The most important challenges facing the world in the twenty-first century are associated with globalization, the increasing interconnectedness of people and places through converging processes of economic, political, and cultural change. Once-distant regions are now increasingly linked together through commerce, communications, and travel. Although early forms of globalization have been ongoing for several hundred years, the bonds of planetary integration are now strengthening at a pace never before witnessed. Many observers argue that contemporary globalization is the most fundamental reorganization of the planet’s socioeconomic structure since the Industrial Revolution. While few dispute the widespread changes brought about by globalization, not everyone agrees on what the implications are or whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

Although economic activities may be the prime mover behind globalization, the consequences affect all aspects of land and life in the new millennium. Cultural patterns, political arrangements, and social development are all undergoing profound change. Because natural resources are now global commodities, the planet’s physical environment is also implicated. Financial decisions made thousands of miles away alter local ecosystems, and the cumulative effect of these far-ranging activities has profound and possibly detrimental implications for the world’s climates, oceans, waterways, and forests (Figure 1.1).

These immense, widespread global changes make understanding our world both a challenging and a thoroughly necessary task. Our future depends on comprehending globalization in its varied manifestations because our lives are now deeply intertwined with this worldwide phenomenon. Although understanding globalization cuts across many academic disciplines, world regional geography is an effective starting point because of its focus on regions, environment, geopolitics, culture, and economic and social development. To understand globalization, a comprehensive knowledge of the world in which it is played out is necessary. This book seeks to impart such knowledge by carefully outlining the basic patterns of world geography and showing how they are being constantly reorganized by global interconnections (see “Setting the Boundaries: The Metageography of World Regions” on page 4 and Figure 1.2). Further, the themes and structure of the book are organized around the tensions and issues resulting from globalization.

**Diversity Amid Globalization: A Geography for the Twenty-first Century**

This chapter introduces a framework for studying world regional geography by first examining the varied aspects of globalization in contemporary life. While the economic implications of globalization dominate most discussions, the cultural, environmental, and geopolitical expressions also must be considered. Following this introduction to globalization is an overview of the major concepts of global geography: human–environment interaction; areal differentiation and integration; regions; landscapes; and global-to-local scales. The third, and last, section introduces the five organizational themes found in each regional chapter of this textbook.

*Figure 1.1 World geography* Viewed from space, both the diversity and the similarities of Earth’s physical fabric are apparent. The challenge of world regional geography is to move closer so that human activities, as well as the physical environment, can be examined. (European Space Agency/Science Photo Library/Photo Researchers, Inc.)
Converging Currents of Globalization

Most scholars agree that the major component of globalization is the economic reorganization of the world. Although different forms of a world economy have existed for centuries, a well-integrated and truly global economy is primarily a product of the last several decades. The attributes of this system, although familiar, bear repeating:

- global communication systems that link all regions on the planet instantaneously (Figure 1.3);
- global transportation systems capable of moving goods quickly by air, sea, and land;
- transnational corporate strategies that have created global corporations more economically powerful than many sovereign nations;
- new and more-flexible forms of capital accumulation and international financial institutions that facilitate 24-hour trading;
- global agreements that promote free trade;
- market economies that have replaced state-controlled economies and privatized firms and services formerly operated by governments;
- a plethora of planetary goods and services that have arisen to fulfill consumer demand (real or imaginary);
- and, of course, an army of international workers, managers, and executives who have given this economic juggernaut a unique human geography.

As a result of this global reorganization, economic growth in some areas of the world has been unprecedented over recent decades. Additionally, international corporations, along with their managers and executives, have amassed vast amounts of wealth, profiting from the new opportunities unleashed by globalization. However, not everyone has profited from economic globalization, nor have all world regions shared equally in the benefits. In Latin America, for example, a recent World Bank study documented a high level of income inequity, with the richest one-tenth of the population...
The impacts of globalization, often through global TV, are everywhere, even in remote villages in developing countries. Here, in a small village in southwestern India, a rural family earns a few dollars a week by renting out viewing time on its globally linked television set. (Rob Crandall/www.robcrandall.com)
Donald's, Burger King, and Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in rupturing—traditional diets with the explosive growth of Mc-

and caps now are found in small villages and large world by millions throughout the world. NBA T-shirts, sneakers, mote images of Western style and culture that are imitated

nal globalizing currents. Global TV, movies, and videos pro-

social tensions between traditional cultures and new, exter-

companies globalization, frequently setting up deep and serious
culture that threatens to reduce local diversity often accom-
damental cultural change. The spread of a global consumer
regions and social groups move ahead and prosper, others
1 percent in 1980 to 50 percent in 1990, largely as a result of
earning almost half the region’s income while the poorest
one-tenth earns only 2.5 percent. Furthermore, the percentage of the population classified as poor increased from 33 percent in 1980 to 50 percent in 1990, largely as a result of economic restructuring. Although that figure is currently slightly lower at 43 percent, these data suggest that as some regions and social groups move ahead and prosper, others fall behind.

Furthermore, such economic changes also trigger funda-
mental cultural change. The spread of a global consumer culture that threatens to reduce local diversity often accom-
panies globalization, frequently setting up deep and serious social tensions between traditional cultures and new, exter-
nal globalizing currents. Global TV, movies, and videos promote images of Western style and culture that are imitated by millions throughout the world. NBA T-shirts, sneakers, and caps now are found in small villages and large world cities alike.

Fast-food franchises are changing—some would say cor-
rupting—traditional diets with the explosive growth of Mc-
Donald’s, Burger King, and Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in most of the world’s cities, including Beijing, Moscow, Singapore, and Nairobi (Figure 1.4). While these stylistic changes may seem innocuous to North Americans because of their fa-
miliarity, they express the more profound structural cultural changes the world is experiencing through globalization.

Although the media give much attention to the rapid spread of Western consumer culture, we should not over-
look how nonmaterial culture also is becoming more dis-
persed and homogenized through globalization. Language is an obvious example. Many a Western tourist in Russia or Thailand has been startled by locals speaking an English made up largely of Hollywood or pop-song phrases. But far more than clichés of speech are involved, for social values, ideas, and even fundamental organizational structures also are being dispersed globally. Changing expectations about human rights, the role of women in society, and the intervention of nongovernmental organizations also are expres-
sions of globalization that have far-reaching implications for cultural change.

It would be a mistake, however, to view cultural global-
ization as a one-way flow that spreads from the United States
Chapter 1  Diversity Amid Globalization

5

and other Western countries into all corners of the world. In actuality, when forms of American popular culture spread abroad, they are typically melded with local cultural traditions in a process known as hybridization. The resulting cultural “hybridities” can themselves reverberate across the planet, creating yet another dimension of globalization. Today, ideas and forms from the rest of the world are having a great impact on U.S. culture (Figure 1.5). The growing internationalization of American food, the fact that more people across large portions of the United States speak Spanish than English in their homes, and even the spread among American children of Japanese comic book culture—Pokemon and the like—are all examples of impacts within the United States.

Globalization also has profound geopolitical facets. To many, an essential dimension of globalization is that it is little hindered by territorial, national, or jurisdictional restrictions. Globalization is just that—global—and its processes transcend traditional boundaries. For example, the creation of the United Nations following World War II was a step toward creating an international governmental structure in which all nations could find representation. Unfortunately, the simultaneous emergence of the Soviet Union as a military and political superpower led to a rigid division into Cold War blocs that inhibited further geopolitical integration. But with the peaceful end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the former communist countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were opened almost immediately to global trade and cultural exchange. These political developments coincided with the economic and technological changes we now see as the wave of globalization.

Some observers argue that economic imperialism has replaced the ideological divisions of the Cold War; hence, today, economic activity and politics are more intertwined than ever. They offer as an example governmental interaction with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other trading blocs in which national interests often are overshadowed by concerns about expanded global economic activity (Figure 1.6). And, while the Cold War may be over, regional military alliances and pacts are still very much a reality, again illustrating the close linkage between geopolitics and globalization. Beyond geopolitics, the expansion of a globalized economy also is creating and exacerbating environmental problems throughout the world as transnational firms, which do global business through international subsidiaries, disrupt local ecosystems in their incessant search for natural resources and manufacturing sites. Landscapes and resources previously used by only small groups of local peoples are now thought of as global commodities to be exploited and traded on the world marketplace. As a result, indigenous peoples are often deprived of their traditional resource base and displaced into marginal environments. On a larger scale, economic globalization is aggravating worldwide environmental problems like climate change, air pollution, water pollution, and deforestation. And yet it is only through global cooperation, such as the UN treaties on biodiversity protection or the Kyoto protocol on global warming, that these problems can be addressed.

Globalization has a clear demographic dimension as well. Although international migration is nothing new, increasing numbers of people from all parts of the world are crossing national boundaries, often permanently. Migration from Latin America and Asia has drastically changed the demographic configuration of the United States, just as migration from Africa and Asia has transformed western Europe. Countries

Figure 1.4 Hybrid world culture  Globalization is creating unique cultural expressions that often merge, or hybridize, the old with the new. Here, in Bangkok, a Thai woman eats lunch at a well-known hamburger chain under a poster for a uniquely Thai traditional dish, a tart papaya salad, which the hamburger chain is marketing as “Thai Spicy McSalad Shaker.” (AP/Wide World Photos)
such as Japan and South Korea that have long been perceived as ethnically homogeneous now have substantial immigrant populations. Even a number of relatively poor countries, such as Nigeria and the Ivory Coast, encounter large numbers of immigrants coming from even poorer countries, such as Burkina Faso. Although international immigration is still curtailed by the laws of every country—much more so, in fact, than the movement of goods or capital—it is still rapidly mounting, propelled by the uneven economic development associated with globalization.

Finally, there also is a significant criminal element to contemporary globalization, including terrorism (discussed later in this chapter), drugs, pornography, slavery, and prostitution. Illegal narcotics, for example, are definitely a global commodity (Figure 1.7). Some of the most remote parts of the world, such as the mountains of northern Burma, are thoroughly integrated into the circuits of global exchange through the production of opium and, hence, through the heroin trade. Even many areas that do not directly produce drugs are involved in their global sale and transshipment. Nigerians often occupy prominent positions in the international drug trade, as do members of the Russian Mafia. Many Caribbean countries have seen their economies become reoriented to drug transshipments and the laundering of drug money. Prostitution, pornography, and gambling have also emerged as highly profitable global businesses. Over the past decades, for example, parts of eastern Europe have become major sources of both pornography and prostitution, finding a lucrative but morally questionable niche in the new global economy.

Advocates and Critics of Globalization

Globalization, especially in its economic form, is one of today’s most contentious issues (Figure 1.8). Supporters generally believe that it results in greater economic efficiency that will eventually result in rising prosperity for the entire world. Critics think that it will largely benefit those who are already prosperous, leaving most of the world poorer than before while reducing cultural and ecological diversity. Economic globalization is generally applauded by corporate leaders and economists, and it has substantial support among the leaders of both the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States. Beyond North America, free trade and other aspects of economic globalization are generally supported by moderate and conservative politicians in most countries. Opposition to economic globalization is widespread in the labor and environmental movements, and among many student groups worldwide. Hostility toward globalization is sometimes deeply felt, as massive anti-globalization protests at World Bank and WTO meetings have made obvious.

The Pro-globalization Stance

Advocates argue that globalization is a logical and inevitable expression of contemporary international capitalism that will benefit all nations and all peoples by increasing global commerce and wealth. These new riches, they say, will eventually trickle down to enrich even the poorest of peoples in all the world’s different regions. Economic globalization can work such wonders, they contend, by enhancing competition, allowing the flow of capital to poor
areas, and encouraging the spread of beneficial new technologies and ideas. As countries reduce their barriers to trade, inefficient local industries will be forced to become more efficient in order to compete with the new flood of imports, thereby enhancing overall national productivity. Those that cannot adjust will most likely go out of business.

Every country and region of the world, moreover, ought to be able to concentrate on those activities for which it is best suited in the global economy. Enhancing such geographical specialization, the pro-globalizers argue, creates a more efficient world economy. Such economic restructuring is made increasingly possible by the free flow of capital, which ought to flow smoothly to those areas that have the greatest opportunities. By making access to capital more readily available throughout the world, economists contend, globalization should eventually result in a certain global convergence, meaning that the world’s poorer countries will gradually catch up with the more advanced economies.

