

# LATIN AMERICA CULTURAL NOTES

# HISTORY

The background features several flowing, ribbon-like shapes in vibrant colors: red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. These ribbons appear to be moving across a black field, creating a sense of dynamic energy and movement. The word 'HISTORY' is centered in the upper half of the image, underlined.



**Beginnings of Civilization**

Early Agricultural Communities
  Early Civilizations

# INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS

- Three important native civilizations that began in Latin America were:
  - A. Maya
  - B. Aztec
  - C. Inca

# MAYANS

- The Maya lived in southern Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala. Their civilization was at its peak around 250 - 900 AD.
- The Maya had city states ruled by kings and priests. They worshipped the gods by ritual sacrifice and blood-letting.
- The Maya lived in a tropical wet climate with rainforests. They practiced slash and burn farming and grew squash and corn.

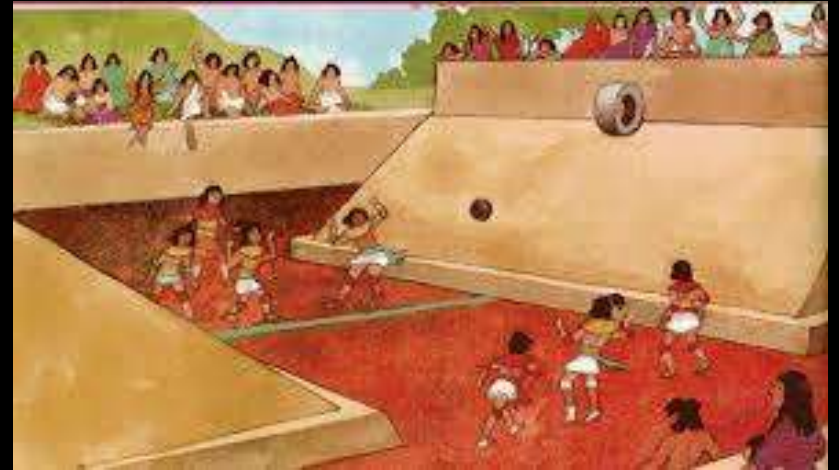




Mesoamerican Societies, c. 1200 BCE-900 CE



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# INCA

- The Inca lived in South America in Peru and Chile.
- The Inca built a system of roads through the Andes Mountains to connect their empire.
- The Inca did not have a writing system but they kept records with a complicated system of ropes with knots.





## INCA COMMUNICATION

- The Inca spoke *Quechua*
- They did not have a written language
- The Inca used groups of knotted strings called *quipu* to record information on:
  - Births & deaths
  - Harvests & taxes



Single Knot  
(S)



Figure Eight Knot  
(E)



Four-turn Long Knot  
(L)



# AZTEC

- The Aztec lived in central Mexico. Their capital was called Tenochtitlan and it was located on islands in a lake. Mexico City now stands on the ruins of the Aztec capital.
- The Aztec also practiced sacrifice and built large pyramids like the Maya.
- The Aztec empire flourished from 1400 to about 1520, when it was overthrown by the Spanish.





# EUROPEANS ARRIVE

- 1492 – Columbus discovered America
- 1494 - **Treaty of Tordesillas**  
- agreement between Spain and Portugal
- Gave Portugal control of what would become Brazil





# EUROPEANS ARRIVE

- Early 1500s – Cortes and Spanish destroyed capital, & built Mexico City on ruins
  - Spanish brought own language, religion; Indian heritage stays strong
  - large **mestizo** population—mixed Spanish, Native American heritage
- Pizarro conquered Incas for Spain
- Since Spanish conquest in 1500s, Native Americans ruled by others
- under Spain: governors ruled the region, acting on behalf of monarchs

