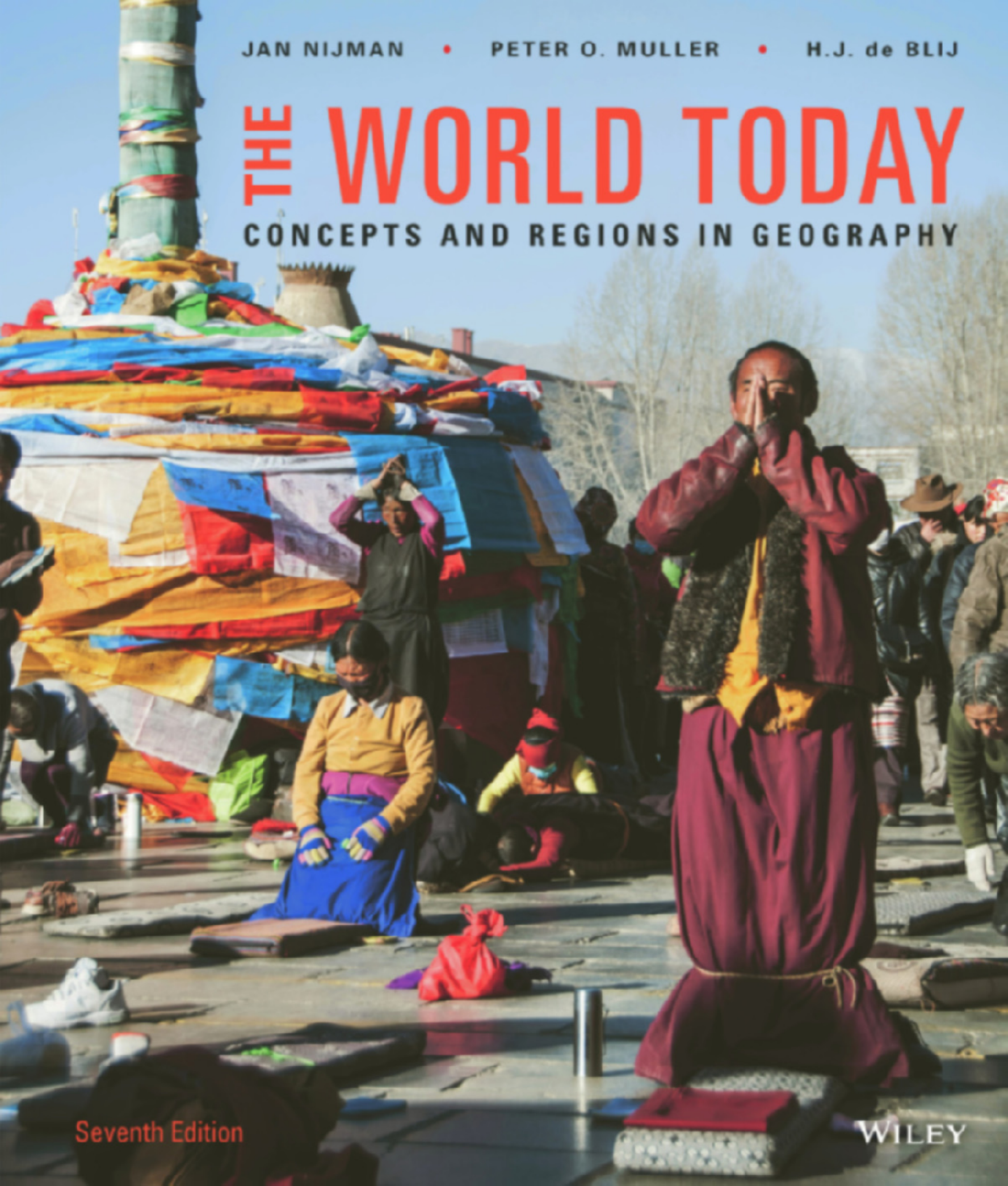


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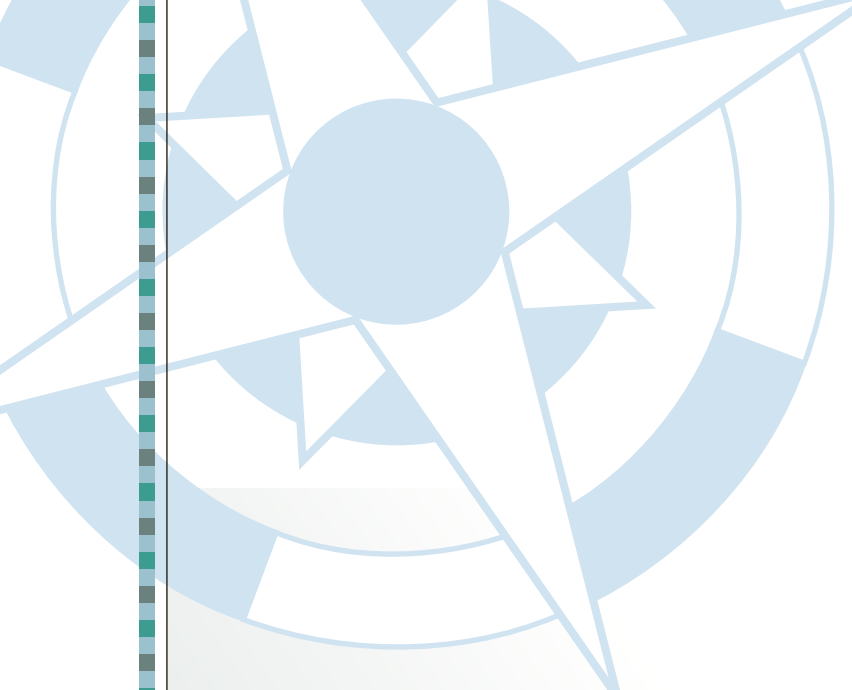
THE WORLD TODAY

CONCEPTS AND REGIONS IN GEOGRAPHY



Seventh Edition

WILEY



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WITH

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Estate of H.J. de Blij

Harm de Blij, 1935–2014

This Seventh Edition of The World Today is dedicated to Harm de Blij, our long-time co-author, mentor, and friend. Harm revolutionized Geography textbook writing in the United States, and he was without equal in communicating geographic knowledge and awareness to wider audiences. His legacy will live on in our books.

PREFACE

This is the Seventh Edition of a book that, since its first appearance in 2003, has undergone several significant changes. We first wrote this book because so many of you, teachers and students alike, expressed the need for a text that provided an introduction to concepts and regions in world geography—but that did so in a concise manner and in the context of current world affairs. That is still the thrust of the book today, and this Seventh Edition, we believe, meets that challenge better than ever.

We continue our established approach to the integrated treatment of regions and concepts, but the book contains several innovative features as well as some major revisions in the coverage of selected world geographic realms. Some of the most profound changes in the world during the mid-2010s involve the Russian/Central Asian, East Asian, and North African/Southwest Asian realms, all with global ramifications. Elsewhere, as always, geographies are being reshaped by geopolitical, environmental, economic, and/or social forces—from the Arctic to Myanmar and from the Panama Canal to Afghanistan.

As always, we rely in large part on our own field observations: much of our time and research for this book involves field visits and research in many of the world's realms. This is expressed, most concretely, in the numerous field notes and photographs supplied by the authors throughout this book. For the geographer, there is just no substitute for being there.

GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE, GLOBAL AWARENESS

The book before you is an information highway to geographic knowledge and global awareness. Universities and colleges prepare their students to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and, increasingly, global citizens. If we are now living in a “global village,” it means that students must get to know the world like they do their own local areas. But while the influence and interests of the United States reach across the globe, it is no secret that geographic illiteracy at home remains widespread. Much of what students encounter in this book is of immediate, practical value to them—as citizens, as consumers, as travelers, as voters, as job-seekers. North America is a geographic realm with steadily intensifying global connections and relationships. Those involvements require countless, often instantaneous decisions, whether they relate to international business, media, affairs of state, disaster relief, and many other spheres. Such decisions must be based on the best possible knowledge of the world beyond our continent. That understanding can be gained by studying the layout of our world, its environments, societies, traditions, resources, policies, development strategies, and other properties—in short, its **regional geography**.

THE NEW AUTHOR TEAM

The World Today carries the lifelong imprint of Harm de Blij, our founding author, mentor, faculty colleague, and cherished friend. Moreover, this book always will reflect his perspective—even as the world continues to change and the discipline of Geography evolves. The author team is changing as well, and up to a few weeks before his passing Harm de Blij was heavily involved in the discussions and highly supportive of the impending changes in this Seventh Edition. Jan Nijman and Peter Muller, Harm's long-time coauthors, are the main authors of this revision, and Richard Grant and You-tien Hsing, respectively, have contributed the revised chapters on Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia. Richard Grant is Professor of Geography and Regional Studies as well as the Director of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Miami. He is one of the world's foremost experts on contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa and has more than two decades of field research experience in Southern and West Africa. That work continues, and he also has affiliations with universities in Ghana and South Africa. You-tien Hsing is both Professor of Geography and holder of the Pamela P. Fong Family Distinguished Chair in China Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She not only brings a wealth of knowledge on rapidly transforming East Asia, but is also a leading authority on the emerging geographies of China. And she, too, draws on an enormous range of field experience all across China as well as in many other parts of East Asia.

The author team is also fortunate to have been joined by Michael Shin, who provided indispensable expertise and support on the use of digital geographic data and cutting-edge methods of interactive learning in our discipline. Michael Shin is Associate Professor of Geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, a highly regarded teacher of GIS at that UCLA Department, and possesses the rare ability to combine high-level technical skills with in-depth thematic expertise (in political geography). Michael's contribution is focused in the digital version of this Seventh Edition. We are delighted that Richard, You-tien, and Michael have joined us to enrich the book with their knowledge and insights.

THE WORLD TODAY: PRINT OR DIGITAL?

The print version of the book is also available in digital form and we—both authors and publisher—have invested substantially in both formats. We are now well underway in preparing for a future in which users will increasingly opt for the digital version because it facilitates greater interactive learning and incorporates an array of online connections to monitor real-time changes in the world around us. At this time, we want to be sure that you have a choice and that both products, print

and digital, are at the leading edge of world regional geography. This revision of the print book has, in fact, benefitted notably from our work on the digital version—the new *Map Analysis* feature (elaborated below) is a direct outcome of these efforts. We know you will be pleased with this new edition, and we also encourage you to explore the digital version to see which option best suits your particular needs and those of your students.

THE NEW MAP ANALYSIS FEATURE

Our book is well known for the quality and currency of its maps, an indispensable tool in the *understanding* of geographic questions. We have now gone a step further and have added a new feature in each chapter that actively draws students ‘into’ the map, challenging them to use and develop their analytical skills in map interpretation. These new maps typically present the spatial distribution of one or more variables tied to concepts highlighted in that chapter of the text; the accompanying caption provides pertinent information and asks one or two open-ended analytical questions, usually related to the mapped spatial patterns and their possible explanations. Since the questions are open-ended and we do not supply any answers, they are well suited to class discussion or short writing assignments.

For example, the South Asia chapter discusses the concept of megacities, with the *Map Analysis* focused on comparing the shapes of the urbanized areas centered by Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Los Angeles (see Fig. 8-9). The questions posed to student readers concern their thoughts on why the areal sizes are so different (L.A. is about 17 times larger than Dhaka), even though their population sizes are roughly equal (ca. 15 million). The answers involve notions of density that are, in turn, related to factors such as mobility, modes of transportation, housing conditions, and income level.

We know how challenging it can be to engage students with maps in a meaningful way, especially in getting them to *read* maps. We believe the new *Map Analysis* feature provides a most useful instrument to help achieve one of the central learning objectives in any (regional) geography course. If you are interested in exploring the digital version of this book, be sure to check out the new *Geographic Information Analysis* modules: these are the online counterparts of the *Map Analysis* feature in this print book. They are specifically designed to heighten geographical knowledge, to increase spatial awareness, and to engage students with interactive, GIS-based, spatial analyses. A set of questions—both multiple choice and discussion-oriented—accompanies each module to facilitate student learning, progress, and assessment.

A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organizationally, this Seventh Edition differs from its predecessor in four distinct ways. First, it is both shorter and more

concise. We are keenly aware of the persistent challenge to instructors and students in World Regional Geography trying to cover all of the world’s realms in a single course. We have judiciously condensed the text by more than 10 percent without compromising explanation of the most essential topics and concepts. Moreover, the emphasis in this book, more than ever, is on the world *today*—on illuminating the role of geography in the global affairs of the late 2010s.

The second difference involves the reordering of the chapters that follow the Introduction. Previous editions began with Europe, followed by Russia, then turned to the Americas, and so on. Of course, there is no self-evident sequence for the presentation of the world’s realms; users are always free to choose their own sequence, and we have maintained the flexibility of the book to fit every possible ordering scheme. Nonetheless, we decided to make a major change and begin the regional chapters in this edition with North America—because that is where most of us are based; because, overall, it presents the most familiar terrain; and because it is from here that we view and develop perspectives on the rest of the world. Starting with North America, then, is not to privilege that realm but rather to acknowledge our own positionality for this survey of world regions. Following North America (Chapter 1), the succession of chapters is largely based on proximity: the second regional chapter covers Middle America, and the third South America; from there we move to Europe (Chapter 4), followed by Russia/Central Asia (5); then on to North Africa/Southwest Asia (6), that is followed by Subsaharan Africa (7). Chapters 8 through 12—South Asia (8), East Asia (9), Southeast Asia (10), Austral Realm (11), and Pacific Realm/Polar Futures (12)—follow the same sequence used in the Sixth Edition. It might therefore be useful to examine this new organization more closely for the purposes of course planning.

Third, the world’s ongoing geographic transformations have led us to reconsider some critical boundaries that separate certain realms. In this edition we pay more attention to *transition zones* between realms in general—but we also saw the need to redraw a few boundaries. The chapter on the Russian realm now includes the additional region of Central Asia, which, as Turkestan, was previously allocated to the North Africa/Southwest Asia realm. At the same time, we have shifted Afghanistan to the South Asian realm from its previous positioning within the North Africa/Southwest Asia realm. The reasons for these changes are elaborated in the appropriate chapters, but they are quite clearly related to the changing regional dynamics of the 2010s. Whereas the world’s geography is still anchored to a relatively stable set of realms, at a finer scale, often on the edges of realms, pieces of the regional puzzle are shifting.

Finally, the Seventh Edition again consists of single chapters for each world geographic realm. Thus we have moved away from subdividing realms into A and B chapters, a result of our streamlining and making the text more concise (in which separate A and B chapters became unnecessary because we felt

they imposed too rigid a structure). Internally, each regional chapter preserves our practice of focusing first on large-scale, realmwide geographies, and then turning to the more detailed coverage of each realm's regions, often breaking them down further into subregions and/or individual countries.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW MATERIAL

Since the Sixth Edition appeared in 2013, the world has undergone some momentous changes, all of which have geographic ramifications. Occasionally, those changes are so rapid and transformative that they force us to rethink the fundamentals of particular realms, regions, and countries, or even of the global system that binds them together. In the mid-2010s, Russia's revanchist policies in its Near Abroad, China's relentlessly expanding global presence, and the spiraling conflicts in North Africa/Southwest Asia are cogent examples. This Seventh Edition not only contains myriad valuable updates but also, where necessary, provides reappraisals of the fundamental nature of the world's ever-changing geography.

