

# 6B

# SUBSAHARAN AFRICAN REGIONS





## **REGIONS**

**Southern Africa**

**East Africa**

**Equatorial Africa**

**West Africa**

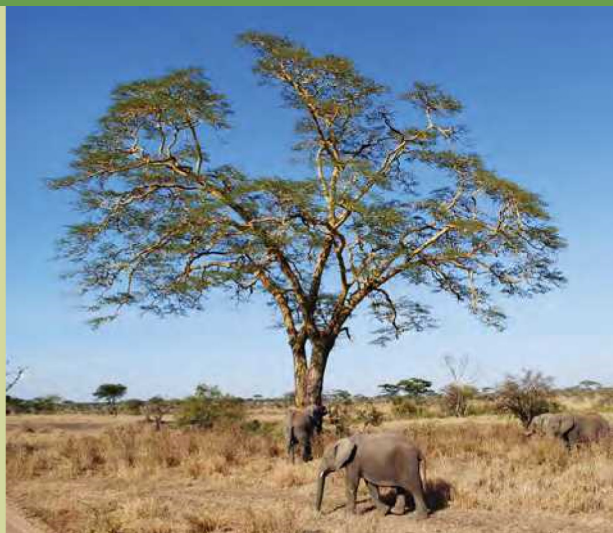
**African Transition Zone**

### **IN THIS CHAPTER**

- ◆ South Africa stumbling
- ◆ Angola's continuing rise
- ◆ Unrest in Nigeria's north
  - ◆ China in Ethiopia
- ◆ Somalia's political patchwork

### **CONCEPTS, IDEAS, AND TERMS**

Apartheid	<b>1</b>
Exclave	<b>2</b>
Landlocked state	<b>3</b>
<i>Sharia</i> law	<b>4</b>
Enclave	<b>5</b>
Periodic market	<b>6</b>
Islamic Front	<b>7</b>
Choke point	<b>8</b>
Failed state	<b>9</b>



© Jan Nijman

Where were these pictures taken?  
Find out at [www.wiley.com/college/deblj](http://www.wiley.com/college/deblj)

On the face of it, Africa seems to be so massive, compact, and continuous that any attempt to justify a contemporary regional breakdown is doomed to fail. No deeply penetrating bays or seas create peninsular fragments as they do in Europe. No major islands (other than Madagascar) provide the broad regional contrasts we see in Middle America. Nor does Africa really taper southward to the peninsular proportions of South America. And Africa is not cut by an Andean or a Himalayan mountain barrier. Given Africa's colonial fragmentation and cultural mosaic, is regionalization possible? Indeed it is.

## REGIONS OF THE REALM

Maps of environmental distributions, ethnic patterns, cultural landscapes, historic culture hearths, and other spatial data yield a four-region structure complicated by a fifth, overlapping zone as shown in Figure 6B-1. Beginning in the south, we identify the following regions:

1. **Southern Africa**, extending from the southern tip of the continent to the northern borders of Angola, Zambia, Malawi, and Moçambique. Ten countries constitute this region, which extends beyond the tropics and whose giant is South Africa.
2. **East Africa**, where equatorial natural environments are moderated by elevation and where plateaus, lakes, and mountains, some carrying permanent snow, exemplify the countryside. Six countries, including the highland part of Ethiopia, comprise this region. The island-state of Madagascar, marked by Southeast Asian influences, is neither Southern nor East African, but is included here because of its relative location.
3. **Equatorial Africa**, much of it defined by the basin of the Congo River, where elevations are lower than in East Africa, temperatures are higher and moisture more



© Jan Nijman

## MAJOR CITIES OF THE REALM

City	Population* (in millions)
Lagos, Nigeria	12.7
Kinshasa, DR Congo	9.9
Abidjan, Ivory Coast	4.8
Johannesburg, South Africa	4.0
Nairobi, Kenya	3.8
Cape Town, South Africa	3.8
Dakar, Senegal	3.4
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	3.4
Ibadan, Nigeria	3.3
Durban, South Africa	3.2
Adis Abeba, Ethiopia	3.2
Accra, Ghana	2.9
Lusaka, Zambia	2.1
Harare, Zimbabwe	1.6
Mombasa, Kenya	1.1

\*Based on 2014 estimates

abundant, and where most of Africa's surviving tropical rainforests remain. Among the nine countries that make up this region, which now includes newly formed South Sudan, DR Congo\* dominates territorially and demographically.

4. **West Africa**, which includes the countries of the western coast and those on the margins of the Sahara in the interior, a populous region anchored in the southeast by the realm's demographic giant, Nigeria. Fifteen countries form this crucial African region.
5. **The African Transition Zone**, the complicating factor on the regional map of Africa. In Figure 6B-1, note that this striped zone of increasing Islamic influence completely dominates some countries (e.g., Somalia in the east and Senegal in the west) while cutting across others, in the process creating Islamized northern areas and non-Islamic southern zones (e.g., Nigeria, Chad, Ivory Coast). Note, too, that an elongated strip of Islamic dominance extends southward from the African Horn, lining the Indian Ocean coastlands of both Kenya and Tanzania.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa, as a geographic region, consists of all the countries and territories lying south of Equatorial Africa's DR Congo and East Africa's Tanzania (Fig. 6B-2). Thus defined, the region extends from Angola and Moçambique

(on the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts, respectively) to South Africa and includes a half-dozen landlocked states. Also marking the northern limit of the region are Zambia and Malawi. Zambia is nearly cut in half by a long land extension from DR Congo, and Malawi penetrates deeply into Moçambique.

### Africa's Resource-Rich Region

Southern Africa constitutes a geographic region in both physiographic as well as human terms. Its northern zone marks the southern limit of the Congo Basin in a broad upland that stretches across Angola and into Zambia (the tan corridor extending eastward from the Bihe Plateau in Fig. 6A-2). Lake Malawi is the southernmost of the East African rift-valley lakes; Southern Africa has none of East Africa's volcanic and earthquake activity. Most of this region is plateau country, and the Great Escarpment is prominent here. There are two consequential river systems: the Zambezi (which forms the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe) and the Orange-Vaal (South African rivers that combine to demarcate southern Namibia from South Africa).

Southern Africa has long been the continent's richest region materially. A great zone of mineral deposits extends through the heart of the region from Zambia's Copperbelt through Zimbabwe's Great Dyke and South Africa's Bushveld Basin and Witwatersrand to the goldfields and diamond mines of Free State and Northern Cape provinces in the heart of South Africa. Ever since these minerals began to be exploited in colonial times, many migrant laborers have come to work in the mines. Major on- and offshore oil reserves boost the economy of Angola. The region's agricultural diversity matches its mineral wealth, especially so in South Africa: vineyards drape the slopes of South Africa's Cape Ranges and the country's relatively high latitudes and its range of altitudes create environments for apple orchards, citrus groves, banana plantations, pineapple farms, and many other crops.

Despite this considerable wealth and potential, not all of the ten countries of Southern Africa have prospered and some are on divergent tracks (see also Fig. 6A-11). As Figure G-11 shows, Angola has moved into the World Bank's upper-middle-income group but three other countries remain mired in the low-income category (Malawi, Moçambique, and Zimbabwe); and even though South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Namibia, and Botswana fall into the two middle-income ranks, the (desert-dominated) last two rank among the realm's three most sparsely populated countries. Zimbabwe remained the basket case of this region—and of the realm at large—in 2013. South Africa has long been the realm's most important country by many measures, at least in terms of size and dominance. But South Africa's economy is suffering from a combination of ailments.

### South Africa

The Republic of South Africa (RSA) is the giant of Southern Africa, its economy still the largest of this entire realm.

\*Two countries in Africa have the same short-form name, *Congo*. In this book, we use **DR Congo** for the much larger Democratic Republic of the Congo, and **Congo** for the smaller Republic of Congo just to its northwest.



FIGURE 6B-2

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Its historical geography differs somewhat from much of the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. The country's lands were fought over by various African nations before the Europeans arrived and the colonial "scramble for Africa" took place. Peoples migrated southward—first the Khoisan-speakers and then the Bantu peoples—into the South African *cul-de-sac*. The Zulu and Xhosa nations fought over lands at about the time the first European settlers arrived.

South Africa is one of the most strategic places on Earth, the gateway from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean,

a key source of provisions on the route to Asia's riches. The Dutch East India Company founded Cape Town as early as 1652, and the Hollanders and their descendants, known as *Boers*, have been a part of the South African cultural mosaic ever since. The British took over about 150 years later, and both colonial powers vied for control throughout South Africa's early history as a state. The British came to dominate the Cape, while the Boers trekked into the South African interior and, on the high plateau they called the *highveld*, founded their own republics. A war ensued,

but by 1910 the Boers and the British had negotiated a power-sharing arrangement, although the Boers eventually achieved dominance that lasted from 1948 to 1994. Having long since shed their European ties, they came to call themselves *Afrikaners*, their word for Africans.

For more than 40 years, between about 1950 and the mid-1990s, multicultural South Africa was in the grip of the world's most notorious racist policy, **Apartheid [1]**—the word itself means “apartness”, but in practice it involves strict racial segregation and severe discrimination. Out of the concept of Apartheid grew a notion, promulgated by the white (European) minority then in control of the state, known as *separate development*. This would apply Apartheid to the entire country, carving it up into racially-based entities whose inhabitants would be citizens of those ethnic domains, but not of South Africa as a whole. Predictably, such racist social engineering aroused strong opposition within South Africa and beyond, leading to worldwide condemnation and international sanctions.

South Africa seemed headed for a violent revolution, but disaster was averted by what was, at the time, an almost inconceivable turn of events. A leader of the white-minority government that for decades had ruthlessly pursued its Apartheid policies, and a revered leader of the multicultural majority who had for 28 years languished in an island prison not far from Cape Town, struck an accord that, in effect, created a new South Africa virtually overnight. Nelson Mandela walked out of prison a free man in February 1990, and in the Republic of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 Mandela became the country's president on a platform representing the African National Congress (ANC), the multiracial anti-Apartheid movement that had fought the policy for many years. The ANC's old foes, the architects of Apartheid, were seated as part of the loyal opposition in a parliament that was now indeed a rainbow assembly. Before 1994 South Africa had been divided into four provinces, and this was replaced with a new federal arrangement consisting of nine provinces (see Fig. 6B-3, including the inset).

### The Ethnic Mosaic

In addition to the various indigenous African nations and the Europeans who settled in South Africa came peoples from Asia. The Dutch brought thousands of Southeast Asians to the Cape to serve as domestics and laborers. The British imported laborers from their South Asian colonies to work on sugarcane plantations, adding further cultural diversity to this multiethnic state. Moreover, a substantial population of mixed ancestry, clustered at the Cape, constitutes today's so-called *Coloured* sector of the country's



© H.J. de Blij

South Africa's Cape Town, whose magnificent site is dominated by Table Mountain, was founded by the Dutch in 1652 as a waystation for empire building in Southeast Asia's East Indies.

citizenry. In the process, South Africa became Africa's most pluralistic and heterogeneous society. Even so, Africans now outnumber non-native Africans by about 5 to 1 (see Table 6B-1).

