sophisticated and centralized exercise of power and political organization. From these origins, the earliest states took shape.

Although ancient states such as the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire exhibited several qualities of modern

states, it was not until the seventeenth century that European rulers and governments began to negotiate treaties that defined the state in international law. That is why the modern state is often described as based on the **European state model** [27], with definitions of nationality and sovereignty. Often, the model assumed that state and nation were ideally coterminous, so that a *nation-state* would enclose an ethnically and culturally homogeneous people within a national boundary. That was never truly the case (even France, the “model of models,” had its minorities), and today the ideal state is defined as a clearly and legally defined territory inhabited by a citizenry governed from a capital city by a representative government. As we shall discover in Chapters 1A and 1B, not even in Europe itself are all governments truly representative, but the European state model has, for better or worse, been adopted throughout the world.

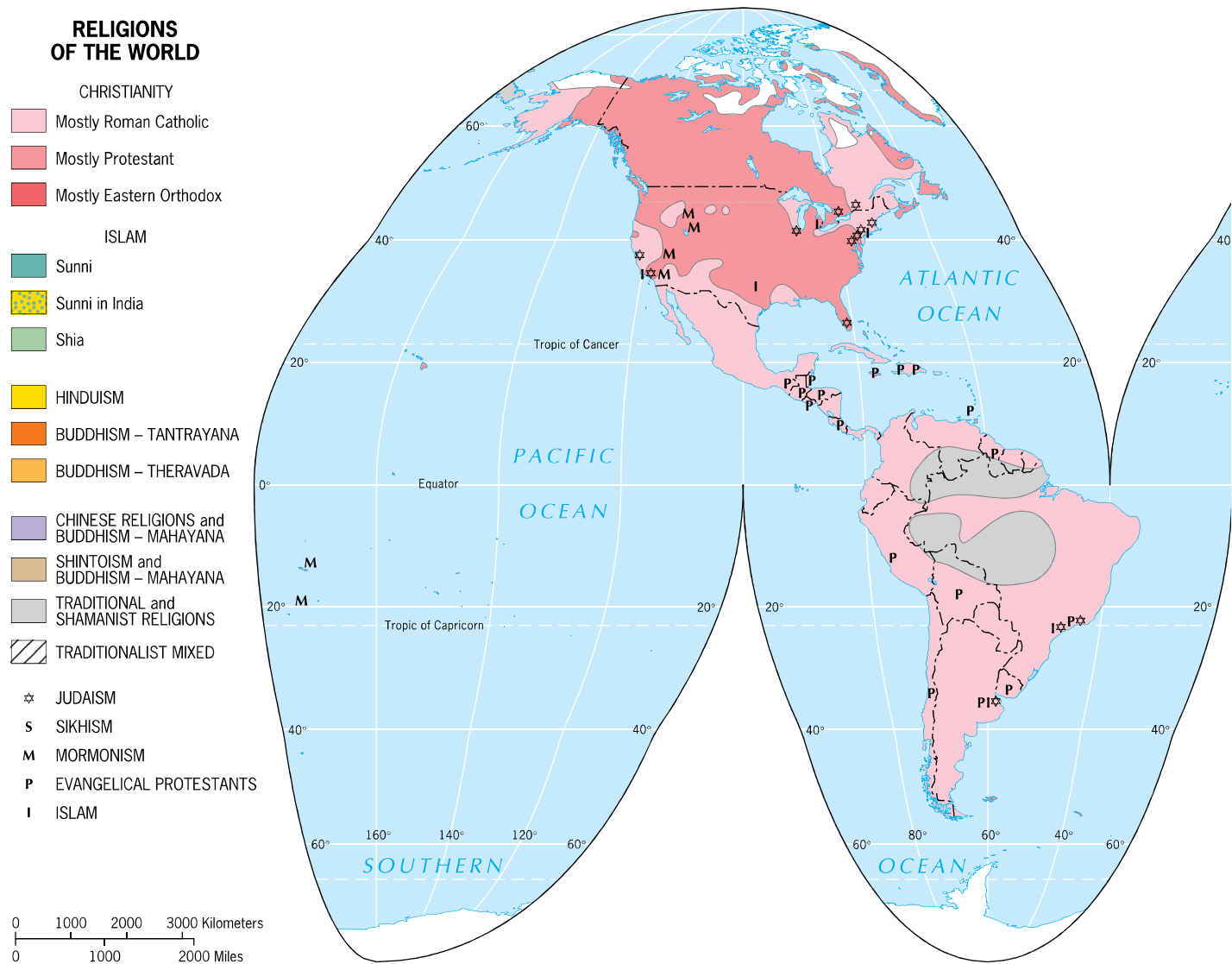


FIGURE G-10

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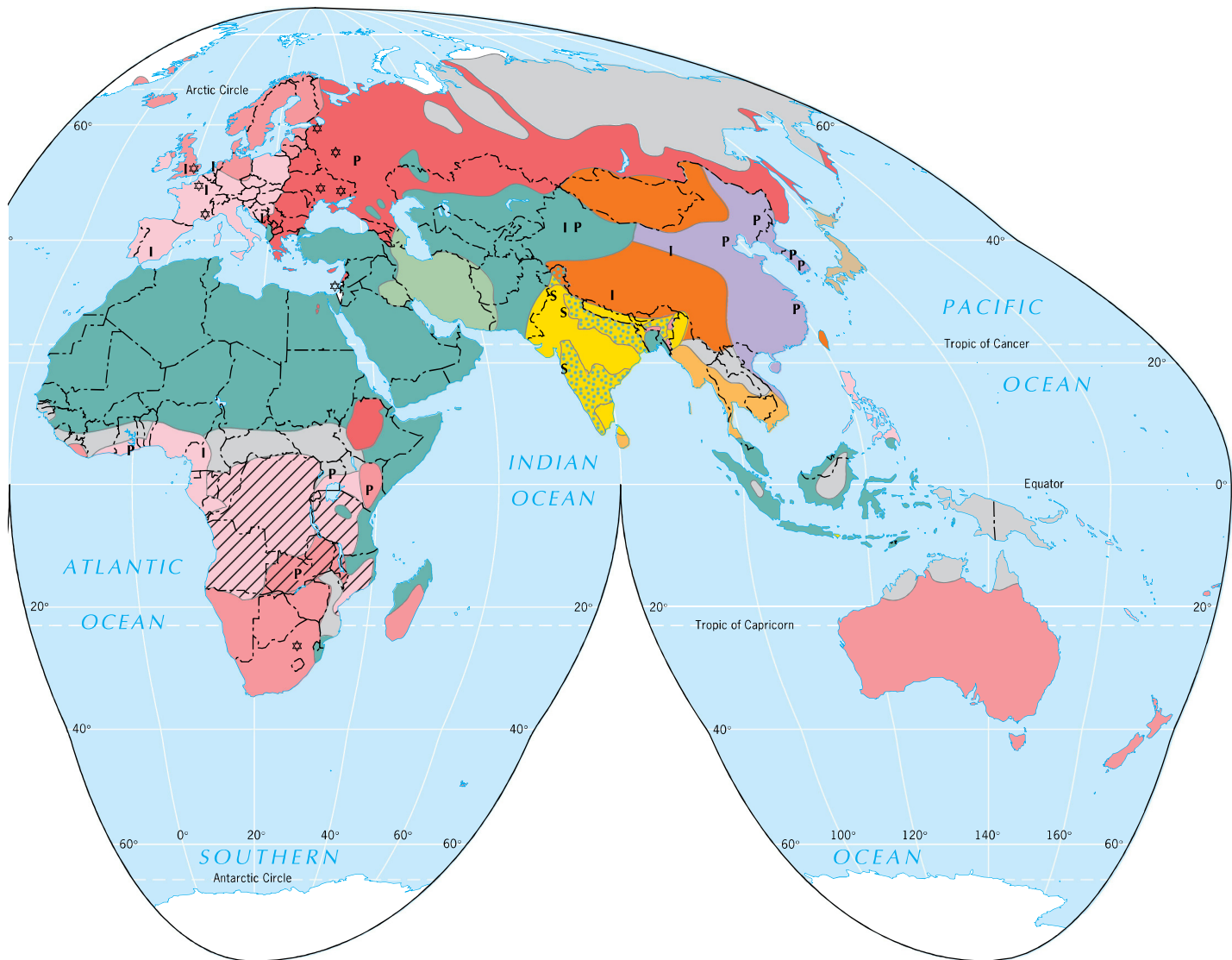
So the modern state is a historical phenomenon, and there are also signs that it may not last forever. The state system today is challenged “from below” by ethnic minorities and regional secessionist movements (e.g., Tibetans in China; Scotland in the United Kingdom). And it is also challenged “from above” through increasingly powerful international organizations such as the European Union. Its member-states voluntarily transfer some of their power to “Brussels” (the EU’s headquarters city) mainly because they think it will be to their economic advantage.

