

NORTH AMERICA

Anglo-America encompasses two of the world's largest countries – the United States of America and Canada. It is so called because of the dominant British influence. This is reflected in the language, as also similarities in the cultural and political landscapes, such as a democratic and federal polity.

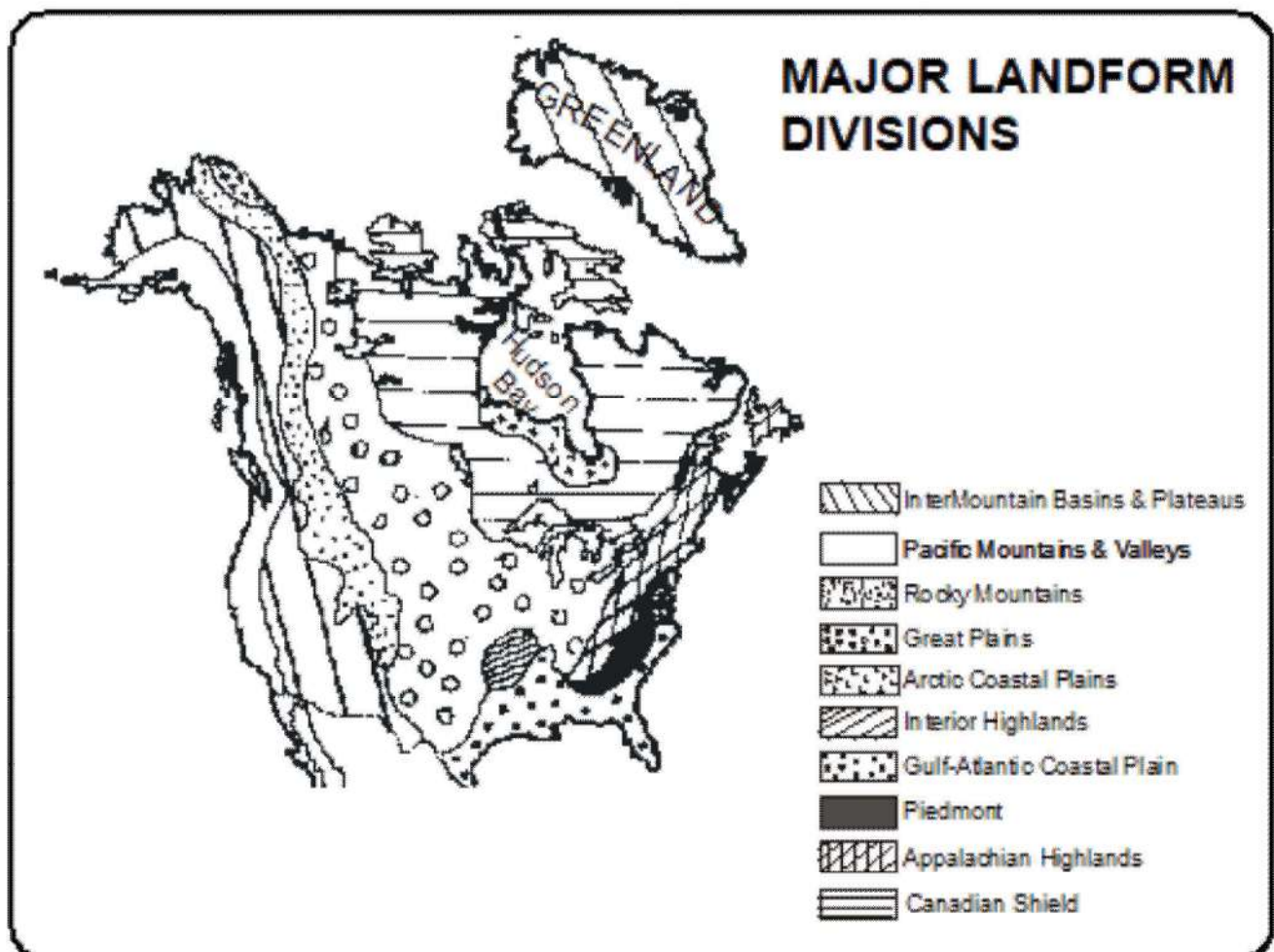
The European cultural norms act as a unifying force in these plural societies. While in Canada, there is a manifestation of regional bilingualism, it is not so in the United States. Diversity in national backgrounds, languages, socio-economic inequity and ethnic divisions have not prevented the emergence of an essentially 'American culture'.

This culture encourages and acknowledges entrepreneurship, development of skills and pursuit of excellence in an enabling environment. These are the reasons for the emergence of the United States and Canada as two of the most

developed countries of the world. Of course, this has been aided by a vast natural resource base, which is partly a consequence of the immense geographical diversity.