**TABLE 6B-1**  
**Demographic Data for South Africa**

Population Groups	2014 Estimated Population (in millions)
<b>African nations</b>	<b>41.4</b>
Zulu	10.0
Xhosa	7.5
Tswana	3.3
Sotho (N and S)	3.3
Others (6)	17.3
<b>Mixed (Coloureds)</b>	<b>4.7</b>
African/White	4.5
Malayan	0.2
<b>Whites</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Afrikaners	2.9
English-speakers	1.6
Others	0.1
<b>South Asian</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Muslims	0.7
Hindus	0.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52.0</b>



FIGURE 6B-3

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Although heterogeneity marks the spatial demography of South Africa, regionalism pervades the human mosaic. The Zulu nation still is largely concentrated in today's Kwazulu-Natal Province (Fig. 6B-3). The Xhosa still cluster in the Eastern Cape, from the city of East London to the Kwazulu-Natal border and below the Great Escarpment. The Tswana still occupy ancestral lands along the border with Botswana. Cape Town remains the heartland of the Coloured population; Durban still has the strongest South Asian imprint. Travel through South Africa, and you will recognize the remarkable diversity of rural cultural landscapes as they change from Xhosa to Ndebele to Venda.

### South Africa's Economic Geography

South Africa's economy is the largest in the realm and it has a major influence in its region. The country stretches from the warm subtropics in its far north to Antarctic-chilled waters in the south. With a land area in excess of 1.2 million square kilometers (470,000 sq mi) and a heterogeneous population of 52 million, South Africa contains the bulk of the region's minerals, most of its good farmlands, its largest cities, best harbors, most productive factories, and best developed transport networks. Mineral exports from Zambia and Zimbabwe move through South African ports. Workers from as far away as Malawi and as close as Lesotho work in South Africa's mines, factories, and fields.

Ever since diamonds were discovered at Kimberley in the 1860s, South Africa has been synonymous with minerals. Rail lines were laid from the coast to the diamond complex even as fortune seekers, capitalists, and tens of thousands of African workers, many from as far afield as Moçambique, streamed to the site. Subsequently, prospectors discovered what was long to be the world's greatest goldfield on a ridge called the Witwatersrand (Fig. 6B-3). There, Johannesburg soon became the gold capital of the world. During the twentieth century, additional goldfields were discovered in Orange Free State. Coal and iron ore were found in abundance, which gave rise to a major iron and steel industry. Other metallic minerals, which included chromium and platinum, yielded large revenues on world markets. Asbestos, manganese, copper, nickel, antimony,

and tin were mined and sold; a thriving metallurgical industry developed in South Africa itself. During much of the twentieth century, capital flowed into the country, white immigration expanded, farms and ranches were laid out, and overseas markets multiplied.

Along the way, South Africa's cities grew rapidly. Johannesburg was no longer just a mining complex: it became an industrial agglomeration and a financial center as well. The old Boer capital, Pretoria, just a short distance north of the Witwatersrand, became the country's administrative center during Apartheid. In Orange Free State, substantial industrial growth (including oil-from-coal technology) matched the expansion of mining. As the core area centered on Johannesburg developed megalopolitan characteristics, most of the coastal cities also expanded. Durban's port served not only the

## AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

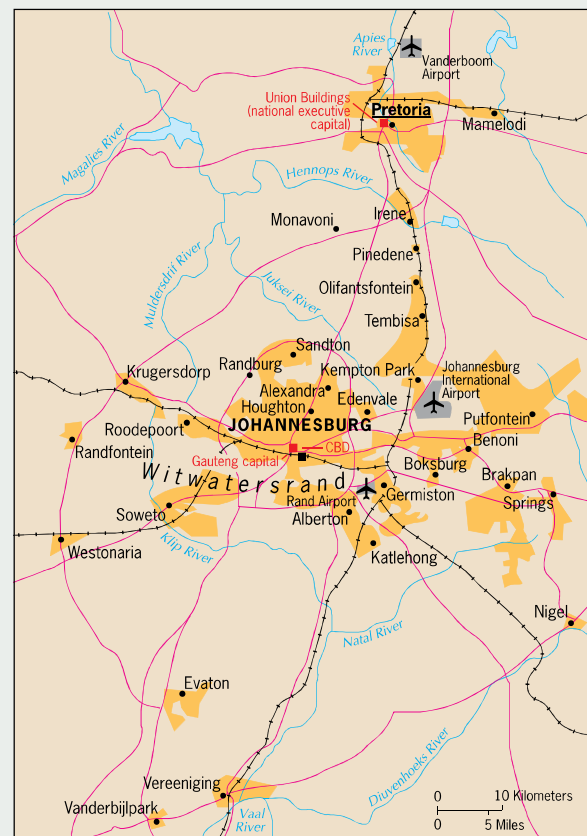
**SUBSAHARAN AFRICA IS** urbanizing swiftly, but it still has only one true conurbation, and South Africa's Johannesburg lies at the heart of it. Little more than a century ago, Johannesburg was a small (though rapidly growing) mining town based on the newly discovered gold reserves of the Witwatersrand. In its early history, this future national core area was dominated by the ancestors of Dutch settlers and the still-remaining names on the map are a reminder of that era.

Today Johannesburg forms the focus of a conurbation (that anchors a province named *Gauteng*) of almost 8 million, extending from Pretoria in the north to Vereeniging in the south, and from Springs in the east to Krugersdorp in the west. The population of metropolitan Johannesburg itself passed the 3 million mark in 2003 (it now stands at 4.0 million), thereby overtaking Cape Town to become South Africa's largest urban agglomeration.

Johannesburg's skyline is the most impressive in all of Sub-Saharan Africa, a forest of skyscrapers reflecting the wealth generated here over the past century (see left photo). Look southward from a high vantage point, and you see the huge mounds of yellowish-white slag from the mines of the "Rand," the so-called mine dumps, partly overgrown today, interspersed with suburbs and townships. In a general way, Johannesburg developed as a white city in the north and a black city in the south. Well-known Soweto (SOuth WEstern TOWnships) lies to the southwest (see right photo). Houghton and other spacious, upper-class suburbs, formerly exclusively white residential areas, lie to the north.

Johannesburg has neither the scenery of Cape Town nor the climate and beaches of Durban. The city lies at an elevation of 1750 meters above sea level (5750 ft—more than a mile high), and its thin air often is polluted from smog created by motor vehicles, factories, mine-dump dust, and

## JOHANNESBURG



© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

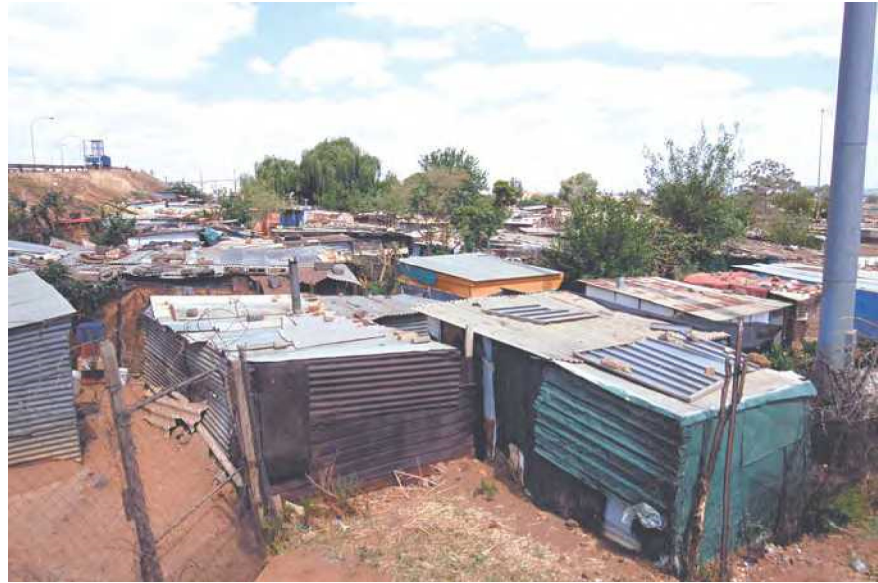
countless cooking fires in the townships and shantytowns that ring much of the metropolis.

Over the past century, the Johannesburg area produced nearly one-half of all the world's gold by value. Today Johannesburg lies at the heart of an industrial, commercial, and financial complex that forms South Africa's economic core.





Martin Harvey/Gallo Images/Getty Images



© Sergio Pitamitz/Robert Harding World Imagery/Corbis

The leafy suburbs and high-rise CBD of Johannesburg and the shantytown housing of an especially poor section of crowded Soweto, one of its satellite towns, show the jarring social contrasts in South Africa's ever-more-unequal society. Future political stability will depend on the government's ability to improve living conditions in the poorest areas, rural as well as urban. Although significant advancement has been made in housing, water supply, and electricity hookups, the enormity of the problem, and constraints ranging from political realities to available resources, slow the pace of progress in a country that is in a race against time.

Witwatersrand but a wider regional hinterland as well. Cape Town was becoming South Africa's second-largest city; its port, industries, and productive agricultural hinterland gave it primacy over a wide area.

But Apartheid frustrated South Africa's prospects. The cost of the separate development program was astronomical. Social unrest during the decade preceding the end of Apartheid created a vast educational gap among young people. International sanctions against the race-obsessed regime damaged the economy.

### Ongoing Challenges

In many respects South Africa is the most important country in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the entire realm's fortunes are bound up with it. No African country attracts more foreign investment or foreign workers. None has the universities, hospitals, and research facilities. No other has the military forces capable of intervening in African trouble spots. Few have the free press, effective trade unions, independent courts, or financial institutions to match South Africa's. And with a population greater than 50 million (80 percent black, 9 percent Coloured, just under 9 percent white, 2.5 percent Asian), South Africa has a large, multiracial, middle class.

Meanwhile, the political system began to falter. In South Africa's first (and subsequent) free and democratic elections, the multiracial "rainbow" African National Congress (ANC) Party, heir to the anti-Apartheid resistance movement, was the winner. As economic opportunities opened for all, a black middle class quickly arose but whites continued to enjoy the benefits of a system that could not be changed in short order. At the same time,

many millions of people living in South Africa's periphery saw little change—except that they seemed poorer than ever compared to their fellow citizens in the cities and on white-owned farmlands. South Africa's economy boomed, but mainly because the old exploitive system continued under a new, now multiracial elite.

This troubled many in the ANC, and a split developed between those who were vested in the system and who wanted stability with slow and affordable change, and those who wanted faster, even revolutionary transformation that would upend the status quo, accelerate the redistribution of wealth, and empower the poor. Two decades after the country's first democratic election, South Africa's principal division is no longer racial: it is economic (in 2012, the RSA recorded the world's worst inequality with a Gini coefficient [see box in Introduction chapter] of 0.63). And in the ANC, the revolutionary wing is strengthening and the pendulum may swing from the haves to the have-nots.

South Africa's economy, for a decade or so after the momentous transition of 1994, thrived on its old assets—profitable commodities like gold, platinum, and diamonds—because local labor was cheap and world prices were high. Investors once deterred by Apartheid now rushed in, and black entrepreneurs prospered. But things were changing. Global competition was eroding South Africa's advantages: in 1970 South Africa produced nearly 80 percent of the world's gold, but today that has dwindled to barely 7 percent. And mine workers were demanding fairer wages, mounting protests and strikes; in 2012, an ugly incident at the Marikana platinum mine (about 100 km [60 mi] northwest of Johannesburg) cost 38 striking miners their lives when police

along with the mining company's security personnel opened fire on the protesting workers. In the rural areas, meanwhile, hundreds of white landowners were killed by invaders taking advantage of their isolation. Not surprisingly, tens of thousands of skilled people have left South Africa, in doubt over the country's future.

