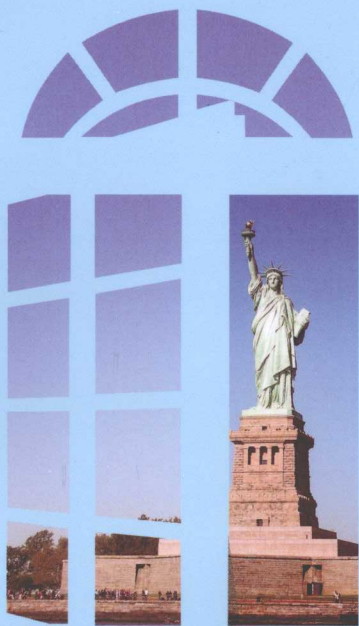


读懂美国

一本就够了

Wanna Know America,
Just Read It!



主编
黄建滨

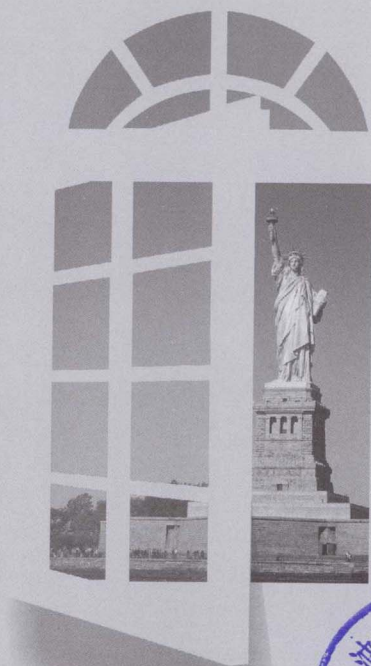


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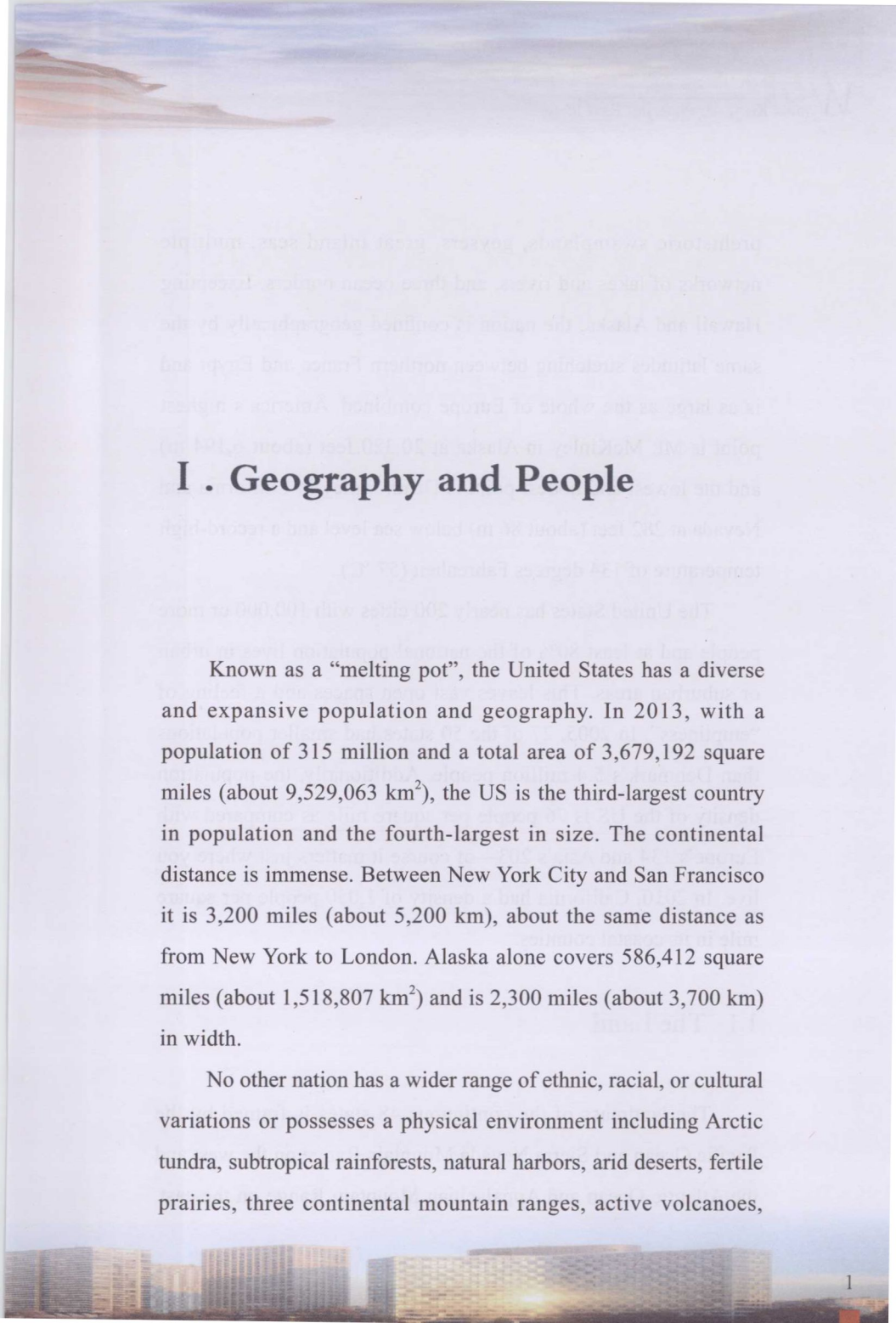
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I . Geography and People