Thomas Friedman, one of the most influential proponents of economic globalization, argues that the need to attract capital from abroad forces countries to adopt sound policies and practices. This process, he argues, will lead to increased national productivity and economic growth. As countries become more efficient in the global economy, they will be able to compete more effectively with other countries, thereby enhancing their overall national productivity.
economic policies. Friedman describes the great power that the global “electronic herd” of bond traders, currency speculators, and fund managers enjoy as they direct money to, or withhold it from, developing economies (Figure 1.9). If a country is to please the “herd” and thus get the capital it needs to modernize and compete internationally, Friedman argues, a country must adopt a policy of fiscal responsibility (which he calls the “golden straightjacket”) to avoid wasteful expenditures.

To the committed pro-globalizer, even the global spread of sweatshops—crude factories in which workers sew clothing, assemble sneakers, or perform similar labor-intensive tasks for extremely low wages—is to be applauded. People go to work in sweatshops because the alternatives in the local economy are even worse (Figure 1.10). Once countries achieve full employment through sweatshops, the argument goes, they can gradually improve conditions and move into more sophisticated, better-paying industries. Proponents of economic globalization also commonly argue that multinational firms based in North America or Europe often offer better pay and safer working conditions than do local firms and thus contribute to worker well-being. Extreme pro-globalizers go so far as to assert that poor countries ought to take advantage of their generally lax environmental laws in order to attract highly polluting industries from the wealthy countries, since acquiring such industries would enhance their overall economic positions.

The pro-globalizers generally strongly support the large multinational organizations that facilitate the flow of goods and capital across international boundaries. Three such organizations are particularly important: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The primary function of the World Bank is to make loans to poor countries so that they can invest in infrastructure and build more modern economic foundations. The IMF is concerned with making short-term loans to countries that are in financial difficulty—those having trouble, for example, making interest payments on the loans that they had previously taken. The WTO, a much smaller organization than the other two, works to reduce trade barriers between countries to enhance economic globalization. It also tries to mediate between countries and trading blocks that are engaged in trade disputes.

To support their claims, pro-globalizers argue that countries that have been highly open to the global economy have generally had much more economic success than those that have isolated themselves by seeking self-sufficiency. The world’s most isolated countries, such as Myanmar (Burma) and North Korea, have become economic disasters, with little growth and rampant poverty, whereas those that have opened themselves to global forces, such as Singapore and Thailand, have in the same period seen rapid growth and a substantial reduction of poverty.

Critics of Globalization  Virtually all of the claims of the pro-globalizers are strongly contradicted by the anti-globalizers. Opponents often begin by arguing that globalization is not a “natural” process. Instead, it is the product of an explicit economic policy promoted by free-trade advocates, capitalist countries (mainly the United States, but also Japan and those of western Europe), financial interests, international investors, and multinational firms. In addition, the processes of globalization so evident today are much more pervasive than those of the past, even during the period of European colonialism. Thus, while global economic and political linkages have been around for centuries, their modern expression is unprecedented.

Because the globalization of the world economy appears to be creating greater inequity between rich and poor, the “trickle-down” model of developmental benefits for all people in all regions has yet to be validated. This inequity is demonstrated by the increase in the percentage of poor people in many world regions (Figure 1.11). A recent United Nations report notes that, in social conditions, 60 countries are worse off now than 30 years ago and that there is a clear trajectory in the direction
Diversity Amid Globalization

of increasing inequity within the world. On a global scale, the richest 20 percent of the world’s people consume 86 percent of the world’s resources, while the poorest 80 percent use only 14 percent of global resources. The growing inequality of this age of globalization is apparent on both global and national scales. Globally, the wealthiest countries have in general grown much richer over the past two decades, while the poorest have become more impoverished. Nationally, even in developed countries such as the United States, the wealthiest 10 percent of the population have reaped almost all of the gains that globalization has offered, whereas the poorest 10 percent have seen their income decline in recent decades.

Opponents also commonly contend that globalization promotes free-market, export-oriented economies at the expense of localized, sustainable activities. World forests, for example, are increasingly cut for export timber rather than serving local needs. As part of their economic structural adjustment package, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund encourage developing countries to expand their resource exports so they will have more hard currency to make payments on their foreign debts. This strategy, however, usually leads to overexploitation of local resources. Opponents also note that the IMF often requires developing countries to adopt programs of fiscal austerity that entail a substantial reduction in funds for basic public services, including education, health, and food subsidies. By adopting such policies, critics warn, poor countries will end up with even more impoverished populations than before.

Anti-globalizers also dispute the empirical evidence on national development offered by the pro-globalizers. Highly successful developing countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Malaysia, they argue, have indeed been engaged with the world market but they have generally done so on their own terms, rather than those preferred by the IMF and other advocates of full-fledged economic globalization. These countries have actually protected many of their domestic industries from foreign competition and have, at various times, controlled the flow of capital.

The “free-market” economic model commonly promoted for developing countries is not even the one that Western industrial countries used for their own economic development. In Germany, France, and even to some extent the United States, governments historically have played a strong role in directing investment, managing trade, and subsidizing chosen sectors of the economy.

Those who challenge globalization also worry that the entire system—with its instantaneous transfers of vast sums of money over nearly the entire world on a daily basis—is inherently unstable. The noted critic John Gray, for example, thinks that the same “electronic herd” that Thomas Friedman applauds is a dangerous force because it is so liable to “stampedes.” These international managers of capital tend to panic when they think their funds are at risk; and when they do so, the entire intricately linked global financial system can quickly become destabilized, potentially leading to a crisis of global proportions. Even when the “herd” spots opportunity, trouble may still ensue. As vast sums of money flow into a developing country, they may create a speculatively inflated bubble economy that cannot be sustained.

Such a bubble economy emerged in Thailand and many other parts of Southeast Asia in the mid-1990s. So much money flooded Thailand that property values in the capital...
One of the unfortunate symbols of Thailand’s 1997 economic financial crisis are more than 300 unfinished high-rise buildings that now litter Bangkok’s downtown skyline. Before the economic collapse, Thailand’s “bubble economy” led to widespread speculation in downtown property values and new buildings. When the bubble burst, bankrupt developers walked away from their high-rise office construction, leaving these abandoned steel skeletons. (Agence France Presse/Getty Images)

The city of Bangkok came to exceed those of most U.S. cities—clearly an economically inefficient arrangement when one considers how much less productive the Thai economy is than that of the United States. When the bubble burst in 1997, a severe depression crippled most of Southeast Asia (Figure 1.12). The depression has never really ended in Indonesia, the biggest country of the region. While this Asian crisis did not undermine the entire world economy, as many anti-globalizers feared it would, some evidence suggests that it very nearly did so.

**Figure 1.12 Economic recession in Thailand**  One of the unfortunate symbols of Thailand’s 1997 economic financial crisis are more than 300 unfinished high-rise buildings that now litter Bangkok’s downtown skyline. Before the economic collapse, Thailand’s “bubble economy” led to widespread speculation in downtown property values and new buildings. When the bubble burst, bankrupt developers walked away from their high-rise office construction, leaving these abandoned steel skeletons. (Agence France Presse/Getty Images)

**A Middle Position?** A number of experts, not surprisingly, argue that both the anti-globalization and the pro-globalization stances are exaggerated. Those in the middle ground tend to argue that economic globalization is indeed unavoidable; even the anti-globalization movement, they point out, is made possible by the globalizing power of the Internet and is, therefore, itself an expression of globalization. They further contend that while globalization holds both promises and pitfalls, it can be managed, at both the national and international levels, to reduce economic inequalities and protect the natural environment. These experts stress the need for strong yet efficient governments, strengthened yet also substantially reformulated international institutions (such as the UN, World Bank, and IMF), and globalized networks of environmental, labor, and human rights groups.

One of the most influential of the middle-ground globalization scholars is Dani Rodrik, who argues that openness to the global economy can indeed be highly beneficial, but that countries must “make openness work” by investing in education and maintaining social cohesion. He concludes, “The world market is a source of disruption and upheaval as much as it is an opportunity for profit and economic growth. Without the complementary institutions at home—in the areas of governance, judiciary, civil and political liberties, social insurance, and education—one gets too much of the former and too little of the latter” (1999, p. 96).

Globalization is one of the most important issues of the day, and one of the most complicated. While this book does not pretend to resolve the controversy, it does encourage readers to reflect on these critical points as they apply to different world regions and locales.

### Diversity in a Globalizing World

The ever-increasing globalization of the world has led many observers to foresee a future world far more uniform and homogeneous than today’s. Optimists imagine a universal global culture uniting all humankind into a single community untroubled by war, ethnic strife, or resource shortage—a global utopia of sorts.

More common, however, is the view that the world is becoming blandly homogeneous as different places, peoples, and environments lose their distinctive character and become indistinguishable from their neighbors. While diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, it also may be the most dangerous thing to live without. Nationality, ethnicity, cultural distinctiveness—all are the legitimate legacy of humanity. If this diversity is blurred, denied, or repressed through global homogenization, humanity loses one of its desirable defining traits.

But even if globalization is generating a certain degree of homogenization, the world is still a fantastically diverse place (Figure 1.13). One still finds marked differences in culture (including language, religion, architecture, foods, and many other attributes of daily life), economy, and politics—as well as in the natural environment. Such diversity is so vast that it cannot readily be extinguished even by the most powerful forces of globalization. In fact, globalization often provokes a strong reaction on the part of local people, making them all the more determined to maintain what is distinctive about their way of life. Thus, globalization is really understandable only if one also examines the diversity that continues to characterize the world.

Our concern with geographic diversity takes many forms and goes beyond merely celebrating traditional cultures and unique places. People have many ways of making a living throughout the world. Different kinds of agriculture produce different food resources, and different uses of natural resources produce different landscapes. As a globalized economy becomes...
and explaining the distinctiveness of places, environments, and landscapes.

In summary, globalization can be defined as the increasing interconnectedness of people and places through converging processes of economic, political, and cultural change. It is a dominant feature of the contemporary world because it is pervasive and unrelenting. Its benefits are uneven. Although economic restructuring is a prime mover, globalization is not simply the growth and expansion of international trade. It also is represented by converging and homogenizing forces that many people resist. Because many environmental, cultural, political, economic, and social differences predate contemporary globalization, they could be thought of as the extant fabric of a highly diverse world. Thus, an equally important theme is how geographic diversity comes in conflict with globalization—how globalization in different places and at different times is suppressed, renegotiated, hybridized, protected, preserved, or extinguished. Because of the importance of this theme, diversity and globalization should be examined as inseparable—often in conflict, yet also often complementary.

**Geography Matters: Environments, Regions, Landscapes**

Geography is one of the most fundamental sciences, a discipline awakened and informed by a long-standing human curiosity about our surroundings and the world environment. The term *geography* has its roots in the Greek words for “describing the Earth,” and this discipline has been advanced since classical times by all cultures and civilizations. With the inherent satisfaction of knowing about different environments come pragmatic benefits for physical exploration, resource use, world commerce, and travel. In some ways, geography can be compared to history: While historians describe and explain what has happened over time, geographers describe and explain Earth’s spatial dimensions, showing how the world differs from place to place (see “Geographic Tools: From Satellites to Shovels”).

Given the broad scope of this geographical charge, it is no surprise that geographers have many different conceptual approaches to examining the world. At the most basic level, geography can be broken into two complementary pursuits, physical and human geography. Physical geography examines climate, landforms, soils, vegetation, and hydrology, while human geography concentrates on the spatial analysis of economic, social, and cultural systems.

For example, a physical geographer studying the Amazon Basin of Brazil might be interested primarily in the ecological diversity of the tropical rain forest or the ways the destruction of that dense vegetation changes the local climate and hydrology. The human geographer, on the other hand, might focus on the social and economic factors explaining the migration of settlers into the rain forest or the tensions and conflicts over land and resources between these migrants and indigenous peoples.
Another basic division is that between focusing on a specific topic or theme, such as climatology or cultural geography, and synthesizing various topics as they apply to a specific region or area of the world, such as Latin America or Europe. The former approach is referred to as thematic or systematic geography, while the latter is called regional geography. These two perspectives are complementary and by no means mutually exclusive. This textbook, for example, draws upon a regional scheme for its overall architecture, dividing the globe into 12 separate world regions, yet it organizes each chapter thematically, examining the topics of environment, population and settlement, cultural differentiation, geopolitics, and economic development. In doing so, each chapter synthesizes physical and human geography, as well as thematic and regional geography.