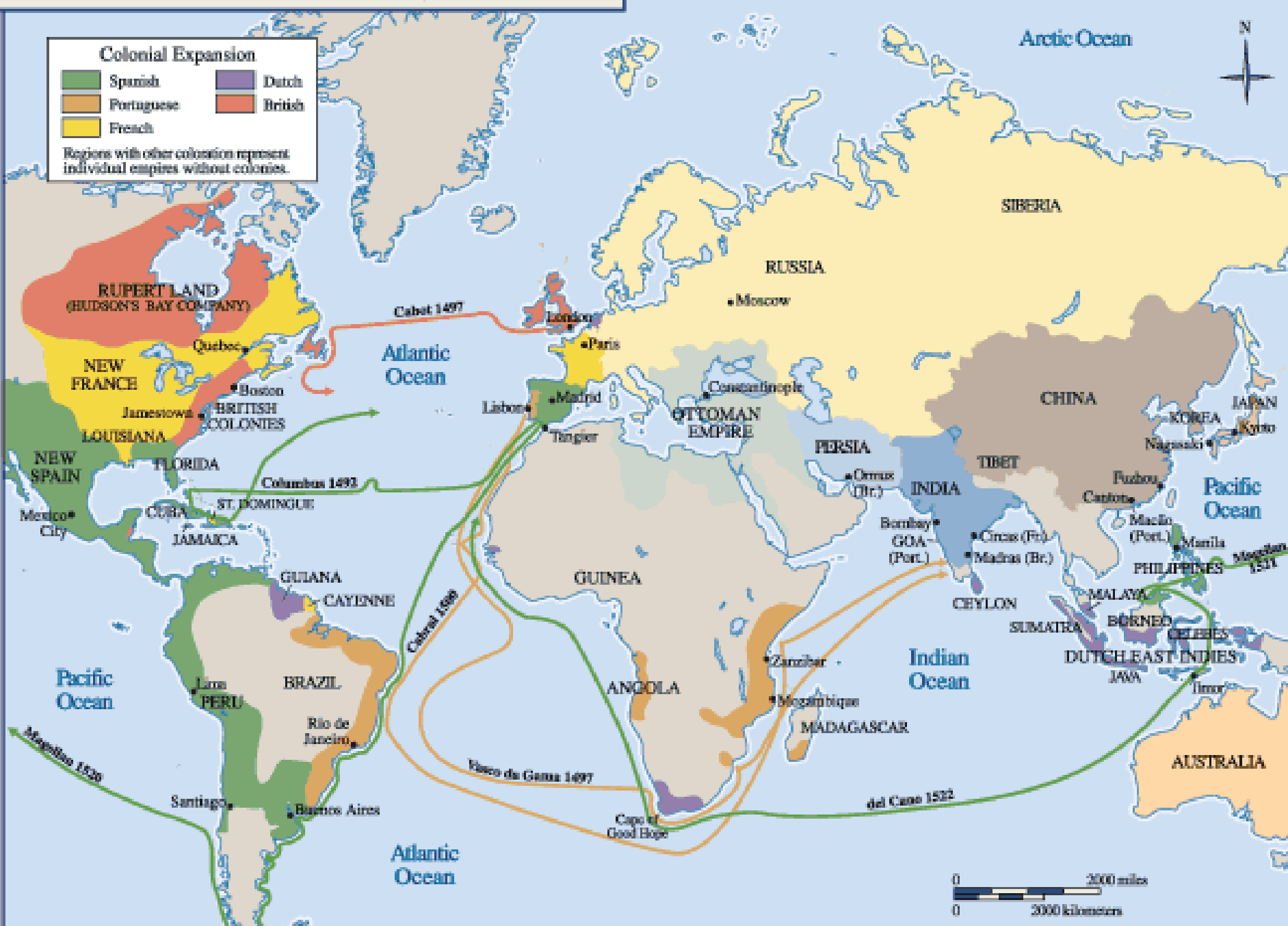


# EXPLORATION AND EMPIRES, 1400–1700

**Colonial Expansion**

<span style="color: green;">■</span> Spanish	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Dutch
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Portuguese	<span style="color: red;">■</span> British
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> French	

Regions with other colonization represent individual empires without colonies.





# EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

- Latin America was colonized by European countries.
- Spain colonized Mexico and most of Central America and South America.
- Portugal colonized Brazil.
- The English colonized Jamaica and Belize.
- The French colonized Haiti.



# EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

- The Europeans converted the natives to Roman Catholicism and made them learn their languages.
- The most wide spoken languages are Spanish and Portuguese.
- The Europeans also brought Africans to work on sugar plantations as slaves.



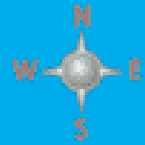
The Atlantic Slave Trade Routes



# African Slave Trade


Main Source Regions of African Slaves
  African Slave Trade Routes

0 500 1000 Miles  
 0 500 1000 Kilometers



# AFRICAN INFLUENCES

- Latin America is heavily influenced by African culture.
- Music - Calypso, steel drum bands, and reggae.
- Religion - Voodoo in Haiti and Candomble in Brazil.

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- Most of Latin America has a mixed population called mestizo.
  - Mestizos are people of mixed Spanish and Native ancestry.
  - People in the Caribbean have mixed European, Native, and African ancestry.

# FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE

- Minority of Spanish colonists still ruled after 1800s independence
- **Oligarchy**—non-democratic government of the few
  - press censored, free speech limited, & dissent punished
  - discrimination against those not in Spanish ruling class
- If government couldn't control people, military would seize power
  - form a **junta**—harsh government run by general
- Many 20<sup>th</sup>-century Latin-American countries ruled by a **caudillo**-military dictator or political boss
  - supported by military and wealthy; sometimes even elected



# RIGID SOCIAL STRUCTURE

- Latin America has a very rigid social structure. There are many poor people and a few rich people. The middle class is very small. During most of its history Latin America was divided among rich landlords who owned most of the land.

# REVIEW QUESTIONS

What was the Treaty of Tordesillas?

What country colonized Brazil?

What is mestizo?

What is an oligarchy?

What group of Native Americans lived in the Andes Mountains in Peru?

What two cultures blended to shape the development of Mexico?



# CULTURE

# LANGUAGES

- Most Latin American countries speak **Spanish**
- Suriname is Dutch-speaking & French Guiana is part of France
- **Portuguese is the official language of Brazil**

# MEXICAN LIFE TODAY

- **Emigration** -.; many workers travel to U.S. (2,000-mile border with U.S)
- separates families; workers in U.S. send money, return with savings
- Growing population, & government policies create a shortage of jobs
- many Mexicans migrate to U.S. for work, but can't get good jobs
- School attendance is improving; 85% of school-age kids in class

# URBANIZATION: THE MOVE TO THE CITIES

- **Subsistence farming** barely supports people and their families
- People move to cities to improve their lives
- **Push factors**—factors that “push” people to leave rural areas
- **Pull factors**—factors that “pull” people to cities

# URBANIZATION: THE MOVE TO THE CITIES

- Rapidly Growing Cities have similar problems
  - growing slums
  - increasing unemployment and crime
  - environmental problems include air pollution, drinking water shortages
- failing infrastructure—sewers, transportation, electricity, housing