Known as a “melting pot”, the United States has a diverse and expansive population and geography. In 2013, with a population of 315 million and a total area of 3,679,192 square miles (about 9,529,063 km²), the US is the third-largest country in population and the fourth-largest in size. The continental distance is immense. Between New York City and San Francisco it is 3,200 miles (about 5,200 km), about the same distance as from New York to London. Alaska alone covers 586,412 square miles (about 1,518,807 km²) and is 2,300 miles (about 3,700 km) in width.

No other nation has a wider range of ethnic, racial, or cultural variations or possesses a physical environment including Arctic tundra, subtropical rainforests, natural harbors, arid deserts, fertile prairies, three continental mountain ranges, active volcanoes,

prehistoric swamplands, geysers, great inland seas, multiple networks of lakes and rivers, and three ocean borders. Excepting Hawaii and Alaska, the nation is confined geographically by the same latitudes stretching between northern France and Egypt and is as large as the whole of Europe combined. America's highest point is Mt. McKinley in Alaska at 20,320 feet (about 6,194 m) and the lowest and hottest point is Death Valley in California and Nevada at 282 feet (about 86 m) below sea level and a record-high temperature of 134 degrees Fahrenheit (57 °C).

The United States has nearly 200 cities with 100,000 or more people and at least 80% of the national population lives in urban or suburban areas. This leaves vast open spaces and a feeling of "emptiness". In 2005, 27 of the 50 states had smaller populations than Denmark's 5.4 million people. Additionally, the population density of the US is 76 people per square mile as compared with Europe's 134 and Asia's 203—of course it matters just where you live. In 2010, California had a density of 1,050 people per square mile in its coastal counties.

1.1 The Land

The landmass of the contiguous 48 states is framed by the Pacific Ocean and Sierra Nevada Mountain Range on the west and the Atlantic Ocean and Appalachian Mountain Range on the east.

The Gulf of Mexico and Rio Grande River mark the border with Mexico; the St. Lawrence seaway and the Great Lakes establish much of the border with Canada. The country is bisected by the world's third-longest river, the Mississippi (6,020 km), which begins in Minnesota, irrigates and drains half the continent, and pours into the Gulf of Mexico just south of New Orleans. The United States is further dissected by the Rocky Mountains, a high range stretching southwards from Alaska to New Mexico.

With the exceptions of Alaska, the Pacific Islands, Puerto Rico, and the southern portions of Florida, Texas, and California, the United States is in the temperate zone and enjoys four distinct seasons. All US except for those in outside Alaska experience hot summers. The warm water of the Atlantic Gulf Stream spawns hurricanes and thunderstorms from Texas to Maine, and hot weather in the country's midsection combines with flat land to produce over 1,000 tornadoes every year. At frequent intervals, too much rain or snow raises the level of the Mississippi–Missouri–Ohio river system, flooding areas to create lakes hundreds of miles wide. In winter, an arctic or “Canadian” jet stream blows from west to east, dipping as far as the middle of the United States and bringing severely cold weather and heavy snows to the northern states.

East of the Rockies and along most of the Pacific coast, the United States has adequate to above-average rainfall, punctuated in recent years by moderate periods of drought. This combines

with the rich soil of the Midwest, the South, and California to provide a bountiful agricultural production in grains, fruits, and vegetables. Where the rainfall is less, but still sufficient to grow grass, cattle farmers and cowboys operate massive livestock businesses on a monotonous landscape.