No summary can adequately encapsulate all that this new edition contains in terms of text, field notes, maps, or photos, but here are some chapter-by-chapter highlights:

The chapter-length **Introduction**, as usual, provides the foundation and sets the stage for the regional chapters, discussing a broad range of basic geographic concepts along with a series of cornerstone world maps. It includes a new section on concepts of sustainable development and inclusive development. The newly featured *Map Analysis* focuses on the critical relationship between economic growth and sustainable development.

Chapter 1, North America, has a new section and map on the U.S.-Mexican border that, simultaneously, is a sharp boundary *and* a transition zone. Also look for new text on high-technology clusters and new maps on U.S. agriculture as well as Miami's world-city connections.

Chapter 2, Middle America, directs attention to the beginnings of a new era in United States-Cuba relations, the implications of the widened Panama Canal that opens in 2016, and the apparent diversification—from exclusively Mexico to incorporating the Caribbean—of U.S.-bound routes for smuggled cocaine and other illicit drugs.

Chapter 3, South America, contains a new section on the slowdown of the commodity boom that affects so much of this realm, and another section on Colombia's recovery from years of civil strife and economic near-paralysis (including the remarkable revival of the city of Medellín). The *Map Analysis* in this chapter compares national incomes to the variation in retail prices of iPhones.

Chapter 4, Europe, discusses the increasing pressures on the European Union concerning Greece, even as the EU continued to expand in recent years (Croatia joined as the 28th member-state in 2013, and Latvia and Lithuania had joined the eurozone by 2015). The Ukrainian crisis receives considerable attention and is the focus of the *Map Analysis* of this chapter. Also look for new material on Islamic jihadist terrorism in France, as well as the staggering human drama of the refugee crisis caused by the tide of undocumented immigration occurring across the central Mediterranean Basin.

Chapter 5, Russia/Central Asia, emphasizes the increasingly revanchist policies of the Putin regime, not only their consequences for the 'Near Abroad' (extending from Ukraine to the Transcaucasian Transition Zone to Central Asia) but also in the context of Russia's rapidly fading democratic prospects. There is a new section (and map) on Russia's power as the major oil and gas supplier of Europe, and a major new section on Central Asia—where Russia and China compete for influence, and the Chinese are busily planning their 'New Silk Road' connection to Europe through Russia's 'backyard.'

Chapter 6, North Africa/Southwest Asia (NASWA), takes a close look at the anticlimactic aftermath of the 'Arab Spring' movement and the dislocation and turmoil it triggered in various regions and countries ranging from Syria to Yemen, from Libya to Somalia. There are several new maps: one details the trans-Mediterranean tidal flow of undocumented immigrants from NASWA to Europe and the refugee crisis it spawned in Southern Europe; another shows the territorial expansion of ISIS (Islamic State) across Syria and Iraq through mid-2015. Note, too, that this chapter now concludes with the regional discussion of the crucial African Transition Zone (previously part of the chapter on Subsaharan Africa).

Chapter 7, Subsaharan Africa, bears the imprint of our new contributing author, Africa specialist Richard Grant. It contains several new field notes and documents the Ebola crisis of 2014–2015. The *Map Analysis* feature in this chapter addresses the challenges of communication and infrastructure in this enormous postcolonial realm. There are new maps on patterns of economic growth and the spatial distribution of Chinese investments across the realm, both linked to an analysis of the heavy reliance on raw materials.

Chapter 8, South Asia, now includes Afghanistan as a transition zone on the realm's western flank. That new section includes a map of the reconfigured West region of South Asia, highlighting the critical connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan—which in turn, are crucial to relations between Pakistan and India. Also look for added material on Indian Ocean geopolitics, gender relations, population dynamics, and megacities.

Chapter 9, East Asia, is enriched throughout by our new collaborating author, You-tien Hsing. There are several new field notes and maps to reflect China's westward march of both economic development and urbanization (also the topic of the *Map Analysis* in this chapter). Look for an entirely rewritten section on Korea and for an updated discussion of geopolitical controversies in the East China Sea. This edition pays special attention to Tibet, which is undergoing rapid change but where culture has thus far proven resilient (see both the front and back covers).

Chapter 10, Southeast Asia, contains newly-added sections and maps on the Mekong River Basin and the astonishing proliferation of dams along the trunk stream and its tributaries; on the regional impacts of Myanmar's liberalization (vis-à-vis India, Thailand, and China); on the coming geopolitical confrontation over Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea; on China's singular dominance in this realm's international trade; and on the intensifying persecution of Myanmar's Muslim minority—the Rohingyas—thousands of whom have fled the country in desperate search of safer havens in Malaysia and elsewhere in the realm.

Chapter 11, The Austral Realm, includes an expanded section on Australia's environmental challenges, especially concerning climate change and growing water shortages. Look for a new map that shows changes in precipitation and the distribution of desalination plants along parts of the country's coastline. The *Map Analysis* in this chapter addresses the geography of Australia's Aboriginal population.

Chapter 12, The Pacific Realm and Polar Futures, in addition to new field notes and photos, contains an updated section on the accelerated melting of the polar ice cap and its consequences for competing territorial claims in the Arctic. The *Map Analysis* centers on rival claims by Russia and Denmark, and on the implications of the shrinking Arctic ice cap for the navigational potential of both the Northeast and Northwest Passages.

ANCILLARIES

A broad spectrum of print and electronic ancillaries are available to support instructors:

Test Bank—Prepared by Dennis Geffert, of Cuyahoga Community College Western. Includes over 1200 multiple-choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank short-answer questions.

PowerPoint Lecture Slides—Prepared by Rhonda Reagan of Blinn College. These slides highlight key chapter topics to help reinforce students' grasp of essential concepts.

PowerPoint Slides with Text Images—Images, maps, and figures from the text are available in PowerPoint format.

Instructors may use these images to customize their presentations and to provide additional visual support for quizzes and exams.

Clicker Questions—A bank of questions is available for instructors who are using personal-response-system technology in their courses.

Instructor's Media Guide—Includes information about the media resources (videos, animations, interactive maps) available for use with this text and offers tips and suggestions on how to use these resources in your course, in conjunction with WileyPLUS Learning Space and Orion.

To see a complete listing of these ancillaries, or to gain access to them upon adoption and purchase, please visit: <http://www.wiley.com/college/sc/nijman>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the 45 years since publication of the First Edition of *Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts* (and joined over the past dozen years by the appearance of this book), we have been fortunate to receive advice and assistance from literally thousands of people. One of the rewards associated with the publication of a book of this kind is the unremitting stream of correspondence and other feedback it generates. Geographers, economists, political scientists, education specialists, and others have written us, often with fascinating enclosures. We make it a point to respond personally to every such letter, and our editors have communicated with many of our correspondents as well. Moreover, we have considered every suggestion made, and several who wrote or transmitted their reactions through other channels will see their recommendations in print in this edition.