**Human–Environment Interaction**

A fundamental component of geographic inquiry is the examination of the basic yet highly complex relationship between humans and their environment. Though this analysis may take many different forms, three overarching questions form the foundation:

- Where and under what conditions does nature control, constrain, or disrupt human activities, and what kinds of societies are most vulnerable to these environmental influences (Figure 1.14)?
- How have human activities affected natural systems such as the world’s climate, vegetation, rivers, and oceans, and what are the consequences of these actions?
- Is there evidence that humans can live in balance with nature so that human use of natural resources might be sustainable over a longer period of time? Or is environmental damage an inevitable consequence of human settlement?

While there are no simple answers to these questions, the study of world regional geography offers valuable insights from different cultural and regional perspectives. The first question, for example, can frame discussions of how human vulnerability to flooding, earthquakes, and famine differs among various
societies. The second question illuminates the ever-important issue of what kinds of human activities cause the most (or the least) environmental damage. This comparative perspective can be helpful for generating solutions to existing problems, as well as constraining actions known to be environmentally harmful. Finally, the third question drives discussions about resource and environmental planning for the near- and long-term future.

Areal Differentiation and Integration

Geography can be considered the spatial science, charged with the study of Earth’s space or surface area, the uniqueness of places, and the similarities between them. One component of that responsibility is describing and explaining the differences that distinguish one piece of the world from another. The geographical term for this is areal differentiation (areal means “pertaining to area”). Why is one part of Earth humid and verdant while another just a few hundred kilometers away is an arid desert (Figure 1.15)? This is a question of spatial or areal differentiation, which is the systematic study of the differences between parts of Earth’s surface.

Geographers also are interested in the connections between different areas and how they are linked. This concern is one of areal integration, or the study of how places interact with each other. How and why are the economies of Singapore and the United States closely intertwined even though the two countries are situated in entirely different physical, cultural, and political environments? These questions of areal integration are becoming increasingly important because of the world linkages inherent in globalization.

Regions

The human intellect seems driven to make sense of the universe by lumping phenomena together into categories of similarity. Biology has its taxa of living objects, history its eras
and periods of time, geology its epochs of Earth history. Geography, too, makes sense of the world by compressing and synthesizing vast amounts of information into spatial categories based on similar traits. The resulting areal units are referred to as regions (look back at “Setting the Boundaries: The Metageography of World Regions”).

Sometimes the unifying threads of a region are physical, such as climate and vegetation, resulting in a regional designation like the Sahara Desert or the Amazonian rain forest. Other times the threads are more complex, combining economic and cultural traits, as in the use of the term Midwest for the central United States. Human beings compress large amounts of information into stereotypes; often the geographic region is just that, a spatial stereotype for a section of Earth that has some special signature or characteristic that sets it apart from other places (Figure 1.16).

Some caution is advised. First, no regions are homogeneous throughout. While there may be a single characteristic that unites an area, there will also be diversity and differences within it. A second caution is urged regarding borders between regions. Except for political borders that separate countries, states, or provinces, rarely are boundaries quite as abrupt as they appear on a map. Mountain ranges usually rise gradually from lowland areas, and deserts transition only gradually into grasslands; manufacturing districts thin out toward the periphery; and linguistic or other cultural regions typically blend gradually into one another. Usually those traits used to define a geographic region are most explicit and clear in the core area. Moving away from the core toward the boundaries, the defining traits usually weaken and grow less and less apparent.

**Space into Place: The Cultural Landscape**

Human beings conceptually transform space into distinct places that are unique and heavily loaded with meaning and symbolism. This diverse fabric of placefulness is of great interest to geographers because it tells us much about the human condition as it varies throughout the world. Places can tell us how humans interact with nature and among themselves; where there are tensions and where there is peace; where people are rich and where they are poor. Consequently, the systematic study of places is a critical element of geography.

A common tool for the analysis of place is the concept of the cultural landscape, which is, simply stated, the visible, material expression of human settlement, past and present. The cultural landscape is the tangible expression of the human habitat. It visually reflects the most basic human needs—shelter, food, work. Furthermore, the cultural landscape acts to bring people together (or keep them apart), because it is a marker of cultural values, attitudes, and symbols. Because cultures vary greatly around the world, so do cultural landscapes (Figure 1.17).
Most of the French countryside, for example, with its modestly sized agricultural fields enclosed by hedgerows and small vineyards adjacent to stone houses clustered together in villages, looks very different from a typical farm landscape of the midwestern United States. Here, fields cover several square miles and people are separated from each other by large distances, comfortable in isolated wood frame houses far from the nearest town. From the contrasting look of these two landscapes, we can infer much about the social and economic systems underlying the different societies.

Increasingly, however, we see the uniqueness of places being eroded by the homogeneous landscapes of globalization—shopping malls, fast-food outlets, business towers, theme parks, industrial complexes. Although these landscapes are familiar and often taken for granted, understanding the forces behind their spread is important because they tell us much about the expansion of global economies and cultures. While a modern shopping mall in Hanoi, Vietnam, may seem familiar to someone from North America, this new landscape conveys a profound message about change and culture in the twenty-first century as yet another component of globalized world culture is implanted into a once remote and distinctive city.

**Scales: Global to Local**

There is a sense of scale to all systematic inquiry, whatever the discipline. In biology, for example, some scientists study the smaller units of cells, genes, or molecules, while others take a larger view, examining plants, animals, or ecosystems. Similarly, some historians may focus on a specific individual at a specific point in time, while others take a broader view of international events over many centuries.

Geographers also work at different scales. While some may concentrate on analysis of a local landscape—perhaps a single village in southern India—others will focus on a broader regional picture, examining, for example, all of southern India. Others do research on a still larger global scale, perhaps studying emerging trade networks between southern India’s center of information technology in Bangalore and North America’s Silicon Valley, or investigating how India’s monsoon might be connected to and affected by the Pacific Ocean’s El Niño. But even though geographers may be working at different scales, they never lose sight of the interactivity and connectivity between local, regional, and global scales, of the ways that the village in southern India might be linked to world trade patterns, or how the late arrival of the monsoon (delayed, perhaps, by El Niño) could affect agriculture and food supplies in different parts of India.

This ability to move between different scales—global, regional, local—is critical for understanding contemporary world regional geography because of the way globalization links all peoples and places. Few villages today, however remote, are unconnected to the modern world. Global economies draw upon local crops and resources, and, conversely, fluctuations in world commodity prices affect the wellbeing of local people. Global TV and videos introduce foreign styles, ideas, mannerisms, and expectations into small towns and remote settlements in formerly isolated parts of the world. Global tourism in its different faces brings strangers (some welcome, some not) to far-flung localities, often corrupting and compromising the very uniqueness the tourists had sought. Further, very few places and people are isolated from global politics and tensions, from the influences of superpowers and supranational organizations.

In this book, we use the phrase “global to local” to capture the flexibility in the scale of analysis necessary to understanding placing regions, places, landscapes, and people in their globalized context (see “Global to Local: Is This Nebraska or India? The Globalization of Back Office Jobs”). Because our premise is that no place in today’s world is completely

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**Figure 1.17 The cultural landscape**

Despite globalization, the world’s landscapes still show great diversity. Geographers use the concept of the cultural landscape to better understand how people shape their environment to create unique places. This landscape is of a village and its rice terraces on the island of Luzon, the Philippines. (*Maurice Joseph/Robert Harding World Imagery*)
isolated from the larger currents, we need this perspective to examine the complicated linkages connecting people and places with the larger, dynamic world (Figure 1.18).

Themes and Issues in World Regional Geography

Geography is the academic discipline that describes Earth and explains the patterns on its surface. Although this task involves different and often contrasting approaches and perspectives, the themes and concepts held in common give coherence to the field, offering an effective perspective on how globalization affects different parts of the world. A general background on global environmental geography is found in Chapter 2, "The Changing Global Environment," which outlines the global environmental elements fundamental to human settlement—climate, topography, vegetation, and hydrology—and discusses the linkages between environmental issues and globalization.

Following the two introductory, thematic chapters, this book adopts a regional perspective, grouping all of Earth’s countries into the framework of world regions. We begin with the region most familiar to most of our readers, North America, and then move to Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Russia, and the different regions of Asia, before concluding with Australia and Oceania. Each of the 12 regional chapters employs the same five-part thematic structure—environmental geography; population and settlement; cultural coherence and diversity; geopolitical framework; and economic and social development.

Population and Settlement: People on the Land

The human population is far larger than it has ever been, and there is considerable debate about whether continued growth will benefit or harm the human condition. Not only aggregate numbers, but also geographic patterns of human settlement across the planet are causes of concern. While some parts of the world are densely populated, with intertwined towns and cities, other places remain almost empty (Figure 1.19).

Global population growth is one of the most vexing issues facing the world. With more than 6.4 billion humans on Earth, we currently add another 72.5 million each year, or about 8,261 new people each hour. About 97 percent of this population growth takes place in the developing world, especially in Africa, South and East Asia, and Latin America. Because of rapid growth in developing countries, perplexing questions dominate discussions of all global issues. Can these countries absorb the rapidly increasing population and still achieve the necessary economic and social development to ensure some level of well-being and stability for the total population? What role should the developed countries of North America, Europe, and East Asia play in addressing those population issues now that their own populations have nearly stabilized? While population is a complicated and contentious topic, several points help focus the issues:

- Very different rates of population growth are found in various regions of the world. While some countries are growing rapidly, others have essentially no natural increase; instead, any population increase comes from in-migration. India is an example of the former, Italy of the latter. Other countries, such as those of the former Soviet Union, have both low birthrates and negligible rates of immigration; unless their circumstances change, they soon will see major population losses.
- Population planning takes many forms, from the rigid one-child policies of China to the "more children, please" programs of western Europe. While some programs attempt to achieve their goals through coercion and force, others rely on incentives and social cooperation (Figure 1.20).
- Not all attention should be focused on natural growth because migration is increasingly a cause of population change in this globalized world. While most international migration is driven by a desire for a better life in the richer regions of the developed world, there also are millions of migrants who are refugees from civil strife, persecution, and environmental disasters.
- The greatest migration in human history is now going on as people move from rural to urban environments. If current
Chapter 1  Diversity Amid Globalization  17

Global to Local  Is This Nebraska or India?  The Globalization of Back Office Jobs

When you call an 800 number, instead of connecting with a service representative in Omaha, Nebraska, or somewhere else in the Midwest, you may actually be speaking to someone in India. Further, that person may have taken on a new identity to mask your international connection. Increasingly, globalization, with its instantaneous electronic communication, facilitates the subcontracting (or outsourcing) of "back office" jobs to India, where a large, relatively inexpensive, well-educated, English-speaking labor force willingly takes on these tasks.

"Hi, my name is Susan Sanders, and I'm from Chicago," says C. R. Suman, 22, who is in fact a native of Bangalore, where she fields calls from customers of a large U.S. telecommunications company. Not only would Ms. Suman's fluent English pass muster in the bleachers of Wrigley Field, but she also has conjured up a fictional American life in case her callers ask personal questions as she resolves problems with their phone bill. "We watch reruns of Friends and Ally McBeal to learn the right phrases," she explains.

The point of this pretense is to convince Americans who dial toll-free numbers that the person on the other end of the line works nearby, not 8,300 miles away in a country that many Americans think has no phones at all. Indeed, call centers are a booming business in India as North American and British companies set up supermarket-sized phone banks to handle the daily barrage of customer inquiries.

Call centers, though, are only the low end of a much larger industry of Indian software designers, accountants, Web site designers, and animation artists who work on projects for foreign companies from their offices in the booming cities of Bangalore, Mumbai, and Hyderabad (Figure 1.3.1). In fact, some experts predict that India is on its way to becoming the back office of the world. One consultant predicts that back office assignments will generate 800,000 new jobs and $17 billion in revenue for India by the year 2008.

The outsourcing of back office business helps U.S. firms cut labor costs for routine work like processing insurance claims or settling credit card bills because wages in India are half those in the United States. While salaries for call center jobs pay around $2,000 a year in India, these jobs are coveted. "In the U.S., these jobs are taken by housewives or kids who haven't decided what they want to do with their lives," said K. Ghanesh, the founder of Customer Asset. "Here they are career jobs for college graduates."