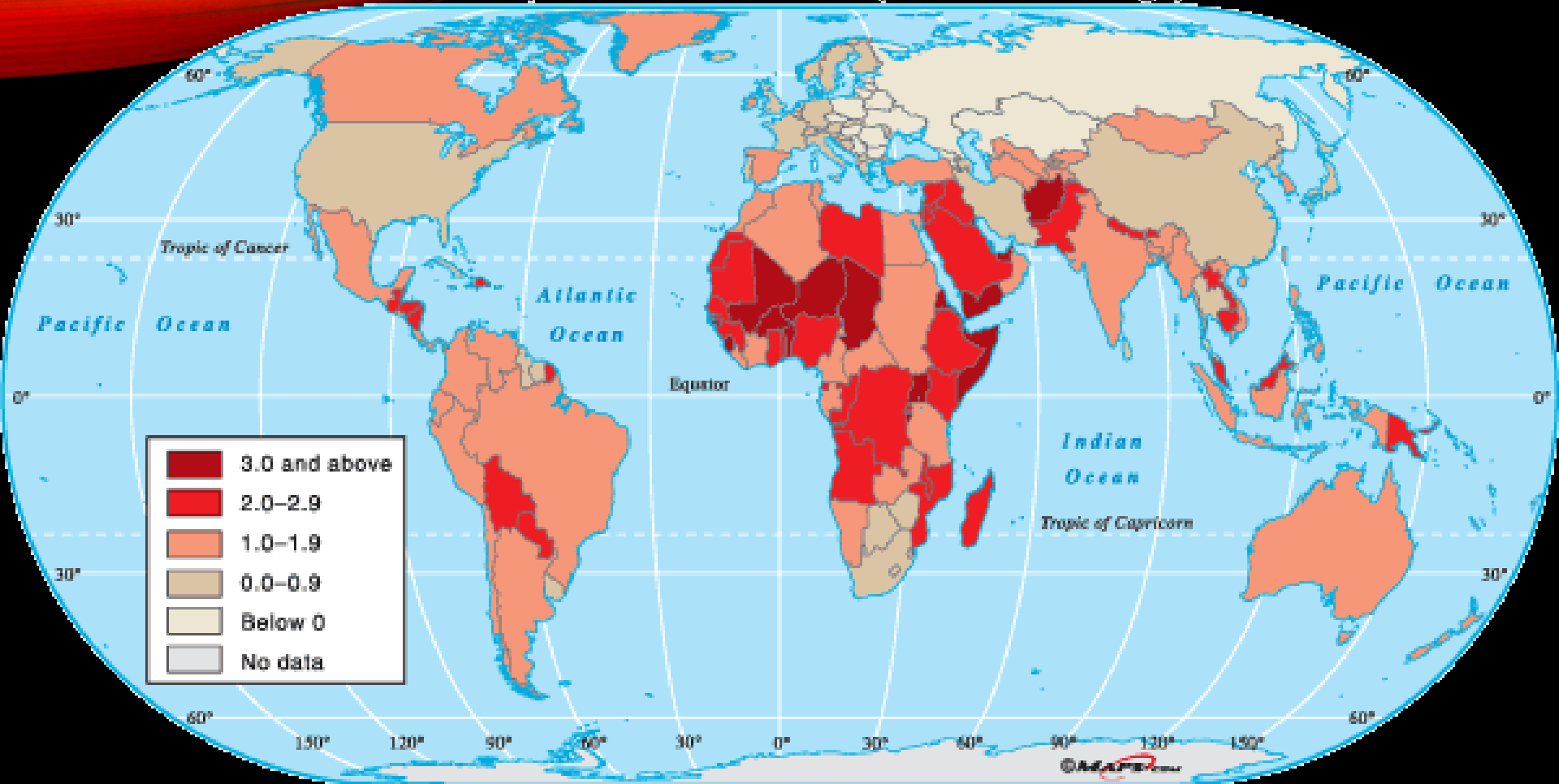


# URBANIZATION: THE MOVE TO THE CITIES

- Six of Latin America's most populous cities are in South America
- Most populous city in Latin America is Mexico City
- 18 to 20 million in city, 30 million in greater metropolitan area