STUDENT RESPONSE

A major part of the correspondence we receive comes from student readers. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our deep appreciation to the several million students around the world who have studied from our books. In particular, we thank the students from more than 150 different colleges across the United States who took the time to send us their opinions. Students told us they found the maps and graphics attractive and functional. We have not only enhanced the map program with exhaustive updating but have added a number of new maps to this Seventh Edition, as well as making significant changes in many others. Generally, students have told us that they found the pedagogical devices quite useful. We have kept the study aids the students cited as effective: a boxed list of each chapter's key concepts, ideas, and terms (numbered for quick reference in the text itself); a box that summarizes each realm's major geographic qualities; and a Glossary of Terms at the end of the book.

FACULTY FEEDBACK

In assembling the Seventh Edition, we are indebted to the following people for advising us on several matters:

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Faculty members from a large number of North American colleges and universities (as well as a number of independent scholars) continue to supply us with vital feedback and much appreciated advice. Our publisher arranged several feedback sessions, and we are most grateful to the following for showing us where and how the text could be strengthened and made more precise:

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Jan Nijman
Coral Gables, Florida

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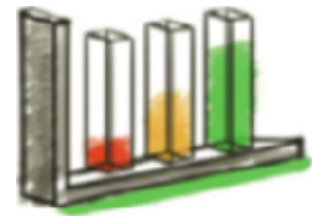
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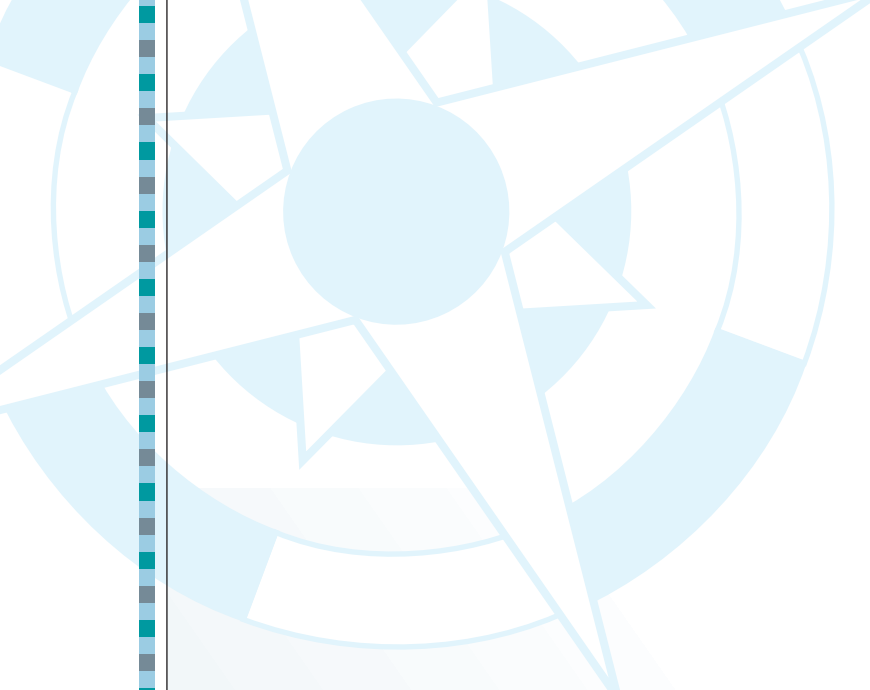
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THE WORLD TODAY

CONCEPTS AND REGIONS IN GEOGRAPHY

SEVENTH EDITION



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Nature and culture, entwined in geography. The Tuscany region in the north-western corner of peninsular Italy contains some of the most elegant cultural landscapes in the world with its rolling hills, contoured grain fields, olive groves, and vineyards.

INTRODUCTION

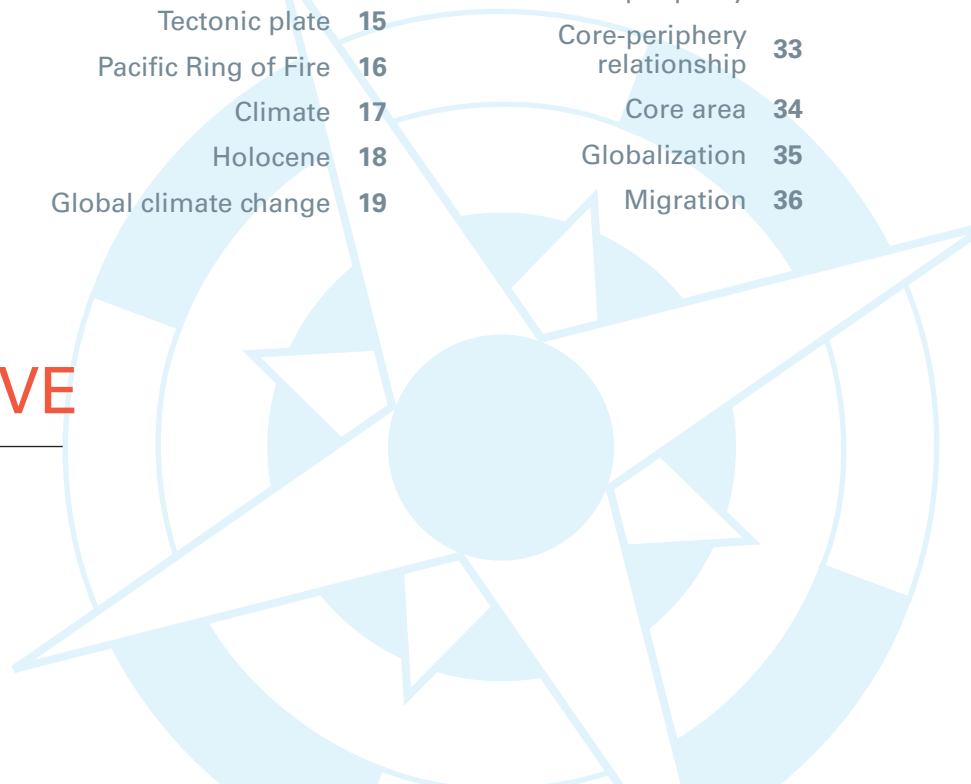
WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