Even though many states find themselves negotiating these challenges through the decentralization of authority to regional governments or through the transfer of part of their authority to international bodies, it is important to keep in mind that they do so, almost always, with the capacity to retain their powers and to seize control at their discretion. For all our efforts to cooperate diplomatically

(the United Nations), economically (the European Union), strategically (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and in other ways, it is the state and its government—not regions or realms—that holds the power and the authority to make decisions in the global arena. Decidedly, this is still a world of states.

Subdivisions of the State

Meanwhile, we are all too well aware that states contain subdivisions. Even the smallest states are partitioned in this manner. As all Americans—as well as Mexicans, Brazilians, and Australians—know, some larger states call their subdivisions *States*: the State of Virginia, the State of Chihuahua, the State of Bahia, the State of Victoria. (As pointed out earlier, a state denotes a sovereign country whereas a [capitalized] State signifies a subdivision.) The subdivisions of other states have alternate names: provinces (Canada),



Adapted from E. H. Fouberg et al., *Human Geography*, 9e, based on several data sources.

regions (France), Autonomous Communities (Spain), Federal Districts (Russia), Divisions (Myanmar). And some of these subnational political units are becoming increasingly assertive, occasionally making their own decisions about their economic or social policies whether the central (state) government likes it or not. When that happens—in Quebec, in Catalonia, in Arizona—we should pay even closer attention to the map.

Our analysis of the world's regional geography requires data, and it is crucial to know the origin of these data. Unfortunately, we do not have a uniformly sized grid that we can superimpose over the globe: we must depend on the world's 190-plus countries to report vital information (think of this information as “state-istics”). Fortunately, all large and populous countries tend to also provide information on each of their subdivisions when they conduct their census. So at least some data are available at a finer scale.

Geopolitics and the State

As we shall observe in the pages that follow, states vary not only in terms of their dimensions, relative location, domestic resource base, productive capacity, and other physical and cultural properties, but also in terms of their influence in world affairs. Napoleon once remarked that “the politics of the state lies in its geography.” There is no doubt that geography is vital to state affairs and to the relations among states within realms and regions. But the actual influence of geography is far from simple and difficult to measure. There can be many different aspects to a country's geography, and sometimes they are hard to separate from cultural or economic factors.

Take size, for example. Big countries tend to be more powerful than small countries, but this is hardly a perfect relationship, and economic prowess also counts for a great deal. Some relatively small countries carry a lot