# Natural Population Increase Rate (Annual Percentage)

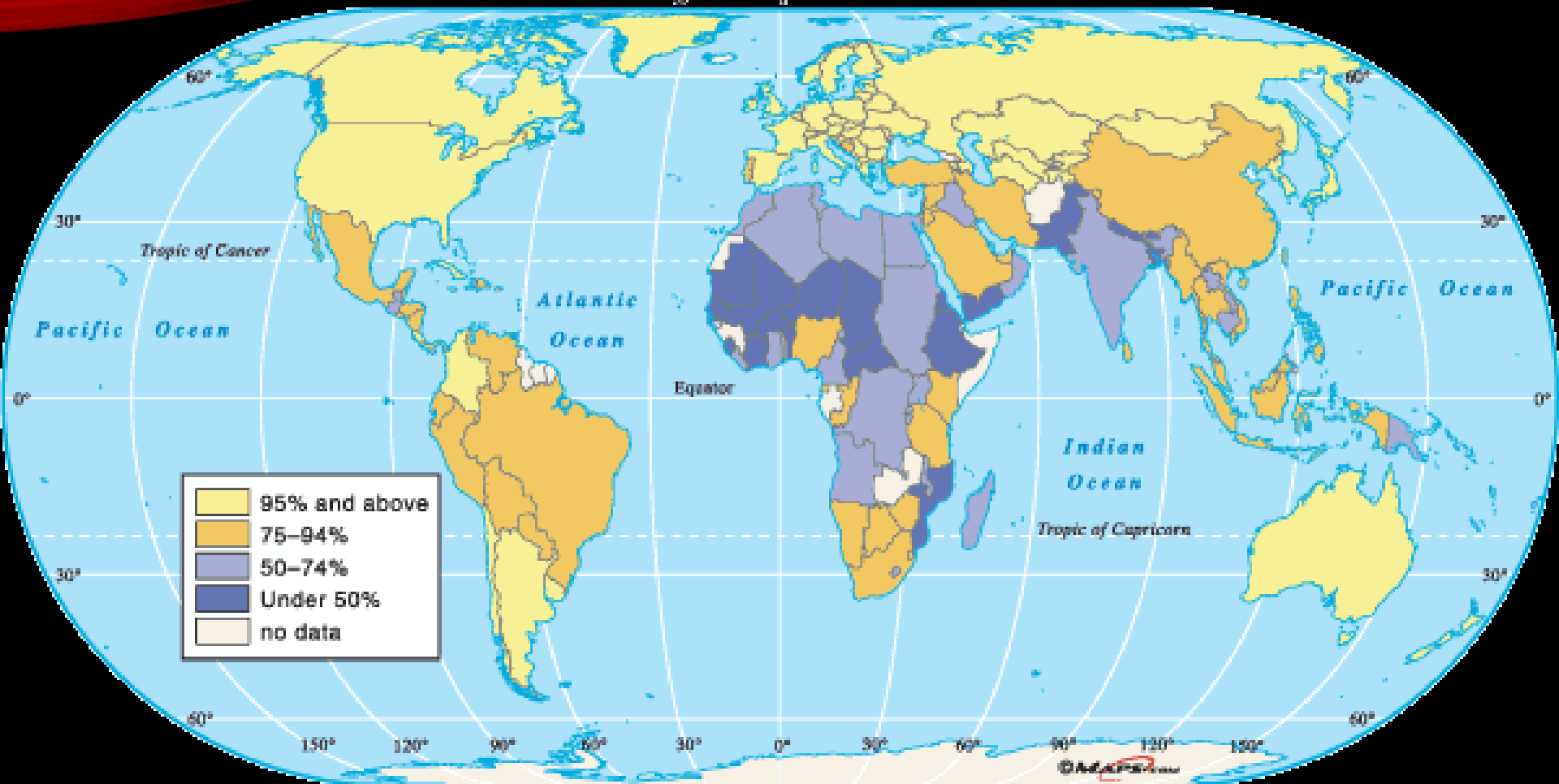


Esri Equal-Area Projection

# LITERACY IN SOUTH AMERICA

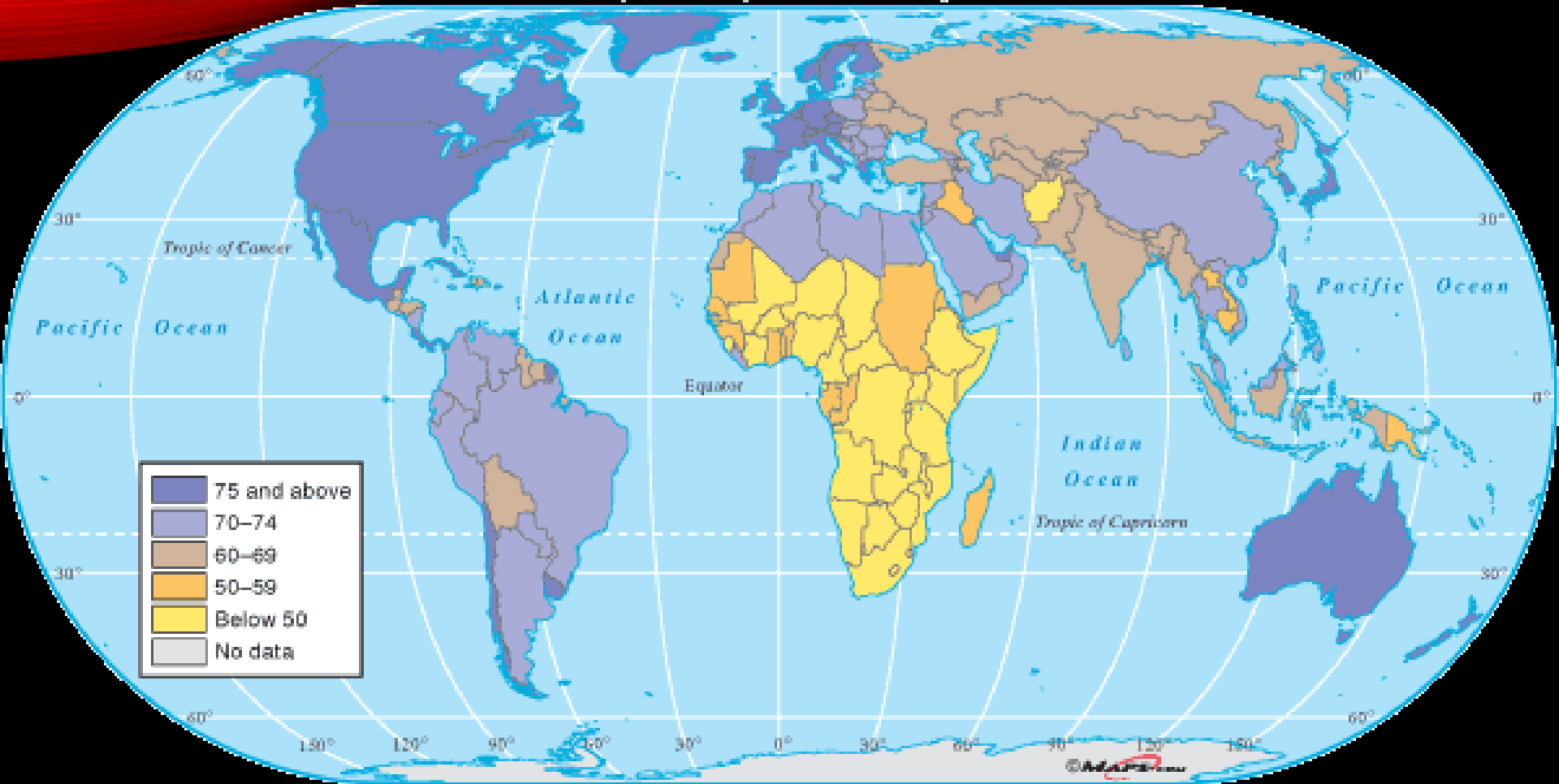
- Spanish-speaking South American countries have high literacy rates
- better than Central America, Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil
- 90% in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay with rates for women as high as men
- Chile has a 95% adult literacy rate & 98% for young people
- All children ages 6–13 attend school; free public education

# Percentage of Population Literate



Escher Equal-Area Projection

# Life Expectancy At Birth (In years)



Eckert Equal-Area Projection



# REVIEW QUESTIONS

What language do the majority of Latin American countries speak?