In the last several years, India has installed reliable high-capacity telephone lines in most of its major cities that allow people in that country to communicate with customers in the United States by phone or Internet with no discernible difference from a calling center in Nebraska.


Figure 1.3.1 Nebraska or India?  A call center worker in Mumbai, India, resolves problems for welfare recipients in the United States. (Amy Waldman/The New York Times)
births to find the net number added through natural increase. Gains or losses through migration are not considered in this figure. Instead of using raw numbers for a large population, demographers divide the gross numbers of births or deaths by the total population, producing a figure per 1,000 of the population. This is referred to as the \textit{crude birthrate} or the \textit{crude death rate}. For example, current data for the world as a whole show a crude birthrate of 21 per 1,000 and a crude death rate of 9 per 1,000. Thus, the natural growth rate is 12 births per 1,000. This is expressed as the rate of natural increase simply by converting that figure to a percentage (and rounding off). The current RNI for the world, then, is 1.3 percent per year.

Because birthrates vary greatly between countries (and even regions of the world), rates of natural increase also vary greatly. In Africa, for example, many countries have crude rates of more than 40 births per 1,000 people, with several higher than 50 per 1,000. Since their death rates are generally less than 20 per 1,000, we find RNIs higher than 3 percent per year, which are among the highest rates of natural growth found anywhere in the world.

\textbf{Figure 1.19 World population}  This world population map shows the differing densities of population in the regions of the world. East Asia stands out as the most populated region, with high densities in Japan, Korea, and eastern China. The second most populated region is South Asia, dominated by India, which is second only to China in population. In North Africa and Southwest Asia, population clusters are often linked to the availability of water for irrigated agriculture, as is apparent with the population cluster along the Nile River. Higher population densities in Europe, North America, and other countries are usually associated with large cities, their extensive suburbs, and nearby economic activities.

\textbf{Figure 1.20 Family planning policies}  Many countries in the developing world have concluded that unrestrained population growth may keep them from realizing their developmental goals, and therefore have put family planning policies in place. This poster in Vietnam urges smaller families. (Chris Stowers/ Panos Pictures)
### Table 1.1 Demographic Indicators of the Ten Largest Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (Millions, 2001)</th>
<th>Population Density, per square mile</th>
<th>Rate of Natural Increase</th>
<th>TFR&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percent &lt;15&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percent &gt;65</th>
<th>Percent Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>293.6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>218.7</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>179.1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>159.2</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>144.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>141.3</td>
<td>2,542</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>137.3</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>127.6</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Total fertility rate  
<sup>b</sup> Percent of population younger than 15 years of age  
Though the crude birthrate gives some insight into current conditions in a country, demographers also calculate the **total fertility rate**, or TFR. The TFR is a synthetic rate that measures the fertility of a statistically fictitious, yet average, group of women moving through their childbearing years. If women marry early and have many children over a long span of years, the TFR will be a large number. Conversely, if data show that women have few children, the number will be correspondingly small. From population data collected in the second half of the 1990s, the current TFR for the world is 2.8; this is the average number of children borne by a statistically average woman. For that same period, the TFR for Africa is 5.1, whereas in slow-growth or no-growth Europe it is 1.4.

One of the best indicators of the momentum (or lack) for continued population growth is the youthfulness of a given population, because this figure shows the proportion of a population about to enter the prime reproductive years. The common conceptualization for this measure is the percentage of a population under the age of 15. Equally important, this figure gives some indication of the health and nutritional needs of a society providing for a youthful population that is most vulnerable to famine, malnutrition, and disease. As a global average, 30 percent of the population is younger than age 15, but in fast-growing Africa, that figure is 42 percent, with several African countries approaching 50 percent (Figure 1.21). This suggests strongly that rapid population growth in Africa will continue for at least another generation despite the tragedy of the AIDS epidemic. In contrast, Europe averages 17 percent and North America 21 percent.

At the other end of the age spectrum is the percentage of a population over the age of 65. These data suggest the need for social welfare services such as health care and social security, which are usually provided through taxation of those of working age. Japan and European countries, for example, have a relatively high proportion of people over age 65 and a very small percentage of young people approaching their reproductive years. Taken together, these data raise concerns about whether these countries can continue to support social security and other public services necessary for the elderly.

### The Demographic Transition

Population growth rates change over time, as is well documented by the historical record. More specifically, historically in Europe, North America, and Japan, growth declined as countries became increasingly industrialized and urbanized. From this historical data, demographers generated the **demographic transition** model, a four-stage conceptualization that tracks changes in birthrates and death rates through time as a population urbanizes (Figure 1.22).

In the demographic transition model, Stage 1 is characterized by both high birthrates and death rates, leading to a very slow rate of natural increase. Historically, this stage is associated with Europe’s preindustrial period, a period that also predated common public health measures such as sewage treatment, the scientific understanding of disease transmission, and the most fundamental aspects of modern medicine. Little wonder that death rates were high and life expectancy short. Unfortunately, these conditions are still common in some parts of the world.

In Stage 2, death rates fall dramatically while birthrates remain high, producing a rapid rise in the RNI. Again, both...
historically and contemporaneously, this decrease in death rates is usually associated with the development of public health measures and modern medicine. One of the assumptions of the demographic transition model is that these services become increasingly available after some degree of economic development takes place and, further, that they are increasingly accessible to the growing number of urban dwellers.

However, even as death rates fall, it takes time for people to respond with lower birthrates, which begin in Stage 3. This, then, is the transitional stage in which people apparently become aware of the advantages of smaller families in an urban and industrial setting. In Stage 4, a very low RNI results from a combination of low birthrates and very low death rates. As a result, there is very little natural population increase.

For many professionals, the demographic transition model is a reasonable predictor of where and when we can expect population growth rates to slow in the developing world. However, it also has detractors who see too many complicating variables and differences between countries for universal application in the twenty-first century. Minimally, the demographic transition concept is a useful tool for organizing information about the vast differences in birthrates and death rates that we find around the world (Figure 1.23).

**Migration Patterns**

Never before in human history have so many people been on the move and lived outside of their countries of birth. Today about 125 million, or 2 percent, of the total world population can be considered migrants of some sort. Estimates suggest that this figure may increase by some 4 million annually. Much of this international migration is directly linked to the new globalized economy, for half of the migrants live either in the developed world or in those developing countries with vibrant industrial, mining, or petroleum extraction economies. In the oil-rich countries of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for example, the labor force is composed primarily of foreign migrants. In total numbers, fully a third of the world’s migrants live in seven industrial countries: Japan, Germany, France, Canada, the United States, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

**Figure 1.22 Demographic transition** As a country goes through industrialization, its population moves through the four stages in this diagram, referred to as the demographic transition. In the first stage, population growth is low because high birthrates are offset by high death rates. Rapid growth takes place in Stage 2 as death rates decline. Stage 3 is characterized by a decline in birthrates. The transition ends with low growth once again in Stage 4, resulting from a relative balance between low birthrates and death rates.

**Figure 1.23 Fertility and mortality** Birthrates and death rates vary widely around the world. Fertility rates result from an array of variables, including state family-planning programs and the level of a woman’s education. This family is in Bangladesh, a country that is working hard to reduce its birthrate through education programs. (Trygve Bolstad/Panos Pictures)
Since industrial countries usually have very low birthrates, immigration accounts for a large proportion of total population growth. Roughly one-third of the annual growth in the United States, for example, comes from in-migration.

But not all migrants move for economic reasons. War, persecution, famine, and environmental destruction cause people to flee to safe havens elsewhere. Accurate data on refugees are often difficult to obtain, but UN officials estimate that some 27 million people (or about 20 percent of the total migrant population) should be considered refugees. More than half of these are in Africa and western Asia. These women wait in line for water at a refugee camp in southern Sudan.

Settlement Geography

Geography has long been concerned with the different patterns of human settlement in the landscape. For example, in some regions, such as Europe and South Asia, people commonly cluster in villages and towns; this contrasts with the dispersed settlement pattern of rural North America, where people tend to scatter across the countryside in individual farms and homesteads. Additionally, the density, pattern, and dynamic of settlement convey much information about regional issues, both historically and currently. In many world regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia, European colonial powers often relocated indigenous people into new settlements to suit their own purposes. Plantation labor needs, for example, often were satisfied by moving native peoples from villages to agglomerated settlements. And, of course, the slave trade caused massive disruption in Africa of traditional settlement patterns.

Today settlement geography gives insight into the profound changes resulting from globalization: whether people are leaving the countryside or staying; whether they are moving to small towns or large cities; whether jobs from new plants and factories are decentralized into the countryside or agglomerated around large cities; whether mechanization is replacing farmworkers who then must seek other options in other places; whether civil and ethnic strife ravage the countryside, forcing people to flee as refugees; whether the rural environment is viable and productive or degraded. Taken together, a settlement pattern can express a sense of a place, the uniqueness of a landscape, and the nature of the home territory of a specific group of human beings in this complex world (Figure 1.25).
Soon, more than half of the people in the world will live in cities. From North America to Asia, Africa to Australia, we are becoming an ever more urban species, clustering in ever larger cities that continue to expand upward and outward at unprecedented rates of growth. Although many countries have long been urbanized, until this decade, at a global scale, most of the world’s population still lived in the countryside. But all that is changing rapidly, with profound implications for urban populations, the growing cities they inhabit, and the larger global environment itself.

What are these cities like and what do people do there? How are they changing as globalization aggravates tensions between the traditional and modern worlds? (Figure 1.4.1)

Although the broad currents of urbanization are discussed throughout this book, we focus on a specific town or city within each regional chapter to convey a particular sense of that place, of what it looks and feels like. We explore how that city embodies a unique personality, while at the same time how it inevitably reflects its ties to the larger world. These “Cityscapes” sidebars describe an array of cities, large and small, rich and poor (but usually a combination of both), and offer a series of regional snapshots that illustrate how these special localities are growing and changing. Here’s a preview:

In Chapter 3 (North America), the dynamic global city of Miami is explored, followed in Chapter 4 (Latin America) by the border city of Juarez, Mexico. In Chapter 5 (the Caribbean), Havana is described, a city closely linked to Miami in many different and complex ways. Then, in Chapter 6 (Sub-Saharan Africa) the influences of globalization on the traditional city of Accra, Ghana, are described. In Chapter 7 (North Africa), Fes, Morocco, a traditional Islamic city undergoing rapid change resulting from massive in-migration, offers another “Cityscapes” that illustrates the profound social and cultural changes being experienced in that portion of the world.

Berlin, Germany, and St Petersburg, Russia, two historic capital cities propelled into the twenty-first century by recent political changes, are highlighted in Chapters 8 (Europe) and 9 (Russia); and the Silk Road trade city of Samarkand, Uzbekistan, a UN World Heritage site, is featured in Chapter 10 (Central Asia). We visit Tokyo, one of the world’s largest cities, in East Asia (Chapter 11), while Mumbai (Bombay), India, a rapidly growing world city, is described in Chapter 12 (South Asia). Manila, the dominant city of the Philippines, is the “Cityscapes” focus for Chapter 13 (Southeast Asia), while the small town of Apia, capital of Samoa, is the focus in Chapter 14 (Australia and Oceania).

**Cityscapes**

**Exploring the World’s Urban Places**

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**Figure 1.4.1 Changing cityscapes** Economic globalization is changing the face of many world cities as new modern buildings replace traditional landscapes. This photo is of new development in Quingdao, China. (Howard Davies/Exile Images)
rates of urban migration in the next decades is great. Accompanying the movement of people from countryside to cities will likely be profound changes in family structure, national policies, and market and manufacturing economics.

**Conceptualizing the City**

Given the important role of cities in world regional geography, it seems appropriate to offer a brief conceptual framework for thinking about urban settlements.

- Cities are interdependent with other cities and towns, both regionally and globally, and are linked in an urban system of interactive settlements. As some cities expand or come to specialize in a specific function, such as banking or manufacturing, the relationships and interactions within that urban system may change. The largest city within the city system may have **urban primacy**, a term used to describe a city that is disproportionately large and dominates economic, political, and cultural activities within the country (Figure 1.27). In many countries, one large primate city usually stands out in that country’s urban system. Examples include Bangkok, Mexico City, Cairo, Paris, and Buenos Aires.