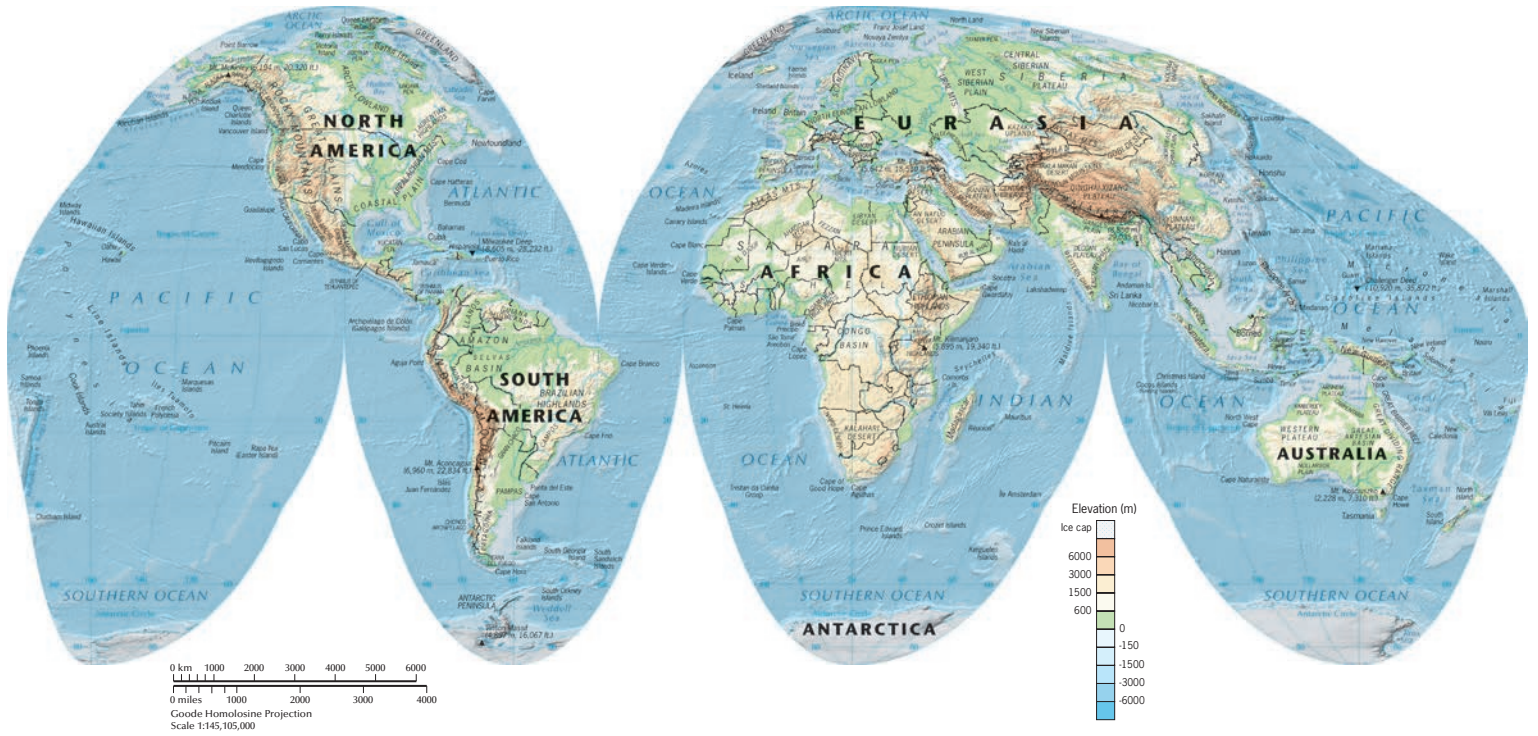
IN THIS CHAPTER

- The power of maps
- The spatial order of the world
 - Dangerous places
 - Persistent cultural diversity
- Geopolitics and the specter of terrorism
- The challenge of sustainable development
 - Widening global inequalities

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FIGURE G-1

What are your expectations as you open this book? You have signed up for a course that will take you around the world to try to understand how it functions today. You will discover how interesting and challenging the discipline of geography is. We hope that this course, and this book, will open new vistas, bring new perspectives, raise your awareness of place, and help you navigate our increasingly complex and often daunting world.

You could not have chosen a better time to study geography. The world is changing on many fronts and is doing so ever faster in response to the rapid advancement of communication technologies. The world truly is ‘shrinking,’ and the likelihood has never been greater that your professional career will be taking you to places far from home. As globalization steadily progresses, geography is becoming ever more important. Moreover, the United States has the world’s most globalized economy, with political influence to match. Intentionally or not, the United States is affecting nations and peoples, lives and livelihoods, from pole to pole. That power confers on Americans a responsibility to learn as much as they can about those places, nations, and livelihoods, so that the decisions of their government representatives are well informed. But in this respect, the United States is no superpower. Geographic literacy is a measure of international comprehension and awareness, and Americans’ geographic literacy ranks low. That is a liability, both for the United States and the rest of the world because such geographic fogginess afflicts not only voters but also the representatives they elect, from local school boards to the U. S. Congress.

A WORLD ON MAPS

Just a casual glance at the pages that follow reveals a difference between this and other textbooks: there are almost as many maps as there are pages. Geography is more closely identified with maps than any other discipline, and we urge you to give as much (or more!) attention to the maps in this book as you do to the text. It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, and the same applies to maps. When we write “see Figure XX,” we really mean it . . . and we hope that you will get into the habit. We humans are territorial creatures, and the boundaries that fence off our 200 or so countries reflect our divisive ways. Other, less visible borders—between religions, languages, wealth, and poverty—partition our planet as well. When political and cultural boundaries are at odds, there is nothing like a map to summarize the circumstances. Just look, for example, at the map of the African Transition Zone in Chapter 6: this corridor’s turbulence and challenges are steeped in geography.

Maps in Our Minds

All of us carry in our minds maps of what psychologists call our *activity space*: the apartment building or house we live in, the streets nearby, the way to school or workplace, the general layout of our hometown or city. You will know what lane to use when you turn into a shopping mall, or where to park at the movie theater. You can probably draw from memory a pretty good map of your hometown. These **mental maps** **1** allow you to navigate your activity space with efficiency, predictability, and safety. When you arrived as a first-year student on a college or university campus, a new mental map would have started forming. At first you needed a GPS, online, or hard-copy map to find your way around, but soon you dispensed with that because your mental map

became sufficient. And it will continue to improve as your activity space expands.

If a well-formed mental map is useful for decisions in daily life, then an adequate mental map is surely indispensable when it comes to decision making in the wider world. You can give yourself an interesting test. Choose some part of the world, beyond North America in which you have an interest or about which you have a strong opinion—for example, Israel, Iran, Russia, North Korea, or China. On a blank piece of paper, draw a map that reflects your impression of the regional layout there: the country, its neighbors, its internal divisions, major cities, water bodies, and so forth. That is your mental map of the place. Put it away for future reference, and try it again at the end of this course. You will have proof of your improved mental-map inventory.

Mapping Revolutions

The maps in this book show larger and smaller parts of the world in various contexts. Some depict political configurations; others display ethnic, cultural, economic, or environmental features. *Cartography* (the making of maps) has undergone a dramatic and continuing technological revolution. Earth-orbiting satellites equipped with remote-sensing technology (special on-board sensors and imaging instruments) transmit remotely sensed information to computers on the surface, recording the expansion of deserts, the shrinking of glaciers, the depletion of forests, the growth of cities, and myriad other geographic phenomena. Earthbound computers possess ever-expanding capabilities not only to organize this information but also to display it graphically. This allows geographers to develop a **geographic information system (GIS)**, bringing geospatial data to a monitor’s screen that would have taken months to assemble just three decades ago.

A parallel map revolution is embodied in the astounding proliferation of navigation systems in cars and on mobile phones. Smartphones allow the use of maps on the go, and many of us, in the developed world at least, have already become dependent on them to traverse cities, find a store or restaurant, even to move around shopping malls. Whereas the personalized maps on our smartphones allow us to navigate more efficiently, the maps in this book are aimed at better understanding the world and its constituent parts.

Satellites—even spy satellites—cannot record everything that occurs on the Earth's surface. Sometimes the borders between ethnic groups or cultural sectors can be discerned by satellites—for example, in changing house types or religious shrines—but this kind of information tends to require on-the-ground verification through field research and reporting. No satellite view of Iraq could show you the distribution of Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim adherents. Many of the boundaries you see on the maps in this book cannot be observed from space because long stretches are not even marked on the ground. So the maps you will be “reading” here have their continued uses: they summarize complex situations and allow us to begin forming durable mental maps of the areas they represent.