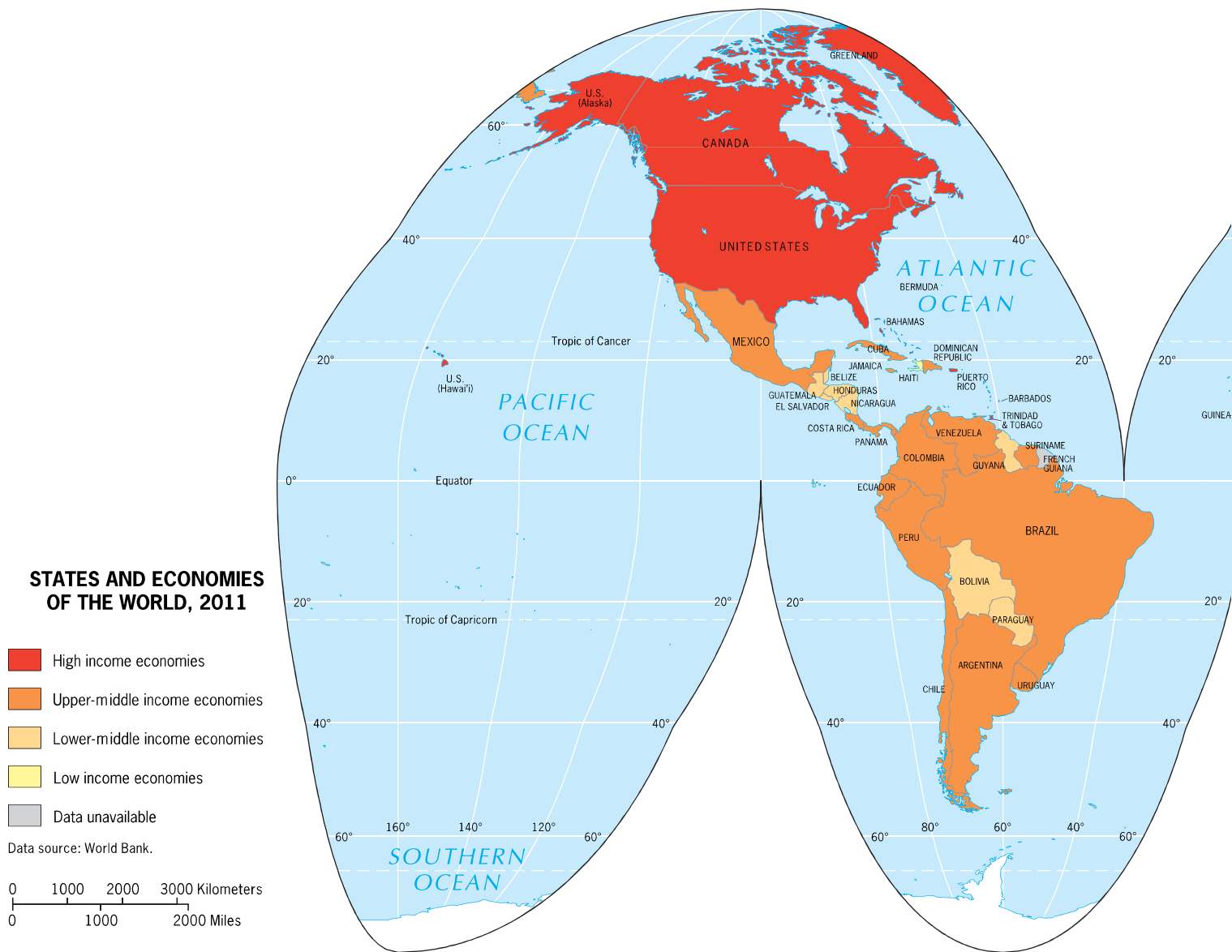


FIGURE G-11

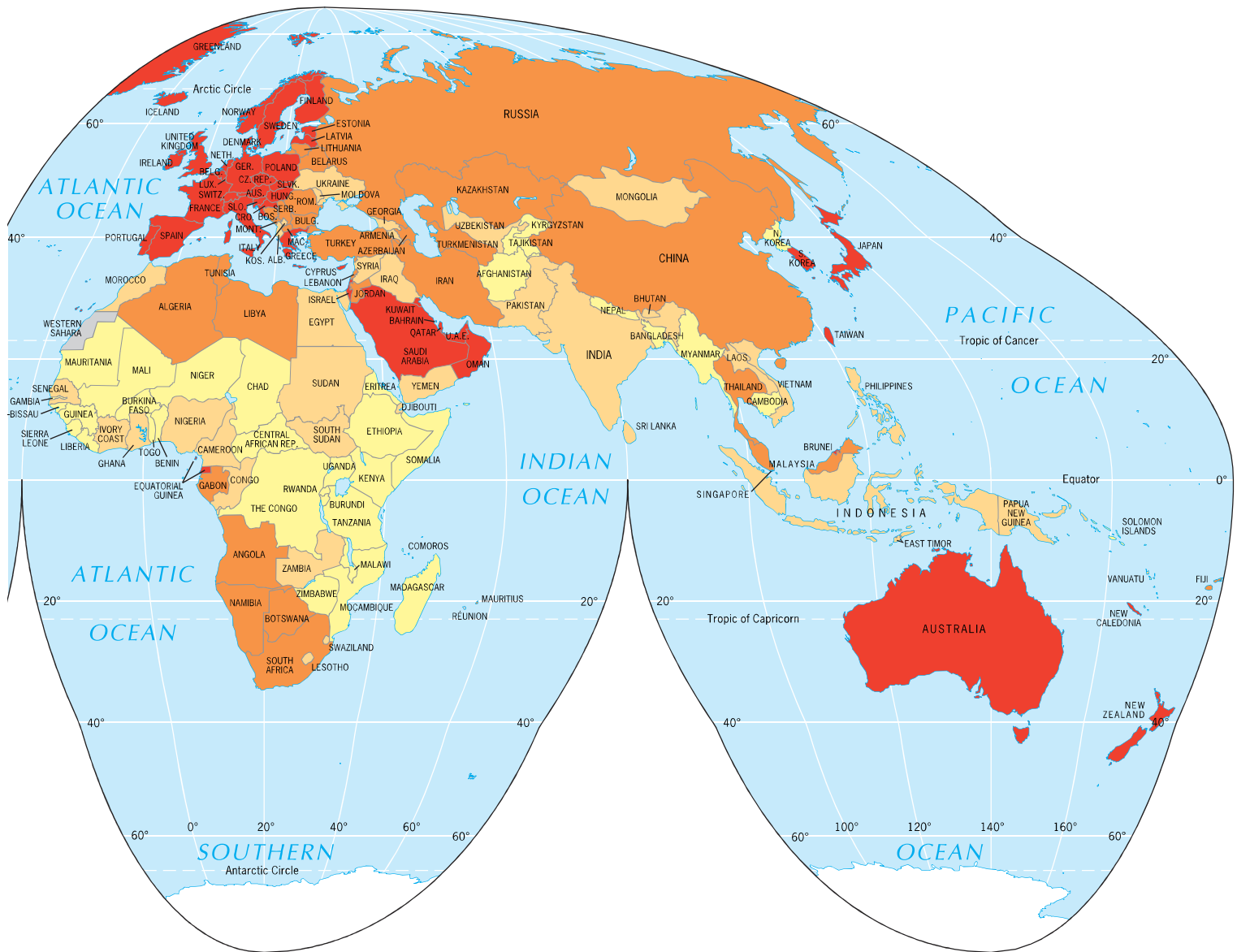
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of weight in international affairs, while other larger and more populous ones are much less influential. Think of Switzerland and its importance in the world of banking and finance; think of Israel and global geopolitics; think of Kuwait and oil.

When gauging the role of geography in international affairs we must also remember that while physical geography may be “permanent” in certain ways, the meaning ascribed to those geographic features can change over time. Think of the impact of transport and communications technology on relative distance, for example. And it is important that we consider the role of geography in historical context as well. For instance, the origins of the European Union must be understood in the context of World War II, particularly the role of Germany during and after the war.

States, Realms, and Regions

As Figures G-3 and G-11 suggest, geographic realms are mostly assemblages of states, and the borders between realms frequently coincide with the boundaries between countries—for example, between North America and Middle America along the U.S.-Mexico border. But a realm boundary can also cut across a state, as does the one between Subsaharan Africa and the Muslim-dominated realm of North Africa/Southwest Asia. Here the boundary takes on the properties of a wide transition zone, yet it still divides states such as Nigeria, Chad, and Ethiopia. The transformation of the margins of the former Soviet Union is creating similar cross-country transitions. Recently-independent states such as Belarus (between Europe and Russia) and Kazakhstan (between Russia and



Muslim Southwest Asia) lie in transition zones of regional change.

Most often, however, geographic realms consist of groups of states whose boundaries also mark the limits of the realms. Look at Southeast Asia, for instance. Its northern border coincides with the political boundary that separates China (a realm practically unto itself) from Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar (Burma). The boundary between Myanmar and Bangladesh (which is part of the South Asian realm) defines its western border. Here, the state boundary framework helps delimit geographic realms.

The global boundary framework is even more useful in delimiting regions within geographic realms. We shall discuss such divisions every time we introduce a Regions of the Realm (B) chapter, but an example is appropriate here. In the Middle American realm, we recognize four regions. Two of these lie on the mainland: Mexico, the giant of the

realm, and Central America, which is constituted by the seven comparatively small states located between Mexico and the Panama-Colombia border (which also marks the boundary with the South American realm).

Political Geography

To our earlier criteria of physical geography, population distribution, and cultural geography, we now add *political geography* as a shaper of world-scale geographic regions. In doing so, we should be aware that the global boundary framework continues to change. Sometimes, new boundaries are created, as between Serbia and Kosovo when Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, or between (now-shrunk) Sudan and South Sudan in 2011. Occasionally, boundaries are eliminated, as was the case between former West and East Germany in 1990. And then,

The Gini Coefficient

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHERS STUDY regional disparities and their causes, including variations of income. But it can be difficult to determine who is earning how much across sizeable populations. Enter Corrado Gini, an Italian statistician, who made pioneering contributions—including a mathematical formula to measure the degree of dispersion of a phenomenon through a population, including economic gains. His name is forever linked to an index that reveals what proportion of a population is sharing in the wealth, and who is not.

This index ranges from 0 (no differences at all; everyone earns the same amount) to 100 (one earner takes all). A country in which a few tycoons control all the wealth and everyone else labors for a pittance will have a “GC” leaning well toward 100; but a country with a more equitable spread of income will be much closer to 0.

