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7  **I. THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING**

**A. Physical Patterns**

- Landforms

- *Highlands*

- Many landforms in this region have been shaped by tectonic forces.

- Molten rock may come to the surface and erupt as volcanoes; many islands in this region are volcanic in origin.

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12  **Physical Patterns**

- *Lowlands*

- A huge wedge of lowlands stretches from the Andes to the Atlantic Ocean.

- The Amazon Basin is the largest feature in the South American Lowlands.

- The interior reaches of the Amazon Basin is home to some of the last relatively undisturbed Native Americans

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16  **Physical Patterns**

- Climate

- Tremendous changes in altitude, the great north-south distance spanned by the landmass, and global wind and ocean currents cause a wide range in temperatures and precipitation.

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18  **Physical Patterns**

- *Temperature-Altitude Zones*

- *Tierra caliente*: hot; tropical rain forests thrive; up to 3000 feet.
- *Tierra templada*: temperate; year-round spring like climate; 3000-6500 feet.
- *Tierra fria*: cool; midlatitude crops; population centers; 6500-12,000 feet.
- *Tierra helada*: frozen; some cultivation; snow and glaciers; above 12,000 feet

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23  **Physical Patterns**

- *Precipitation*

- Precipitation is influenced by the interaction of global wind patterns, ocean currents, and topography.
- The Peru Current and the rain shadow caused by the central Andes in Chile and Peru have created possibly the world's driest desert, the Atacama.

24  **Physical Patterns**

- *El Niño*

- El Niño brings warm water and rain to the west coast of South America;
- nutrient-poor warm water replaces the nutrient-rich cold water of the Peru Current.
- El Niño also brings unpredictable weather to much of the United States, Mexico, the Amazon, and Caribbean.

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26  **B. Human Patterns over Time**

- The Peopling of Middle and South America

- By the late 1400s, people had altered the landscape by modifying drainage for irrigation, constructing raised fields, terracing hillsides, paving walkways, constructing cities, and raising up huge earthen ceremonial structures.
- A system of shifting cultivation was also perfected.
- The trauma of conquest and subsequent European dominance have obliterated many of these accomplishments.
- The Aztecs had some technologies and a highly organized social structure. The Inca Empire was one of the most efficiently managed in the history of the world.

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33  **Human Patterns over Time**

- The Conquest

- The European conquest was one of the most significant events in human history, altering landscapes and ending millions of lives as a consequence of introduced diseases and slavery.
- The Caribbean was the first region contacted by Europeans.
- Mexico was the first part of the mainland to be conquered by Europeans.
- The conquest of the Incas in South America, and the smallpox epidemic, resulted in the Viceroyalty of Peru.
- In coastal Brazil, people were killed and land was seized as coastal cultures were annihilated early on; however, the Amazon Basin was left alone for several centuries because it was difficult to extract resources.

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36  **Human Patterns Over Time**

- A Global Exchange of Crops and Animals

- Global exchange and diffusion facilitated other cultures in adopting food from the Americas; plants and animals that were exchanged changed diets globally.

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40  **Human Patterns Over Time**

- The Legacy of Underdevelopment

- 40 % of the people are poor, yet a small elite class enjoys affluence. This inequality is a result of corruption, the effects of colonialism, and social attitudes and policies that stifle entrepreneurs and upward social mobility.
- Colonizers managed all aspects of production, transport, and trade, which resulted in a huge underground economy, institutionalized dishonesty, and resentment of the Spanish authorities.
- In the early nineteenth century, wars of independence transformed the region; however, the revolutionaries evolved into a new elite that monopolized economic opportunity.

41  **C. Population Patterns**

- The major migration trend is rural to urban and the population continues to climb because of high birth rates.

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43  **Population Patterns**

- Population Numbers and Distributions

- *Population Distribution*

- Population is unequally distributed in Middle and South America and there is no relationship between population and physical landforms.

- *Population Growth*

- The population is growing quickly, causing great concern, for people are already suffering from a low standard of living.
- However, some countries are beginning to experience demographic transition as people are using contraception more often and growth rates are falling.

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45  **Population Patterns**

- Migration and Urbanization

- As a result of migration, urban areas become crowded. Immigrants are exposed to values and ways of life that contrast with their traditional cultures. Cities are often not prepared and infrastructure cannot keep pace with the inflow of people.
- Primate cities often draw most of the migrants, concentrating wealth and power in one place while distant rural areas are ignored.