There is one other point we should make that is especially important when it comes to world maps: never forget that the world is a sphere, and to project it onto a two-dimensional flat surface must necessarily entail some very significant distortions. Try peeling an orange and flattening the entire peel on a surface—you

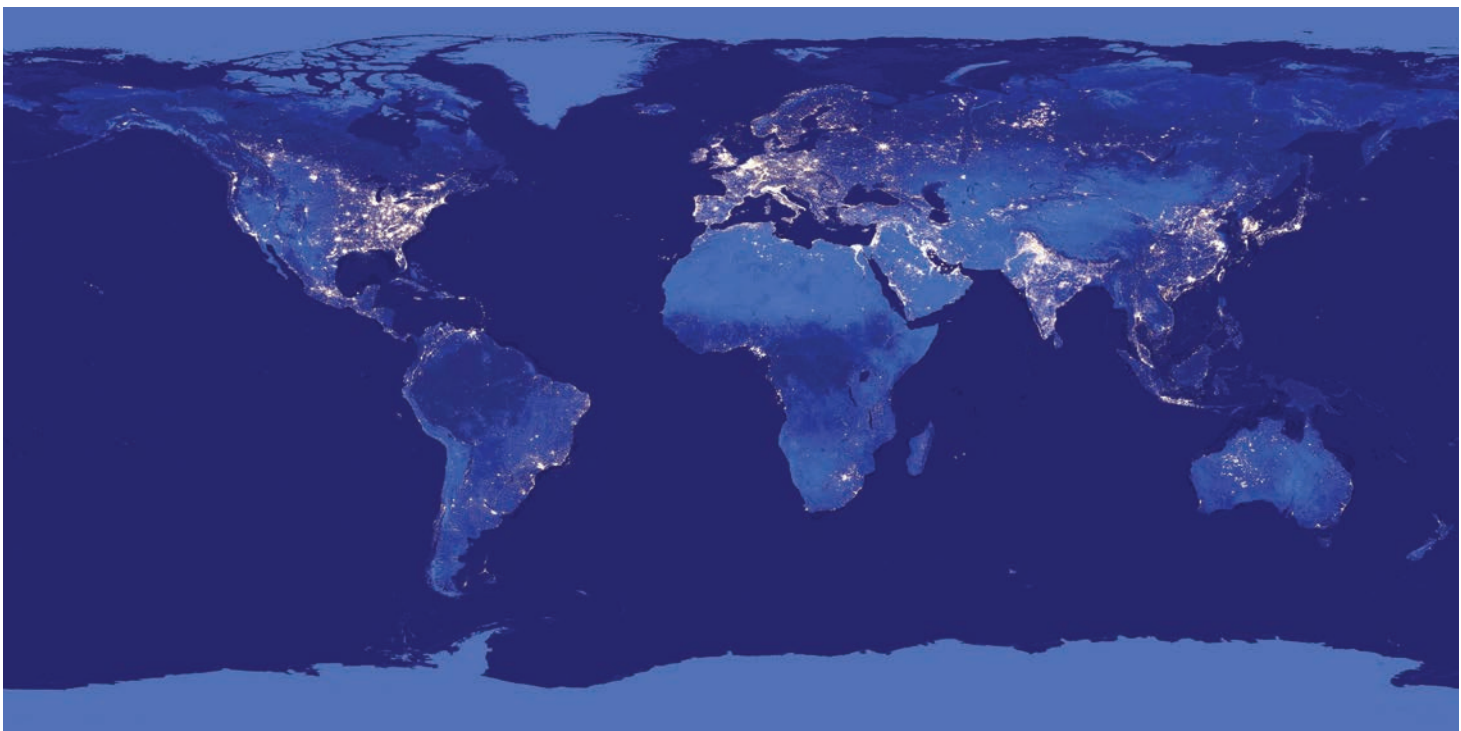
will have to tear it up and try to stretch it in places to get the job done. Take a look at Figure G-1 and note how the Atlantic Ocean and other segments of the planetary surface are interrupted. You can produce a map like this in many different ways, but you will always end up distorting things. When studying world maps, there is nothing like having a globe at hand to remind you of our three-dimensional reality.

GEOGRAPHY'S PERSPECTIVE

Geography is sometimes described as the most interdisciplinary of disciplines. That is a testimonial to geography's historic linkages to many other fields, ranging from geology to economics and from sociology to environmental science. And, as has been the case so often in the past, geography is in the lead because interdisciplinary studies and research are now more prevalent than ever.

A Spatial Viewpoint

Most disciplines focus on one key theme: economics is about money; political science is about power; psychology is about the mind; biology is about lifeforms. Geography is about the explanation of space on the Earth's surface. More specifically, geographers are concerned with the organization of *terrestrial space*.



NASA Earth Observatory / NOAA NGDC

This map is an assemblage of nighttime satellite images that show the dominance of electric lighting in certain parts of the world and darkness in others. What does this spatial distribution suggest about the geography of development?

Social space (cities, buildings, political boundaries, etc.) as well as natural space (climates, terrain, vegetation, etc.) are not randomly configured. Instead, there generally prevails a particular order, regularity, even predictability about the ways in which space is organized. Sometimes it is the deliberate work of human beings, and sometimes it is the work of nature, but both produce specific patterns. Geographers consider these spatial patterns and processes as not only interesting but also crucial to how we live and how we organize our societies. The **spatial perspective** 2 has defined geography from its beginning.

Environment and Society

There is another connection that binds geography and has done so for centuries: an interest in the relationships between human societies and the natural environment. Geography lies at the intersection of the social and natural sciences and integrates perspectives from both, being the only discipline to do so explicitly. This perspective comes into play frequently: environmental modification is in the news on a daily basis in the form of worldwide climate change, but this current surge of global warming is only the latest phase of endless atmospheric and ecological fluctuation. Geographers are involved in understanding current environmental issues not only by considering climate change in the context of the past, but also by looking carefully at the implications of global warming for human societies. Geographers are acutely aware that human beings will always be part of nature, no matter how far technology advances.

More generally, think of this relationship between humans and their environment as a two-way street. On one hand, human beings have always had a transformative effect on their natural surroundings, from the burning of forests to the creation of settlements. On the other hand, humans have always been heavily dependent on the natural environment, their individual and collective behaviors very much a product of it. There are so many examples that it is hard to know where to begin or when to end: we eat what nature provides, and traditional diets vary regionally; rivers allow us to navigate and connect with other peoples—or they serve as natural boundaries like the Rio Grande; wars are fought over access to water or seaports; landlocked countries seem to have different cultures from those of islands; and so on.

Spatial Patterns

Geographers, therefore, need to be conversant with the location and distribution of salient features on the Earth's surface. This includes the natural (physical) world, simplified in Figure G-1, as well as the human world, and our inquiry will view these in temporal (historical) as well as spatial perspective. The spatial structure of cities, the layout of farms and fields, the networks of transportation, the configurations of rivers, the patterns of climate—all these form part of our investigation. As you will find, geography employs a comprehensive spatial vocabulary with meaningful terms such as area, distance, direction, clustering, proximity, accessibility, and

many others we will encounter in the pages ahead. For geographers, some of these terms have more specific definitions than is generally assumed. There is a difference, for example, between *area* (surface) and *region*, between *boundary* and *frontier*, and between *place* and *location*. Sometimes, what at first may seem to be simple ideas turn out to be rather complex concepts.

Scale and Scope

One prominent term in the geographic vocabulary is **scale** 3. Whenever a map is created, it represents all or part of the Earth's surface at a certain level of detail. Obviously, Figure G-1 displays a very low level of detail; it is little more than a general impression of the distribution of land and water as well as lower and higher elevations on our planet's surface. A limited number of prominent features such as the Himalayas and the Sahara are named, but not the Pyrenees Mountains or the Nile Delta. At the bottom of the map you can see that one inch at this scale must represent about 1650 miles of the real world, leaving the cartographer little scope to insert information.