The natural resources have facilitated the development of world's largest manufacturing complexes, a concomitant of which has also been the large-scale urbanisation. Over and above industrialisation, these countries remain the foremost producers of a variety of agricultural products. Agriculture here is primarily mechanised, commercial and export-oriented.

During recent times, the economic geography of this region has undergone change. The change is a consequence of factors like transformation in the nature of the economy, from one dependent on manufacturing to knowledge based industries, emergence of regional trade blocs and global free trade. The effects of these have been the rise of



amenities-rich 'Sunbelt' and change in trade flows. Such changes include strengthened interconnections between North and Middle America as a result of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area); increased interactions with the Pacific Rim countries while maintaining close economic links with Europe.

No doubt, there have been myriad problems such as socio-economic inequity on one hand and pollution and environmental deterioration on the other. Nevertheless, the Anglo-American countries have shown the way in reconciling developmental goals with environmental conservation.

Natural Landscape

The physiographic diversity in Anglo-America is immense and varies from swampy plains to high mountains. At the broadest level, the physical divisions of North America include plains and highlands.

The plains include the Canadian Shield, the Arctic Coastal plains, the Gulf – Atlantic Coastal plains, the Piedmont and the Interior plains. These differ in terms of the plain forming processes, the nature of underlying rocks and local topographical variations. For instance, the mineral rich Canadian Shield is formed of ancient, highly eroded, metamorphic rocks. Large parts of these are covered with swamps and a number of lakes of glacial origin like the Great Bear, Winnipeg and the Great Lakes. As a contrast, the more fertile Interior plains lie mostly within the drainage basins of four important rivers: Mississippi, Mackenzie, Saskatchewan and St Lawrence.

The most important highlands are the Appalachians, the Interior Highlands and the Western Cordillera.

The Appalachians or the Eastern highlands were once very high. Over the years, these have been eroded and are now an area of low relief.

The Interior Highlands, often called the Ozark-Ouachita highlands, constitute an island of hill country surrounded by plains. The Arkansas river divides the Interior Highlands into two major segments- Boston and Ozark mountains in the north and Ouachita mountains in the south.

The Western Cordillera, stretching from north to south along the entire length of the continent, consists of several parallel ranges. The Rocky Mountain is the most prominent. Apart from this, Sierra Nevada, the Coast Ranges and the Cascade Ranges also form part of the Western Cordillera.

These ranges enclose within them several intermontane plateaus and basins. The largest of the basins is the Great Basin that forms an area of inland drainage. The other important basins and plateaus are the Colorado plateau, known for its Grand Canyon, Columbia – Snake Plateau, Fraser – Nechako – Stikine plateau and the Yukon basin, all of which are named after the principal rivers draining these areas.

Apart from the rivers in western America, the important ones are the St. Lawrence and Mackenzie which flow northwards and the Mississippi which flows southwards. The important tributaries of Mississippi are Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio and Arkansas.