- Although cities are highly complicated settlements, they often share traits of **urban structure**, a term that refers to the distribution and patterning of land use within the city. Land use is linked to specific functions, such as finance, governmental activities, housing, retailing, and industry. Almost all large cities, for example, contain a central business district.

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**Figure 1.26 Industry and cities**

Historically, there is a close relationship between a country’s level of industrial development and its level of urbanization. That relationship is linked to a number of factors, including transportation, labor, financing, and market. This photo of a Seattle steel mill illustrates several aspects of that relationship. (Dan Lamont/Corbis/Bettmann)

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**Figure 1.27 Growth of world cities**

This map shows the largest cities in the world (more than 10 million), along with predicted growth by the year 2015. Note that the greatest population gains are expected in the large cities of the developing world, such as Lagos, Nigeria; Karachi, Pakistan; and Bombay (Mumbai), India. In contrast, large cities in the developed world are predicted to grow slowly over the next decades. Tokyo, for example, will add fewer than a million people.
(CDB) in which banks and business headquarters are located. Because these functions are not randomly distributed, but instead follow well-understood location principles, it is possible to generate models of urban structure that convey the commonalities between cities within a specific region. An example is the model of Latin American cities discussed in Chapter 4.

Closely related to urban structure is the landscape of the city, the **urban form** or physical arrangement of buildings, streets, parks, and architecture that gives each city its unique sense of place. For example, Cairo clearly looks and feels very different from New Delhi or Caracas (Figure 1.28). The reasons for these differences in urban landscapes range from different histories, economies, and planning policies to ideologies and cultural values. In the regional chapters, we explain why certain cities look and feel as they do.

Because urban migration has taken place so rapidly in developing countries, many cities have reached a state of **overurbanization**, in which the urban population grows more quickly than the provision of necessary support services such as housing, transportation, waste disposal, and water supply. Unfortunately, this is a fairly common situation in the developing world. The hundreds of thousands of “street people” of Calcutta are legend, although the phenomenon of homelessness is by no means restricted to South Asia. **Squatter settlements**, illegal developments of makeshift housing on land neither owned nor rented by their inhabitants, are widespread in the rapidly growing cities of the developing world. Such settlements often are built on steep hillside slopes or on river floodplains that expose the occupants to the dangers of landslide and floods. Squatter settlements also are often found in the open space of public parks or along roadways, where they are regularly destroyed by government authorities, only to be quickly rebuilt by migrants who have no other alternatives (Figure 1.29).

Even for those who have found more permanent housing, water and sewer connections are often rudimentary at best. Water service can be sporadic and restricted to a few hours a day, and open sewers are a disturbingly common feature of many cities. The World Bank estimated recently that 60 percent of the people in less-developed cities lived in homes that are not connected to sewers.

Although difficult to measure accurately in developing countries, urban unemployment and underemployment are of epidemic proportion, often encompassing up to 50 percent of the potential workforce. Without regularly paid work, new urban migrants survive by doing work outside the formal economy such as running errands, standing in lines for pay, street vending, or scavenging public dumps. Because cities are experiencing unprecedented and seemingly relentless growth, this multitude of problems is good reason for concern about the quality of life of the world’s recent urban migrants.

### Cultural Coherence and Diversity: The Geography of Tradition and Change

Culture can be thought of as the weaving that keeps the world’s diverse social fabric together. A cursory reading of the daily newspaper, however, raises questions about whether the world is coming unraveled because the frequency and intensity of cultural conflict seem ever-increasing. With the recent rise of global communication systems (satellite TV, movies, etc.)
fueled by ethnic tension. Here, religious strife between Hindu and Muslim people in India is the issue. (Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images, Inc - Lusis)

video, etc.), stereotypic Western culture is spreading at a rapid pace. While it is willingly accepted by many throughout the world, others resist what they consider a new form of cultural imperialism through protests, censorship, and even terrorism. In response to the spread of a common world culture, many people across the globe are revisiting their traditional and historical identities as ethnic or folk groups. Not simply a matter of quaint customs and costumes, it often leads to overt conflict with neighboring groups with different identities and self-interests. Religious conflicts, too, seem to be on the increase. Some conflict is coincidental with the return of religious choice to former Soviet lands; others result from missionary activity by Christian sects. The rise of religious fundamentalism as a reaction to globalization also breeds cultural tensions.

The geography of cultural cohesion and diversity, then, entails an examination of tradition and change, of language and religion, of group belonging and identity, and of those complex and varied currents that underlie and pervade twenty-first-century ethnic factionalism and separatism (Figure 1.30).

Culture in a Globalizing World

Given the diversity of cultures around the world, coupled with the dynamic changes associated with globalization, traditional definitions of culture must be stretched somewhat to provide a conceptual framework applicable to the new millennium. Though social scientists offer varied definitions of culture, there is enough overlap and agreement among these definitions to provide a starting point. Culture is learned, not innate, and is shared, not individual, behavior; it is held in common by a group of people, empowering them with what could be called, for lack of a better term, a “way of life.”

Additionally, culture has both abstract and material dimensions: speech, religion, ideology, livelihood, and value systems, but also technology, housing, foods, and music. These varied expressions of culture are germane to the study of world regional geography because they tell us much about the way people interact with their environment, each other, and the larger world. Finally, especially given the widespread influences of globalization, it is best to think of culture as dynamic rather than static. That is, culture is a process, not a condition, something that is constantly adapting to new circumstances. As a result, there are always tensions between the conservative, traditional elements of a culture and newer forces promoting change and modernity (Figure 1.31).

When Cultures Collide

Cultural change often takes place within the context of international tensions. Sometimes one cultural system will replace another; at other times resistance will stave off change. More commonly, however, a newer, hybrid form of culture results that is an amalgamation of two cultural traditions. Historically, colonialism was the most important perpetuator of these cultural collisions; today, globalization in its varied forms can be thought of as the major vehicle of cultural collision and change.

Cultural imperialism is the active promotion of one cultural system at the expense of another. Although there are still many expressions of cultural imperialism today, the most severe examples occurred in the colonial period when European cultures spread worldwide, sometimes overwhelming, eroding, and even replacing indigenous cultures. During this period, Spanish culture spread widely in Latin America; French culture diffused into parts of Africa; and British culture entered India. Of course, North America also was highly influenced by these three cultures. New languages were mandated, new education systems implanted, and new administrative institutions took the place of the old. Foreign dress styles, diets, gestures, and organizations were added to existing cultural systems. Many vestiges of colonial culture are still evident today. In India the makeover was so complete among some social groups that wags are fond of saying, with only slight exaggeration, that “the last true Englishman will be an Indian.”

Today’s cultural imperialism is seldom linked to an explicit colonizing force, but more often comes as a fellow traveler with globalization. Though many expressions of cultural imperialism carry a Western (even U.S.) tone—such as McDonald’s, MTV, Marlboro cigarettes, and even the use of English as the dominant language of the Internet—these facets result more from a search for new consumer markets than from deliberate efforts to spread modern American culture throughout the world.

The reaction against cultural imperialism, cultural nationalism, is the process of protecting and defending a cultural system against diluting or offensive cultural expressions while at the same time actively promoting national and local cultural values. Often, cultural nationalism takes the form of explicit legislation or official censorship that simply outlaws the unwanted cultural traits. Examples of legislated cultural nationalism are common. France has long fought the Anglicization of its language by banning “Franglais,” the use of English words such as “Le weekend,” in official French. More recently, France has sought to protect its national music and film industries by legislating that radio DJs play a certain
percentage (40 percent at this writing) of French songs and artists each broadcast day. France also is erecting tax and tariff barriers to Hollywood’s products. Additionally, many Muslim countries censor Western cultural influences by restricting and censoring international TV, which they consider the source of many undesirable cultural influences. Most Asian countries, as well, are increasingly protective of their cultural values, and many are demanding changes to tone down the sexual content of MTV and other international TV networks.

As noted above, the most common product of cultural collision is the blending of forces to form a new, synergistic form of culture. This is called cultural syncretism or hybridization (Figure 1.32). To characterize India’s culture as British, for example, would be to grossly oversimplify and exaggerate England’s colonial influence. Indians have adapted

Figure 1.31 Folk, ethnic, popular, and global culture A broad spectrum of cultural groups characterizes the world’s contemporary cultural geography, ranging from traditional folk cultures to the ubiquitous popular and global cultures. Representing global culture (a) is a Korean woman in downtown Washington, D.C., with laptop and cell phone, while the young couple (b) in Sofia, Bulgaria, express the universal style of popular culture. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the ethnic cultures of (c) Farifuna women in Honduras and (d) the Chongquinada in Peru. (Rob Crandall/Rob Crandall www.robcrandall.com)

Figure 1.32 Cultural syncretism The hybridization of culture, past and present, is clearly visible in this photo of South Asians (India vs. Pakistan) playing what was, before the colonial period, a uniquely English sport. Note, too, how this traditional sport now carries the logos and advertisements of global culture. (Arko Datta/Reuters/Corbis/Bettmann)
many British traits to their own circumstances, infusing them with their own meanings. India’s use of English, for example, has produced a unique form of “Indlish” that often befuddles visitors to South Asia. Nor should we forget how India has added many words to our own English vocabulary—khaki, pajamas, veranda, bungalow. In sum, both the Anglo and Indian cultures have been changed by the British colonial presence in South Asia.

Language and Culture in Global Context

Language and culture are so intertwined that, in the minds of many, language is the characteristic that best differentiates and defines cultural groups. Furthermore, because language is the primary means for communication, it obviously folds together many other aspects of cultural identity, such as politics, religion, commerce, folkways, and customs. Further, language is fundamental to cultural cohesiveness (Figure 1.33). It not only brings people together but also sets them apart; it can be an important component of national or ethnic identity and a way of creating and maintaining boundaries necessary to the reinforcement of regional identity and character (see “Local Voices: Who Are They and Why Should We Listen?,” page 32).

Because most languages have common historical (and even prehistoric) roots with other languages, linguists have grouped the thousands of languages found throughout the world into a handful of language families. These are simply a first-order grouping of languages into large units based upon common ancestral speech. For example, about half of the world’s people speak languages of the Indo-European family, which includes not only European languages such as English and Spanish, but also Hindi and Bengali, the widespread languages of South Asia. This grouping demonstrates that these diverse languages evolved from common linguistic roots. Within language families are smaller units that also give clues to the common history and geography of peoples and cultures. Language branches and groups (also called subfamilies) are closely related subsets within a language family in which there are usually similar sounds, words, and grammar. Well known are the similarities between German and English, or between French and Spanish. Because of those similarities, these languages are placed into the same linguistic grouping (Figure 1.34).
The notion of a language family, such as the one shown here for Indo-European, is that similar historical roots have imparted linguistic similarities to each group and language branch. Although the exact time and place of the origin of proto-Indo-European languages have yet to be agreed upon and thus remain a fascinating geographical and linguistic issue, there is little question for linguists that the Indo-Iranian languages of South Asia and Germanic languages of Europe and North America share a common root. The relationships between later language groups and branches are much clearer and usually can be historically documented.
Even individual languages often have very distinctive forms associated with specific regions. Such different forms of speech are called dialects. Although dialects of the same language have their own unique pronunciation and grammar (think of the distinctive differences, for example, between British, North American, and Australian English), they are—sometimes with considerable effort—mutually intelligible. Additionally, when people from different cultural groups cannot communicate directly in their native languages, they often agree upon a third language to serve as a common tongue, or lingua franca. Swahili has long served that purpose in polyglot eastern Africa, and French was historically the lingua franca of international politics and diplomacy. Today English is increasingly the common language of international communications (Figure 1.35).

**Figure 1.35 English as global language** A traffic sign in Saudi Arabia reminds us of how some familiar English phrases have become almost universal. In many ways, English has become a global lingua franca for diverse activities such as international business, aviation traffic, communications, popular music, and road signs. (Ray Ellis/Photo Researchers, Inc.)

Even individual languages often have very distinctive forms associated with specific regions. Such different forms of speech are called dialects. Although dialects of the same language have their own unique pronunciation and grammar (think of the distinctive differences, for example, between British, North American, and Australian English), they are—sometimes with considerable effort—mutually intelligible. Additionally, when people from different cultural groups cannot communicate directly in their native languages, they often agree upon a third language to serve as a common tongue, or lingua franca. Swahili has long served that purpose in polyglot eastern Africa, and French was historically the lingua franca of international politics and diplomacy. Today English is increasingly the common language of international communications (Figure 1.35).