Such developments erode confidence and deter investment, and while South Africa still has Africa's largest and most diversified economy, its dominance is declining. The Republic suffers from massive unemployment which, among the African majority, is estimated to be as high as 50 percent. The public schools are failing and there is not enough money to reverse the tide: South Africa now ranks 132nd out of a total of 144 countries on elementary school performance, an ominous harbinger for the future. Urgently needed land reform is slowed by the lack of available funds. Millions of houses have been built in the post-Apartheid era and utilities provided, but far fewer than needed. Many in the left wing of the ANC blame South Africa's political leaders of the post-Mandela period: Mandela retired in 1999 and was succeeded by Thabo Mbeki, a businessman who was in the stability/slow-transition camp. Then in 2007 Jacob Zuma, a populist, polygamist, and father of 16 children by wives and others assumed the presidency hoping to reconcile the diverging ANC factions, staving off a challenge by a young firebrand ready to restart the revolution. Clearly, South Africa's political ground is now shifting.

### South Africa and the World

South Africa has many of the geographic endowments for a strong economy, but it will take time, stability, and competent management to achieve its potential. Meanwhile, South Africa's leaders seek ways to raise the country's profile in a globalizing, competitive world and, for example, aspire to join the exclusive BRICs (dynamic Brazil-Russia-India-China). In what some observers regarded as a publicity stunt to advance this cause, the government in 2013 maneuvered to host a BRIC summit meeting by inviting the group to convene in the port city of Durban. Its goal was not just to raise South Africa's standing, but to convert the BRICs into the BRICS—with South Africa added via the capital "S"—a continuing campaign you can monitor when you surf the Web.

But South Africa's economy is not only much smaller, but also much weaker than those of the four BRICs. Indeed, the South African economy lags well behind those of such other potential members of this group as Turkey, Indonesia, and Mexico. South Africa does not have an oil bonanza; it still depends heavily upon commodity sales on fickle world markets; it is losing its regional advantage in education and skills; it has critical infrastructure needs; and what it lacks now is persuasive and capable leadership that can do for the economy what Mandela did for the society. Such leadership is not in sight.

### The Middle Tier

Between South Africa's northern border and the region's northern limit lie two groups of states: those possessing bor-

ders that adjoin South Africa and those beyond. Five countries form the Middle Tier, and all border on South Africa: Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, and the two ministates of Lesotho and Swaziland (Fig. 6B-2). As the map reveals, four of these five are landlocked. Diamond-exporting (and upper-middle-income) **Botswana** occupies the heart of the Kalahari Desert and surrounding steppe; despite its lucrative diamonds, the majority of its 1.9 million inhabitants are subsistence farmers. In 2012, Botswana continued to be the most severely AIDS-afflicted country in all of tropical Africa. **Lesotho** and **Swaziland**, both traditional kingdoms, depend very heavily on remittances from their workers in South African mines, fields, and factories.

Southern Africa's youngest independent state, **Namibia** (2.5 million), is a former German colony with a territorial peculiarity: the so-called Caprivi Strip linking it to the right bank of the Zambezi River (Fig. 6B-2), another consequence of colonial partitioning. Administered by South Africa from 1919 to 1990, Namibia is named after one of the world's driest deserts (the Namib, which lines its coast). This state is about as large as Texas and Oklahoma combined, but only its far north receives enough moisture to enable subsistence farming, which is why most of the people live close to the Angolan border. Mining in the Tsumeb area and ranching in the vast steppe country of the south form the leading commercial activities. The capital, Windhoek, is centrally situated opposite Walvis Bay, the main port. German influence still lingers in what used to be called South West Africa, as does an Afrikaner presence from the Apartheid period. Although orderly land reform is under way, unresolved issues remain, and much of the population still lives in poverty.

### The Tragedy of Zimbabwe

Botswana's other neighbor, Zimbabwe, may be said to lie at the heart of Southern Africa, between the Zambezi River in the north and the Limpopo River in the south, between the escarpment to the east and the desert to the west. Landlocked but endowed with good farmlands, cool uplands, a wide range of mineral resources, and varied natural environments, Zimbabwe at independence had one of Southern Africa's most vibrant economies and seemed to have a bright future. Zimbabwe's core area is defined by the mineral-rich Great Dyke that extends across the heart of the country from the vicinity of its capital, Harare, in the north to the second city, Bulawayo, in the south. Gold, copper, asbestos, chromium, and platinum are among its natural endowments. Its farms are capable of producing tobacco, tea, sugar, cotton, and even cut flowers in addition to staples for the local market.

But these are not good times for Zimbabwe. During the colonial period, the tiny minority of whites that controlled what was then called Southern Rhodesia (after Cecil Rhodes, the British capitalist of diamond fame and scholarship honors), took the most productive farmlands and organized and ran the agricultural economy. Following independence, their descendants continued to hold huge estates, only parts of which were being farmed. This

enormous inequality inhibited broad-based development. What was needed was a comprehensive land reform program and, indeed, democratic rule.

In the wake of their successful joint campaign to end white-minority rule, the two nations that constitute most of Zimbabwe's population, the Shona (82 percent) and the Ndebele (14 percent), engaged in bitter ethnic conflict. Proper legal reforms did not take effect, and the rule of President Mugabe turned from ineffective to disastrous. As he encouraged squatters to invade white farms (where a number of owners were killed and many others fled), the agricultural economy began to collapse. Corruption in the Mugabe government resulted in the transfer of land, not to needy squatters but to friends of top officials. Foreign investment in other Zimbabwean enterprises, including the mining industry, dried up. By the mid-1990s, Zimbabwe was in economic free fall.

Mugabe also turned against the informal sector of the economy, which was all most Zimbabweans had left when jobs on farms and in factories and mines disappeared. He ordered his henchmen to destroy the dwellings and shacks of some 700,000 "informal" urban slum dwellers (many of whom were said to support the political opposition), leaving them in the streets without shelter or livelihood. As conditions worsened, people by the hundreds of thousands streamed out of Zimbabwe. Today, an estimated 3.2 million of the country's 13.1 million people are displaced, and about 80 percent are jobless.

Heroic Zimbabweans and persistent outsiders have put pressure on Mugabe to force him to permit some form of representative government. In 2008, this dictator was actually defeated in legislative elections that should have produced a runoff between Mugabe and his challenger, Morgan Tsvangirai; but the regime managed to avoid this, forcing Tsvangirai to accept an ineffective power-sharing arrangement. After difficult negotiations, a new constitution was approved by referendum in early 2013, clearing the way for another "free election." But only a few weeks later, media reports showed Mugabe's thugs roughing up campaigners in the dilapidated streets of Harare. The human catastrophe of Zimbabwe stands in sharp contrast to what is being achieved elsewhere in the region.

### The Northern Tier

In the four countries that extend across the Northern Tier of Southern Africa—Angola, Zambia, Malawi, and Moçambique—change is everywhere. **Angola** (22.3 million), formerly a Portuguese colony, together with its **exclave [2]** (separated outlier) of **Cabinda** had a thriving (colonial) economy based on a wide range of mineral and agricultural exports at the time of independence in 1975. But the Portuguese had done a miserable job of preparing the country for self-rule, and soon Angola fell victim to the Cold War, with northern peoples opting to follow a communist course and southerners falling under the sway of a rebel movement backed by South Africa and the United States. The results

included devastated infrastructure, idle farms, looting of diamonds, hundreds of thousands of casualties, and millions of landmines that continue to kill and maim.

Over the past decade, Angola's economy has revived, spectacularly so, and statistically it became the fastest growing national economy in the world! In 2012, the World Bank moved Angola up from the category of "lower middle income" to that of "upper middle income" country. Almost all of this growth comes from oil, much of which is exported to China, and Angola now vies for first place with Nigeria in Sub-Saharan Africa in oil production. Yielding about U.S. \$5 billion per year, the return of stability is attracting investors to begin rebuilding this ruined country. But the dependence on oil is too great: this fuel accounts for almost half of Angola's GDP, more than 90 percent of its exports, and around 80 percent of government revenues—so that those "upper middle income" statistics hardly reflect better economic circumstances for the average Angolan.

On the opposite coast, the other major former Portuguese dependency, **Moçambique** (25.0 million), experienced a comparable trajectory. Upon independence Moçambique also chose a Marxist course with unfortunate economic and political consequences. Here, too, a rebel movement supported by South Africa caused civil conflict, created famines, and generated a stream of more than a million refugees toward Malawi. Railroad and port facilities lay idle, and Moçambique at one time was ranked by the United Nations as the world's poorest country.

Moçambique has neither oil nor as much agricultural land as Angola. But it does have considerable bauxite (aluminum ore) and coal deposits, and it has a major advantage in terms of relative location. In recent years, port traffic has been revived and the country is working with South Africa on a joint Maputo Development Corridor (Fig. 6B-2). In 2011, construction began on a new bridge over the Zambezi River (only the country's fourth) at the interior city of Tete; it will open by 2015, and is expected to expedite the rising flow of road transport to and from the neighboring landlocked states.

Moçambique's economy has grown rapidly over the past decade, but here again we have an African economy that overly depends on a single resource, in this case the bauxite that accounts for one-third of all exports. And, like Angola, the country has performed poorly in distributing the benefits of growth. Late 2010 saw riots on the streets of the capital city, Maputo, to protest higher food prices. Among Moçambique's masses, poverty still reigns, but the 2012 discovery of the Rovuma offshore natural gas reserve has raised the country's prospects.

Landlocked **Zambia** (14.5 million), another product of British colonialism, shares the mineral riches of the Copperbelt with its northern neighbor, DR Congo's Katanga Province. Not only have commodity prices on which Zambia depends fluctuated wildly, but Zambia's outlet ports—Lobito in Angola as well as Beira in Moçambique—and the railways leading there were rendered inoperative by Cold War conflicts. Most recently, China has

taken an interest in Zambia's minerals, and the Chinese are investing in railroad repairs as well as the expansion of mining operations. Zambia's annual economic growth has exceeded 6 percent over the past decade.

Neighboring **Malawi** (16.8 million), like Zambia, has been able to sustain democracy for nearly two decades now. Malawi has an almost totally agricultural economic base and is also unremittingly challenged by environmental degradation. This country's dependence on corn as its food staple, its variable climate, and its severely fragmented land-use pattern combine to create cycles of boom and bust from which Malawi has yet to escape. Still, the economy has grown steadily at nearly 6 percent per year since the turn of this century.

## ■ EAST AFRICA

To the east of the chain of Great Lakes that marks the eastern border of DR Congo (Lakes Albert, Edward, Kivu, and Tanganyika), the land rises from the Congo Basin to the East African Plateau. Hills and valleys, fertile soils, and copious rains mark this transition in Rwanda and Burundi. Eastward the rainforest disappears and the open savanna cloaks the countryside. Great volcanoes tower above a rift-valley-dissected highland. At the heart of the region lies Lake Victoria. Farther north the surface rises above 3300 meters (10,000 ft), and so deep are the trenches cut by faults and rivers there that the land was called, appropriately, Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Five countries, in addition to the highland component of Ethiopia, comprise this East African region: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi (Fig. 6B-4). Here the Bantu peoples who make up most of the population met Nilotic peoples from the north.