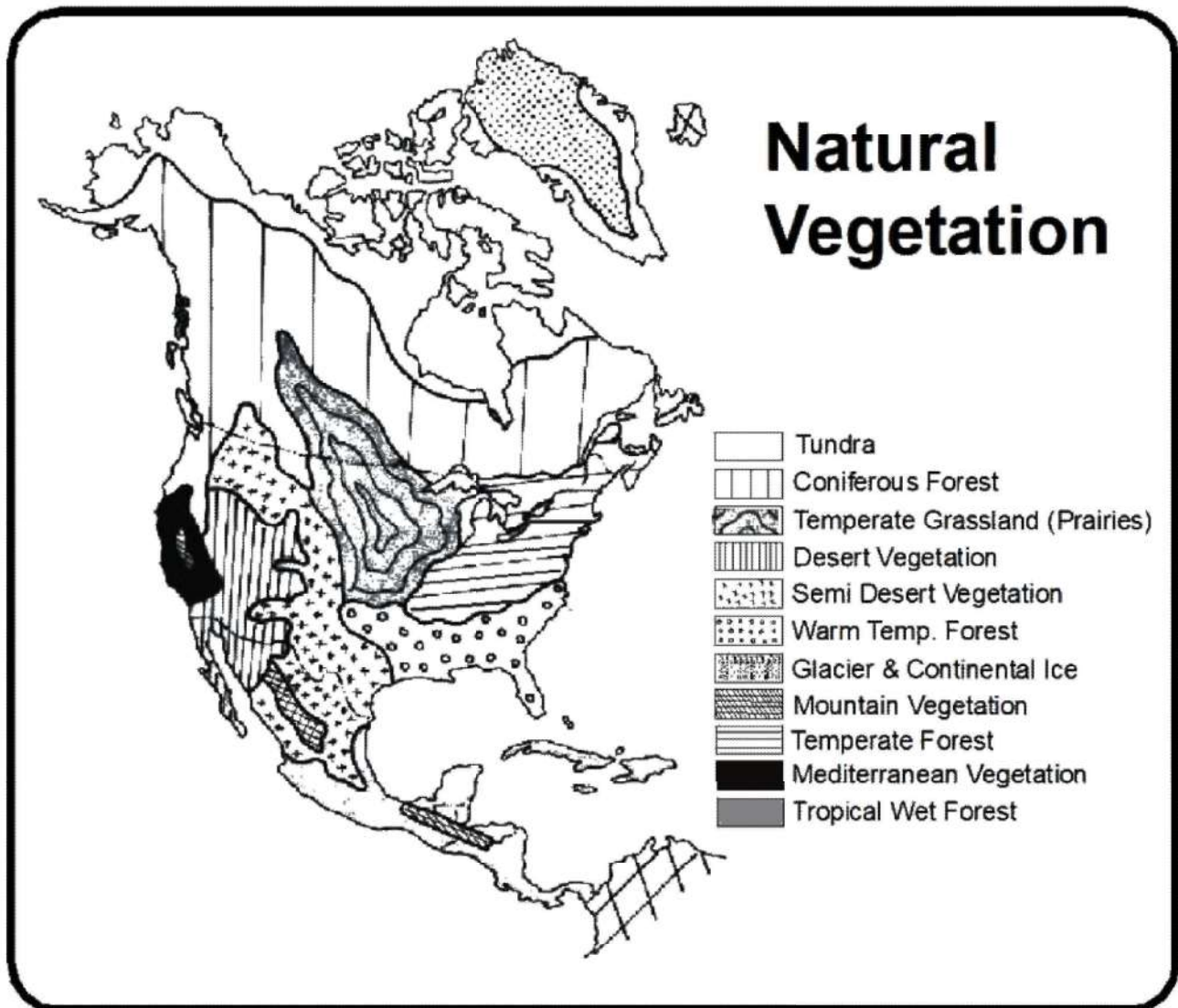
Climate and Vegetation

The climatic pattern of Anglo-America exhibits both diversity and largeness of scale. Every major non-tropical climatic type is present here, with the tropical climatic type represented only in Hawaii and southern Florida. USA has the maximum number of climatic types within its boundaries. This variety affords unparalleled possibilities and economic opportunities.

Of the various climates, the Tundra type is found in the north. It rims the coast from Alaska to Labrador and is also found in the coastal section of Greenland. This region is characterised by a very low mean annual temperature, with not more than four months having temperatures above freezing point. Within the Arctic Circle, there are weeks of continuous darkness or light. Here, precipitation is primarily in the form of snow that falls mainly in winter.

Permafrost and poor drainage have restricted the vegetation to mosses and lichens, though stunted birches and dwarf willows may be found in sheltered spots.

The Cool Temperate Continental (Siberian) type, commonly known as the Taiga is found south of the Tundra type. Winters here are long



and bitterly cold and summers cool and brief. The annual range of temperature is very large but not as much as that in the Russian Taiga. This is a consequence of the lesser east-west expanse of North America. The precipitation here is low because of continentality and is primarily convectional with a summer maximum. Permanent snowfields are absent because any accumulation of snow is melted with the return of summers.

Though the total precipitation is low, cool and humid conditions allow the growth of trees, with the evergreen conifers being the most wide-spread. Important species include the douglas fir, balsam fir, pine and spruce. These occur in pure stands, thus commercial exploitation is easy.

South of the Taiga, lies the region of Cool Temperate Eastern Margin (Laurentian) type.

This is intermediate between the Siberian and the British types, with features of both maritime and continental climates. Here the winters are cold and dry and summers warm and wet. The summers would have been warmer, were it not for the cold Labrador ocean current. The precipitation is uniformly distributed throughout the year due to maritime influence of the Atlantic and the Great Lakes.

The predominant vegetation of the Laurentian type of climate is cool temperate forest, a mix of conifers and deciduous. The important deciduous tree species include oak, beech, maple and birch.

The Cool Temperate Western Margin (British) type is found in the northwest. This region is under a permanent influence of the westerlies. The mean annual temperature range is not very large because of the oceanic influence. The

rainfall is adequate throughout the year, but with a winter or autumn maximum.

The natural vegetation of this climatic type is deciduous hardwood. These occur in pure stands with scanty undergrowth. The important species include elm, beech, poplar, alders and aspen.

The Warm Temperate Eastern Margin (China) type is found in the southeast where continental heating in summer induces an inflow of air from the cooler Atlantic Ocean. It is sometimes referred to as the Gulf type. Here the monsoonal characteristics are less well established, as there is no complete reversal of winds. The warm Gulf stream and onshore trade winds lead to a smaller range of temperature. The annual rainfall is heavy and is well distributed throughout the year. There is a summer maximum because of hurricanes. This region is also known for the intense and extremely destructive tornadoes called "twisters" in the Mississippi basin.