As important as the actual number is the way the GC is changing. When China was under strict communist rule and before its modern economic boom began, its GC was low (nobody, of course, actually measured it). By 1993, however, it was reported to be 41; the newest figure—47 for the year 2012—shows that it now exceeds the United States (38 in 2012) in terms of inequality, with China’s incomes increasingly concentrated in the country’s wealthier Pacific Rim. India’s GC, probably underestimated at around 40, may be rising even faster than China’s. But Brazil, long exhibiting one of the world’s highest GC’s, has lately decreased to just above 50, partly as a result of social programs we discuss in Chapter 5B. The GC for some states is unavailable, even as an estimate. Certain governments prefer not to let the Gini out of the bottle.

of course, the meaning of boundaries can change because the countries involved agree on new political relationships; this is especially clear in the case of the European Union. But the overall state system has endured.

In Chapter 12, we will discuss a recent development in boundary-making: the extension of boundaries onto and into the oceans and seas. This process has been dividing up the last of the Earth’s open frontiers, with uncertain consequences.

GEOGRAPHIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Finally, as we prepare for our study of world regional geography, it is all too clear that realms, regions, and states do not enjoy the same level of prosperity. The field of *economic geography* focuses on spatial aspects of the ways people make their living, and deals with patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. As with all else in this world, these patterns reveal much variation. Individual states report the nature and value of their imports and exports, farm and factory output, and many other economic data to the United Nations and other international agencies. From such information, economic geographers can measure the comparative well-being of the world’s countries (see the box titled “The Gini Coefficient”). The concept of **development [28]** is used to gauge a state’s economic, social, and institutional growth.

Statistics: A Caution

The concept of development, as measured by data that reflect totals and averages for entire national populations, entails some pitfalls of which we should be aware from the start. When a state’s economy is growing as a

whole, and even when it is “booming” by comparison to other states, this does not automatically mean that every citizen is better off and the income of every worker is rising. Averages have a way of concealing regional variability and local stagnation. In very large states such as India and China, it is useful to assess regional, provincial, and even local economic data to discover to what extent the whole country is sharing in “development.” In the case of India, we should know that the State of Maharashtra (containing the burgeoning city of Mumbai) is far ahead of most others when it comes to its share of the national economy. In China, the coastal provinces of the Pacific Rim far outstrip those of the interior. In Spain, the people of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (focused on the city of Barcelona) delight in telling you that theirs is the most productive entity in the country. Hence, national (state-level) statistics can conceal as much as they reveal.

Development in Spatial Perspective

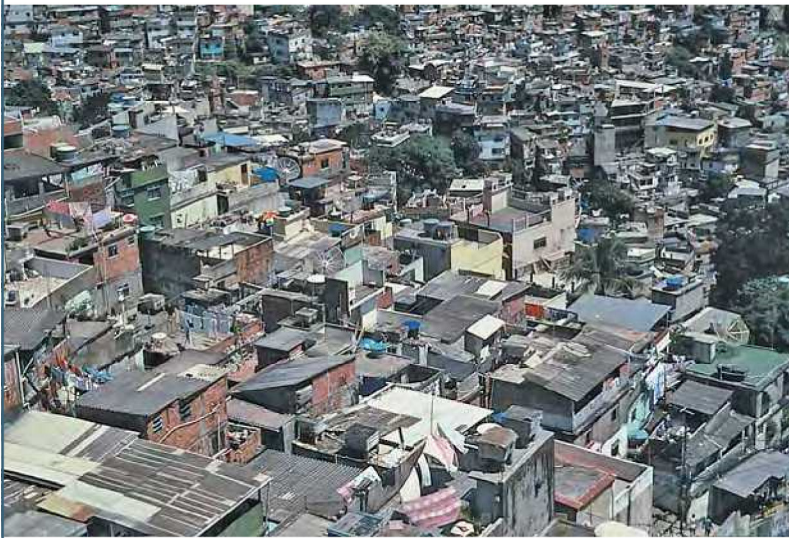
Various schemes to group the world’s states into economic-geographic categories have come and gone, and others will probably arise in the future. For our purposes, the classification scheme used by the World Bank (one of the agencies that monitor economic conditions across the globe) is the most effective. It sorts countries into four categories based on the success of their economies: (1) high-income, (2) upper-middle-income, (3) lower-middle-income, and (4) low-income. These categories, when mapped, display interesting regional clustering (see Fig. G-11). Compare this map to our global framework (Fig. G-3), and you can see the role of economic geography in the layout of the world’s geographic realms. Also evident are regional contrasts within realms—for instance, between Brazil and its western neighbors, between South Africa and most of



From the Field Notes . . .

“Thanks to a Brazilian intermediary I was allowed to enter and spend a day in two of Rio de Janeiro’s hillslope *favelas*, an eight-hour walk through one into the other. Here live millions of the city’s poor, in areas often ruled by drug lords and their gangs, with minimal or no public services, amid squalor and stench, in discomfort and danger. And yet life in the older *favelas* has become more comfortable as shacks are replaced by more permanent structures, electricity is sometimes available, water supply, however haphazard, is

improved, and an informal economy brings goods and services to the residents. I stood in the doorway of a resident’s single-room dwelling for this overview of an urban landscape in transition: satellite-television disks symbolize the change going on here. The often blue cisterns catch rainwater; walls are made of rough brick and roofs of corrugated iron or asbestos sheeting. No roads or automobile access, so people walk to the nearest road at the bottom of the hill. Locals told me of their hope that they will some day have legal rights to the space they occupy. The Brazilian government at times expresses support for these claims, but it is complicated. As the photo shows, people live quite literally on top of one another, and mapping the chaos will not be simple (but will be made possible with geographic information systems). This would allow the government to tax residents, but it would also allow residents to obtain loans based on the value of their *favela* properties, and bring millions of Brazilians into the formal economy. The hardships I saw on this excursion were often dreadful, but you could sense the hope for, and anticipation of, a better future.”



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the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, and between west and east in Europe.

Economic geography is not the entire story, but along with factors of physical geography (such as climate), cultural geography (including resistance or receptivity to change and innovation), and political geography (history of colonialism, growth of democracy), it plays a powerful role in shaping our variable world.

A Core-Periphery World: Increasing Complexity

It has been obvious for a very long time that human success on the Earth’s surface has focused on certain areas and bypassed others. The earliest cities and states of the Fertile Crescent, the empires of the Incas and the Aztecs, the dominance of ancient Rome, and many other hubs of activity tell the story of development and decay, of growth and collapse. In their heyday, such centers of authority, innovation, production, and expansion were the earliest **core areas** [29], places of dominance whose inhabitants exerted their power over their surroundings near and far. Such core areas grew rich and, in many cases, endured for

long periods because their occupants skillfully exploited those surroundings—controlling and taxing the local population, forcing workers to farm the land and mine the resources at their command. This created a **periphery** [30] that sustained the core for as long as the system endured, so that core-periphery interactions, one-sided though they were, created wealth for the former and enforced stability in the latter.