**Figure 1.36 Major religious traditions** This map shows the geographical mosaic of major religious traditions found throughout the world. For most people, religious tradition is a major component of cultural and ethnic identity. While Christians of different sorts account for about 34 percent of the world’s population, this religious tradition is highly fragmented. Within Christianity, there are about twice as many Roman Catholics as Protestants. Adherents to Islam account for about 20 percent of the world’s population. The Sunni branch within Islam is three times larger than the Shiite. Hindus account for about 14 percent of the global population.
A Geography of World Religions

Another extremely important and often defining trait of cultural groups is religion (Figure 1.36). Indeed, with the erosion of atheistic communism in the former Soviet Union and the search for differentiating cultural identities in this era of a totalizing global culture, religion is becoming increasingly important in defining cultural identity. Recent ethnic violence and unrest in far-flung places such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Indonesia illustrate the point. Additionally, widespread missionary activity with its resulting conversions has both spread certain religions and aggravated religious tensions between certain groups.

Universalizing religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, attempt to appeal to all peoples regardless of location or culture; these religions usually have a proselytizing or missionary program that actively seeks new converts. In contrast are the ethnic religions, which remain identified closely with a specific ethnic, tribal, or national group. Judaism and Hinduism, for example, are usually regarded as ethnic religions because they normally do not actively seek new converts. Christianity, a universalizing religion, is the world’s largest in both areal extent and number of adherents. Although fragmented into separate branches and churches, Christianity as a whole claims almost 2 billion adherents, or about a third of the world’s population. The largest number of Christians can be found in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and North America. Islam, which has spread from its origins on the Arabian Peninsula as far east as Indonesia and the Philippines, has about 1.2 billion members.

While not as severely fragmented as Christianity, Islam should not be thought of as a homogeneous religion because it also has split into separate groups. The major branches are Shiite Islam, which constitutes about 11 percent of the total Islamic population and represents a majority in Iran and southern Iraq, and the mainstream Sunni Islam, which is found from the Arab-speaking lands of North Africa to Indonesia. Both of these forms of Islam are experiencing a fundamentalist revival in
Diversity Amid Globalization

which proponents are interested in maintaining a purity of faith distanced from Western influences (Figure 1.37). Hinduism, which is closely linked to India, has about 750 million adherents. Outsiders often regard Hinduism as polytheistic because Hindus worship many deities. Most Hindus argue, however, that all of their faith’s gods are merely representations of different aspects of a single divine, cosmic unity. Historically, Hinduism is linked to the caste system with its segregation of peoples based upon ancestry and occupation. But because the caste system is now anathema to India’s official democratic ideology, connections between religion and caste are now much less explicit than in the past. Buddhism, which derived from Hinduism 2,500 years ago as a reform movement, is widespread in Asia, extending from Sri Lanka to Japan and from Mongolia to Vietnam. In its spread, Buddhism came to coexist with other faiths in certain areas, making it difficult to accurately estimate the number of its adherents. Estimates of the total Buddhist population thus range from 350 million to 900 million people.

Finally, in some parts of the world, religious practice has declined for different reasons, giving way to secularization, in which people consider themselves either nonreligious or outright atheistic. Though secularization is difficult to measure,
social scientists estimate that about 1 billion people fit into this category worldwide. Perhaps the best example of secularization comes from the former communist lands of Russia and eastern Europe, where there was overt hostility between government and church. Since the fall of Soviet communism in 1991, however, many of these countries have experienced a modest religious revival. Secularization has probably grown more pronounced in recent years in western Europe. Although historically and to some extent still culturally a Roman Catholic country, France now reportedly has more people (mostly migrants) attending Muslim mosques on Fridays than Christian churches on Sundays. Japan and the other countries of East Asia are also noted for their high degree of secularization.

Geopolitical Framework: Fragmentation and Unity

The term geopolitics is used to describe and explain the close link between geography and politics. More specifically, geopolitics focuses on the interactivity between power, territory, and space at all scales from the local to the global. There is little question that one of the dominant characteristics of the last several decades has been the rapidity, scope, and character of political change in various regions of the world (see “Geography in the Making: Current Events in a Dynamic World”).

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 came opportunities for self-determination and independence in eastern Europe and Central Asia. The result has been fundamental changes in economic, political, and even cultural alignments and alliances. While religious freedom helps drive national identities in some new Central Asian republics, eastern Europe seems primarily concerned with economic and political links to western Europe. Russia itself wavers perilously between different geopolitical pathways. Phrases and terms common to an earlier generation may disappear; for example, the “Cold War” between the two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union, has already become a historical artifact (Figure 1.38). Optimism at the end of the Cold War was captured only briefly with the term “the New World Order.” Hopes for a new global stability proved short-lived as the superpowers withdrew their protection from many of the countries of their former domains, leaving many countries susceptible to internal tensions. Ethnic and cultural factions, giddy with the prospect of self-rule, promoted diverse and contradictory agendas that brought many countries to the brink of anarchy. Continued strife in the former Yugoslavia, Africa, the Caucasus, and Central Asia serve as examples. As a result, factionalism, ethnic tensions, and regional separatism are becoming increasingly widespread in the early twenty-first century.

While wide-ranging international conflicts remain a nagging concern of diplomats and governments (particularly in South Asia, where the proliferation of nuclear weapons has inflamed historical animosities), perhaps more common are strife and tension within—rather than between—nation-states. Civil unrest, tribal tensions, terrorism, and religious factionalism have created a new fabric and scale of political tension. So widespread and problematic is this tension in some parts of the world that scholars increasingly describe the nation-state as a possibly archaic political structure that may soon be replaced by tribal and ethnic micro-states, some taking the form of warlord fiefdoms.

Global Terrorism

In many ways, the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States underscore the need to expand our conceptualization of globalization and geopolitics. While previous terrorist acts were usually connected to nationalist or regional geopolitical aspirations to achieve independence or autonomy, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were different. Unlike IRA terrorist bombings in Great Britain...
or those of the extremist wing of Basque nationalists in Spain, the September 2001 terrorism transcended conventional geopolitics as a relatively small group of religious fanatics attacked the symbols and superstructure of Western culture, power, and finance. Moreover, these attacks were a stark reminder of the increasingly close and now unpredictable interconnections between political activity, cultural identity, and the economic linkages that bind our contemporary world.

In geopolitical terms, global terrorism demands a new way of looking at the world to understand the attacks and to assess the profound implications of that terrorism. More to the point, many experts argue that global terrorism is both a product of as well as a reaction to globalization. Unlike earlier geopolitical conflicts, the geography of global terrorism is not defined by a war between well-established political states. Instead, the Al Qaeda terrorists appear to belong to a web of small, well-organized cells located in many different countries, linked in a decentralized network that provides guidance, financing, and political autonomy. This network has used the tools and means of globalization to its advantage. Members communicate instantaneously via cell phones and the Internet. Transnational members travel between countries quickly and frequently. The network’s nefarious activities are financed through a complicated array of holding companies and subsidiaries that traffic in a range of goods, such as honey, diamonds, and opium. To recruit members and political support, the network feeds upon the unrest and inequities (real and imagined) resulting from economic globalization; and global terrorism attacks targets that symbolize those modern global values and activities it opposes.

Even though the September 2001 attacks focused terror on the United States, the casualties and resultant damage were truly international, for citizens from more than 80 countries were killed in the World Trade Center tragedy alone. Additionally, the attacks pushed parts of the global economy from temporary economic slowdown to full-on recession. The devastating effects on U.S. and international airline companies as well as the loss of tourist revenue to moderate Muslim countries such as Morocco and Egypt serve as examples.

The military and political responses to global terrorism also demand an expanded conceptualization of geopolitics. In 2001, for example, in Afghanistan, the military muscle of a nation-state superpower—the United States—was directed not at another nation-state but, rather, at a confederation of religious extremists, the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Military strategists refer to this kind of fighting as asymmetrical warfare, a term that aptly describes the differences between a superpower’s military technology and strategy and the lower level technology and guerrilla tactics used by Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Most superpower military strategists agree that the war on terrorism will be fought with this sort of political and battlefield asymmetry.
Further, because the global context for the war on terrorism involves a complex mosaic of religious, cultural, political, and economic undercurrents, there is debate in geopolitical circles about whether the United States can—or should—pursue its agenda as a member of a coalition of explicitly committed countries or whether it will be done essentially alone, or unilaterally. Many geopolitical thinkers posit that resolution of this coalition-unilateral issue will be decided by how the United States defines its goals for the war on terrorism. A global coalition seems likely if the United States sets a specific and limited goal such as the destruction of Al Qaeda. However, the broader goals discussed in Washington, namely the displacement of governments in Iraq or North Korea, or rebuilding nation-states in the Middle East, may have limited support from the world community.

**Nation-States**

A conventional starting point for examining political geography is the concept of the nation-state. The hyphen links two diverse concepts, the term state, which is a political entity with territorial boundaries recognized by other countries and internally governed by an organizational structure, with the term nation, which refers to a large group of people who share numerous cultural elements, such as language, religion, tradition, or simple cultural identity, and, more importantly, view themselves as forming a single political community. The nation-state, then, is ideally a relatively homogeneous cultural group with its own fully independent political territory.

Nation-states, however, do not always fit neatly into the boundaries of actual states. In fact, perfect nation-state congruence is relatively rare (Figure 1.39). While some large cultural groups may consider themselves to be nations lacking recognized, self-governed territory (such as the Kurdish people of Southwest Asia), many, if not most independent states include cultural and ethnic groups within their established boundaries that seek autonomy and self-rule. In Spain, for example, both the Catalans and the Basques think of themselves as forming separate, non-Spanish nations, and thus seek political autonomy from the central government. On a world scale, out of the more than 200 different countries that now make up the global geopolitical fabric, only several dozen would qualify as true nation-states.

Although the nation-state may be considered the ideal political model, multinational states containing different cultural and ethnic groups are much more numerous than homogeneous ones. Moreover, micronationalism, or group identity with the goal of self-rule within an existing nation-state, has been on the rise for the last half century and remains a considerable source of geopolitical tension throughout the world.

**Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces**

Cultural and political forces acting to weaken or divide an existing state are called centrifugal forces, because they pull away from the center. Many have already been mentioned: linguistic minority status, ethnic separatism, the desire for

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**Figure 1.39 A nation without a state** Not all nations or large cultural groups control their own political territories or states. For example, the Kurdish people of Southwest Asia traditionally occupy a large cultural territory that is currently in four different political states: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. As a result of this political fragmentation, the Kurds are considered minorities, and each of the these four political units attempts to its own way to limit (and even eliminate) Kurdish unity and power so as to weaken claims for an independent Kurdish state.
territorial autonomy, along with disparities in income and well-being. Separatist tendencies in French-speaking Quebec (Canada) or the Basque region in Spain are good examples (Figure 1.40). Counteracting these dissipating forces are those that promote political unity and reinforce the state structure. These **centripetal forces** could include a shared sense of history, a need for military security, an overarching economic structure, or simply the advantages that come from a larger political apparatus that builds and maintains the infrastructure of highways, airports, and schools.

The overriding question in much of the world is whether centrifugal forces will increase in strength and furor so that they overcome the centripetal forces, leading to new, smaller independent units. Also important is whether this process takes place through violent struggle or peaceful means. Given the current widespread nature of these internal tensions, separatist struggles probably will continue to dominate regional geopolitics for decades to come.

**Boundaries and Frontiers**

A key component of the definition of a state is that its territory is demarcated by borders recognized by a large number of other states. Although these boundaries may be one of the most recognizable features of a world map, the issue of agreed-upon borders is often complicated and contentious. Border wars were frequent in the twentieth century, and if the current trend toward an increasing number of independent states continues, boundary disputes may become an even more important facet of the geopolitical landscape.