### Kenya

Kenya (45.4 million) is neither the largest nor the most populous country in East Africa, but over the past half-century it has been the dominant state in the region. Its skyscrapered capital at the heart of its core area, Nairobi, home to 3.8 million, is the region's largest city and hub for many activities; its chief port, Mombasa, is East Africa's busiest.

After independence, Kenya chose the capitalist path of development, aligning itself with Western interests. Without major known mineral deposits, Kenya depended on exports of coffee and tea as well as other food products, and on a tourist industry based on its magnificent landscapes. Tourism became its largest single earner of foreign exchange, and Kenya prospered, apparently proving the wisdom of its economic planners.

But serious problems soon emerged. Kenya during the 1980s had the highest

rate of population increase in the world, and population pressure on farmlands and on the fringes of the wildlife reserves mounted. Poaching became widespread, and tourism declined. During the late 1990s, El Niño-triggered rains affected parts of Kenya, causing landslides and washing away large segments of the crucial highway that connects Nairobi and Mombasa. This disaster was followed by a severe drought lasting several years, bringing widespread famine to the interior. Meanwhile, government corruption siphoned off funds that should have been invested. An elected president, Daniel arap Moi, turned into a dictator who severely damaged Kenya's prospects for stability. The AIDS epidemic brought another major setback. And then Kenya sustained the impact of terrorist attacks in Nairobi and Mombasa.

On the surface, Kenya today seems relatively prosperous and exhibits fairly healthy economic statistics. Nairobi's CBD breathes an atmosphere of modernity and worldliness, and its largest slum, Kibera, is world-renowned for its vibrant informal economy. But the country has utterly failed at building a unified nation out of its 41 (!)

Kenya has become one of the world's major exporters of flowers, but not without controversy. Here, workers are picking roses in a huge, 2-hectare (5-acre) greenhouse, part of an industry that currently concentrates around Lake Naivasha in the Eastern Rift Valley. European companies have set up these enterprises, buying huge swaths of land and attracting workers far and wide. Locals see wildlife and waters threatened, but the government appreciates the revenues from an industry that now accounts for more than 20 percent of Kenya's agricultural export income. This is a revealing core-periphery issue: companies growing and exporting the flowers to European markets use pesticides not tolerated in Europe itself, so that the ecological damage prevented by regulations in the global core falls on the periphery, where rules are less stringent and the environment suffers. The burgeoning flower industry around Lake Naivasha also has created social problems as thousands of workers, attracted by rumored job opportunities, have converged on the area and find themselves living in especially squalid conditions.



Marta Nascimento/REA/Redux

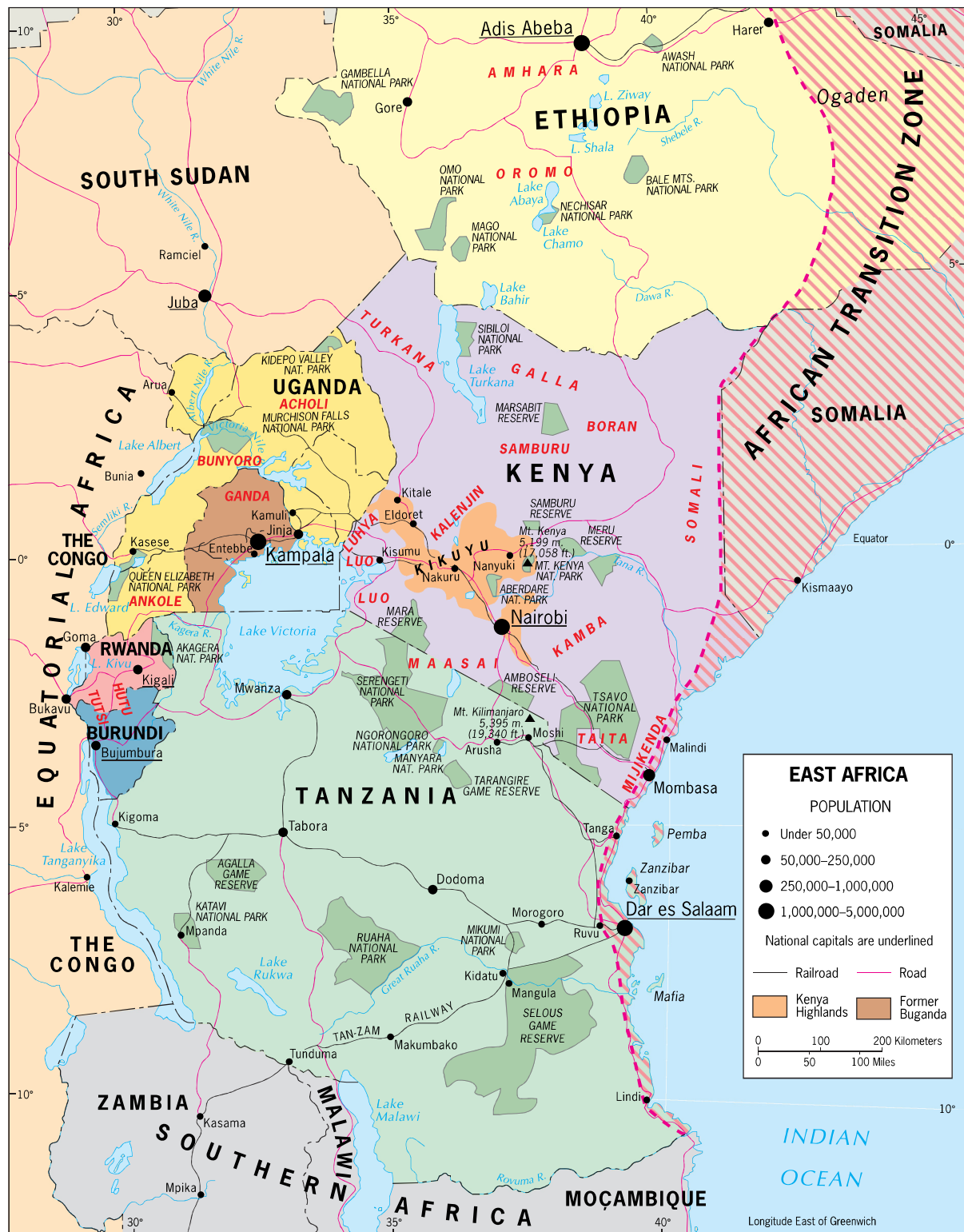


FIGURE 6B-4

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

constituent ethnic groups. Geography, history, and politics have placed the Kikuyu—who, according to the latest census, account for only 17 percent of the population—in a position of dominance. This is contested by several other groups (see Fig. 6B-4). The Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, and

Kamba together constitute almost 50 percent of the population, and in the country's periphery there are major peoples such as the Maasai, Turkana, Boran, and Galla.

Kenya is notorious for the corruption of its elected officials. The country's average annual per-capita income is

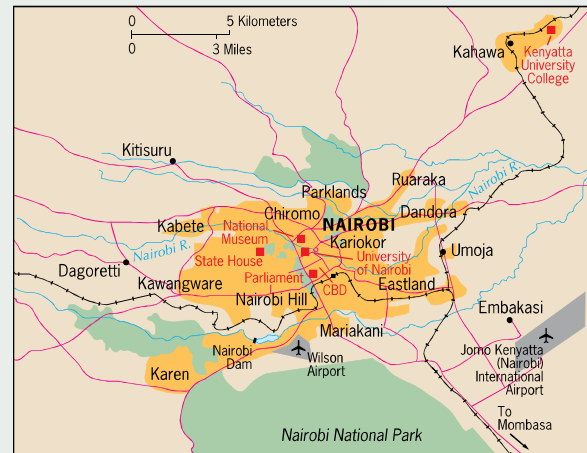
## AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

# NAIROBI

**NAIROBI IS THE** quintessential colonial legacy: there was no African settlement on this site when, in 1899, the railroad the British were building from the port of Mombasa to the shores of Lake Victoria reached it. However, it possessed something even more important: water. The fresh stream that crossed the railway line was known to local Maasai cattle herders as Enkare Nairobi (Cold Water). The railroad was extended farther into the interior, but Nairobi grew, and Indian traders set up shop. The British established their administrative headquarters here. Not surprisingly, when Kenya became independent in 1963, Nairobi was chosen to be the national capital.

Nairobi owes its primacy to its governmental functions, which ensured its priority through the colonial and independence periods, and to its favorable situation. To the north and northwest lie the Kenya Highlands, the country's leading agricultural area and the historic base of the largest nation in Kenya, the Kikuyu. Beyond the rift valley to the west lie the productive lands of the Luo in the Lake Victoria Basin. To the east, elevations descend rapidly from Nairobi's 1600 meters (5000 ft), so that highland environments make a swift transition to tropical savanna; to the north, increasing aridity produces semiarid steppe.

A moderate climate, a modern city center, several major visitor attractions (including Nairobi National Park, on the city's doorstep), and an ultramodern airport have boosted



© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Nairobi's fortunes as a major tourist destination, though wildlife destruction, security concerns, and political conditions have damaged the industry in recent years.

Nairobi is Kenya's principal commercial, industrial, and educational center. But its growth (to 3.8 million today) has come at a price: its modern central business district stands in stark contrast to the squalor in the shantytowns that house the countless migrants its perceived opportunities attract.

now about U.S. \$1600; yet every member of the Kenyan Parliament earns \$156,000 tax-free. A recent poll indicated that the typical urban Kenyan pays about 16 bribes per month for anything from accessing running water to avoiding traffic tickets.

The highly contested outcome of Kenya's 2008 presidential election—the opposition felt it was cheated by allegedly fraudulent results that kept the Kikuyu president in office—uncorked what had been longstanding tensions, and violence erupted that left 1300 people dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. An important step forward came with a new constitution in 2010 that more effectively guaranteed a separation of powers and a multiparty political system. New elections were held in March 2013 without a reprise of the violence of 2008. The presidency was narrowly won by Uhuru Kenyatta, a politician deeply implicated in the violence following the 2008 election. In the outside world, his election was greeted with skepticism; inside Kenya, his main challenge is to unite this painfully divided state.

## Tanzania

The name of this country is a hybrid derived from *Tanganika* plus *Zanzibar*. This is the biggest and most populous

East African state with just over 50 million people. Tanzania has been described as a country without a core because its clusters of population and zones of productive capacity lie dispersed—mostly on its margins along the Indian Ocean coast, near the shores of Lake Victoria in the northwest, next to Lake Tanganyika in the far west, and facing Lake Malawi in the interior south. Although the capital, Dar es Salaam, is located on the east coast, some government agencies are based in interior Dodoma, sometimes called Tanzania's “co-capital.” This is in sharp contrast to Kenya, which has a well-defined core area in the Kenya Highlands centered on Nairobi in the heart of the country. Moreover, Tanzania consists of more than 100 peoples, with no ethnic group large enough to dominate the state; 30 percent of the population, mainly on the coast, are Muslims.

After achieving full independence in 1964, Tanzania embarked on a socialist path toward development, including an extensive but poorly planned farm collectivization program. The tourist industry declined sharply, and Tanzania became one of the world's poorest countries. But Tanzania did achieve remarkable political stability and a degree of democracy. Since 1990, the government has changed course to improve living standards, but the AIDS crisis, problems with the Zanzibar merger (which continue to this day),

and involvement in the troubles of neighboring countries, including Rwanda, made things difficult. Yet today, Tanzania's prospects have improved. It is a leading gold producer and the economy has grown at nearly 7 percent per year for a decade. The tourist industry has rebounded and political stability persists. Tanzania is home to Serengeti National Park, which has long been one of Africa's most popular safari destinations (see chapter-opening photo).