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48  **Population Patterns**

- Migration and Urbanization

- Because most migrants cannot afford to buy or lease land, they often squat on nearby land. They organize themselves to pressure for social services; these communities are difficult to dislodge.
- Female urban migrants often earn low wages and poorly treated; male urban migrants are often underemployed and forced to take low-skill jobs or work in the informal economy.
- In rural areas, those that already have the advantages of education, creativity, and initiative are the ones who are leaving, resulting in "brain drain."

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51  **II.CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC ISSUES**

**A. Economic and Political Issues**

- The greatest challenge facing leaders in this region is a widening gap between the rich and the poor.
- Many unresolved and difficult challenges exist, it has been argued that globalization is reducing the importance of income disparity in the region.

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53  **Economic and Political Issues**

- Phases of Economic Development: Globalization and Income Disparity

- The three major economic phases have all been characterized by various levels of external influence and have helped entrench wide income disparities.
  - The Early Extractive Phase
  - The Import Substitution Industrialization Phase

- The Current Structural Adjustment Phase

#### 54 ☐ Phases of Economic Development

- *The Early Extractive Phase*
  - Based on colonial mercantilist policies, where resources flowed out of the country with little benefit to the vast majority of the population.
  - Laborers were bound to the land on haciendas, which used only a fraction of their potential agricultural land.
  - Plantations were more efficient because of better locational connections, capital investments, climate, and labor to specialize in one crop.
  - Livestock ranches were originally found in drier areas, but are now moving into cleared rainforest lands.

#### 55 ☐ Phases of Economic Development

- *The Import Substitution Industrialization Phase*
  - A strategy of this phase was to do away with the extractive systems and achieve self-sufficiency.
  - The government funded import substitution; factories produced goods that used to be imported; high tariffs were placed on competing imports.
  - Import substitution industrialization was not very successful; most economies remained highly dependent on the export of raw materials.

#### 56 ☐ Phases of Economic Development

- *The Debt Crisis*
  - Prices for raw materials (besides oil) decreased in the 1970s; thus, exports could no longer support the region's economy.
  - Efforts made to modernize and industrialize, based on millions of dollars in loans from international banks, did not succeed. Loans were difficult to repay.

#### 57 ☐ Phases of Economic Development

- *The Current Structural Adjustment Phase*
  - Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) are designed to free up money for loan repayment by promoting free-market policies through the expansion of industries that produce goods for export.
  - Governments were required to reduce government programs, remove tariffs, and sell state-owned industries.

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#### 59 ☐ Phases of Economic Development

- *Outcomes of SAPs*
  - Economic growth was experienced in extractive industries.
  - Some countries are attempting to move beyond extractive industries by establishing free-trade zones, including maquiladoras.
  - SAPs have encouraged greater efficiency, high rates of economic growth, and increased exports in some countries.

- However, little regard is given for working conditions or the environment; most exports are still raw materials; social services programs were cut; and income disparity has increased.

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## 61 Economic and Political Issues

- The Informal Economy

- Causes: Canceled subsidies for housing, food, health care, and industries; reduced government jobs; recession; underemployment; and losses in real wages led people to pursue informal economic options.
- Positive effects: Workers pay no taxes, but can support their families; improvement of urban life by making goods more affordable; conservation of resources and an incubator of new businesses; and support of a vibrant, highly organized system that is highly rational and strategizing.
- Negative effects: Workers pay bribes instead of taxes; no protection of health and safety.

## 62 Economic and Political Issues

- Regional Trade and Trade Agreements

- Alternatives to SAP-type policies are emerging to reduce tariffs and encourage trade among neighboring countries. Regional free-trade associations and trade agreements (e.g., Mercosur, NAFTA, and FTAA) are used to fuel economic growth.
- The record of regional free-trade agreements is mixed, as the benefits are not spread evenly geographically or across society, yet they seem likely to help economies achieve more economic independence.

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## 66 Economic and Political Issues

- Global Free Trade Issues as Seen from Middle and South America

- Recently, countries in the region have taken a stand against free trade talks, as they want to stop the hypocrisy of the G8, as G8 countries are promoting free trade while practicing protectionist policies themselves.

## 67 Economic and Political Issues

- Agriculture and Contested Space

- *At the Personal Scale*

- Governments have encouraged large-scale, absentee-owned, export-oriented agriculture in order to pay off large government debts. Smaller farmers are often squeezed out.
- This has sparked resistance among rural farmers in a number of places where subsistence agriculture competes with commercial plantation agriculture.