What Latin American country speaks Portuguese?

How are push- and- pull factors causing urbanization?

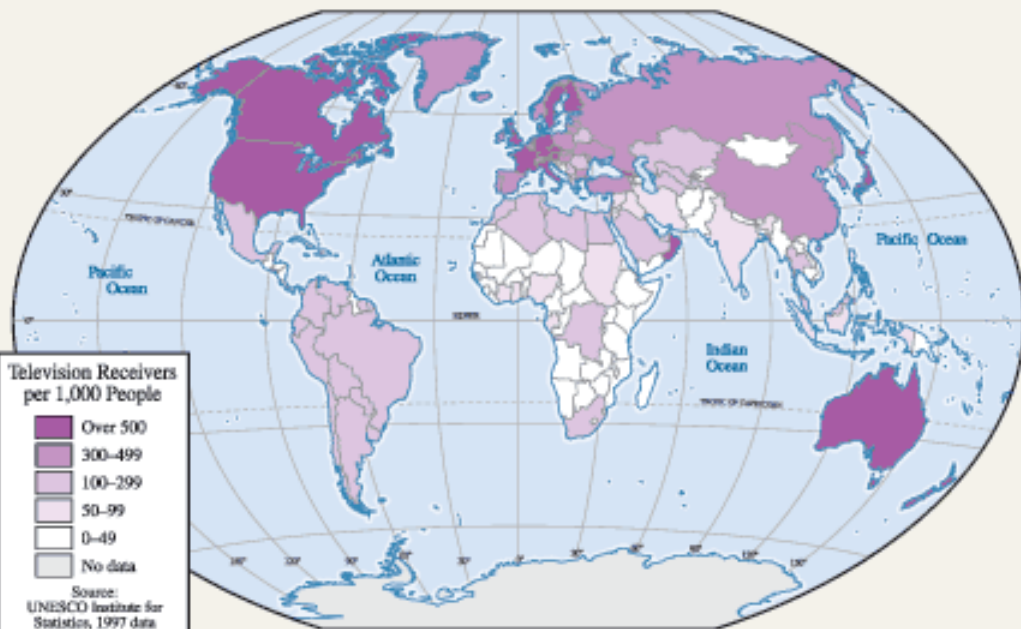
# ECONOMY



# BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

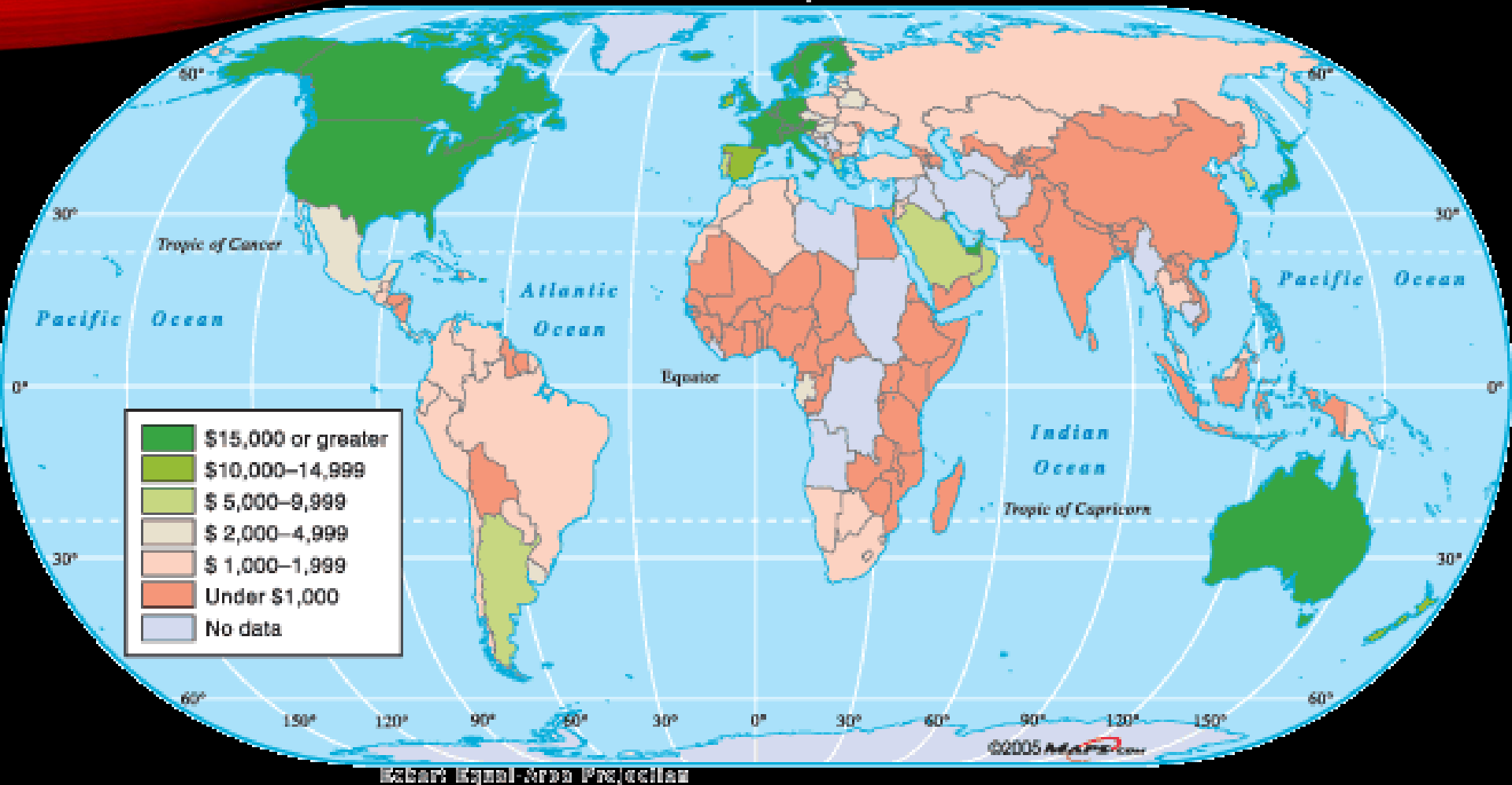
- **Income gap**—difference between quality of life of the rich and poor
  - Gap is widening in most Latin American countries
- Most countries have free-market economies & minimal government rules
- people have freedom, & rewards they need to create wealth
- Poor lack skills to fully, equally participate in such an economy
- most have little education; can't read, can't find jobs
- end up doing menial labor
- conditions in slums bring disease, crime, short life spans

# TELEVISIONS AND PERSONAL COMPUTERS





# GNP Per Capita



# ECONOMICS

- Gulf oil reserves help Mexico develop industrial economy & manufacturing
- Many new factories along U.S. border
- **Maquiladoras**—factories that assemble imported materials
  - export products (electronics, clothes) to U.S.



# ECONOMICS

- Mexico is Part of **NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)** with U.S., Canada
  - prosperity through trade expected



EC

- Sugar cane is Caribbean's largest export crop
  - also bananas, citrus, coffee, spices







# ECONOMICS

- Poor crop-labor pay leaves Caribbean's per-capita income very low
- Central America plantations produce 10% of world's coffee, bananas
  - mining and forest resources are also exported
- Chile's largest export is copper







# TOURISM: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS

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- Advantages of Tourism
- Tourists spend money on souvenirs, trips, restaurants