**Figure 1.40 Basque separatism**  The outspokenness and militancy of the Spanish Basques are just one expression of the ethnic separatism that is still common in contemporary Europe and, for that matter, the world.  *(Alberto Arceo/Panos Pictures)*

**Figure 1.41 Ethnic and state boundaries**  This map shows the lack of congruence between ethnic group territory and modern political borders in southern Africa. Instead of adhering to ethnographic boundaries, several of these political boundaries were drawn geometrically (such as the Namibia–Botswana border) or along physical features such as rivers and mountains (the South Africa–Botswana border).
A cursory glance at the world political map reminds us that boundaries come in many forms. Some are drawn along physical features such as mountain ridges, rivers, or coastlines. Although historically it was thought that using clearly marked landscape features would lessen border tensions, this is not always the case. The Rio Grande between Texas and Mexico is notoriously porous to illegal boundary crossings. Similarly, the sinuous coastline of southern Spain offers North Africans ample opportunity for illegal entry into Europe.

Ethnographic boundaries, which follow cultural traits such as language or religion, have long been a model for international politics because they complement the ideal of the nation-state (Figure 1.41). Many boundaries in Europe were adjusted ethnographically after World War I. Similarly, attempts were made to define the new states of Bosnia and Serbia with ethnographic boundaries after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

In contrast, geometric boundaries are perfectly straight lines, drawn without regard for physical or cultural features, that usually follow a parallel of latitude or a meridian of longitude. Historically, geometric boundaries often were drawn by colonial powers as a convenient way of quickly demarcating spheres of influence; the use of the 49th parallel to draw the western part of the boundary between Canada and the United States is an excellent example. Other illustrations can be found in the arid lands of North Africa. However, when space is divided by geometric borders without consideration for the diverse cultural fabric on the landscape, border wars and even civil wars often result.

Colonialism and Decolonialization

One of the overarching themes in world regional geography is the waxing and waning of European colonial power over much of the world. Colonialism refers to the formal establishment of rule over a foreign population. A colony has no independent standing in the world community, but instead is seen only as an appendage of the colonial power. Generally speaking, the main period of colonization by European states was from 1500 through the mid-1900s, though even today a few colonies remain (Figure 1.42).

Decolonization refers to the process of a colony’s gaining (or regaining) control over its territory and establishing a separate, independent government. As was the case with the Revolutionary War in the United States, this process often begins as a violent struggle. As wars of independence became increasingly prevalent in the mid-twentieth century, some colonial powers recognized the inevitable and began working toward peaceful disengagement from their colonies. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, for example, Britain and France granted independence to most of their former African colonies, often after a period of warfare or civil unrest. This

Figure 1.42 The colonial world, 1914  This world map shows the extent of colonial power and territory just prior to World War I. At that time, most of Africa was under colonial control, as were Southwest Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Australia and Canada were very closely aligned with England. Also note that in Asia Japan controlled colonial territory in Korea and northeastern China, which was known as Manchuria at that time.
process was nearly completed in 1997 when Hong Kong was peacefully restored to China by the United Kingdom.

But decades and even centuries of colonial rule are not easily erased, hence, the impress of colonialism is still found in the new nations’ governments, education, agriculture, and economies. While some countries may enjoy special status with, and receive continued aid from, their former colonial masters, others remain disabled and disadvantaged because of a much-reduced resource base. Some scholars regard the continuing economic ties between certain imperial powers and their former colonies as a form of exploitative neocolonialism. On the other hand, some remaining colonies, such as the Dutch Antilles in the Caribbean, have made it clear that they have no wish for independence, finding both economic and political advantages in continued dependency. Because the consequences of colonialism differ greatly from place to place, the final accounting is far from complete (Figure 1.43).

International and Supranational Organizations

As another attribute of globalization, international organizations increasingly link two or more states for the express purpose of military, economic, political, or environmental cooperation. At the top of this organizational chart, of course, is the United Nations (UN), which has increasingly become a major peacekeeping force on the international scene. Virtually all independent countries belong to the UN, although a few, such as Switzerland, do not. Other well-known organizations are the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which includes 11 oil-producing countries around the world; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance linking the United States and Canada to Europe (including Turkey); and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional forum that encompasses all of Southeast Asia. Regional trade alliances are also a common part of the global landscape, with the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) linking three North American countries—Canada, the United States, and Mexico—into a free-trade area.

A supranational organization is defined as an organization of states linked by a common goal, within which individual state power may be reduced to achieve the organization’s goals. Put differently, the higher goals of the supranational organization may often necessitate a reduction in state sovereignty by individual members (Figure 1.44). Perhaps the best example is the European Union, or EU, which began as an economic union, and which has expanded its powers so that it now holds elections, has a parliament, promotes a common monetary currency, and works toward reducing border formalities between member states. These EU goals remain controversial, however, as discussed in Chapter 8.

Figure 1.43 Colonial vestiges in Vietnam. The red star flag of communist Vietnam flies in front of the Hotel de Ville in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). This juxtaposition of the contemporary government’s symbol and an artifact of the French colonial period captures the process of decolonialization and independence.

(Catherine Karnow/Woodfin Camp & Associates)

Economic and Social Development: The Geography of Wealth and Poverty

The pace of global economic change and development has accelerated dramatically in the last several decades. As a result, we now talk about global assembly lines, outsourcing, transnational corporations, commodity chains, and international electronic offices. Few regions of the world are untouched by these changes. The overarching question, however, is whether the positive changes of economic globalization outweigh the negative. While answers are varied, sometimes elusive, and often inconclusive, an important first step in world regional geography is to link economic change to social development.

Economic development is commonly accepted as desirable because it generally brings increased prosperity to people, regions, and nations, which also, by conventional thinking at least, usually translates into social improvements such as better health care, improved education systems, and more enlightened labor practices. The operative assumption is that, as the economy of an area develops, so will its social infrastructure.
However, one of the more troubling expressions of recent economic growth, has been the geographic unevenness of prosperity and infrastructural improvement. While some regions prosper, others languish and, in fact, fall behind. As a result, the gap between rich and poor regions has increased. This geographic unevenness in development, prosperity, and social infrastructure is a characteristic signature of the early twenty-first century. According to the World Bank, about half the people in the world live on less than two dollars a day, with about 60 percent of them in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Regional inequities also are problems because of their inseparable interaction with political, environmental, and social concerns. Political instability and civil strife within a nation, for example, often are driven by the economic disparity between a poor periphery and an affluent, industrial core. In those backwaters, poverty, social tensions, and environmental degradation often drive civil unrest that ripples through the rest of the country. This theme of the unevenness of social and economic development is a major story line in the regional chapters of this book.

**More- and Less-Developed Countries**

Until the last century, economic development was centered in North America, Japan, and Europe, while most of the rest of the world remained gripped in poverty. This uneven distribution of power led scholars to devise a **core-periphery model** of the world economy. According to this model, the United States, Canada, western Europe, and Japan constitute the global economic core of the North, while most of the areas to the south make up a less-developed global periphery. Although an oversimplification of sorts, this core-periphery dichotomy does contain some truth. All the G-8 countries—the exclusive club of the world’s major industrial nations made up of the United States, Canada, France, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Russia—are located in the northern hemisphere core. Another assumption of this core-periphery model is that the developed core achieved its wealth primarily by exploiting the periphery, either through historical colonial relationships or through more recent economic imperialism.

Today, for example, much is made of “North–South tensions,” a phrase implying that the rich and powerful countries of the Northern Hemisphere are at odds with poor and less powerful countries to the south. This dichotomy is based upon the historical arrangement of northern powers—mainly European—dominating and exploiting southern colonies in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. Over the past several decades, however, the global economy has grown much more complicated. A few former colonies of the south, most notably Singapore, have become very wealthy. Meanwhile, the northern countries of the former Soviet Union have experienced an extremely rapid economic and political decline and are therefore now sometimes placed within the zone of global poverty. Australia and New Zealand, moreover, never fit into the neat North–South division. For these reasons, many
global experts conclude that the term North–South is antiquated and should be avoided.

Another term, the Third World, often is used to refer to the developing world. This phrase carries connotations of a low level of economic development, unstable political organizations, and a rudimentary social infrastructure. Originally, the term was part of the Cold War vocabulary used to describe those countries that were independent and not allied with either the capitalist and democratic First World or communist Second World superpowers. Because the Second World of the Soviet Union and its eastern European allies no longer exists, the concept of a Third World must be questioned. Also significant is the fact that a number of so-called Third World countries, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, have experienced such rapid growth over the past several decades that they are no longer underdeveloped. In this book, therefore, we avoid the terms Third World and First World and instead use relational terms that capture the complex spectrum of economic and social development, namely more-developed country (MDC), and less-developed country (LDC). A world map of per capita GNI shows the spatial patterns of rich, moderate, and poor countries (Figure 1.45).

**Indicators of Economic Development**

The terms development and growth often are used interchangeably when referring to international economic activities. There is, however, value in keeping them separate. Development has both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. A dictionary definition uses phrases such as “expanding or realizing potential; bringing gradually to a fuller or better state.” When we talk about economic development, then, we usually imply structural changes, such as a shift from agricultural to manufacturing activity, with accompanying changes in the uses of labor, capital, and technology. Along with these changes are assumed improvements in standard of living, education, and even political organization. The structural changes experienced by Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand or Malaysia in the last several decades illustrate this process.

Growth, in contrast, is simply the increase in size of a system. The agricultural or industrial output of a country may grow, as it has for India in the last decade, and this growth may—or may not—have positive implications for development. Many expanding economies have experienced increased poverty. When something grows, it gets bigger; when it develops (sticking with the dictionary meaning, at least), it improves. Critics of the world economy are often heard to say that we need less growth and more development. This critique should not be dismissed as unrealistic or naïve.

In this book, each of the regional chapters includes a table of economic development indicators (Table 1.2). A few introductory comments are necessary to put these data in proper perspective. The traditional measure for the size of a country’s economy is the value of all final goods and services produced within its borders (gross domestic product, or GDP) plus the net income from abroad. These two factors constitute the gross national income, or GNI (formerly referred to as gross national product, or GNP). Although widely used, GNI can be an incomplete and even misleading economic indicator because it ignores nonmarket economic activity such as bartering or

**Figure 1.45 World GNI ($PPP) per capita** Gross national income, or GNI (formerly referred to as GNP), is one of the best measures to show the geographic pattern of rich and poor countries. Whereas 75 percent of the world’s population fall into the lower categories, only 10 percent are in the highest category. (Data from the World Bank Atlas, 2003)
household work, and also because it does not take into account ecological degradation or depletion of natural resources, activities that may constrain future economic growth. For example, if a country were to clear-cut its forest, which could limit future growth, this act would nevertheless increase the GNI for that year. Further, diverting educational funds to purchase military weapons might increase a country’s GNI in the short run, but the economy would likely suffer in the future because of its less-educated population. For this reason, it is important to couple GNI data with an array of other economic and social indicators.

A first step is to divide the GNI by the country’s population, which produces a GNI per capita figure. For example, according to World Bank data, the annual GNI for the United States in 2002 was about $10,207 trillion. Dividing that figure by the population of about 290 million results in a GNI per capita of $35,400. Because of the ratio between population and GNI, similar figures will result for countries that have both a smaller GNI and a smaller population. Japan, for example, has a GNI about half that of the United States at $4,323 billion. However, because that country has a smaller population (127.6 million), its GNI per capita is almost equal at $34,010.

An important qualification to these GNI per capita data is the concept of adjustment through purchasing power parity (PPP), which gives us a comparable figure for a standard “market basket” of goods and services purchased with the local currency (Figure 1.46). Until recently, GNI data were usually based on the market exchange rate for a particular country’s national currency as compared to the U.S. dollar, even though the GNI data might be inflated or undervalued depending on the strength or weakness of that currency. If the Japanese yen were to fall against the dollar overnight as a result of currency speculation, for example, the official figure for Japan’s GNI would correspondingly drop, despite the fact that Japan had experienced no real decline in economic output. Because of these problems, the PPP adjustment can provide a more accurate sense of the local cost of living, and these data can also be used to adjust GNI for currency inflation. To illustrate, when Japan’s GNI per capita is adjusted for PPP, which takes out the inflationary factor, the figure is $27,380. The PPP adjusted GNI per capita for the United States increases to $36,110.

Lastly, the economic growth rate (the annual rate of expansion for GDP) also can be distorted by inflated currencies.