A map such as Figure G-1 is called a *small-scale* map because the ratio between map distance and real-world distance, expressed as a fraction, is very small at 1:103,750,000. Increase that fraction (i.e., zoom in), and you can represent less territory—but also enhance the amount of detail the map can exhibit. In Figure G-2, note how the fraction increases from the smallest (1:103,000,000) to the largest (1:1,000,000). Montreal, Canada, is just a dot on Map A but an urban area on Map D. Does this mean that world maps like Figure G-1 are less useful than larger-scale maps? It all depends on the purpose of the map. In this chapter, we often use world maps to show global distributions as we set the stage for the more detailed discussions to follow. In later chapters, the scale tends to become larger as we focus on smaller areas, even on individual countries and cities. But whenever you read a map, be aware of the scale because it is a guide to its utility.

The importance of the scale concept is not confined to maps. Scale plays a fundamental role in geographic research and in the ways we think about geographic problems—scale in terms of *level of analysis*. This is sometimes referred to as *operational scale*, the scale at which social or natural processes operate or play out. For instance, if you want to investigate the geographic concentration of wealth in the United States, you can do so at a range of scales: within a neighborhood, a city, a county, a State,* or at the national level. You choose the scale that is the most appropriate for your purpose, but it is not always that straightforward. Suppose you had to study patterns of ethnic segregation: what do you think would be the most relevant scale(s)?

*Throughout this book we will capitalize State when this term refers to an administrative division of a country: for example, the U.S. State of Ohio or the Australian State of New South Wales. Since this term is also synonymous with country (e.g., the state of Brazil), we use the lower case when referring to such a national state.

EFFECT OF SCALE

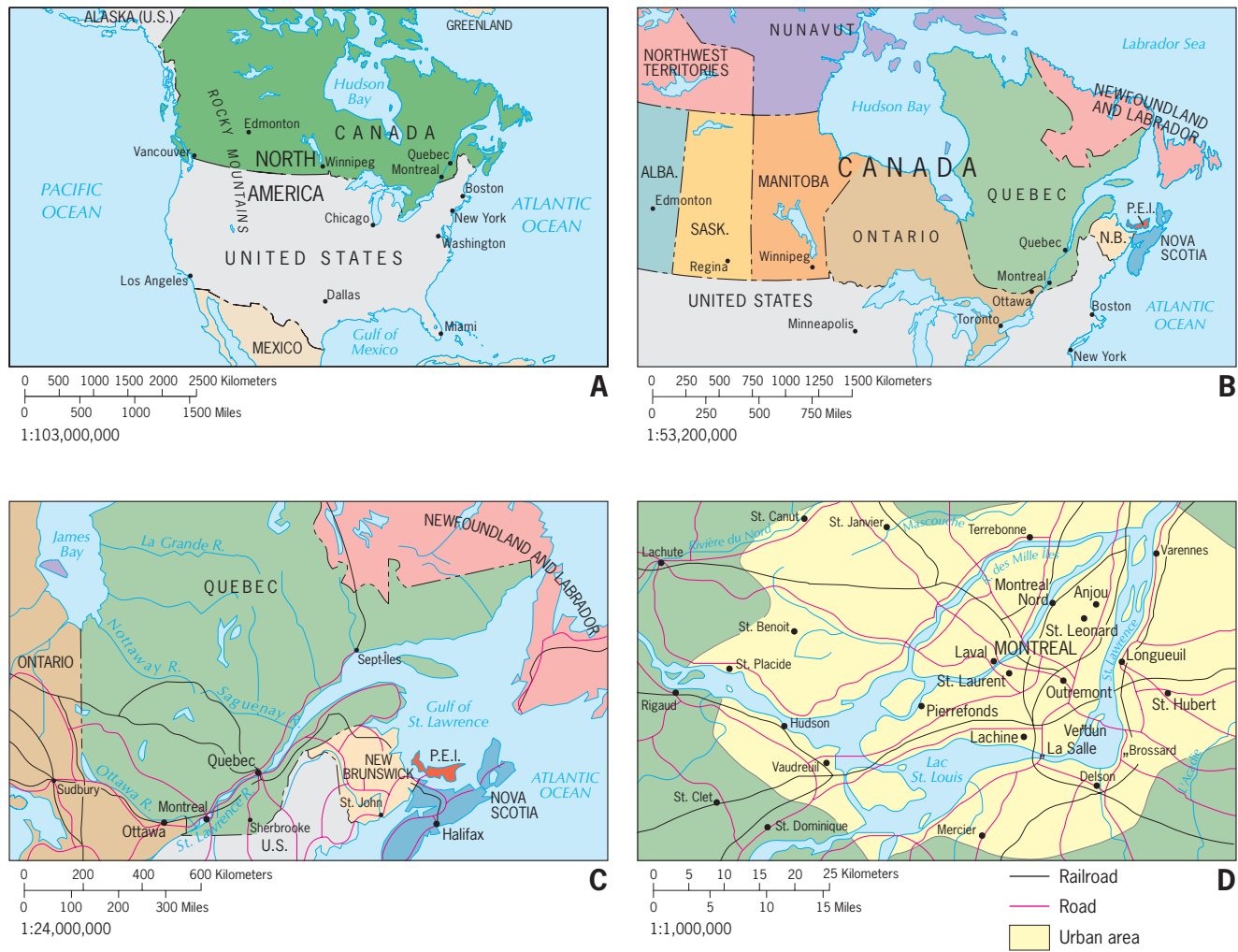


FIGURE G-2

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In this book, our main purpose is to understand the geography of the world at large and how it works, and so, inevitably, we must deal with broad spatial entities. Our focus is on the world's realms and on the main regions within those realms, and in most cases we will have to forego analyses at a finer scale. For our purposes, it is the big picture that matters most.

WORLD GEOGRAPHIC REALMS

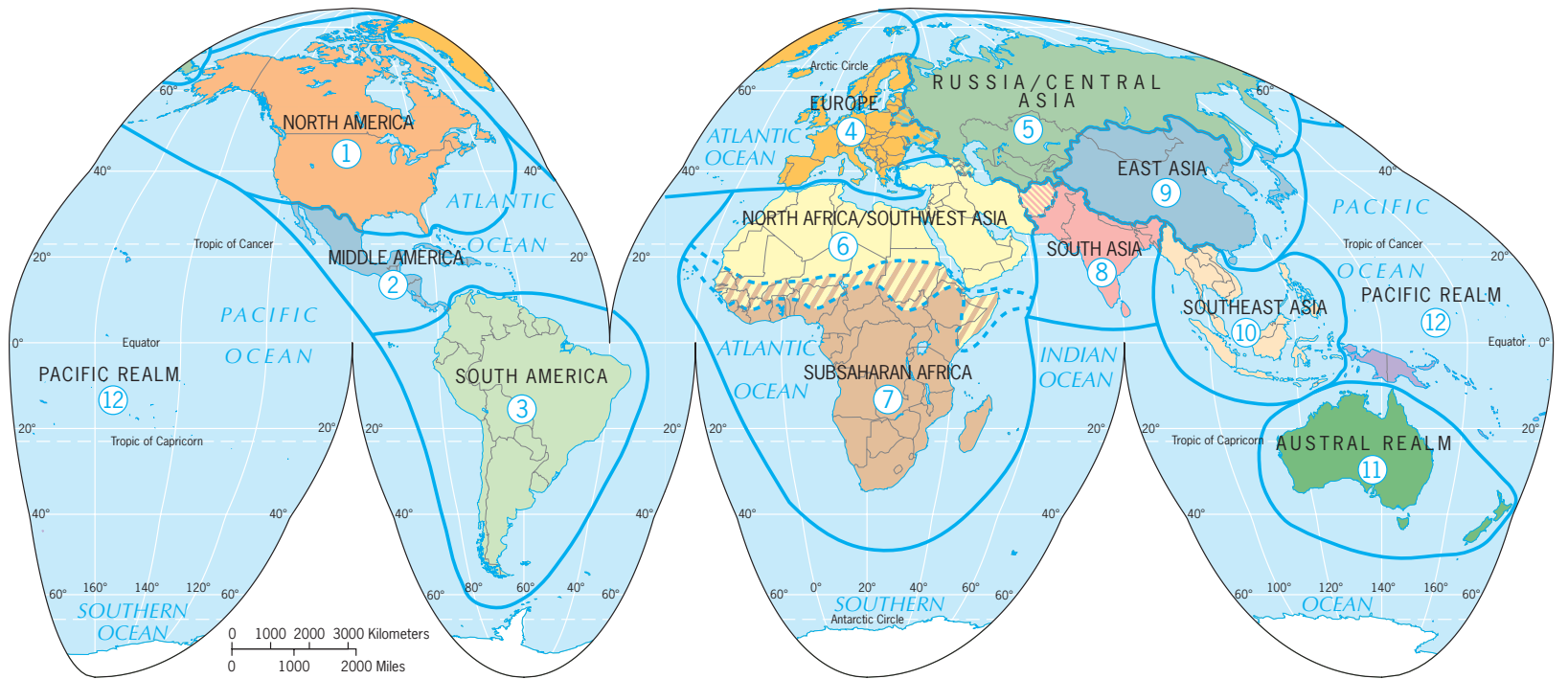
Ours is a globalized, interconnected world, a world of international trade and travel, migration and movement, tourism and television, financial flows and Internet traffic. It is a world that, in some contexts, has taken on the properties of a “global village”—but that village still has its neighborhoods. Their names are Europe, South America, Southeast Asia, and others familiar to us all. Like the neighborhoods of a city or town, these global neighborhoods may not have sharply defined borders, but their persistence, after