In modern times, the world can be said to revolve, economically speaking, around a global core and periphery—the world economy, after all, has become a single integrated spatial system. In the nineteenth century, this core more or less coincided with western Europe, controlling as it did vast areas of the world through its empires. In the twentieth century, the core expanded first to North America and then grew to include Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Since the 1960s, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and some of the (oil-) rich Gulf States have become part of the core as well. And as the twenty-first century opened, the newest entrant stepped forward: Pacific-fronting China. The global core, therefore,

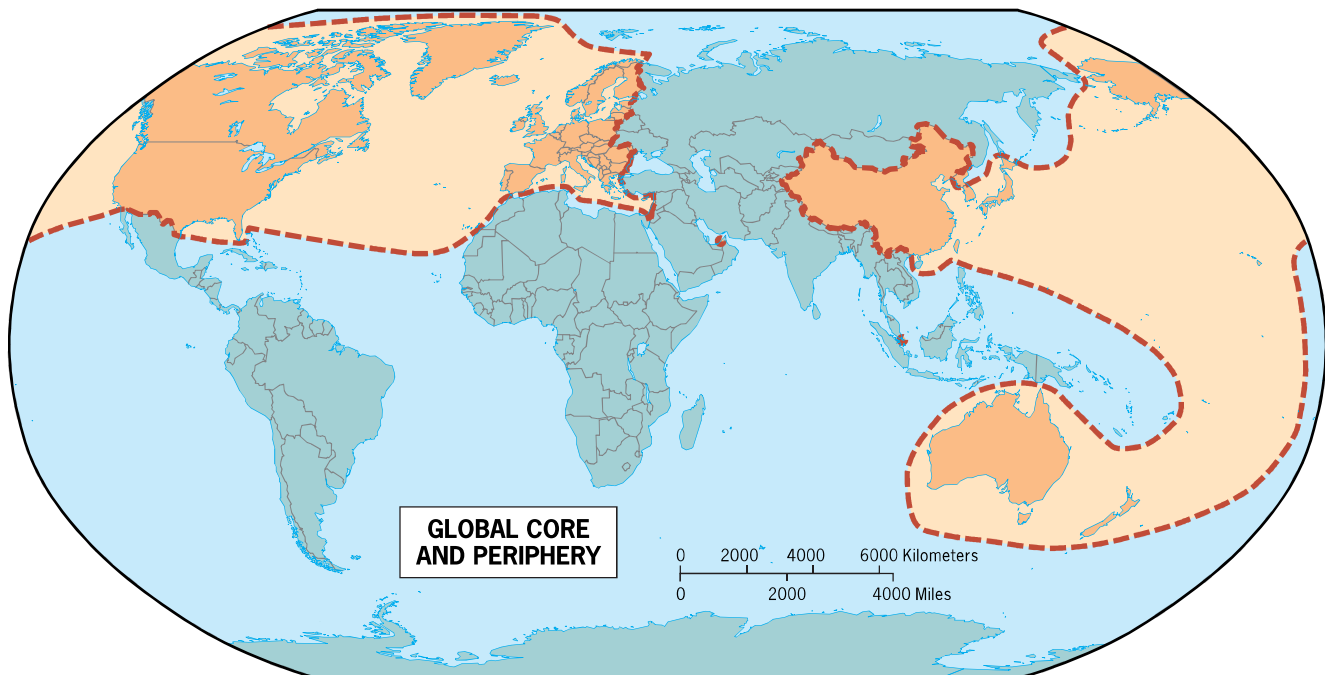


FIGURE G-12

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continues to evolve. As an economic-geographic phenomenon, it is mapped in Figure G-12 above. But keep in mind that here the core is defined purely in economic terms: if we were to include such other criteria as representative Western-style government, for example, China would not qualify.

It is also important to realize that core-periphery relationships are not limited to the global scale. Countries themselves can and do exhibit such patterns as well. China again is a case in point: its coastal provinces form the core, while the interior and westernmost reaches of the country are part of China's periphery. Uneven development, therefore, exists at a range of scales, from the urban to the global. Most functional regions, in essence, are *spatial networks* comprising nodes of variable centrality and importance, and this usually translates into different levels of economic development. Except for a few special cases, all countries contain core areas. These national cores are often anchored by the country's capital and/or largest city: Paris (France), Tokyo (Japan), Buenos Aires (Argentina), and Bangkok (Thailand) are just a few notable examples. Larger countries may have more than one core area, such as Australia with its eastern and western coast cores and intervening periphery.

The world continues to exhibit major differences in productivity and well-being. One of the most intriguing economic-spatial outcomes of globalization is that a growing number of countries have accelerated their development—but this growth is often confined to specific city-regions whereas the rest of the country remains quite poor.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization [31] is essentially a geographical process in which spatial relations—economic, cultural, political—shift to ever broader scales (now driven in no small part by recent rapid advances in communication and transport technologies). What this means is that what happens in one place has repercussions in places ever more distant, thereby integrating the entire world into an ever “smaller” global village. Globalization comes into our homes via television, computers, and smartphones: news today has never traveled faster, and sometimes even government leaders turn to the Internet on their personal electronic devices to get the latest reports on international events.

Globalization is not something entirely new. The second half of the nineteenth century, for instance, also witnessed major advances in the intensification of global interdependence. It was particularly affected by new technologies such as the steamship, the railway, and the telegraph, which subsequently were followed by the first motor vehicles and airplanes. With today's newest technologies, the world is becoming ever more interconnected. Thus geography and our knowledge of the world's realms and regions become increasingly important—because what happens elsewhere will have consequences wherever you are.

Global Challenges, Shared Interests

Globalization plays out in various spheres, from the environmental to the cultural to the economic. Today's most



From the Field Notes . . .



© Jan Nijman

“Singapore is an outstanding example of a city propelled into prominence by forces of globalization. Located strategically on one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes (the Strait of Malacca) and with a good harbor, this city-state was bound to benefit from expanding world trade. It now boasts the busiest transshipment port in the world and the city has also become a shopping magnet for elites all across the Southeast Asian realm. During a visit to Singapore in the summer of 2012, I

had spotted a newly built, futuristic-looking skyscraper across the bay from downtown and thought it would be worth a visit. It turned out to be the huge Marina Bay Sands Hotel (developed by the Sands Corporation of Las Vegas) that opened for business in 2010. The rooftop features a spectacular pool with a view of the city and its port down below. Like most ‘world-cities’, Singapore is a hub of both production and consumption.”

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pressing environmental issue, no doubt, is global warming, a threat to the world at large. It is clear that we must confront this problem together, but it is far from easy to agree on strategies. Some countries are bigger polluters than others, some have more resources than others, and some are more developed than others. How to divide the burdens? At the Durban (South Africa) Conference on Climate Change in 2011, for the first time governments from around the world committed themselves to preparing a comprehensive global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The good news was that the deal included developed and developing countries, as well as the participation of the United States, which had been reluctant to get involved in previous international efforts. The bad news is that the process will be an excruciatingly slow one: the target date for completing the agreement is 2015, and the actual reductions of emissions would not commence until 2020. On top of that, it remains to be seen if the agreement will be legally binding.

Culturally, too, the world is coming closer together, and this is most apparent in global migration flows. Such migration used to be uncommon because most people were

rooted in their home environment, where they lived out their entire lives. When residential relocation did occur, it used to be one-way, with people migrating from one place to another and then staying put. But in the current globalization era, migration flows have intensified, in part because people now possess far greater knowledge about opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, it is now much easier to travel back and forth, which allows migrants to maintain close ties with their original home countries. Not surprisingly, as the number of highly mobile *transnational migrants* has increased, they have become instrumental in the spreading of cultures around the world. Examples include Algerians in Paris, Haitians in Montreal, Cubans in Miami, Mexicans in Los Angeles, Indians in Singapore, and Indonesians in Sydney.

But it is also important to keep in mind that people’s mobility is often constrained, because some parts of this highly uneven world are so much better off than others. High-income countries are a magnet for migrants, but all too often they cannot get access. Millions of workers aspire to leave the periphery, which contains the world’s poorest regions, to seek a better life somewhere in the core. Trying to get there, many of them die



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every year in the waters of the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic. Others risk their lives at the barriers that encircle the global core as if it were a gated community—from the “security fence” between Mexico and the United States to the walls that guard Israel’s safety to the razor wire that encircles Spain’s outposts on North Africa’s shore.