### Table 1.2 Economic Indicators of the Ten Largest Countries

| Country     | Total GNI  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1,234.2</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>4,520</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>494.8</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>2,650</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>10,207.0</td>
<td>35,400</td>
<td>36,110</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>149.9</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>3,070</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>494.5</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>7,450</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>306.6</td>
<td>2,130</td>
<td>8,080</td>
<td>–2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>1,770</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>4,323.9</td>
<td>34,010</td>
<td>27,380</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Purchasing power parity


**Figure 1.46 Village food market**

The concept of purchasing power parity (PPP), which is a common market basket of goods, is used to generate a sense of the true cost of living for different countries. This outdoor produce market is in Chichicastenango, Guatemala.  (Rob Crandall/www.robcrandall.com)
but can be standardized by PPP. China’s economic growth rate, for example, averaged more than 9 percent per year during the 1980s and early 1990s based upon conventional GDP data. However, when adjusted for PPP-based currency, this annual growth rate is closer to 5 percent. Increasingly, world organizations are using PPP-based measures of economic activity for making international comparisons. In this book, whenever possible, we use PPP-adjusted data in the economic development tables in the regional chapters.

**Indicators of Social Development**

Although economic growth is a major component of development, the conditions and quality of human life in this rapidly changing world are of equal interest. The standard assumption is that economic development and growth will spill over into the social infrastructure so that there will also be a concomitant improvement in public health, working conditions, gender equality, and education must be supported with objective data. For that reason, we include several measures of social development in the regional chapters (Table 1.3 and Figure 1.47).

One indicator of social development is life expectancy, the average length of life expected at birth for a hypothetical male or female based upon national death statistics. A large number of social factors influence life expectancy, such as availability of health services, nutrition, prevalence (or absence) of disease, accident rates, sanitation, and homicide rates. Additionally, life expectancy also is affected by biological factors, which may explain why women usually live longer than men. When social and biological factors are folded together, life expectancy data provide important insights into local conditions. For the few countries in which men live longer than women, for example, one can deduce that the social position of women remains quite low.

Life expectancy figures vary widely among countries in different world regions, but they have generally been improving over time. For the world as a whole, life expectancy in 1975 was 58 years, whereas today it is 67. Over the same period, Africa’s figure has gone from 46 to 52, although in some African countries longevity has dropped recently because of the AIDS epidemic. In Russia, life expectancy also has fallen lately—especially for men—with the deterioration of economic conditions. Unfortunately, national life expectancy data often mask differences within a country, such as the wide disparity between rich and poor, differences between ethnic groups, or even discrepancies between specific regions. Within the United States, for example, the gap in life expectancy between African Americans and whites is 7 years, although this is an improvement over the 15-year gap recorded in 1900.

Local-scale data also tell important stories. For example, partly because of the high homicide rates for African-American males in major urban areas such as New York City, Detroit, and Chicago, their calculated life expectancy in these cities is shorter than that of men in Bangladesh, one of the world’s poorest countries.

Under age 5 mortality, which is the measure of the number of children who die per 1,000 persons, is another important indicator of social conditions. This figure gives insight into conditions such as food availability, health services, and public sanitation. In the first 5 years of life, a child moves from the personal protection and nurturing of his or her mother into a larger social environment; these first 5 years are a time of high vulnerability to nutritional deprivation, infection, disease, accidents, and other human tragedies. In the social development tables, child mortality data are given for two points in time, 1990 and 2002, to indicate whether there has been an improvement in child mortality rates over that period.

Adult illiteracy rates, given for both men and women in the tables, provide two kinds of information relevant to the social development of a country. In general, high rates of illiteracy usually are products of low levels of national investment in education, which does not bode well for participation in a globalizing world. Second, gender disparities also can be evident in these data. In some countries, we see a striking discrepancy between men and women, often with much higher rates of illiteracy for females than for males, suggesting that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Life Expectancy at Birth (per 1,000)</th>
<th>Under Age 5 Mortality (per 1,000)</th>
<th>Percent Illiteracy (Ages 15 and over)</th>
<th>Female Labor Force Participation (% of total, 2002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

there are strong cultural, social, or economic biases against the education of girls and women. The implications of low female literacy rates are many. For example, there is a demonstrated connection between acceptance of family planning and female education: A higher birthrate usually accompanies high female illiteracy. Additionally, the role that women play in a country’s economy also is closely linked to their levels of education and literacy (Figure 1.48).

In many countries, women play a prominent role in economic life; thus, data on the percentage of females in the labor force are important (Figure 1.49). However, three points must qualify these data. First, much of women’s work has traditionally been undervalued and hidden from the national census because it is considered part of the unpaid sector of household and subsistence. Therefore, the long hours women spend gathering firewood, drawing water, cooking, tending gardens and fields, and raising children are not tabulated as “work” or “employment” and do not appear in the labor force statistics (men also perform work in the unpaid domestic sector, but usually to a lesser degree than women). Second, many women work in the “informal” economic sector, earning subsistence wages selling vegetables or handicrafts in village markets, cleaning houses, or doing other forms of temporary labor. National employment data rarely include such important forms of work. Third, even when employed in the formal economic sector, such as on a factory assembly line, women are usually paid...
less than men and also are disproportionately concentrated in jobs with little security or chance of advancement.

Even though women may constitute the majority of workers in many developing countries, the quality and conditions of their work often mimic the early and unpleasant days of European industrialization when people worked long hours under dangerous conditions for low wages with little job security. While it took Europe almost a century to enact legislation to improve these working conditions, it seems reasonable to expect that the economic, political, and social currents of the early twenty-first century might move faster to produce humane working conditions.

The Vision of Sustainable Development

As the environmental and social costs of globalized economic development become increasingly apparent, the notion of sustainable development is being widely discussed by international aid workers, development planners, environmentalists, and community groups. This term can be defined simply as an agenda of economic change and growth that seeks a balance with issues of environmental protection and social equity so that the short-term needs of contemporary society do not compromise the future. Some reduce the definition to its essence by referring to sustainable development as “intergenerational equity.” For example, instead of wholesale harvesting of Indonesian rain forests as a way of amortizing current foreign debt, a sustainable development plan would emphasize the paced, longer-term use of this valuable resource so that the economic benefits might be spread out over time in a more equitable and self-sustaining manner. Another illustration would be a country’s investment in female education, which, even if such an investment diverted money from contemporary social programs, would probably have positive future consequences for both economic and social development.

Conclusion

As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, globalization is driving a fundamental reorganization of economies and cultures through such vehicles as trade agreements, supranational organizations, military alliances, and cultural exchanges. At one level, the world seems to be converging and becoming more homogeneous because of globalization. Nonetheless, there is still great diversity. While some areas prosper, others stagnate; as global TV promotes a common world culture, small-group identity becomes increasingly important; as nation-states become world players through supranational agreements, separatist groups seek autonomy and independence. This tension and interplay between globalization and diversity gives world regional geography its primary focus.

Our description and analysis of each world region are organized around five issue-oriented themes: environmental geography; population and settlement; cultural coherence and diversity; geopolitical framework; and economic and social development. Although the specific issues differ from region to region, certain general themes link the chapters. Environmental issues, be they at the global or local scale, affect all world regions. Examples include...
global climate change, water pollution, air pollution, forest destruction, and the protection of biodiversity.

In most regions of the developing world, population and settlement issues revolve around four issues: rapid population growth, family planning (or its absence), migration to new centers of economic activity (both within and outside the region), and rapid urbanization.

A major theme in our treatment of global cultural geography is the tension between the forces of cultural homogenization resulting from globalization and the countercurrents strengthening small-scale cultural and ethnic identity. Throughout the world, small groups are setting themselves apart from larger national cultures with renewed interest in ethnic traits, languages, religion, territory, and shared histories. Not merely a matter of colorful folklore and revitalized local customs, in many parts of the world, cultural diversity is translated into geopolitics with outspoken calls for regional autonomy or separatism.

Because of cultural factionalism, the geopolitical issues of many of the world’s regions are dominated by matters of global terrorism, ethnic strife and territorial disputes within nation-states, border tensions with neighbors of different cultural traditions (Pakistan and India are examples), and new forms of military alliances and agreements to deal with the ever-changing nature of national security.

Last, the theme of economic and social development is dominated by one issue: the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, between countries and regions that already have wealth—and are getting even richer through globalization—and those that remain impoverished. Economic inequities are found on every scale from global to local, including pockets of poverty within the world’s richest countries. On a global scale, the core of developed countries is surrounded by a periphery of less-developed nations aspiring to the same success; on the smaller scale of regions and individual nations, vibrant centers of economic development are linked to the globalized world, while more remote backwater areas languish and stagnate. Often, blatant inequities in social development, schools, health care, and working conditions accompany these disparities in wealth.

Understanding this complex world is a challenging, yet necessary, task. Think of this book as a beginning rather than an end, as a way to gain skills in using the conceptual tools of geography to engender critical thinking about the complicated issues and themes of world regional geography replete with diversity amid globalization.

### Key Terms

- areal differentiation (page 13)
- areal integration (page 13)
- asymmetrical warfare (page 34)
- bubble economy (page 9)
- centrifugal forces (page 35)
- centripetal forces (page 36)
- colonialism (page 37)
- core-periphery model (page 39)
- cultural imperialism (page 26)
- cultural landscape (page 14)
- cultural nationalism (page 26)
- cultural syncretism or hybridization (page 27)
- culture (page 26)
- decolonialization (page 37)
- demographic transition (page 20)
- economic convergence (page 7)
- economic growth rate (page 41)
- ethnic religion (page 31)
- ethnocentric boundaries (page 37)
- geometric boundaries (page 37)
- globalization (page 1)
- gross national income (GNI) (page 40)
- gross national income (GNI) per capita (page 41)
- lingua franca (page 30)
- nation-state (page 35)
- overurbanization (page 25)
- purchasing power parity (PPP) (page 41)
- rate of natural increase (RNI) (page 17)
- region (page 14)
- secularization (page 32)
- squatter settlements (page 25)
- supranational organization (page 38)
- sustainable development (page 44)
- sweatshops (page 8)
- total fertility rate (TFR) (page 20)
- transnational firm (page 5)
- universalizing religion (page 31)
- urban form (page 25)
- urban primacy (page 24)
- urban structure (page 24)
- urbanized population (page 23)

### Questions for Summary and Review

1. Why is globalization a signature of the twenty-first century, and what has facilitated it?
2. What role did the end of the Cold War play in furthering globalization?
3. Summarize the major assets and liabilities of globalization as discussed in this chapter.
4. What geographic concept(s) best capture(s) the appearance of places and the “look of the land”?
5. Give examples of how changing scale from global to local might change an analysis of areal differentiation and integration for a specific area.
6. If the rate of natural increase (RNI) for the world remains consistent at 1.3 percent per year, what will the planet’s population be in 10 years?
7. Explain the four stages of the demographic transition. How do birthrates and death rates differ in each stage? At what point is RNI highest?
8. Why is there an association between urbanized population rates and economic development in different countries of the world? Under what conditions would this association not hold?
9. What are the expressions and implications of overurbanization for cities in the developing world?
10. Why is it difficult to define *culture* in this globalized world? What conceptual and geographic solutions are helpful in solving this problem?

11. What are the differences between language families, branches, and groups? Give examples by noting their geographic distribution in the world.

12. Using the concepts presented in the section on “Geopolitical Framework,” explain what happened to the “New World Order.”

13. Using a world map or atlas, come up with five examples each of ethnographic and geometric boundaries. Is there any clue about problems associated with these different borders?

14. What are the shortcomings of GNI? How are these rectified?

15. Why are adult illiteracy rates a good indicator of social development?

### Thinking Geographically

1. Select an economic, political, or cultural activity in your city, and discuss how it has been influenced by globalization.

2. Choose a specific country (or region) of the world to examine the benefits and liabilities of globalization. Remember to look at different facets of globalization, such as the environment and cultural cohesion and conflict, as well as the economic effects on different segments of the population.

3. Using the concepts of areal integration and city systems, discuss the global links between your city and other urban areas, both nationally and internationally.

4. How would you characterize your location in terms of regions? That is, in what physical, economic, and cultural regions are you located?

5. Compare the issues and problems with urban growth in your city to those of a city of similar size in a foreign country. Consider how urban structure and form might be similar and different in these two cities.

6. Discuss the cultural geography of your area, noting the distribution, landscapes, and interaction among different cultural groups.

### Bibliography