tens of thousands of years of human dispersal, is beyond doubt. We call such global neighborhoods **geographic realms** 4. Each of the realms possesses a particular combination of environmental, cultural, and organizational properties.

These blended, characteristic qualities are imprinted on the landscape, giving each realm its own traditional attributes and social settings. As we come to understand the human and environmental makeup of these geographic realms, we learn not only where they are located but also why they are located where they are (a central question in geography), how they are constituted, and what their future is likely to be in our fast-changing world. Figure G-3, therefore, forms the overall framework for our investigation in this book.

Criteria for Geographic Realms

The existence and identification of world geographic realms depends on a combination of factors. Our world offers a highly complex and variable environment of large and small continents,



**WORLD
GEOGRAPHIC
REALMS**

- ① NORTH AMERICA
- ② MIDDLE AMERICA
- ③ SOUTH AMERICA

- ④ EUROPE
- ⑤ RUSSIA/CENTRAL ASIA
- ⑥ NORTH AFRICA/SOUTHWEST ASIA
- ⑦ SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

- ⑧ SOUTH ASIA
- ⑨ EAST ASIA
- ⑩ SOUTHEAST ASIA

- ⑪ AUSTRAL REALM
- ⑫ PACIFIC REALM

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FIGURE G-3

enormous oceans and countless waterways, innumerable islands, diverse habitats and cultures, and intricate political geographies. What constitutes a realm depends on the circumstances, but we can still identify three main sets of criteria that apply to all realms:

- **Physical and Human** Geographic realms are based on sets of spatial criteria. They are the largest units into which the inhabited world can be divided. The criteria on which such a broad regionalization is based include both physical (that is, natural) and human (or social) yardsticks. For example, South America is a geographic realm because physically it is a continent and culturally it comprises comparable societies. The realm called South Asia, on the other hand, lies on a Eurasian landmass shared by several other geographic realms; high mountains, wide deserts, and dense forests combine with a distinctive social fabric to create this well-defined realm centered on India.
- **Functional** Geographic realms are the result of the interaction of human societies and natural environments, a *functional* interaction revealed by farms, mines, fishing ports, transport routes, dams, bridges, villages, and countless other features that mark the landscape. According to this criterion, Antarctica is a continent but not a geographic realm.
- **Historical** Geographic realms represent the most comprehensive and encompassing definition of the great clusters of humankind in the world today. China lies at the heart of such a cluster, as does India. Most of Africa constitutes a geographic realm from the southern margin of the Sahara (an Arabic word for desert) to the Cape of Good Hope and from its Atlantic to its Indian Ocean shores. Geographic realms are generally defined on the basis of physical features, but they are also the product of historical evolution.

Figure G-3 displays the 12 world geographic realms based on these criteria. As we will show in greater detail later, waters, deserts, and mountains as well as cultural and political shifts mark the borders of these realms. We shall discuss the positioning of these boundaries as we examine each realm.

Delineating Realms: Boundaries and Transition Zones

Oceans and seas are the most common natural boundaries of the world's realms, such as the South Atlantic to Sub-Saharan Africa's west or the North Atlantic to North America's east. But where two geographic realms meet, **transition zones** 5, not sharp boundaries, often mark their contacts.

We need only remind ourselves of the border zone between the geographic realm in which most of us live, North America, and the adjacent realm of Middle America. The line in Figure G-3 coincides with the boundary between Mexico and the United States, crosses the Gulf of Mexico, and then separates Florida from Cuba and the Bahamas. But Hispanic influences are strong in North America north of this boundary, and the U.S. economic influence is strong south of it. The line, therefore,

represents an ever-changing zone of regional interaction. Again, there are many ties between South Florida and the Bahamas, but the Bahamas resemble a Caribbean more than a North American society. Metropolitan Miami has so many ethnic Cuban residents that it is sometimes referred to as the second-largest Cuban city after Havana.

In Africa, the transition zone from Sub-Saharan to North Africa is so wide and well defined that we have put it on the world map; elsewhere, transition zones tend to be narrower and less easily represented. In the second decade of this century, such countries as Belarus (between Europe and Russia/Central Asia) and Afghanistan (between Southwest Asia and South Asia) lie in inter-realm transition zones. Remember, over much (though not all) of their length, borders between realms are zones of regional change.

Transition zones are fascinating spaces: it is almost as if they rebel against a clear ordering of the world's geography. They remind us that the world is a restless and contested place with shifting boundaries and changing geographic fortunes. They challenge the geographer and, above all, they underscore just how complex the study of geography is.

Two Types of Realms

The world's geographic realms can be divided into two categories. The first are *monocentric* realms that are dominated by a single major political entity, in terms of territory and/or population. North America (United States), Middle America (Mexico), East Asia (China), South Asia (India), Russia/Central Asia, and the Austral Realm (Australia) are all monocentric realms. They are, in their entirety, heavily influenced by the presence of that one country. It is as if the realm is organized around them.

The second type of realm is *polycentric* in nature. In these, the appearance, functioning, and organization of the realm are dispersed among a number of more or less equally influential regions or countries. Europe, North Africa/Southwest Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Pacific Realm all fall into this category. Polycentric realms can be more volatile in some ways, their development determined by the sum of many different parts.

Two of the world's realms are a bit more difficult to categorize. Southeast Asia is a dynamic realm that contains almost a dozen countries, some of them regarded as emerging economies. Arguably, Indonesia is becoming the most influential power, but it would be premature to label this a monocentric realm. The other realm that seems to fall in between is South America. Here it is Brazil that has the biggest population and increasingly the largest and most influential economy. South America, more emphatically than Southeast Asia, may be moving toward a monocentric spatial organization.

Of course, some of the dominant powers in the monocentric realms influence events beyond their realm and demonstrate a truly global reach. The United States has dominated world events (though not unchallenged) since World War II, but in recent decades it has had to make way for newly emergent powers such as Japan and Germany. Nowadays, China exercises a major influence not just