- new hotels, businesses have been built in Mexico and the Caribbean
- regional ports serve cruise ships
- residents work in restaurants and resorts, guide tours and activities
- Helps reduce income gap between rich and poor

# TOURISM: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS

- Disadvantages of Tourism
- Resorts built in unspoiled settings create congestion, pollution
- Gap between rich tourists and poor residents creates resentment
- Local governments run up debt to build tourist facilities
- airports, harbors, hotels, resorts, sewage systems, shopping malls
- Facility owners often live out of country, so profits leave the area
  - such owners make decisions that may not be in area's best interest



# RAIN FOREST

- Rain forest has **biodiversity** —wide range of plant, animal species
- 50 million acres of rain forest worldwide destroyed annually
- Mahogany & cedar harvested, exported from Amazon



# RAIN FOREST LAND USES

- Poor native farmers clear rain forest for crops (**slash & burn**)
- Poor soil fertility, increased erosion lead to more timber clearing
- Brazil's growing population: 173 million in 2000, 200 million projected in 2020
- Over half of Amazon rain forest is in Brazil





# THE PRICE OF DESTRUCTION

- **Deforestation**—cutting down and clearing away trees
- Rain forests regulate climate: absorb carbon dioxide, produce oxygen
- Fewer forests means less carbon dioxide absorbed - it builds up in atmosphere, prevents heat from escaping into space
- **global warming**—atmospheric temperature rises, weather patterns change
- Covers 6% of earth's surface but has 50% of plant, animal species
- Researchers are trying to develop medicines from rain forest plants

