



WORLD

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

A GLOBAL APPROACH

GEORGE F. HEPNER

JESSE O. McKEE

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A Global Approach

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PREFACE

Recent world events, such as the changes in Eastern Europe and the crisis in the Gulf, are intricately related to the geography of these areas—past, present, and future. One of Iraq's goals in invading Kuwait was the acquisition of a coastal outlet to the Persian Gulf. Eastern Europe had acted as a geographic buffer zone for the Soviet Union. Thus, in both of these situations, geographic issues lay beneath the ideological and political rhetoric.

As a result of these and similar events that indicate the value of geography, the discipline is undergoing a renewal in the United States and other parts of the world. In the scientific/high-technology arena, geographic studies using computers for cartography, satellite remote sensing, spatial analysis, and information systems are becoming indispensable to regional economic development, resource exploitation, military planning, and environmental management. In addition, the impact that geographic illiteracy can have on international business opportunities and the peace and welfare of the world is finally gaining attention in the United States. Consequently, geography is increasingly being viewed as a fundamental discipline necessary for comprehension of the history, politics, and economies of the nations and regions of the world.

Geographic educators play an important role in introducing students to fundamental, nontrivial knowledge about the variety of places in the world. Implicit in the study of world places and regions is an understanding of one of the essential concepts of geography: that relationships and interactions between humans and their environments influence the evolution of specific geographic places, regions, and landscapes. At the same time, geographic education must help the student understand the global interrelationships and dependencies among countries and regions.

This text addresses the variations in the regions of the world while focusing on the commonality of linkages in the increasingly interconnected world. The regional

chapters in this text have been prepared by leading regional specialists. All contributors have lived and worked in their respective regions and are thus able to provide the text with unmatched geographical knowledge and insight. Continuity between the regional chapters is maintained by the use of a consistent topical structure. At the same time, flexibility is achieved by leaving the style, presentation, and emphasis given to individual topics to the contributor's discretion. We feel this is an optimal way of ensuring a measure of predictability in the discussions of the regions, which will aid student comprehension, while avoiding the monotonous, sterile presentations that may result when diverse regions are forced into a rigid structure.

It is the intention of the authors that the student recognize that each region has a distinctive character, but that global processes bind all regions together into an interdependent web. The increasing number of socioeconomic, political, and natural environmental connections among the regions of the world is an undeniable reality of the modern age. The desire to produce a text that focuses on these evolving connections was the major impetus for this book. The theme of global interconnectivity and interdependency is the frame of reference through which the regional chapters have been prepared. Each of the regional chapters includes discussion of interconnectivity topics common to all chapters, such as trade and alliances. The chapter contributors further enhance the theme of interconnectivity by examining issues unique and significant to the particular region. Each regional chapter strives to address both interregional and intraregional connectivity by highlighting those connections most significant to the particular region.

World Regional Geography: A Global Approach is divided into three parts. Part One, composed of Chapters 1, 2, and 3, provides the framework used in the regional discussions in Parts Two and Three. These chapters are an explication of foundational ideas and global patterns

that provide the students with a basis for understanding and comparing specific regional patterns. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the basic concepts and ideas in regional, physical, and human geography. Chapter 2 discusses the elements and processes of the global natural environment as a foundation for human activities. Global patterns of culture, population, technology, and economic development are introduced in Chapter 3. These spatial variations in technological achievements and applications contribute significantly to the division between the economically developed and the developing worlds.

The introductory student needs an organizational structure for comprehending the role of both individual countries in a region and of regions in the world. The level of economic development is the criterion most commonly used to provide this structure. Categorizing countries and regions by the level of economic development is at best an inexact undertaking, however. It glosses over inequities within countries and regions, minimizes the recognition of economic development as a continuum and ignores noneconomic criteria in the definition of development. These important considerations and subtleties are all addressed in the initial chapters.

The regional chapters presented in Part Two and Three are designed with a consistent format: (1) Physical Environment, (2) Human Environment, (3) Spatial Connectivity, and (4) Problems and Prospects. Part Two discusses the regions that are part of the economically developed world. This category includes regions having both predominantly capitalistic, market economies and predominantly socialistic, planned economies. Although the radical changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe make firm ideological and economic classification impossible at this time, it appears that a form of democratic socialism will be the dominant political-economic theme in these regions. The inertia of socialistic control and centralized economic planning is likely to be felt for many years to come in these countries in spite of the recent changes. Part Three examines regions having economic levels significantly below those of the developed world. These developing regions encompass a mixture of planned and free market economies but are similar in their modest to low standard of living.

All of the chapters are illustrated with maps, graphs, tables, and photographs. Each chapter begins with a list of terms and a statement of important concepts and issues. Each regional chapter includes a table of statistical information for each country in the region and a base

map of the region. Special feature boxes are included in the chapters to delve further into important geographic concepts, connectivity issues, and special interest topics. Chapters conclude with a list of suggested readings. The text material is supported by a comprehensive glossary at the end of the text.

Supplements

A full supplement package accompanies this text.

- *The Instructor's Manual with Test Bank* by Gwenda Rice, contributor, contains lecture outlines and enhancements and student map exercises. Two versions of chapter tests that include objective and essay questions are provided for each chapter. The test bank is also available on Westest, a computerized testing program that includes editing features for instructors.
- *The Student Study Guide* contains learning objectives, conceptual and map review exercises, and sample test questions that correspond to the test questions in the test bank.
- Full-color transparency overhead acetates of maps and key figures in the text are provided.
- Slides are available to qualified adopters. See your West representative for additional media.

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Jesse McKee

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