### Uganda

Take a look at Figure 6B-4 and you will see that landlocked but lakefront Uganda (38.0 million) lies in a most challenging neighborhood. To the north lies newly independent South Sudan, by many measures Africa's poorest country and the redoubt of renegade rebel groups. To the west lies the heavily contested eastern frontier of DR Congo, where government forces and insurgents fight seemingly endless wars. To the south lies Rwanda, scene of recurrent mass genocides dating back as far as the 1950s. All this violence has not left Uganda untouched, so that its hopes have long been pinned on comparatively stable Kenya, its outlet to the ocean, and on the buffer of Lake Victoria.

Not that Uganda itself was a haven of peace and stability: when the British colonialists arrived, Uganda was the domain of East Africa's most important indigenous state, the Kingdom of Buganda, peopled by the Ganda (Fig. 6B-4; also see Fig. 6A-4). The British established their headquarters near the Ganda capital of Kampala and used the kingdom's dominance over its neighbors to control Uganda through indirect rule. Thus the Ganda became the dominant nation in modern, multicultural Uganda, and when the British left they bequeathed Uganda a complicated federal system designed to perpetuate Ganda supremacy.

That system soon failed, bringing to power one of Africa's most brutal dictators, Idi Amin. Uganda had a strong economy based on coffee, cotton, and other farm exports as well as copper mining; its sizeable Asian minority of about 75,000 dominated local commerce. Amin ousted all the Asians, exterminated his opponents, and destroyed the economy. After that, the AIDS epidemic struck Uganda severely. Recovery was slow after Amin's expulsion in 1980, and subsequently Uganda progressed toward more representative government only to witness another case of growing autocracy. A massive official campaign made Uganda a leader in the struggle against AIDS, but ugly homophobia has tarnished its reputation as well.

As the map indicates, Uganda is a **landlocked state** [3] and depends on Kenya for a distant outlet to the ocean. This entails additional transport costs, affecting both exports (mainly coffee) and imports. Still, Uganda's economy shows healthy growth; should its external periphery be stabilized, a bright future may yet be in prospect.

### Rwanda and Burundi

Rwanda and Burundi would seem to occupy Tanzania's northwest corner, and indeed they were part of the German

colonial domain forcibly assembled before World War I. But during that war Belgian forces attacked the Germans from their Congo bases and were awarded these territories when the conflict ended in 1918. Local peoples were powerless to prevent this imperial land-grab.

Rwanda and Burundi (each with 11.3 million people), Africa's most densely populated countries, are physiographically part of East Africa, but their cultural geography is linked to the north and west. Here, Tutsi pastoralists from the north subjugated Hutu farmers, who had themselves made serfs of the local Twa (pygmy) population, setting up a conflict that was originally ethnic but became cultural. Certain Hutu were able to advance in the Tutsi-dominated society, becoming to some extent converted to Tutsi ways, leaving subsistence farming behind, and rising within the social hierarchy. These so-called moderate Hutu were—and are—frequently targeted by other Hutus, who resent their position in society. This longstanding discord, exacerbated by colonial policies, repeatedly devastated both countries and in 1994 resulted in the horrific Rwanda genocide. Unfortunately, this conflict continues to simmer and has spilled over into DR Congo. As many as 4 million people have perished as Hutu, Tutsi, Ugandan, and Congolese rebel forces fought for control over the eastern margins of DR Congo. Rwanda's official economic growth figures (7 percent annually over the past decade) provide the impression of a healthy economy, but the country's main products are coffee and tea, and an estimated two-thirds of the population lives in dire poverty.

### Ethiopia

The highland zone of Ethiopia also forms part of East Africa. Addis Abeba, the historic capital, was the headquarters of a Coptic Christian, Amharic empire that held its own against the colonial intrusion except for a brief period from 1935 to 1941, when the Italians defeated it. Indeed, the Ethiopians, based in their mountain fortress (Addis Abeba lies more than 2400 meters/8000 ft above sea level), became colonizers themselves, taking control of much of the Islamic part of the African Horn to the east.

This country's natural outlets are toward the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, but in 1993 its government was forced to yield independence to Eritrea (part of the African Transition Zone) and Ethiopia became effectively landlocked. A bitter border war (1998–2000) between the two countries followed, and cost some 100,000 lives. Physiographically and culturally, however, Ethiopia is part of East Africa, and the Oromo (35 percent) and Amhara (27 percent) peoples are neither Arabized nor Muslim: they are Africans. Figure 6B-4 shows that functional linkages between Ethiopia and the rest of East Africa remain weak—but this is likely to improve in the future.

During the past decade, Ethiopia has made considerable economic progress and ranked as the fifth-fastest-growing economy in the world (but starting from a low base). Much of this growth has been attributed to new

governmental initiatives, such as selling enormous tracts of publicly-owned arable land to foreign agribusinesses and courting Chinese foreign investment. By 2012, Chinese investment in Ethiopian infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, hydroelectric facilities) had risen to U.S. \$2.5 billion (see opening photo, Chapter 6A). These investments have contributed to fast economic growth at around 9 percent per year since 2002.

Ethiopia's diverse environments, spectacular scenery, and archeological fame sustain an economy that depends primarily on farm products (coffee, tea, and spices) and tourism. But no less than 85 percent of Ethiopia's 91.2 million citizens are subsistence farmers, and the country, once a regional breadbasket, now requires food imports from relief agencies.

Not all of Ethiopia is properly considered part of East Africa: its northern parts lie in the African Transition Zone and as such they face challenges of a completely different regional order. We will return to these issues later in the chapter.

### Madagascar

Only 400 kilometers (250 mi) off Africa's central east coast lies the world's fourth-largest island, Madagascar (Fig. 6B-5). But Madagascar is not part of either East Africa or Southern Africa. About 2000 years ago, the first human settlers arrived here—not from Africa but from distant Southeast Asia. A powerful Malay kingdom of the Merina came to flourish in the highlands, and its language, Malagasy, became the indigenous tongue of the entire island (see Fig. 6A-10).

The Malay immigrants later brought Africans to their island, but today the Merina (26 percent) and the Betsimisaraka (15 percent) remain the largest of about 20 ethnic groups in the population of 23.1 million. Like mainland Africa, Madagascar experienced colonial invasion and competition. Portuguese, British, and French colonizers appeared after 1500, but the Merina were well organized and resisted colonizers conquest. Eventually, Madagascar became part of France's empire, and French became the *lingua franca* of the educated elite.

Because of its Southeast Asian imprint, Madagascar's staple food is rice, not corn. It has some minerals, including chromite, iron ore, and bauxite, but the economy is weak, damaged by long-term political turmoil and burdened by rapid population growth. The infrastructure has crumbled; the "main road" from the capital to the nearest port (Fig. 6B-5) is now a potholed 250 kilometers (150 mi) that takes 10 hours for a truck to navigate.

Meanwhile, Madagascar's unique flora and fauna retreated before the human onslaught. Madagascar's long-term isolation kept evolution here so distinct that the island is a discrete zoogeographic realm. Primates living on the island are found nowhere else; 33 varieties of lemurs are unique to Madagascar. Many species of birds, amphibians, and reptiles are also exclusive to this island. Their home, the rainforest, covered 168,000 square kilometers (65,000 sq mi) in



FIGURE 6B-5

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

1950, but today less than one-third of it is left. Logging, introduced by the colonists, damaged it; slash-and-burn agriculture continues to destroy it; and severe droughts since 1980 have intensified the impact. Obviously, Madagascar should be a global conservation priority, but funds are limited and the needs are enormous. Malnutrition and poverty are powerful forces when survival is at stake for villages and families.

Madagascar's cultural landscape retains its Southeast Asian imprints, in the towns as well as the paddies. The capital, Antananarivo, is the country's primate city, its architecture and atmosphere combining traces of Asia and Africa. Poverty dominates the townscape here, too, and there is little to attract in-migrants (Madagascar is only 31 percent





## From the Field Notes . . .

“Taking an early morning stroll along the beach near the town of Maroantsetra on Madagascar’s northeastern coast,



© Jan Nijman

I stopped to observe a group of fishermen at work. It was a very basic way of fishing, with minimal equipment. Using a couple of small rowboats, they dropped their net about 20 meters (65 ft) from shore and then pulled it in toward the beach. It was a meager haul. Most of this catch, they said, was intended for consumption by the men’s families and the rest would be sold informally. More than 70 percent of the people in this country live below the national poverty level, and in rural and coastal areas the percentage is even higher. These economic problems stand in sharp contrast to the country’s natural beauty—or what remains of it after years of severe environmental degradation.”

[www.conceptcaching.com](http://www.conceptcaching.com)



urbanized). But perhaps the most ominous statistic is the high natural increase rate (2.9 percent) of Madagascar’s population.

### ■ EQUATORIAL AFRICA

The term *equatorial* is not just locational but also environmental. The equator bisects Africa, but only the western two-thirds of central Africa displays the conditions associated with the low-elevation tropics: intense heat, copious rainfall and extreme humidity, little seasonal variation, rainforest and monsoon-forest vegetation, and enormous biodiversity. To the east, beyond the Western Rift Valley, elevations rise, and cooler, more seasonal climatic regimes prevail. As a result, we have recognized two regions in these lowest latitudes: (just-discussed) East Africa to the east, and Equatorial Africa to the west.

Equatorial Africa is physiographically dominated by the huge, bowl-shaped Congo Basin. In the far northwest, the Adamawa Highlands separate this region from West Africa; rising elevations and climatic change mark its southern limits (see the *Cwa* boundary in Fig. G-7). Its political geography consists of nine states, of which DR Congo (formerly Zaïre) is by far the largest in both territory and population (Fig. 6B-6).

Five of the other eight states—Gabon, Cameroon, Congo (Republic), Equatorial Guinea, and São Tomé and Príncipe—all have coastlines on the Atlantic Ocean. The Central African Republic, the southern part of Chad that belongs to this region, and newly independent South Sudan are all landlocked. In many ways, vast and complex Equatorial Africa is the most troubled region in the entire realm.

### DR Congo

As the map shows, DR Congo—known officially as *The Democratic Republic of the Congo*—has only a tiny window (37 kilometers/23 mi) facing the Atlantic Ocean, barely enough to accommodate the wide mouth of the Congo River. Oceangoing ships can reach the port of Matadi, inland from which falls and rapids make it necessary to move goods by road or rail to the megacity capital, Kinshasa. Lack of navigability also necessitates transshipment between Kisangani and Ubundu, and at Kindu. Follow the railroad south from Kindu, and you reach another narrow corridor of territory at the city of Lubumbashi in the southeastern corner of the country. That vital part of Katanga Province contains most of DR Congo’s major mineral resources, including copper and cobalt.

With a territory not much smaller than the United States east of the Mississippi, a population of nearly 75 million, a rich and varied mineral base, and much serviceable agricultural land, DR Congo would seem to have all the ingredients needed to lead this region and, indeed, all of Subsaharan Africa. But powerful centrifugal forces, arising from its physiography and cultural geography, pull this country apart. The immense forested heart of basin-shaped DR Congo creates communication and transportation barriers between east and west, north and south. Many of the country’s productive areas lie along its periphery, separated by considerable distances. These areas tend to look across the border, to one or more of DR Congo’s nine neighbors, for outlets, markets, and often ethnic kinship as well.