# MOVING TOWARD SOLUTIONS

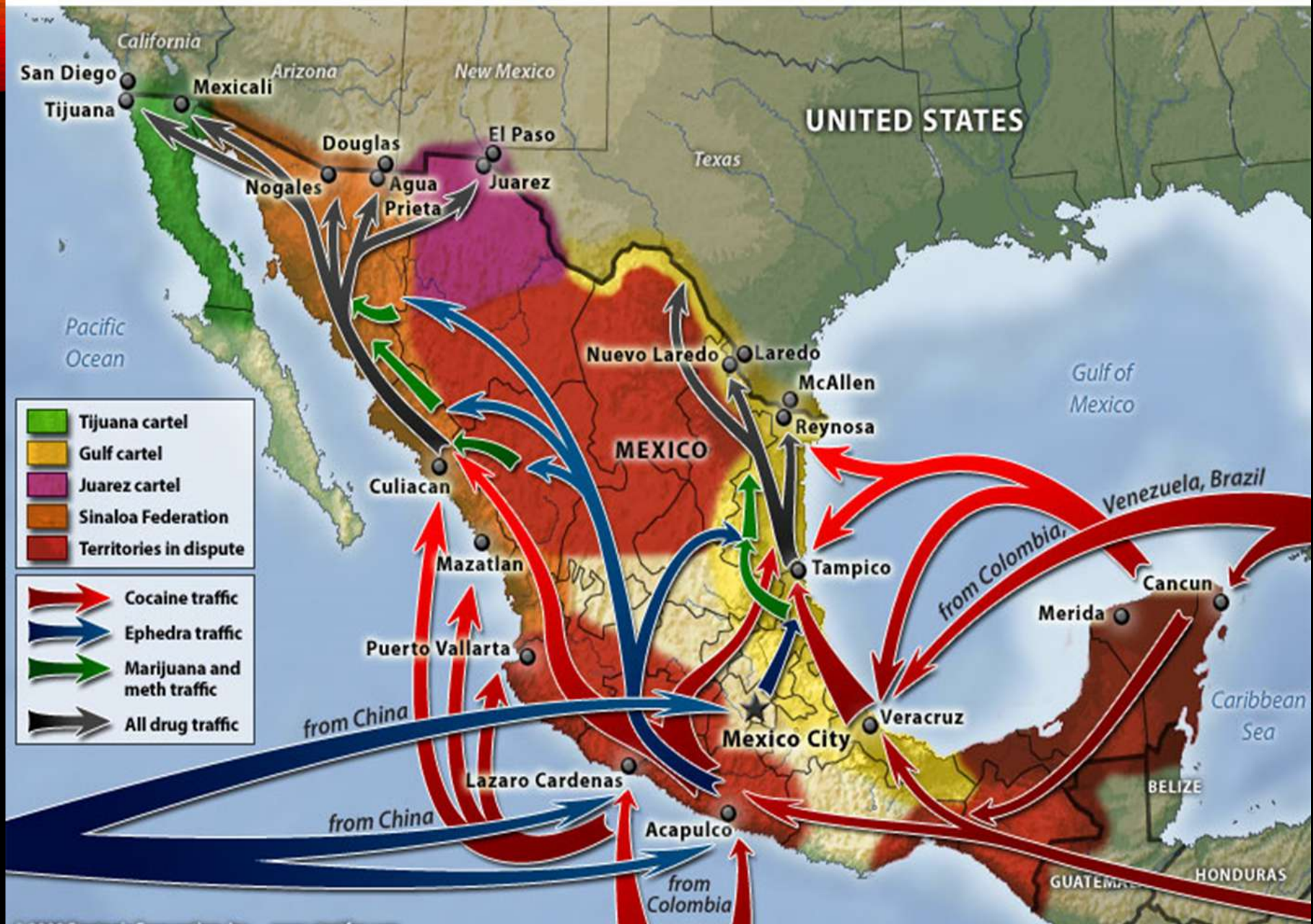
- Balancing economic development with rain forest preservation
- some countries restrict economic development
- Grassroots organizations try to educate people about rain forests
  - protest environmentally damaging plans
- One environmental plan is the **debt-for-nature swap** - group pays part of government's large debt
  - government protects part of rain forest
  - approach works in Bolivia



# DRUG CARTELS



# CARTEL TERRITORIES AND DRUG ROUTES



# REVIEW QUESTIONS

What is NAFTA?

What is debt – for nature swap?

What is global warming?

What is biodiversity?

What is deforestation?

What are maquiladores?

What effect is slash-and-burn farming having on the Amazon Rain Forest?

Name three reasons that it is important to preserve the rain forest: