

Basic Political Geography for Our Earth

The world as we know it can be divided into land and sea. The largest land masses are continents 大洲: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America, and Antarctica 南极洲. Do you think Eurasia 欧亚大陆 should be considered one continent or two? How many of the five countries in both Europe and Asia can you name?

The largest bodies of water are oceans: The Atlantic 大西洋, The Pacific 太平洋, The Indian 印度洋, and The Arctic 北冰洋. Seas, such as the South China Sea, are smaller parts within the oceans.

Regions 区域 can include both land and sea. Besides pure geography, trading areas are sometimes used to define regions in IPE. Important regions include: East Asia 东亚 (or Northeast Asia 东北亚, sometimes called "The Far East"); (Continental 大陆 Vs. Oceanic/Island 海洋/岛屿) Southeast Asia 东南亚 (Sometimes called "Indochina"); Central Asia 中亚; South Asia 南亚 (including the Indian sub-continent); Western Vs. Eastern Vs. Northern Europe 西欧, 东欧, 北欧; The Middle East 中东 (sometimes called "The Holy Land" 圣地 and the object of Orientalism 东方风格); Northern Vs. Sub-Saharan Africa 北非, 撒哈拉以南非洲; Central America 中美洲 & The Caribbean 加勒比海; Latin America 拉丁美洲. Oceania 大洋洲 includes Australia/NZ. Areas all along the equator 赤道, between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn, are considered the tropics 热带地区. What countries can you name that are in more than one region? What regions are on more than one continent?

For some larger countries like China, there may be a national core region (i.e. "China Proper" or 内地) and a frontier 边陲, usually along international borders. Most regions of China are named after the cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west) or combine two of them. The Northeast is sometimes called Manchuria, notably not Manchukuo, the Japanese puppet regime up to WWII. Historically, the Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze including Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, etc.) region has been the most prosperous. Zhongyuan is a historically important interior region including Henan, Shanxi and parts of other contemporary provinces along the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. In winter, areas north of the Yangtze get indoor heat, while those south of it do not. The South-North Water Transfer Project 南水北调工程 goes through the Yangtze and diverts water mainly from this great river to the arid north on its three routes. The West-East pipeline 西气东输工程 is another long, important transfer project sending natural gas from Xinjiang to the booming east and southeast coast.

Features of topography 地形学 such as rivers, lakes, plains, hills, and mountain ranges 山脉 are often used as natural borders. Other borders and boundaries are artificial or "man-made" 人造线.

According to IR theories such as offensive realism, every state's goal is to project power beyond its official borders, eventually establishing dominance or hegemony 霸权 over its region. History has only known a few global hegemonies 霸主 from the age of imperialism to the present. Which can you name?

Island nations, rarely, may be a single island, but they are more likely to be archipelagos 群岛, perhaps with one "main island" where the capital is located and where the majority of the population usually (but not always) lives. What Island nations do you know whose largest island isn't the most populous or the home of the capital city 首都? What islands do you know that are divided into more than one country? What countries do you know that are peninsulas 半岛? What national capitals are not the countries' biggest cities?

Most countries have one or more coastlines 海岸线 on the ocean or other major body of water like an inland sea 内海. Some countries, however, are landlocked 内陆的, which makes trade more difficult. What countries do you know that are landlocked?

The world can be divided geographically in many different ways that take politics more or less into account. Hemispheres 半球 named after the cardinal directions are the most purely geographic, excluding the people who live in these places. As indicated by the iconic National Geographic magazine 国家地理杂志, however, the topic is very much inclusive of peoples and cultures, more of a territorial anthropology 人类学, really.

The Global South refers to the developing world. This includes 2nd (middle-income), 3rd (pre-industrial), and 4th-world (little or no electricity and running water) countries, though this numerical system was more accurate and useful in the 20th century than today. One especially problematic case for these labels is today's PRC: Is China a developing or a developed country? How about the other BRICs?

The developed world (of post-industrial, service, and knowledge economies) consists of so-called first-world countries and may be more often referred to as OECD countries 经合组织国家 at the top of the global economy than "the Global North." A Eurocentric 以欧洲为中心 worldview sees only "The West and the Rest." To what extent do you think China's rise will bring Chinese world concepts like 天下 "All Under Heaven" back into use?