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## 70 Is Democracy Rising?

- After a long history of dictatorships, all countries in the region except Cuba have democratically elected governments; however, in much of the region, democracy is

still fragile.

- Central America: Costa Rica's democratic traditions stretch back to the 1800s.
- The Central Andes: Protests by working people brought down Ecuador's government in 1997 and Peru's government in 2000.

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## 72 Economic and Political Issues

- *Corruption*

- Corruption and serious scandals are widespread, undermining democratic institutions.
- The drug trade is a major factor contributing to this corruption. The effort to stop the production of drugs in Middle and South America has led to the largest U.S. military presence in the region in history.

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## 75 Economic and Political Issues

- *Foreign Involvement in the Region's Politics*

- Even though the intent is to enhance democracy, outside intervention has often compromised it; the most active power in the region is the United States.

- *Can Internet Technology Further Democracy?*

- Democracy is strongest where people are educated, healthy, and economically secure. The process of deepening democracy goes hand in hand with creating more socially and economically equal societies.
- The use of the Internet can also enhance democratic participation, thus access and training are crucial.

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## 77 II.CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC ISSUES

### B. Sociocultural Issues

- Cultural Diversity

- This region is one of the most culturally complex on earth.
- Mestizos are now the majority in Mexico, Central America, and much of South America.
- In urban areas, contact between people is accelerating the rate of acculturation and assimilation.

## 78 Sociocultural Issues

- Race and the Social Significance of Skin Color

- Skin color is more descriptive than race; however, family, wealth, education, and occupation are more significant than race.

## 79 Sociocultural Issues

- The Family and Gender Roles

- Some effects of an extended family are that individuals subvert their interests to those of the family and

community. Families frequently live together in domestic compounds.

- *Marianismo*: The Virgin Mary is held up as the model for women, putting a priority on chastity and service to the family. A woman's power increases as her skills and sacrifices are recognized and enshrined in family lore.
- *Machismo* bases manliness on the ability to father children, be attractive to women, be engaging in social situations, and be master of the household.

80  **Sociocultural Issues**

- Children in Poverty

- Many children are homeless in the region. Parents are overburdened and may push them out of the home to become economically active.
- After migrating to cities, many women end up single mothers away from their extended families or have little security with their mate; this can result in neglected, malnourished, and unruly children.

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82  **Sociocultural Issues**

- Religion in Contemporary Life

- Historically, religion encouraged working people to accept their low status, obedience to authority, and postponement of rewards until heaven; religion also reinforced class differences.
- This changed as the populist movement sought relief for the poor; the movement redistributed land and canceled fees for baptisms, weddings, and funerals.
- Liberation theology saw poverty as a problem of society, not the individual. Perpetuating inequality was seen as a sin. Social and economic reform was promoted as liberation from evil.
- Recently, Evangelical Protestantism has begun to appeal to the poor. The idea of the personal "gospel of success" may be an important impetus to the emergence of a middle class.

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85  **II.CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC ISSUES**

**C. Environmental Issues**

- Human settlement has had consequences on the environment for thousands of years, but today's impacts are particularly severe, as population is growing at the same time consumption of resources is growing.

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87  **Amazon deforestation**

- Forests are cleared for cattle ranching, growing cash crops, hardwood lumber, fuel wood, oil and gas extraction, and human developments.
- However, environmental regulations are being developed and reforestation is more widespread than previously thought. Deforestation in the Amazon may have global implications as it contributes to global warming through the greenhouse effect.

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96  **Environmental Issues**

- The Environment and Economic Development

- Governments argued that development was seen as a necessity, while environmental regulations were an unaffordable luxury.
- Countries are starting to embrace development while attempting to mitigate the negative environmental and social effects.

97  **II.CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC ISSUES**

**D. Measures of Human Well-Being**

- GDP per capita masks the very wide disparity of wealth in the region and ignores aspects of well-being other than income.
- Some HDI rankings are higher partly because education is somewhat more available across gender and class; nonetheless, investment in education is not sufficient and health care is poor.
- GEM is higher in some countries because their governments support education and equal opportunity for women.

98  **Measures of Human Well-Being**

- A Rising Threat to Human Well-Being

- HIV-AIDS is taking a serious toll throughout Middle and South America and is expected to negatively affect measures of human well-being.

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