The natural vegetation is luxuriant because of higher rainfall. The Gulf States of USA have lowland deciduous forests with thick undergrowth. The important species include walnut, oak, hickory, maple and pines.

The Warm Temperate Western Margin (Mediterranean) type is found in California. This region experiences a dry warm summer with offshore trade winds and a moist winter with onshore westerlies. The rain comes in heavy showers interrupted by a few days of bright sunshine.

Since half the year is dry, the natural vegetation is not luxuriant. The trees have xerophytic adaptations. The plant growth is restricted to autumn and spring, when temperature is higher and moisture sufficient.

On the highlands, natural vegetation consists of the Mediterranean evergreen forests with the Giant Sequoia or the Redwood typical of California; evergreen conifers in the cooler parts and Mediterranean bushes and scrubs called chaparral in California.

In the southwest, lies the Desert type of climate. The region includes Mohave, Sonoran and Californian deserts, formed as a result of offshore trade winds, desiccating effect of the Californian cold current, subsiding air and rain

shadow effect. The climate is characterised by a very large diurnal and annual range of temperature without a distinct cold season. The annual precipitation is less than 25cm and is primarily convectional.

The natural vegetation consists of xerophytic scrub. These either lie dormant during the hot season awaiting the infrequent rain or have developed special adaptations, such as long wiry roots, thick succulent stem and thorny leaves.

Bordering the desert, in the interior of the continents lie the Temperate Grasslands. Due to continentality rainfall is so low that these grasslands are practically treeless. In North America, these are called Prairies. They are characterised by extremes of temperature leading to a very large annual range of temperature. The precipitation is light and mainly convectional. Winter rainfall occurs because of depressions steered in by the westerlies. An interesting feature of the Prairies is a hot local wind, the Chinook, also called the Snow Eater. It blows down the easter slopes of Rockies and has a beneficial effect on the pastures.

The Prairies are covered with grass. There are almost no trees, although some species like low willows, alders, and poplars are found along watercourses. In areas with adequate rainfall long prairie grasses are found. These are typical of the wheat lands in Northern America. In areas with lesser rainfall short steppe grasses are found. These grasses are not only shorter but also wiry and occur in clumps. This region is less suitable for farming and is used for ranching.

Anglo-America which includes USA and Canada is undoubtedly the leading region of the world. Both these countries have certain similarities such as large area, huge natural resource base and developed manufacturing economies but there are certain important differences. For instance, the population of Canada is much smaller and manufacturing not as well developed as in the US. There is somewhat lesser political cohesion in Canada than the US. These differences justify their treatment separately, in so far as the social, economic and political aspects are concerned.

USA

The USA that we see today is because of the immigrants who have shaped and continue to shape a rich and varied cultural mosaic. In fact, the latest census showed that nearly 85% of the US population identified themselves with one of more than 140 different national backgrounds. It is thus, a veritable 'melting pot'.

The more important of the nationalities are British, Irish, French, Italian, Scandinavian, African and more recently Chinese, Indian and Korean. Although the dominant European ancestries (British, French and Irish) were fairly well dispersed throughout USA, most others show preference for a particular region. For instance, Italians and Portuguese are clustered in the northeast, Scandinavians in the north-central states, Afro-Americans in the southeast, Hispanics in the southwest and Asians in the west.