Samuel Huntington's 塞缪尔·亨廷顿 controversial concept of a world divided into "clashing" civilizations 文明冲突论 takes culture into account as well as geography, but most U.S. political scholars continue to see the world in terms of nearly 200 nation-states.

World Systems Theory 世界体系理论, most prominently associated with Immanuel Wallerstein, puts the economy at the center of its geographic analysis, dividing countries and regions into the core 核心, periphery 外围, and semi-periphery 半外围 of the global economy.

When two countries disagree about who owns or has rights to the resources of land or sea, this is called a dispute 争端. Disputed islands such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku, disputed borders, territorial disputes, and territorial waters such as the Southeast Asian countries vying for fishing and undersea/deep sea drilling rights 深海钻探权 in the South China Sea are all examples. China considers everything within "The Nine Dash Line 九段线" to be its territory. Fortunately these disputes are somewhat rarer in the 21st century, but by no means have they all been resolved 被解决的, and notably, China is still involved in many.

BASIC TERRESTRIAL BIOMES 生物群系: *tundra 冻原 (冻土带) *taiga 泰加 (针叶林) *deciduous forest 落叶阔叶林 (落叶林) *grasslands 草原 *desert 沙漠 *high plateaus 高原 *tropical forest 热带森林

OTHER LAND & WATER DESCRIPTORS: alluvial plain 冲积平原, bay 湾, (river) delta 三角洲, estuary 河口, foothills 山麓, freshwater 淡水 Vs. saltwater 咸水 lake (or sea), gulf 海湾, hills 丘陵, hinterland 腹地, loess plateaus 黄土高原, oasis 绿洲, plains 平原, Puszca/primeval/virgin forest 原始森林, meadow 草地, swamp/bog 沼泽, territorial waters 领海 Vs. "the high seas"/international waters 公海, tributary 河流支流, wasteland 废墟 / 荒地, wetlands 湿地

OTHER VOCABULARY: *aboriginal/indigenous people (including Native Americans & Australian Aborigines) 原住民 *annex(ation) 兼并 *Balkanization 巴尔干化 (分裂) *buffer state 缓冲国 *buffer zone 缓冲地带 (i.e. The DMZ 非军事区 between the two Koreas) *cartography 地图学, 海图学 *city-state 城邦 *compound 院子 (where members of a cult 邪教组织 or other group isolate themselves) *conquest 征服 *divide and conquer 分而治之 *exoticism 异国情调 *exoticize (Sth./Sb./somewhere) *expansionism 扩张主义 *flat earth societies 地平说学会 *geopolitics 地缘政治 *Here there be dragons. *"I claim this land for Spain." 我代表我的国家占领这片土地 *imperial overstretch 帝国过度扩张 *invasive species 外来物种 *irredentism 民族统一主义 *Is this the hill you want to die on? 留得青山在, 不怕没柴烧 *longitude 经度 & latitude 纬度 *Manifest Destiny 命定扩张论 (19世纪为美帝国主义向外搞侵略和扩张辩解的反动史观) (that the USA should extend from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast) *microstate 微型国家 (a very small but recognized sovereign state) Vs. micronation 私人国家 (usually founded/claimed/maintained by a single individual) *the natural resource curse 自然资源诅咒 *no-man's land 无人区 *nudist colony 裸体主义者活动的场所 *petrostate 石油国家 *plant one's flag 这是我的地盘 *(North/South) Poles 北极/南极 *political Vs. physical map 政治地图, 物理地图 *real estate 地产 *sacred land 圣地 *secede/secession 脱离 *separatism 分裂 *"The sky is high, and the emperor is far away." 天高皇帝远 *spheres of influence 势力范围 *territory 领土 *Tropic of Cancer 北回归线, Tropic of Capricorn 南回归线 *United States Space Force 美国太空部队 *wipe Sth. (i.e. an entire country) off the map 消灭 *Young Earth Creationism 年轻地球创造论 (mostly Christians who believe the earth is only 10-20,000 years old, humans lived with dinosaurs, etc.) *The Zomia 东南亚高地, 佐米亚 (the last, largest ungoverned territory on earth, spanning several countries in SE Asia)