DR Congo’s civil wars of the 1990s started in one such neighbor, Rwanda, and spilled over into what was then still known as Zaïre. Rwanda has for centuries been the scene of conflict between sedentary Hutu farmers and invading Tutsi



FIGURE 6B-6

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley &amp; Sons, Inc.

pastoralists. Colonial borders and practices worsened the situation, and after independence in the early 1960s a series of terrible crises followed. In the mid-1990s, another of these crises generated one of the largest refugee streams ever seen in the world, and that conflict engulfed eastern (and later northern and western) DRCongo. The death toll will never be known, but estimates range upward from 5 million, a calamity that was still not enough to propel the international community into concerted peacemaking action.

By 2004, a combination of power transfer in Kinshasa, negotiation among various rebel groups and the African states involved in the conflict, UN assistance, and general exhaustion produced a semblance of stability in most of the eastern margins of DRCongo (Fig. 6B-6). But the Kinshasa-based government proved unable to completely pacify its eastern periphery (especially North and South Kivu Provinces), and yet another series of rebel attacks, allegedly encouraged by Rwanda, occurred. In mid-2013, the level of

violence had again abated even though a durable peace was not in sight.

### Across the River

To the west and north of the Congo and Ubangi rivers lie seven of Equatorial Africa's other eight countries (Fig. 6B-6). A pair of them are landlocked. **Chad**, straddling the African Transition Zone as well as the regional boundary with West Africa, is one of Africa's most remote countries. Poverty is rife, although recent oil discoveries in the south and assistance from China in exploiting those reserves are today changing its status. The embattled **Central African Republic**, chronically unstable as well as deeply mired in poverty, never was able to convert its agricultural potential and mineral resources (diamonds, uranium) into significant progress. And one country consists of two small, densely forested volcanic islands: **São Tomé and Príncipe**, a mini-state containing a population of just 240,000 whose economy, like several others in the realm, is being transformed by recent oil discoveries.

The four coastal states present a different picture. All possess oil reserves and share the Congo Basin's equatorial forests; thus petroleum and timber figure prominently among their exports. In **Gabon**, this combination has produced an upper-middle-income economy (see Fig. G-11). Of the four, coastal Gabon also has the largest proven mineral resources, including manganese, uranium, and iron ore. Its capital, Libreville (the only coastal capital in the region), reflects all this in its high-rise downtown, bustling port, and mushrooming shantytowns.

**Cameroon**, not as well endowed with oil or other raw materials, has the region's strongest agricultural sector by virtue of its higher-latitude location and higher-relief topography. Western Cameroon is one of the more developed parts of Equatorial Africa and includes the capital, Yaoundé, and the principal port of Douala.

With five neighbors, **Congo** (the "other" [former French] Congo) could be a major transit hub for this region, especially for DR Congo if it ever recovers from civil war. Its capital, Brazzaville, lies just across the Congo River from Kinshasa and is linked to the port of Pointe Noire by road and railway. But devastating, unceasing power struggles have thus far negated Congo's geographic advantages.

As Figure 6B-6 shows, **Equatorial Guinea** consists of a rectangle of mainland territory and the island of Bioko, where the capital of Malabo is located. A former Spanish colony that remained one of the realm's least-developed territories, Equatorial Guinea has now been so dramatically affected by increased oil production and exporting that it has become Africa's only high-income economy (Fig. G-11) with GDP growth rates exceeding 10 percent for the last decade. However, as in so many other oil-rich countries, this bounty has had minimal impact on the well-being of most of the people, but ostentatious displays of wealth by members of the ruling elite have elicited international condemnation.

One other coastal territory would also seem to be a part of Equatorial Africa: **Cabinda**, wedged between the two Congos just to the north of the Congo River's mouth. But Cabinda is one of those odd colonial legacies on the African map—it belonged to the Portuguese and was administered as part of Angola. Today it is an exclave of independent Angola, and a most valuable one because it contains major oil reserves.

### South Sudan

The ninth state of Equatorial Africa lies in the region's northeast corner: South Sudan. This newest country to appear on the world political map officially became independent in mid-2011. Its birth came in the aftermath of six disastrous decades of postcolonial strife within the former state of Sudan, a brutal conflict magnified by the bisection of that country by the religious divide between Islam and Christianity-animism that signifies the African Transition Zone. The latter will be discussed as the final region of Sub-Saharan Africa in this chapter; the remainder of former Sudan—which still calls itself Sudan in its new truncated form—is discussed in Chapter 7B.

The British effectively ruled Sudan from the 1890s until independence in 1956. One of the roots of the country's long-running internal conflict, which peaked during the past three decades, lies in the decision of the British colonial administration to combine northern Sudan, which was Arabized and Islamized, with a large area to the south that was African and where many villagers had been Christianized. As soon as the British departed, the Khartoum-based regime in the north sought to impose its Islamic rule on southern Sudan, and a bitter civil war immediately broke out. After dragging on for about 15 years, things quieted down between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s. But by 1985 the war resumed with a ferocity that lasted until a peace agreement was finally brokered in 2005. About 1.5 million people are believed to have died in the protracted violence, and another half million succumbed to famine and disease triggered by the hostilities.

Former Sudan's drawn out civil war impoverished the country, and its per capita income ranked among the world's lowest. That changed in the 1990s when oil was discovered in Kordofan Province and elsewhere, including major deposits in the embattled south (Fig. 6B-6). Leaders in the south saw oil as a ticket to self-sufficiency, and the north felt that it too would walk away with control of several oilfields.

The 2005 peace agreement that ended the war stipulated a division of the oil revenues between north and south, and also laid the groundwork for a referendum in the south on secession and its reconstitution as an independent country. That referendum was finally held in the southern provinces in early 2011, with 99 percent of their population voting for independence, which was implemented on July 1 of that year.

Nevertheless, the new country continues to exhibit a landscape of grinding poverty. Pre-2011 governance there

had been so deficient that the size of South Sudan's population is not even known—for 2014, the best estimate is just about 10 million. A great majority of the people are either subsistence farmers or cattle herders (stuck in a traditional livelihood in which individual and family status depends on the number of one's livestock). Most people are illiterate, and child mortality rates rank among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sudan and South Sudan have had a contentious relationship ever since the secession of the latter. Long stretches of their joint boundary remain at issue. But in 2013 the two neighbors, aware of the cost their disputes, came to an *ad hoc* agreement that allowed oil exports to flow again.

## WEST AFRICA

West Africa occupies most of Africa's Bulge, extending south from the margins of the Sahara to the Gulf of Guinea coast and from Lake Chad west to Senegal (Fig. 6B-7).

Politically, the broadest definition of this region includes all those states that lie to the south of Western Sahara, Algeria, and Libya, and to the west of Chad (itself sometimes included) and Cameroon. Within West Africa, a rough division is sometimes made between the large, mostly steppe-and-desert states that extend across the southern Sahara (Chad could also be included here) and the smaller, better-watered coastal states.

Apart from once-Portuguese Guinea-Bissau and long-independent Liberia, West Africa encompasses four former British and nine former French dependencies. The British-influenced countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia) lie separated from one another, whereas Francophone West Africa is contiguous. As Figure 6B-7 shows, political boundaries extend perpendicularly from the coast into the interior, so that from Mauritania to Nigeria, the West African habitat is parceled out among parallel, coast-oriented states. Across these boundaries, especially across those between former British and former



FIGURE 6B-7

French territories, there is only limited interaction. For example, in terms of value, Nigeria's trade with Britain is about 100 times as great as its trade with nearby Ghana. The countries of West Africa are not interdependent economically, and their incomes are largely derived from the sale of their products on the non-African international market.

In light of these cross-currents of subdivision within West Africa, why are we justified in speaking of a single West African region? First, because this part of the realm exhibits remarkable cultural and historical momentum. The colonial interlude failed to extinguish West African vitality, expressed not only by the old states and empires of the savanna and the cities of the forest, but also by the vigor and entrepreneurship, the achievements in sculpture, music, and dance, of peoples from Senegal to Nigeria's southeastern Iboland. Second, because West Africa contains a set of parallel east-west environmental belts, very clearly reflected in Figure G-7, whose role in the development of the region is pervasive. As the transport-route pattern on the map of West Africa indicates, overland connections within each of these belts, from country to country, are poor; no coastal or interior railroad ever connected this tier of countries. Yet spatial interaction is stronger across these belts, and some north-south economic exchange does take place, notably in the coastal consumption of meat from cattle raised in the northern savannas. And third, because West Africa received an early and crucial imprint from European colonialism, which—with its maritime commerce and slave trade—transformed the region from one end to the other. That impact reached into the heart of the Sahara and set the stage for the reorientation of this entire area, from which emerged the present patchwork of states.

West Africa today is Sub-Saharan Africa's most populous region (Fig. 6A-4). In these terms, Nigeria (whose census results are in doubt, but with an estimated population of 179 million) is Africa's largest state; Ghana (26.7 million) and Ivory Coast (21.6 million) rank prominently as well. The southern half of the region, understandably, is home to most of the people. Mauritania, Mali, and Niger include too much of the unproductive belt of steppe environment (known as the *Sahel*) as well as the arid Sahara to its north to sustain populations as large as those of Nigeria, Ghana, or Ivory Coast.

The peoples along the coast reflect the modern era that the colonial powers introduced: they prospered in their new-found roles as intermediaries in the coastward trade. Later, they experienced the changes of the colonial period; in education, religion, urbanization, agriculture, politics, health, and many other endeavors, they adopted new ways. In contrast, the peoples of the interior retained their ties with a different era in African history. Distant and aloof from the main arena of European colonial activity and often drawn into the Islamic orbit, they experienced a significantly different kind of change. But the map reminds us that Africa's boundaries were not drawn to accommodate such contrasts. Both Nigeria and Ghana possess population clusters representing the interior as well as the coastal peoples, and in both

## VOICE FROM THE

## Region



© Victoria Okoye

Victoria Okoye, Nigeria

### YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

"My family is from Nigeria and I've lived in Abuja and Lagos. Democracy in Nigeria is slowly improving, but many young people still don't see the political system as accountable or as a tool to improve conditions in the country. Instead, politics remains an avenue for personal gain and those in government seem disconnected from the everyday struggles of average citizens. Problems are often attributed to Nigeria's ethnic diversity, but this diversity is part of the richness of Nigeria's culture. To me, this is one of the most prominent examples of the failure of politics and government, which leads people to fall back on their social, cultural, familial, and religious ties. We young people are eager for change, but we find it hard not to become cynical. Many Nigerians, including some of my friends and relatives, have become disillusioned. They were not interested in voting in the 2011 elections because of their lack of faith in the system. In some parts of the country, there was voter intimidation, violence, and fraud at polling stations. But there are numerous grassroots initiatives and projects aimed at improving the political system, and engaging youth is part of this. Through on-the-ground community mobilizing as well as the Internet, Facebook, and mobile phones, young people are playing a key role in creating and working with organizations aimed at real political change to make the politicians and government more responsive to citizens' needs. There is a big generational shift happening in that sense. Lasting change will take time, but I'm very hopeful."

countries the wide cultural gap between north and south has produced political problems.

### Nigeria

Nigeria, the region's cornerstone, is (according to the best demographic estimate) home to just under 180 million people, by far the largest population of any African country. Consider this: there are more people in Nigeria alone than in all the other countries of West Africa combined.

When Nigeria achieved full independence from Britain in 1960, its new government was faced with the daunting task of administering a European political creation containing three major nations and nearly 250 other peoples ranging from several million to a few thousand in number.



FIGURE 6B-8

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley &amp; Sons, Inc.

For reasons obvious from the map (Fig. 6B-8), Britain's colonial imprint was always stronger in the two southern subregions than in the north. Christianity became the dominant faith in the south, and southerners, especially the Yoruba, took a lead role in the transition from colony to independent state. The choice of Lagos, the dominant port of the Yoruba-dominated southwest, as the capital of a federal Nigeria (and not one of the cities in the more populous north) reflected British aspirations for the country's future. A three-region federation, two of which lay in the south, would ensure the primacy of the non-Islamic part of the state. But this framework did not last long. In 1967, the Ibo-dominated Eastern Region declared its own independence as the Republic of Biafra, leading to a

three-year civil war at a cost of about a million lives. Since then, Nigeria's federal system has been modified repeatedly; today there are 36 States, and the capital has been moved from Lagos to more centrally located Abuja (Fig. 6B-8).

### Fateful Oil

Large oilfields were discovered beneath the Niger River Delta during the 1950s, when Nigeria's agricultural sector was producing most of its exports (peanuts, palm oil, cocoa, cotton) and farming still had priority in national and State development plans. Soon, revenues from oil production dwarfed all other sources, bringing the country a brief period of prosperity and promise.

But before long, Nigeria's petroleum riches brought more bust than boom. Misguided development plans now came to focus on grand, ill-founded industrial schemes and such expensive luxuries as a national airline even as the continuing mainstay of the vast majority of Nigerians, agriculture, fell into neglect. Worse, poor management, corruption, outright theft of oil revenues during military misrule, and excessive borrowing against future oil income led to economic disaster. The country's infrastructure collapsed. In the cities, basic services broke down. In the rural areas, clinics, schools, water supplies, and roads to markets crumbled. And across the country, absolute poverty prevails: at the beginning of this decade, more than 60 percent of the people still earned less than U.S. \$1 a day.

The Niger Delta itself has become conflict-ridden, and with every spasm of violence, oil production is inter-

rupted and so are revenues. Local people, beneath whose land the oil was being exploited, demanded a share of the revenues and reparations for ecological damage; in the mid-1990s, the military regime under General Abacha responded by arresting and executing nine of their leaders. By 2010, thousands of insurgents had agreed to lay down their arms in return for a promise of amnesty and a stipend. But peace remains tenuous, and more than 50 years of oil production has decimated many of the Delta's rural occupations in agriculture and fisheries.

Nigeria's GDP growth over the past decade is among the highest on the African continent; but on global indices of national well-being, Nigeria has sunk to the lowest tier even as its output ranks it among the world's top dozen oil producers, with the United States its chief customer. Population increases in this country (more than twice the

## AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

**IN A REALM** that is only 37 percent urbanized, Lagos, former capital of federal Nigeria, stands out: a teeming megacity of 12.7 million, sometimes called the Calcutta of Africa.

Lagos evolved over the past three centuries from a Yoruba fishing village, Portuguese slaving center, and British colonial headquarters into Nigeria's (and Africa's) largest city, principal port, leading industrial center, and first capital (1960–1991). Situated on the country's southwestern coast, it consists of a group of low-lying barrier islands and sand spits between the swampy shoreline and Lagos Lagoon. The center of the city still lies on Lagos Island, where the high-rises adjoining the Marina overlook Lagos Harbor and, across the water, Apapa Wharf and the Apapa industrial area. The city expanded south-eastward onto Ikoyi Island and Victoria Island, but after the 1970s most urban sprawl took place to the north, on the western side of Lagos Lagoon.

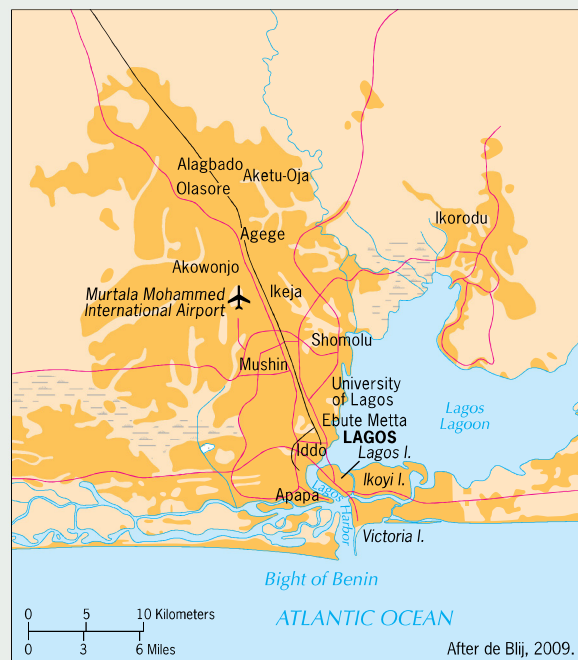
Lagos's cityscape is a mixture of modern high-rises, dilapidated residential areas, and squalid slums. From the top of a high-rise one sees a seemingly endless vista of rusting corrugated roofs, the houses built of cement or mud in irregular blocks separated by narrow alleys. On the outskirts lie the shantytowns of the least fortunate, where shelters are made of plywood and cardboard and lack even the most basic facilities. Slum demolitions are a regular occurrence, often to make way for new construction. The government has proclaimed its ambition to make Lagos into Africa's premier business center.

Traffic in Lagos is as bad as it gets anywhere, with daily commutes of three or more hours the rule rather than the exception. During rush hour (which is almost always) cars move at about 5 kilometers (3 mi) an hour. The only beneficiary of this chaos is the *okada*, the motor-bike taxi that in recent years has taken the city by storm. These small

vehicles sometimes carry entire families, weaving swiftly through traffic and violating every rule in the book—and proliferated so rapidly that they became a problem and are now banned from certain roads and local areas.

By world standards, Lagos ranks among the most severely polluted, congested, and disorderly cities. Mismanagement and official corruption are endemic. Laws, rules, and regulations, from zoning to traffic, are flouted. The international airport is notorious for its inadequate security and for extortion by immigration and customs officers. In many ways, Lagos remains a metropolis out of control.

## LAGOS



© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

world average) are disturbingly high and this tends to offset economic growth.

### Islam Ascendant

In 1999, Nigeria's hopes were raised when, for the first time since 1983, a democratically elected president was sworn into office. But soon its problems (which now also included a deepening AIDS crisis) magnified when northern States, beginning with Zamfara, proclaimed *Sharia* (strict Islamic) law [4]. When Kaduna State followed suit, riots between Christians and Muslims devastated that State's venerable capital city of Kaduna. There, and in 11 other northern States (Fig. 6B-8), the imposition of *Sharia* law led to the departure of thousands of Christians, intensifying the cultural fault line that threatens the cohesion of the country. That schism continues to deepen (see photo), and the kind of Islamic revivalism now taking hold in the north raises the prospect that Nigeria, West Africa's cornerstone and one of this realm's most important states, may succumb to devolutionary forces arising from its location astride the African Transition Zone. For Subsaharan Africa, that would be a calamity.

Nigeria—especially the north—is increasingly unsafe for locals as well as foreigners. A string of kidnappings and killings in early 2013 has put the expatriate community and foreign corporations on alert. The radical Islamic organization responsible for most of these acts of terrorism is *Boko Haram* (which means “Western education is sinful”), a jihadist group that originated in the far northeastern State of Borno (Fig. 6B-8), an impoverished, underrepresented corner of Nigeria where repressive government policies have triggered growing militancy. *Boko Haram*'s “religious cleansing” activities were initially confined to Borno, but lately operations have expanded westward to the key city of Kano and even the federal capital, Abuja, to its south. Support for Islamic militants is drawn from young northern Nigerian men, half of whom are unemployed, who have lost hope in the politicians and in their own future.

### Development Prospects

Nigeria's rapid economic growth over the past decade has exceeded that of South Africa, and some observers suggest that Nigeria is poised to overtake the realm's leader. But growing exports of crude oil and an improving economy do not make for a leadership change just yet. Nigeria's numbers are in part a reflection of its demography: Nigeria has more than three times the population of South Africa. Nigeria's commodities are in demand; South Africa's world markets are static or declining. But consider this: South Africa has a well-developed, modern road and railroad network (respectively, 754,000 kilometers [470,000 mi] and 12,500 kilometers [7770 mi] in

length); the comparable data for Nigeria are 12,500 and 2200 kilometers [1365 mi]. Whether it is level of urbanization, literacy, agricultural diversity, manufacturing capacity, higher education, or infrastructure, South Africa will stay in the lead for some time to come. Certainly Nigeria has the potential to take its place as Africa's economic leader, but catching up from a low base is not the same as overtaking in total. For all its own shortcomings, South Africa remains the realm's undisputed pacesetter.

### Coast and Interior

Nigeria is one of 17 states (counting Chad and offshore Cape Verde) that form the region of West Africa. Four of these countries, comprising a huge territory under steppe and desert environments but containing relatively small populations (Fig. 6B-7), are landlocked: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad (all are discussed further in Chapter 7B). Figure G-7 clearly shows the prevailing arid conditions in these four interior states, and Figure 6A-8 reveals the concentration of population within the steppe zone and along the ribbon of water provided by the Niger River—a lifeline dependency most crucial in Mali and Niger (both are also challenged by troubled, remote northern frontiers deep in the Sahara). Scattered oases form the remaining settlements and anchor regional trade as well. And it should also be noted that even the coastal states do not escape the aridity, especially the marginal lands of their interiors.

A man walks past the wreckage at police headquarters in Kano, Nigeria following a suicide bomber's attack in January 2012. More than 150 people were killed within days in a series of coordinated attacks by the jihadist Islamist group, *Boko Haram*, in this largest city of northern Nigeria. A shadowy organization with a Taliban-like agenda, *Boko Haram* is linked to al-Qaeda. It seeks to impose strict *Sharia* law (already in practice throughout the north, as Fig. 6B-8 indicates) on Nigerians all across the country, using any means it deems necessary.



© AP/Wide World Photos



West Africa's countries all share the effects of the environmental zonation depicted in Figure G-7, but they also exhibit distinct regional geographies. Typical of the coastal zone is **Benin**, Nigeria's neighbor with a population of 9.9 million, which has a growing cultural and economic link with the Brazil's northeastern Bahia State, where many of its people were taken in bondage and where elements of West African culture survive. Benin's geography is comparable to that of neighboring **Togo** (population: 6.3 million): both are markedly elongated narrow political units with savannas in the north and humid tropical lowlands near the coast, but without usable rivers. On the other hand, **Burkina Faso** is representative of the much drier interior: impoverished and landlocked, but with undeveloped reserves of gold, its commercial economy relies on the exporting of cotton. Importantly, with Muslims constituting 59 percent of Burkina Faso's 18.6 million residents, this country—together with Mali (93 percent), Niger (99 percent), and transitional Chad (56 percent)—lies firmly within the Islamic orbit of northern West Africa; among other things, this translates into a fast-growing population well above twice the world average, a demographic trend also exhibited by Mali, Niger, and Chad.