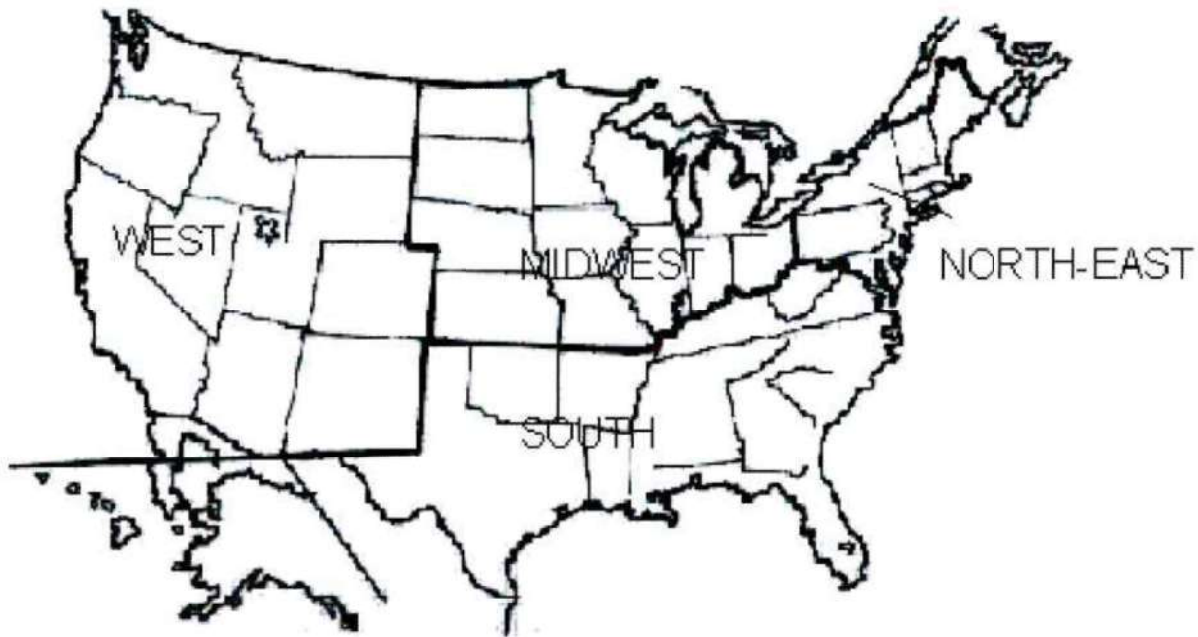
The population composition has been changing over time. Although the Afro-American population remains fairly stable, the Hispanic population has been increasing. It is expected

that they will outnumber the Afro-Americans by 2005. Apart from the Hispanics, the population of Asians has also been increasing.

As per the recent census, no less than 12% of the US population spoke a primary language other than English. There are differences even in the usages of English. For instance, the Southern states possess a distinctive accent, different from that of the New England states. A closer relation between language and cultural landscape can be discerned from the names of places, that also provide clues to the movement of people in the past. (See box: Toponymy)

The immigrants have brought with them different religions. The important among these are Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism. Nevertheless, Anglo-America remains Christian dominated. The distribution of religious groups also shows regional variation. For instance, Protestant Baptists are clustered in the southeast, Mormons in Utah, Roman Catholics in the New England states and Hispanics in the southwest.

Cultural geography of USA continues to evolve into a complex mosaic. The basis of group



NOTE: THE BOUNDARIES ARE ARBITRARY AND TRANSITIONAL

identification is changing today. It is now no longer solely based on the traditional divisions of race and ethnicity. Age, occupational status and life-style have emerged as new dimensions in social stratification. As it reflects an increasing secularisation of the society, it is a cause of satisfaction to a majority of the Americans. Nevertheless, it does represent a threat to the cherished democratic ideals of the American nation.

As an aid to study the socio-economic diversity, conterminous USA has been divided, somewhat arbitrarily into 4 major multi-state regions, the North East, South, Midwest and West.

The North East consists of 6 New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island) and 5 Middle Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland) and the District of Columbia.

Besides the fact that this area was settled the earliest, it is also the most intensely developed, most densely populated and most urbanised region. In fact, nearly, 25% of the population resides in the North East, which accounts for 5% of the total land area of USA. This is despite the region not being well endowed in terms of natural resources and most of the materials required by the North East industries coming largely from outside this region.

The most prominent feature of this region is its intense urbanisation. This is even more marked in the Boston- Washington axis, also called the "Megalopolis". The extraordinary urbanisation was a necessary by-product of industrialisation. Even though it emerged during the industrial revolution, the process of urbanisation had begun well before the American Civil War. John Brocht has developed a framework based on transportation technology and industrial energy to study the process of urban evolution in the North East. (See box)

It is of interest to note that although there is a decline in employment in the manufacturing sector, this region still records the lowest unemployment rates. Thus, the northeast presents a mixed picture. The new avenues for

employment are in the services sector or knowledge based industries. Here, the example of old textile towns of Lowell and Lawrence must be cited. These towns have been 'recycled' and now possess a developed electronics industry.

Though agriculture in the north east is highly productive, it is over shadowed by other ways of life, occupations and land uses. Interestingly, the nature of agricultural products of Northeast has changed over time. During the colonial times, small surpluses of grains were produced that fed the pre-industrial, urbanising society. Increasing competition from the Midwest in grain production and expanding demand of dairy products led to the development of dairy and truck farming. This was also suited to the generally low quality soils of this region. In recent years, truck farming has lost out to newer specialities such as chicken broiler production. Another adaptation in the densely urbanised and populated states such as Massachusetts and Rhode Island is the greenhouse products. Today, this is a leading source of income.

The South includes 14 states: 5 along the Atlantic from Virginia to Florida; 4 along Gulf of Mexico from Alabama to Texas; 5 interior states of West Virginia, Kentucky, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Tennessee. It accounts for 25% of the total area and a little over 30% of the population.