When the world economy entered a deep, extended downturn in 2008, unemployment skyrocketed and opportunities for migrants declined accordingly. In Europe, undocumented migration plunged 33 percent from 2008 to 2009 alone, and along the U.S.-Mexican border the number of interceptions fell by 23 percent during the same 12-month period. As the global economy recovers, immigration rates are expected to increase concomitantly.

Winners and Losers

If a geographic concept can arouse strong passions, globalization is it. To most economists, politicians, and businesspeople, this is the best of all possible worlds—the march of international capitalism, open markets, and free trade. In theory, globalization breaks down barriers to foreign trade, stimulates commerce, brings jobs to remote places, and promotes social, cultural, political, and other kinds of exchanges. High-tech workers in India are employed by computer firms based in California. Japanese cars are assembled in Thailand. American footwear is made in China. Fast-food restaurant chains spread standards of service and hygiene as well as familiar (and standardized) menus from Tokyo to Tel Aviv to Tijuana. If wages and standards of employment are lower in peripheral countries than in the global core, production will shift there and the gap will shrink. Everybody wins. Economic geographers can prove that global economic integration allows the overall economies of poorer countries to grow faster: compare their international trade to their national income, and

The “Occupy Wall Street” demonstration in New York City on October 11, 2011. The protests that began here, in the form of deliberate illegal squatting and resistance to removal by the police, soon spread to cities across the United States and around the world. Under the banner of “We are the 99%,” these demonstrators insist that the vast majority of people do not benefit from global finance and that the politicians are on the side of big business. In New York and elsewhere, these protests relied on a hard core of thousands of determined demonstrators and, while short-lived, made headlines around the world.

you will find that the *gross national income (GNI)** of those that engage in more foreign trade (and thus are more “globalized”) rises, while the GNI of those with less actually declines.

But there is another, more complicated issue. Although many countries, even lesser-developed ones that were able to latch onto globalization, have witnessed accelerated economic growth and rising per capita incomes, inequality within these countries has frequently increased just as fast. In other words, uneven development within countries has become more pronounced. As noted earlier, this is particularly obvious in China, the fastest-growing economy in the world over the past two decades: much of this growth took place in its Pacific coastal zone, not in the interior of the country, and income differentials became ever wider. And the same is true in India and most other *emerging markets*. This is why a regional approach is so important to understanding what is going on in the world economy.

Globalization in the economic sphere is proceeding under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO), of which the United States is the leading architect. To join, countries must agree to open their economies to foreign trade and investment. The WTO has 159 member-states (Russia being among the latest to join in 2012), all expecting benefits from their participation. But the leading global-core countries themselves do not always oblige when it comes to creating a “level playing field.” The case of the Philippines is often cited: Filipino farmers found themselves competing against North American and European agricultural producers who receive subsidies to support production as well as the export of their products—and losing out. Meanwhile, low-priced, subsidized U.S. corn appeared on Filipino markets. As a result, the Philippine economy lost several hundred thousand farm jobs, wages went down, and WTO membership had the effect of severely damaging its agricultural sector. Not

*Gross national income (GNI) is the total income earned from all goods and services produced by the citizens of a country, within or outside of its borders, during a calendar year. *Per capita GNI* is a widely used indicator of the variation of spendable income around the globe and is reported for each country in the farthest-right column of the Data Table in Appendix B.

surprisingly, the notion of globalization is not popular among rural Filipinos.

Opposition to globalization is not confined to the periphery: in the United States and western Europe, WTO meetings have often been plagued by protests and demonstrations by those who believe that the global economy is “rigged” to benefit the few while most lose out. The global financial crisis that began in 2008 created a more specific, concrete target of such criticism: in 2011, the so-called “Occupy Wall Street” demonstrators in New York City triggered a global protest movement against corporate greed and corruption of the financial sector. Their slogan, “We are the 99%” (see photo), underscored their claim that the great majority of people in the world do not benefit from the workings of the global economy.

The Future

As with all significant transformations, the overall consequences of globalization are uncertain. Critics maintain that one of its most insidious outcomes is a steadily widening gap between rich and poor, a polarization of wealth that is likely to destabilize the world. Proponents argue that, as with the Industrial Revolution, it will take time for the benefits to spread—but that globalization’s ultimate effects will be advantageous to all. Indeed, the world is functionally shrinking, and we will find evidence for that throughout this book. But the “global village” still retains its distinctive neighborhoods, and globalization has not erased their particular properties—in some cases even sharpening the contrasts. In the chapters that follow, we use the vehicle of geography to identify and investigate them.

REALMS AND REGIONS: THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

At the beginning of this chapter, we introduced a map of the great geographic realms of the world (Fig. G-3). We then addressed the task of dividing these realms into regions, and we used criteria ranging from physical geography to economic geography. The result is Figure G-14. On this map, note that we display not only the world geographic realms but also the regions into which they subdivide. The numbers in the legend reveal the order in which the realms and regions are discussed, starting with Europe (1) and ending with the Pacific Realm (12).

Before we launch our survey, here is a brief summary of the 12 geographic realms and their regional components:

Europe (1)

Territorially small, politically still fragmented but economically united, Europe has had a very turbulent history and has been disproportionately influential in global affairs.

The regionalization of this realm is today best approached within a core/periphery framework. Generally speaking, Europe’s core lies in its west, with a wide periphery curving across the realm’s southern, eastern, and far northern domains.

Russia (2)

Territorially enormous and politically unified, Russia was the dominant force in the former Soviet Union that disintegrated in 1991. Undergoing a difficult transition from dictatorship to democracy and from communism to capitalism, Russia is geographically complex and continues to change. We define five regions: the Russian Core in the west, the Southeastern Frontier, Siberia, the Far East, and Transcaucasia.

North America (3)

Another realm in the global core, North America consists of the United States and Canada. We identify nine regions: the North American Core, the Maritime Northeast, French Canada, the South, the Southwest, the Pacific Hinge, the Western Frontier, the Continental Interior, and the Northern Frontier. Five of these regions extend across the U.S.-Canada border.

Middle America (4)

Nowhere in the world is the contrast between the global core and periphery as sharply demarcated as it is between North and Middle America. This small, fragmented realm divides into four regions: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Basin’s Greater and Lesser Antilles.

South America (5)

The continent of South America also defines a geographic realm in which Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) influences dominate the cultural geography but indigenous imprints survive. We recognize four regions: the Caribbean North, composed of Caribbean-facing states; the Andean West, with its strong aboriginal influences; the Southern Cone; and Brazil, the realm’s giant.

Subsaharan Africa (6)

Between the African Transition Zone in the north and South Africa’s southernmost Cape lies Subsaharan Africa. The realm consists of five regions: Southern Africa, East Africa, Equatorial Africa, West Africa, and the African Transition Zone itself.

North Africa/Southwest Asia (7)

This vast geographic realm has several names, extending as it does from North Africa into Southwest and, indeed, Central Asia. It is a very complex and volatile realm, and much of

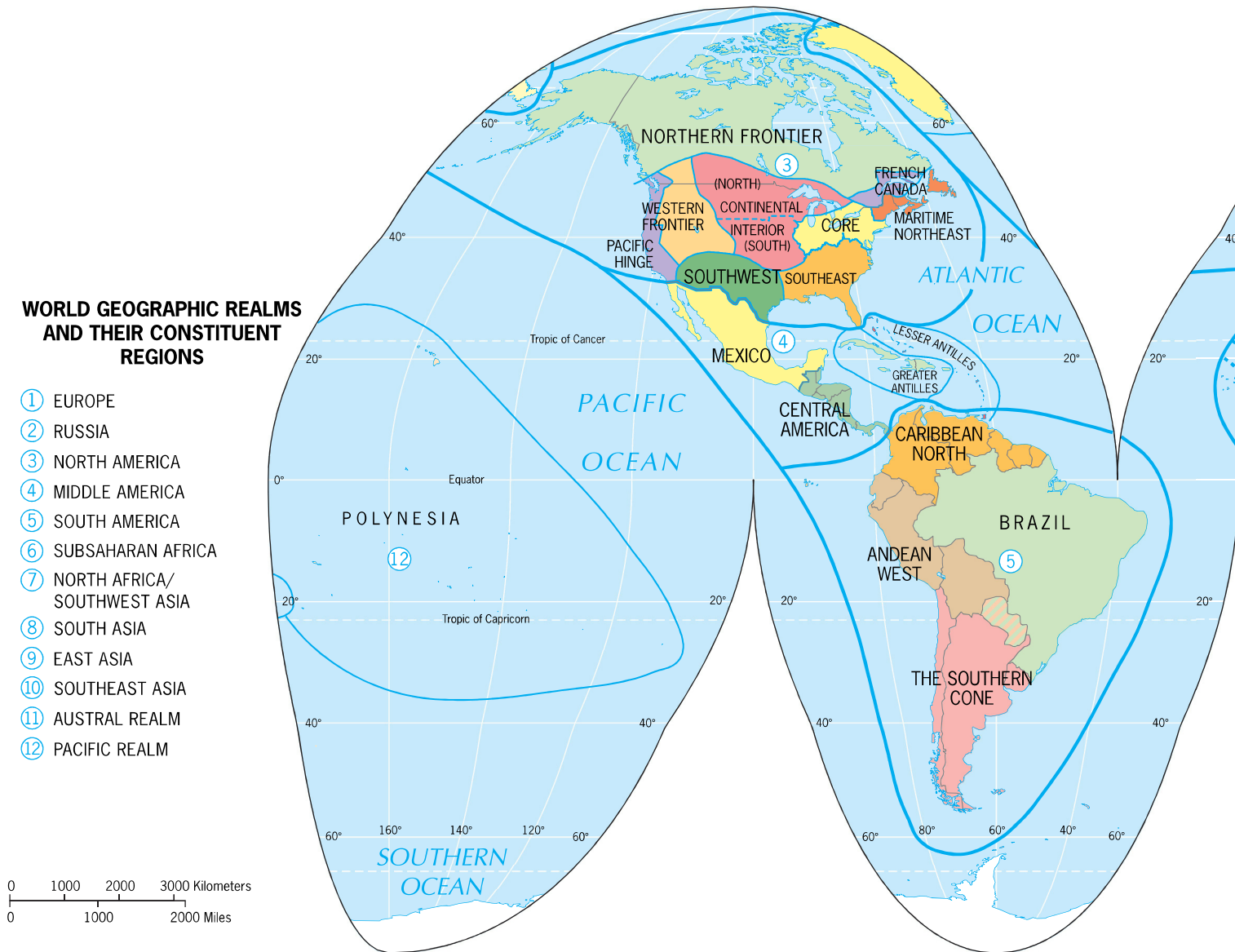


FIGURE G-13

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this is related to its particular regional geographies. There are six regions: Egypt and the Lower Nile Basin, the Maghreb in North Africa, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and toward the east, the Empire States and Turkestan.

South Asia (8)

Physically, South Asia is one of the most clearly defined geographic realms, but has a complex cultural geography. It consists of five regions: India at the center, Pakistan to the west, Bangladesh to the east, the Mountainous North, and the Southern Islands that include Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

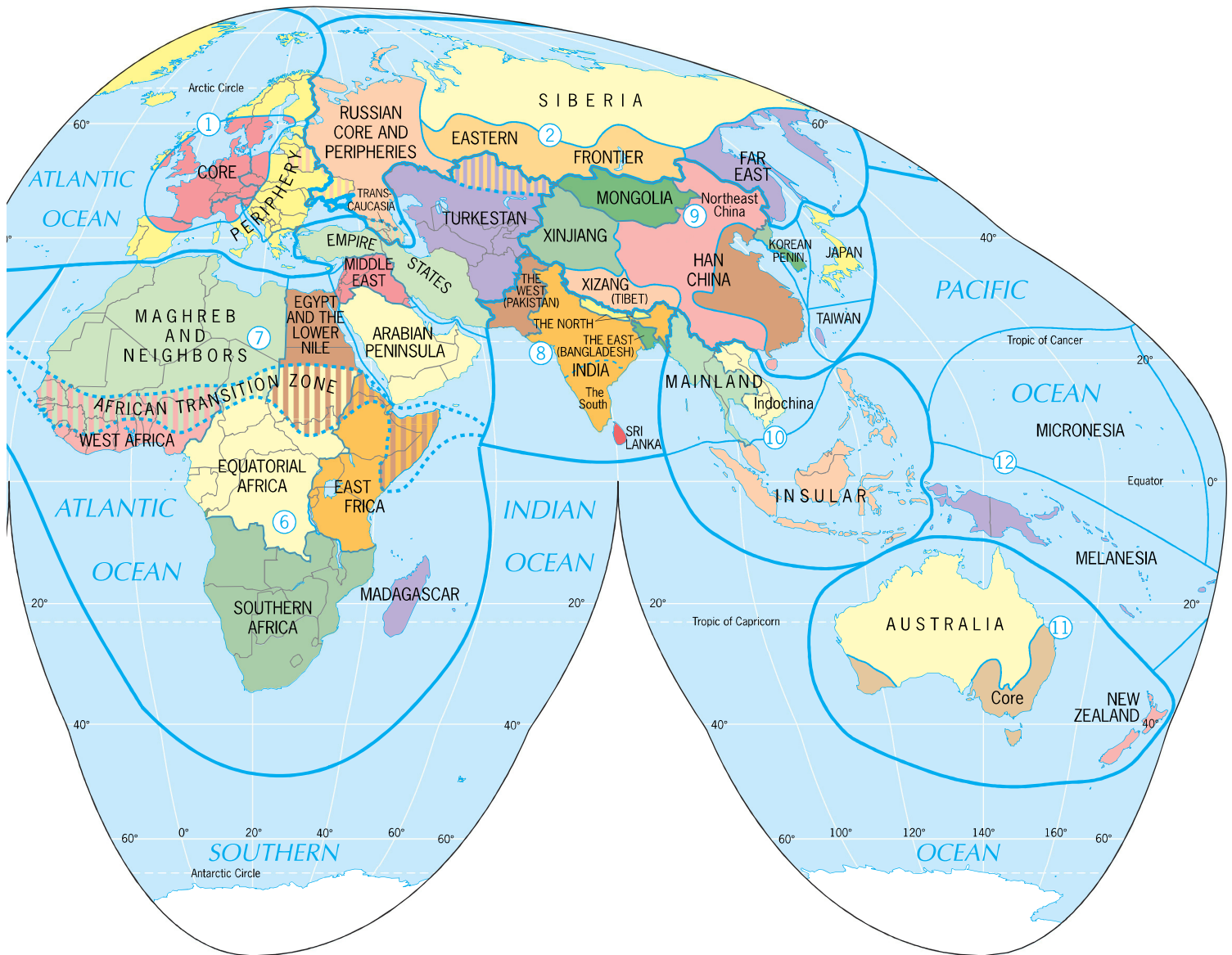
East Asia (9)

The vast East Asian geographic realm extends from the deserts of Central Asia to the tropical coasts of the South

China Sea and from Japan to the Himalayan border with India. We identify seven regions: China's Coastal Core, Interior, and Western Periphery; Mongolia; the Korean Peninsula; Japan; and Taiwan.