The country has vast natural resources in almost everything, including timber, oil, natural gas, coal, iron ore, bauxite, uranium, gold, copper, and silver. It also controls nearly 12,500 miles (about 20,000 km) of coastline from which to import and export products and to send out fishing fleets. For over 200 years, Europeans wrote to relatives about what seemed to be limitless forests and of their own handiwork in using an axe for taming the wilderness. Today, US timber companies clear-cut whole areas of woodlands and fight with environmentalists over the destruction

of old growth forests, most of which are protected by law. The companies also plant more trees than they cut each year, ensuring a growth cycle which renews the forests every 20 years. Even so, radical environmentalists using the name Earth Liberation Front (ELF) have been unhappy with government policies which allow companies or individuals to injure “Mother Earth”. In 2001, ELF labeled timber companies “earth rapers”. Company offices and private luxury homes built in forests that the group wants preserved have been the victims of arson attacks.



America has rich reservoirs of oil, found mostly along the Gulf of Mexico in Texas and Louisiana, but also in Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. The biggest oilfield is in Alaska and a trans-Alaskan pipeline carries the crude oil to coastal shipping and refining firms. Still, the American love for the automobile means that the country consumes far more oil than

it produces and it is the world's major importer of petroleum. Copper and silver are mined primarily in Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado. The vast iron ore deposits in Wisconsin and Michigan and the world's largest coal mines—in West Virginia and Pennsylvania—ensure that the country's steel mills are well supplied. Two-thirds of the world's known uranium deposits are located under the Navajo Indian reservation in Arizona. The United States uses the uranium for its military and to power 104 nuclear power reactors in 31 states.

With this wealth in resources causing a mindset of unlimited abundance, Americans have often run roughshod over the land, depleting the soil, overkilling animals, polluting the environment, and wasting resources. Fur traders and soldiers slaughtered millions of bison; by 1889, fewer than 1,000 bison remained alive. Old growth forests were lost through logging practices that scalped whole areas, strip mining in open mines scarred the earth, the dumping of chemicals into waste heaps caused health problems, and rivers and lakes became so polluted that whole ecosystems were changed. 25% of all greenhouse gases causing global warming are currently spewed from US sources—not a surprising number given that US factories produce 25% of the world's industrial products. In 2001, the Senate failed to ratify the 2000 Kyoto Protocol to the 1992 Climate Change Convention after President Bush announced that he would not support the

measure. The world viewed this as an act of bad faith because Clinton administration representatives at Kyoto had agreed to reduce pollution under the protocol.

In 1871, Congress set aside 2.2 million acres (about 900,000 hectares) in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho to establish the nation's first national park, Yellowstone. Twenty years later, in 1890, the second national park, Yosemite, saved ancient redwood trees and pristine mountains in California. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt overrode Congressional criticism to set aside millions of acres of national lands, thereby enlisting the government into conservation. The parks are extremely popular among Americans, who are, in fact, overusing them. For example, Yosemite and Yellowstone are each visited by over 4 million visitors and campers per year.

The National Park Service (NPS), which has administered the nation's parks since 1916, continues to limit camping permits and remove roads to help the parks recover to a more natural condition. In 2003, the NPS controlled 79 million acres (31.4 million hectares) in 385 parks and had 266 million visitors. In addition to the NPS, each of the 50 states has a state park system for recreational and conservation purposes. In 2003, 5,842 state parks set aside 13.6 million acres (5.4 million hectares).

The largest national park is Gates of the Arctic Park in Alaska, at over 7.5 million acres (3 million hectares), established

in 1980 during the Carter administration. Generally, Democratic presidents have supported programs protecting public lands; Republican presidents from 1981–1993 (Reagan and Bush) resisted the creation of more parks and wanted existing reserves opened to private exploitation. The two most recent presidents are illustrative of this difference. The Clinton administration banned road-building and commercial logging on 60 million acres (24 million hectares) of forests, increased the size of many national parks, established 11 new national monuments and adopted tougher standards for automobile emissions. The Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society praised Clinton and hailed 2000 as the best year for conservation since the Carter administration.

On the other hand, President Bush has opened parks and Indian reservations for oil exploration, logging, and mining.

Another issue is the decrease in biodiversity as thousands of animals and plants are now extinct and the rate seems to be increasing to as many as 200 species a year. Americans are concerned that the loss of biodiversity might threaten the planet but they concentrate more on the environmental movement.

In addition to the 77.5 million acres (33 million hectares) in the 369 parks of the NPS, the federal government has designated more than 93 million acres (37 million hectares) as National Wildlife Refuges. These refuges protect animals and plants, restrict sightseeing, and prohibit fishing, hunting, and rock collecting.