This region has certain distinctive characteristics. It has an intermediate population density. The urbanisation level is somewhat lower. There are several small towns and cities and only a few large metropolitan centres. Even the ethnic composition on the south is different, with a higher percentage of white Protestants of British ancestry, black Protestants and Mexican American Catholics. Historically, this region had lower incomes than the nation in general, though this difference has lessened markedly.

The economy of the South has been dominated by production of cash crops for the world markets. This reliance on commercial agriculture was established by the 17th century. It was initially dependent upon growing tobacco using slave labour. This was followed by growing rice and indigo for exports, during the late 17th century. Only after the invention of the cotton

gin did cotton become the main basis for the plantation economy.

More interesting has been the shift of the cotton growing regions westward. This was initially concentrated in the Atlantic coastal region of Georgia and South Carolina, in the so-called 'Sea Island' district. By the Civil War in 1861, this area had lost its prominence.

By 1860, the 'Black Belt', extending from Alabama to Mississippi had become the principal centre for cotton production. Even in this region, exhaustion of the soil plus the ravages of boll weevil destroyed the cotton production just as in the Sea Island district.

During the last century there has been a further westward shift to the Mississippi lowland. This has proved more durable and still is an important producer of cotton.

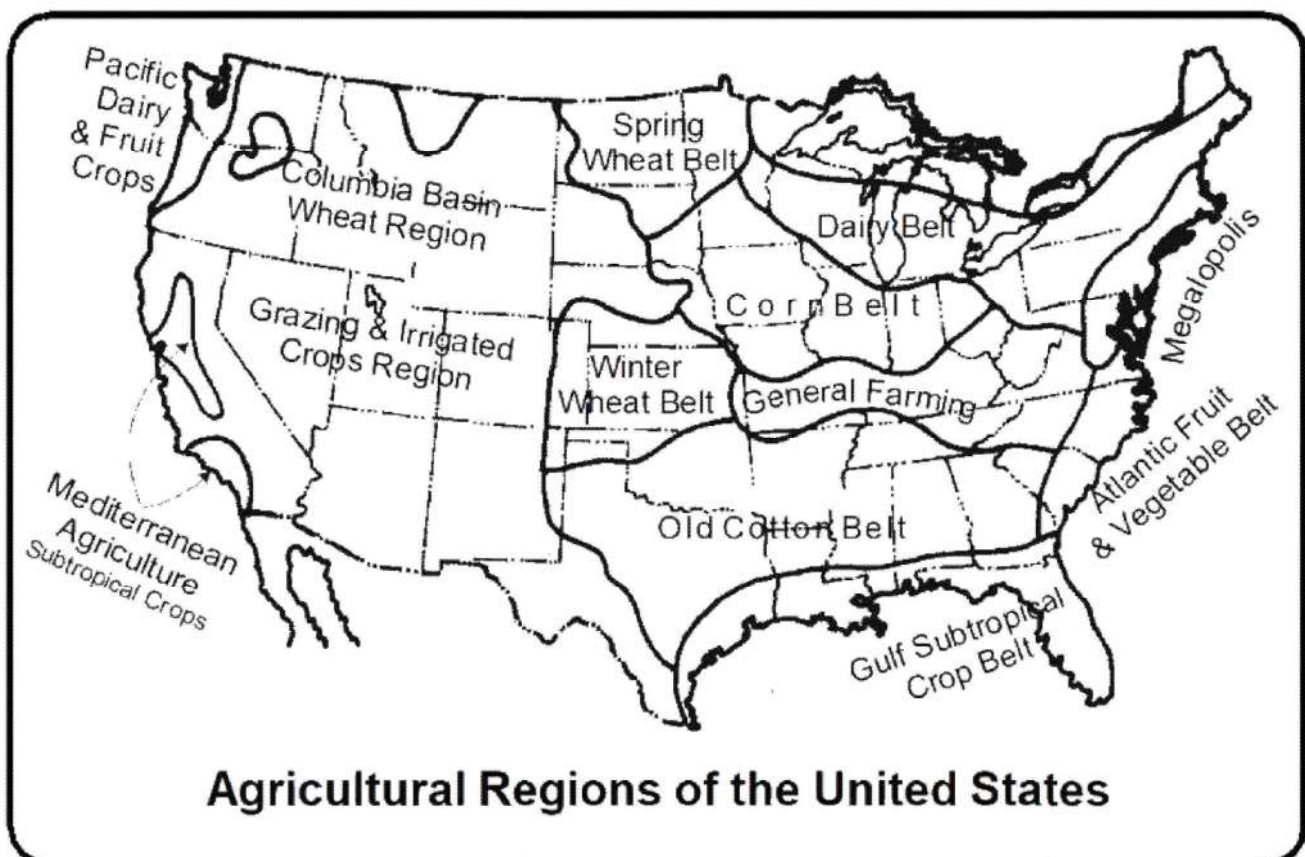
As elsewhere, there have been changes in the nature of agriculture, kind of products and the levels of productivity. Today, the southern part is not outstanding in agriculture. Although smaller dispersed plantations had appeared by the Civil War, today small and part time farmers producing a wide range of products dominate the southern agriculture. Animal products like

chicken broiler and beef cattle have become the major source of southern income, although in certain areas the traditional staples of cotton and tobacco remain important. In recent years, island like districts producing a range of non-traditional products from peanuts to racehorses have emerged.