Southeast Asia (10)

Southeast Asia is a varied and intriguing mosaic of natural landscapes, cultures, and economies. Influenced by India, China, Europe, and the United States, it includes dozens of religions and hundreds of languages plus economies reflecting both the global core and periphery. Physically, Southeast Asia consists of a broad peninsular mainland and an offshore arc consisting of thousands of islands. The two regions (Mainland and Insular) are based on this distinction.



Austral Realm (11)

Australia and its neighbor New Zealand form the Austral geographic realm by virtue of continental dimensions, insular separation, and predominantly Western cultural heritage. The regions of this realm are defined by physical as well as cultural geography: in Australia, a highly urbanized, two-part core and a vast, desert-dominated interior; and in New Zealand, two main islands that exhibit considerable geographic contrast.

Pacific Realm (12)

The enormous Pacific Ocean, larger than all the landmasses combined, contains tens of thousands of islands large and small. Dominant cultural criteria warrant three regions: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

As this introductory chapter demonstrates, our world regional survey is no mere description of places and areas. We have combined the study of realms and regions with a look at geography's ideas and concepts—the notions, generalizations, and basic theories that make the discipline what it is. We continue this method in the chapters ahead so that we will become better acquainted with the world and with geography. By now you are aware that geography is a wide-ranging, multifaceted discipline. It is often described as a social science, but that is only half the story: in fact, geography straddles the divide between the social and the physical (natural) sciences. Many of the ideas and concepts you will encounter have to do with the multiple interactions between human societies and natural environments.

Regional geography allows us to view the world in an all-encompassing way. As we have seen, regional geography borrows information from many sources to create

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL AND SYSTEMATIC GEOGRAPHY

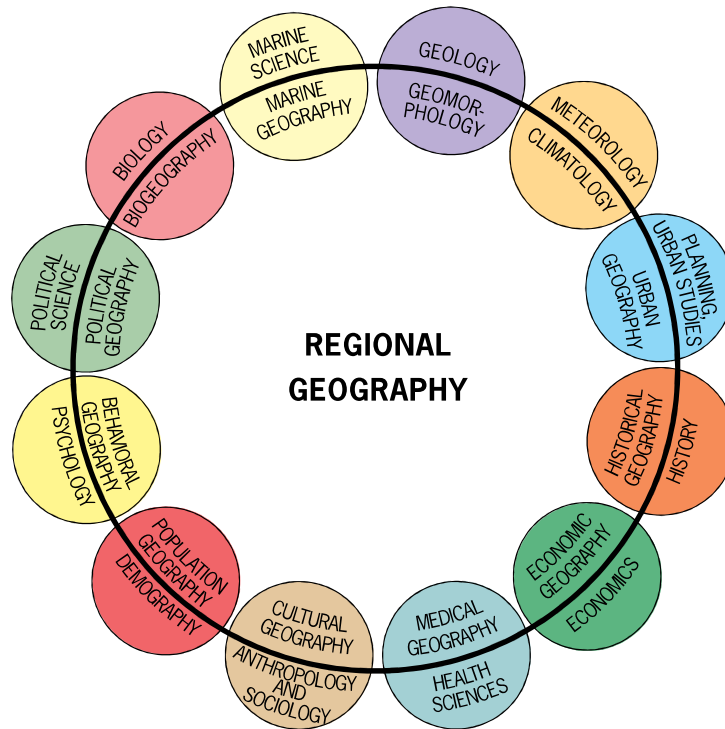


FIGURE G-14

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an overall image of our divided world. Those sources are not random. They represent topical or *systematic geography*. Research in the systematic fields of geography makes our world-scale generalizations possible. As Figure G-14 shows, these systematic fields relate closely to those of

other disciplines. Cultural geography, for example, is allied with anthropology; it is the spatial perspective that distinguishes cultural geography. Economic geography focuses on the spatial dimensions of economic activity; political geography concentrates on the spatial imprints of political

What Do Geographers Do?

A **SYSTEMATIC SPATIAL** perspective and an interest in regional study are the unifying themes and enthusiasms of geography. Geography's practitioners include physical geographers, whose principal interests are the study of geomorphology (land surfaces), research on climate and weather, vegetation and soils, and the management of water and other natural resources. There also are geographers whose research and teaching concentrate on the ecological interrelationships between the physical and human worlds. They study the impact of humankind on our globe's natural environments and the influences of the environment (including such artificial contents as air and water pollution) on human individuals and societies.

Other geographers are regional specialists, who often focus their work for governments, planning agencies, and multinational corporations on a particular region of the world. Still other geographers—who now constitute the larg-

est group of practitioners—are devoted to topical or systematic subfields such as urban geography, economic geography, and cultural geography (see Fig. G-14). They perform numerous tasks associated with the identification and resolution (through policy-making and planning) of spatial problems in their specialized areas. And, increasingly, there are geographers who combine their fascination for spatial questions with cutting-edge technical expertise.

Geographic information systems (GIS), digital mapping, remote sensing, geospatial data analysis, and geovisualization are among the myriad specializations listed by the 10,000-plus professional geographers of North America. On the book's website, you will find much information on the discipline, how one trains to become a geographer, and the many exciting (and rapidly expanding) career options that are open to the young professional.

behavior. Other systematic fields include historical, medical, behavioral, environmental, and urban geography. We will also draw on information from biogeography, marine geography, population geography, geomorphology, and climatology (as we did earlier in this chapter).

These systematic fields of geography are so named because their approach is global, not regional. Take the geographic study of cities, urban geography. Urbanization is a worldwide process, and urban geographers can identify certain human activities that all cities in the world exhibit in one form or another. But cities also display regional properties. The typical Japanese city is quite distinct from, say, the African city. Regional geography, therefore, borrows from the systematic field of urban geography, but it injects this regional perspective.

In the following chapters we call upon these systematic fields to give us a better understanding of the world's realms and regions. As a result, you will gain insights into the discipline of geography as well as the regions we investigate. As you will see, geography is vital to interpreting, comprehending, and coping with our rapidly transforming world (see box titled "What Do Geographers Do?" and the book's website for a detailed discussion of career opportunities).

POINTS TO PONDER

- Within the next few years or so China is expected to surpass the United States as the biggest national economy in the world.
- The global human population recently surpassed 7 billion and is predicted to reach 9.6 billion by 2050. Will there be enough food and water to go around?
- In this second decade of the twenty-first century, almost 1 billion people must survive on less than one U.S. dollar a day.
- Global warming is expected to cause a significant rise in sea level by the end of the twenty-first century, though estimates vary widely.
- The number of smartphones in use, worldwide, passed the 1 billion mark in 2012; the majority of these devices have map navigation applications.
- Globalization may cause the world to "shrink," but marked differences remain among geographic realms and regions.