The development of agriculture and plantation economy was not matched by an equal development of industries. This led to developmental differentials and out migration. As a response to low cotton prices and especially the Great Depression of the 1930s, industrial development truly commenced. The earliest large-scale industries to develop were cotton textile and apparel industries. These in fact, were able to surpass those in the northeast and attain national prominence.

After 1940s, the industrial development accelerated with an increase in the number of factories, workers in the manufacturing sector, product diversification and by 1980s, industrialisation in the south caught up with rest of the USA.

Despite the growth, the south remains beset with problems arising out of spatial and social



inequity. This is a consequence of the uneven process of development. Although the south is well placed to make use of the opportunities of a post-industrial society, it still has a long way to go.

The Midwest includes 12 states sub grouped into the eastern Midwest, which has the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and the western Midwest which has the states of Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri.

The Midwest accounts for about 20% of the total land area and approximately 25% of the population. This region is a leading producer of both agricultural products and manufactured goods and is extraordinarily well connected.

The Midwest accounts for 40% of the total agricultural production, in value terms. This has been made possible by a combination of natural conditions and human enterprise. Rich water retentive soils, sufficient moisture and optimal temperature have together provided the required conditions for agricultural development. The important products of this region are corn, soyabean, wheat and dairy products. Other minor specialised products such as fruits, especially cherries around Lake Michigan, sunflower in North Dakota, sugar beet and potatoes in Minnesota. Agriculture in Midwest is carried out on large to medium size farms owned or operated by a small number of farmers. In fact agriculture is a much larger part of Midwest economy than is indicated by the decreasing number of people employed on the farms. The very capital-intensive nature of the agriculture has created a large demand for farm machinery and this contributes to the industrial economy of this region.

The industrial development decreases from east to west. The states of eastern Midwest account for nearly 22% of the manufacturing employment, while the western Midwest accounts only for 7% of such employment. This difference has arisen because of the earlier settlement of the eastern part, proximity to the market and easier access to the Appalachian coal through the well-developed transport network. The Midwest agriculture remains the basis for industrialisation. Farm machinery, food-

processing, meatpacking and wheat milling remain important industries. In fact, the demand for agricultural implements spurred even the Iron and Steel industry in this area. The availability of steel, central location vis-à-vis the market led to the emergence of the automobile industry, especially around Detroit and other mid-western cities.

Increasing competition from other nations in steel and automobile manufacture has brought about a decline in the employment in the manufacturing sector, especially in the eastern Midwest. This situation is made worse by the fact that this area is not attracting new high technology industries, which are moving to the "Sunbelt". It remains to be seen whether the expanding services sector can fill the unemployment gap.

The West includes 11 states, which lie beyond western borders of the south, excluding those, which make up the Midwest. Eight of them are often termed as Mountain west as they lie in the mountains.

The West comprises 33% of the land area and 20% of the population. This region is lightly settled, except for a huge cluster in central California and other dispersed locations. The prominent among these are Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Denver, Colorado; Salt Lake City, Utah; Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington.

The West is short of water and its availability is a critical factor in the location of settlements. No wonder, the intensely developed urban centres are largely crowded into a handful of big metropolitan centres located in or near major oases. For that matter, even the moist Pacific Northwest can be seen as "oasis like" in the arid west.

The other areas have a fairly low intensity of development and low population density. This is because of dry climate, rough topography and late settlement.

In this region, whereas the rural population is dispersed because of good connectivity and mechanised farming, the urban population is concentrated into a handful of big urban centres. The urban centres of the west coast have developed fairly diversified functions among which servicing

of agriculture is generally the oldest.

The shortage of water has not prevented the development of agriculture. This region accounts for nearly 20% of the agricultural production. In general, larger the irrigated area of these states, greater is the agricultural production and greater is its population. In southern California, the favourable climate and irrigation from mountain streams supported the production of citrus fruits. Today, the Central Valley is known for its highly productive agriculture. This region is famous for an amazing variety of products, important among them being grapes, cotton and rice as also subtropical and temperate fruits and vegetables. Apart from this, there has been an increase in the proportion of farmland devoted to growing cattle feed for beef and dairy cattle to meet the demand of the large urban population. In recent times, a large output of poultry products has added to this variety.

Agriculture in the Pacific Northwest began in the 1840s producing wheat, eggs and vegetables to supply to California during the Gold Rush. But its development today is somewhat restricted because of unfavourable terrain and soil conditions. The leading products today, are milk and truck crops that are sold in the nearby urban centres. However, Oregon and Washington continue to be the leading producers of timber especially softwood varieties like douglas fir.

The Mountain states are drier than those in the northwest and lack the irrigation facilities of California. This has limited agricultural development to only those areas which have ample irrigation. For instance, cotton and hay, to support beef and dairy cattle in Salt River valley in Phoenix and limited agriculture to meet the local needs of farm products in Salt Lake City has been established around an oasis.

The favourable climate, availability of skilled manpower and other such factors have contributed to the rise of high technology industries like computers and biotechnology in the San Francisco region, especially in the famed 'Silicon Valley'.

Industrial development in the Pacific Northwest has been spurred by making available cheap hydro-electricity in a region lacking fossil

fuels. The cheap power has attracted power hungry aluminium plants. The single most important industry in this region is aircraft manufacturing, with the Boeing Company located in Seattle.

The other states in western USA are more dependent on mining. For instance, mining of copper in Arizona and oil and coal in Utah. California today, is one of the most affluent states but this prosperity has come at the cost of pollution and threatened ecological stability. Moreover, in today's post-industrial economy it faces competition from other centres in the "Sunbelt" as a favoured destination for industrial location. Nevertheless, alongwith the Pacific Northwest, California remains well poised to take advantage of its location on the gateway to the western Pacific, which is now emerging as the world's most economically dynamic region.

Despite the swings in the extractive economy, the other mountainous western states have recorded an increase in population in recent years. The guiding force has been the search for high amenity locations, clean and stress-free environs.

Alaska

Alaska was purchased by USA from Russia in 1867, thus becoming its 49th state. Although it comprises nearly 17% of the area of USA, its rugged territory and harsh climate have severely restricted settlement in this mineral rich region. The Arctic coastal plains of Alaska contain very large deposits of oil and natural gas.

Since the 1940s, this region has experienced growth largely due to increased military and governmental employment, development of air transport and rise of fishing industry.

Today, nearly half the population lives in metropolitan Anchorage, while the rest is dispersed over the state with pockets of concentration in Fairbanks, and the state capital Juneau.

Of the total population about 17% comprise Alaskan Natives (Eskimos, American Indians or Aleuts). They have been victims of white exploitation for very long and have only recently received some redress.

As agriculture is limited only to high cost

dairying in some areas, Alaska is totally dependent on conterminous USA for both food and consumer goods. This has made Alaska, the most expensive of the states.

Hawaii

The state of Hawaii consists of 8 volcanic mountainous islands, with the island of Hawaii being the largest. Hawaii was annexed in 1898 after overthrowing a Polynesian monarchy. The state's population is a mix of Caucasian, Japanese Polynesian, Filipino and Chinese origins. But culturally the population is thoroughly Americanised.

Nearly 3/4th of the population is concentrated in Metropolitan Honolulu, which occupies the island of Oahu.

The temperatures in Hawaii are tropical except for colder spots on mountain tops.

The rainfall produced by the Trade winds shows extreme contrasts between the windward and leeward slopes. As a result, some areas are so dry that only irrigated agriculture is possible. The main agricultural products and exports are sugarcane and pineapples. They are sent mainly to conterminous USA. Apart from agriculture, the economy of this region is based on military expenditure and in recent years, on tourism.

Canada

Canada is one of the most developed, industrialised, technologically advanced and urbanised states of the world – Despite this, it has certain characteristics which are unlike any other developed country.

These peculiar characteristics of Canada

include its greater reliance on the exports of raw or semi-finished materials, energy and food while it importing the manufactured goods. It is overwhelmingly dependent on USA, which is its largest trading partner. In fact, the whole economic structure of Canada is geared to interchange with the giant next door. This is because of Canada's small population. Although the Canadians are affluent, their limited numbers are neither a large enough market for the Canadian products, nor are they able to provide vast capital.

The overbearing influence of USA on Canada has been a sore point to many Canadians who think of themselves as an 'American Colony'. Apart from this, is the past experience of less than cordial relations, manifested in threats of annexation, a series of border disputes and more recently disputes over trade. Nevertheless, relations between the two countries have improved gradually to a level where the two countries are cited as an example of cooperation between the neighbouring countries with the frontier separating them coming to symbolise friendship. These ties have found their basis in cultural similarities, material wealth of both nations, mutual need for and advantages of cooperation, both economic and military.

The peculiar characteristics of Canada arise also because of the internal geography of Canadian regions, which differs sharply. This has also influenced the settlement pattern of Canada.