Among the coastal states, **Ghana**, known in colonial times as the Gold Coast, was the first modern West African state to achieve independence, with a democratic government and a sound commercial economy based on cocoa exports. A pair of grandiose post-independence schemes can be seen on the map: the port of Tema (near the capital, Accra), intended to serve a vast West African hinterland, and Lake Volta, which resulted from the region's largest dam project. Both democracy and the economy soon failed, but during the 1990s a military regime was replaced by a stable representative government and recovery began. In 2007, Ghana celebrated 50 years of independence, its democracy maturing, its economy forging ahead, corruption persistent but declining, and its international stature rising. The same year also brought news of a major discovery of oil reserves off Ghana's coast and caused a surge of optimism. This came only a few months after its government had received a nearly (U.S.) \$550 million aid package from the Millennium Challenge Corporation in the United States to expand commercial agriculture, further improve infrastructure, and combat poverty—a grant made in recognition of Ghana's achievements that featured a democratic, closely contested, and peaceful presidential election. Later elections and a peaceful transfer of power

Even in the poorer countries of the world, you see something that has become a phenomenon of globalization: gated communities. Widening wealth differences, security concerns, and real estate markets in societies formerly characterized by traditional forms of land ownership combined to produce this new element in the cultural landscape. This is the entrance to Golden Gate, the first private gated-community development in Accra, Ghana, started in 1993 as a joint venture between a Texas-based construction company and a Ghanaian industrial partner.

after the 2012 death of President John Atta Mills have solidified Ghana's reputation as an African trailblazer.

**Ivory Coast** (officially *Côte d'Ivoire*) has had a turbulent history. Following independence in 1960, it translated the next three decades of autocratic but stable rule into economic progress, yet excesses by the country's president-for-life eventually cost it dearly. One of those excesses involved the late-1980s construction of a Roman Catholic basilica to rival St. Peter's in Rome in the president's home village, Yamoussoukro, also designated to replace Abidjan as the country's new capital. By the turn of this century, the political succession had become badly entangled in a north-south, Muslim-Christian schism that degenerated into two rounds of civil war between 2002 and 2011. Conflict has now largely subsided, but the country remains deeply troubled as it tries to rebuild its shattered society and cocoa-based commercial economy.

Democratic **Senegal** on the extreme west coast demonstrates what stability can facilitate: without oil, diamonds, or other valuable sources of income and with an overwhelmingly subsistence-farming population, Senegal nevertheless managed to achieve some of the region's highest GNI levels. More than 95 percent Muslim and dominated by the Wolof, the ethnic group concentrated in and around the capital of Dakar, and with continuing close ties to France, Senegal has even been capable of overcoming both a failed effort to unify with its English-speaking **enclave [5]**, **Gambia**, and a secession movement in its southwestern Casamance district. In 2010, Senegal marked both 50 years of independence and four decades of democracy, and in 2012 a runoff election ousted a president who tried to secure a third term.

Other parts of West Africa have been afflicted by civil war and horror. **Liberia**, founded in 1822 by freed American slaves who returned to Africa with the help of



© Richard Grant



## From the Field Notes . . .



© H.J. de Blij

“Wherever you go in West Africa, you are struck by the bright colors, especially in the markets. And Freetown, Sierra Leone on this Friday seems to be one huge market, the streets lined with stalls, young and old crowding intersections in huge numbers. Most of the goods were for local trade; compared to what you see in East Africa, where tourism plays a bigger role, these markets still have a strong domestic atmosphere. Music plays everywhere, in shops, out in the open; and the whole city seems suffused with the aromas of spicy foods.”

[www.conceptcaching.com](http://www.conceptcaching.com)



American colonization societies (today, their descendants make up about 2.5 percent of the population), was governed by Americo-Liberians for six generations and sold rubber and iron ore abroad. A military coup in 1980 ended that era, and full-scale civil war beginning in 1989 embroiled virtually every ethnic group in the country. About a quarter of a million people, one-tenth of the population, perished; hundreds of thousands of others fled the country. But Liberia turned a corner in 2006 with the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Africa’s first female president. She succeeded in stabilizing the political system and in restoring democracy. Sirleaf subsequently received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 and later that year was reelected.

**Sierra Leone** followed a similar route from self-governing British Commonwealth member to republic to one-party state and military dictatorship. In the 1990s, a rebel movement, financed by diamond sales, inflicted dreadful punishment on the local population, but a remarkable turnaround made possible by British intervention occurred early in the twenty-first century as free elections were held. In 2010, the United Nations lifted all sanctions against the country, which has now stabilized and is rebuilding. Diamonds are still the leading export, and Sierra Leone has been among Africa’s fastest growing economies in recent years. The same cannot yet be said of neighboring Guinea, where dictatorial mismanagement and a violent power struggles combined to ruin economic opportunities in both agriculture and mining.

As Figure 6B-7 shows, **Guinea** borders all three of the troubled countries just discussed, and it has involved itself in the affairs of all of them—receiving in return a stream of refugees in its border zones. Guinea, with a population of

12.1 million, has been under dictatorial rule ever since its founding president, Sekou Touré, turned from father of the nation into usurper of the people. As Figure G-11 shows, Guinea is one of Africa’s lowest-income states, but representative government and less corrupt administration could have made it a far better place. Guinea has significant gold deposits, may possess as much as one-third of the world’s bauxite (aluminum ore) reserves, and can produce far more coffee and cotton than it does; offshore lie productive fishing grounds. As the map shows, this is no ministate like its coastal neighbor **Guinea-Bissau**, the former Portuguese colony. Guinea’s capital, Conakry, has a substantial hinterland reaching well into West Africa’s interior, giving the country a wide range of environments.

We should remember that the many conflicts we noted above are often geographically concentrated in a few places and they are not representative of vast and populous West Africa. Tens of millions of farmers and herders who manage to cope with fast-changing environments in this zone between desert and ocean live remote from the news-making conflicts along the well-watered coast. Time-honored systems continue to serve: for instance, the local village markets that drive the traditional economy. Visit the countryside, and you will find that some village markets are not open every day but only every third or fourth day or in some other rotation adjusted to factors of product supply, distance, and population distribution. Such a system ensures that all villages of a certain size get to participate in the exchange network. These **periodic markets** [6] represent one of the many traditions enduring here, even as the cities beckon the farmers and burst at the seams. This region’s great challenges are economic survival and

nation-building through political stability under some of the most challenging circumstances in the world.

### Saharan Shadows

The huge western bulge of the African landmass is environmentally dominated by the Sahara, the great desert whose dust is spread widely by *Harmattan* “winter” winds across the entire region and far out to sea. Under nature’s regime, the Sahara expands and contracts over time, its semiarid southern margin or *Sahel* (an Arabic word meaning “shore”—as if the great desert were a vast sea) shifting north and south. Figure 6B-7 shows the Sahel in an average position, but people and their animals are increasingly affecting its configuration through the process of *desertification* (human-induced desert expansion). Herds of livestock quickly occupy the desert-adjointing steppes when they turn temporarily green, but their grazing in numbers far beyond the carrying capacity of this land removes vast areas of this grass as they yank it out by the roots and trample it into the fragile soil layer, making the now-dusty surface highly vulnerable to wind erosion. Inevitably, drought soon returns, the great desert advances, and the people again retreat into the moister savannas to the south, where they invade farmlands and confront sedentary inhabitants. It is an ancient cycle intensified by unrelenting population growth and political partitioning, and it challenges virtually every state in this key zone of Africa.

## ■ THE AFRICAN TRANSITION ZONE

From Mauritania and Senegal in the far west to the Horn of Africa in the east, a semiarid belt of land, about 500 kilometers (300 mi) wide, lies between the bone-dry Sahara to the north and the more humid savanna zone to the south. Here in the *Sahel*—mapped in Figure 6B-7—steppe (*BS*) climates separate desert (*BW*) from tropical savanna (*Aw*) climates (see Fig. G-7). Life in this stressed belt of steppelands is quite unpredictable. During the nine-month dry season, from October to June, there is virtually no rain and temperatures rise to 50°C (122°F). When the rains finally come, they are erratic and some areas get a little while others are flooded. Some years the harvest is good, sometimes it is almost nonexistent. According to a recent UNICEF report, malnutrition kills 225,000 children annually in the five western Sahelian countries (those excluding former Sudan and the African Horn). But the problems of the Sahel go far beyond climate.

As Figures 6B-9 and 6B-1 show, the African Transition Zone is unlike the other four regions of this realm. This is where Subsaharan Africa’s cultures intersect with those of the Muslim world. This Islamic incursion into Subsaharan Africa has engulfed some countries in their entirety (such as Senegal and Burkina Faso), and divides others into Muslim and non-Muslim sectors (Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Chad). As elsewhere in the world where certain geographic realms meet and overlap, complications mark the African Transi-

tion Zone. In some areas, the transition from Muslim to non-Muslim society is spatially gradual, as is the case in Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. In other places, the cultural divide is considerably sharper, as in eastern Ethiopia and former Sudan, where a traditional border between Christian/animist African cultures and Islamic African communities is more abrupt. The southern border of the African Transition Zone, the religious frontier occasionally referred to as Africa’s **Islamic Front** [7], is therefore neither static nor uniform.

Conflict marks much of the African Islamic Front (mapped in Fig. 6B-9): longstanding in former Sudan, where a decades-long war for independence by non-Islamic Africans in the south against the Arabized, Muslim north was successful but cost millions of lives; intermittent in Nigeria, where Islamic revivalism is currently clouding that country’s prospects; and recent in Ivory Coast, where political rivalries have reawakened religious strife in a once stable country. Nonetheless, the most conflict-prone part of the African Transition Zone lies in the east, involving not only now-bifurcated Sudan but also the historic Christian state of Ethiopia, which is nearly encircled by predominantly Muslim societies.

### The Horn of Africa

Africa’s Horn (Fig. 6B-10) is an especially volatile subregion of the African Transition Zone, which contains Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. We will concentrate our attention here on the two largest of these countries. But note that the ministate of **Djibouti**, fully 97 percent Muslim, has taken on added importance since it lies directly across from Yemen and overlooks the narrow entry to the Red Sea, the Bab el Mandeb Strait, a **choke point** [8] in international commerce. **Eritrea** came into existence in 1993 when it split off from Ethiopia; still-ongoing boundary conflicts with Ethiopia have damaged the economies of both countries. Eritrea’s early hopes for representative government and economic progress were dashed by war, dictatorial rule, and, more recently, involvement in Islamic sectarian strife.

The highlands of **Ethiopia**, where the country’s core area, capital (Addis Ababa), and its historic Christian heartland lie, are virtually encircled by dominantly Muslim societies. As Figure 6B-9 reminds us, Ethiopia’s eastern Ogaden is traditional Somali country and almost entirely Islamic. Today, one-third of Ethiopia’s population of 91.2 million is Muslim, and here the Islamic Front is quite sharply defined. With the continent’s second-largest population, Ethiopia is an important African cornerstone state but, landlocked and fragmented by the African Transition Zone, its economy and political system remain weak. However, given its substantial population and crucial relative location, Ethiopia’s importance in this realm is certain to grow.

### Somalia

The key component in the eastern sector of the African Transition Zone is Somalia, where 10.7 million people, virtually

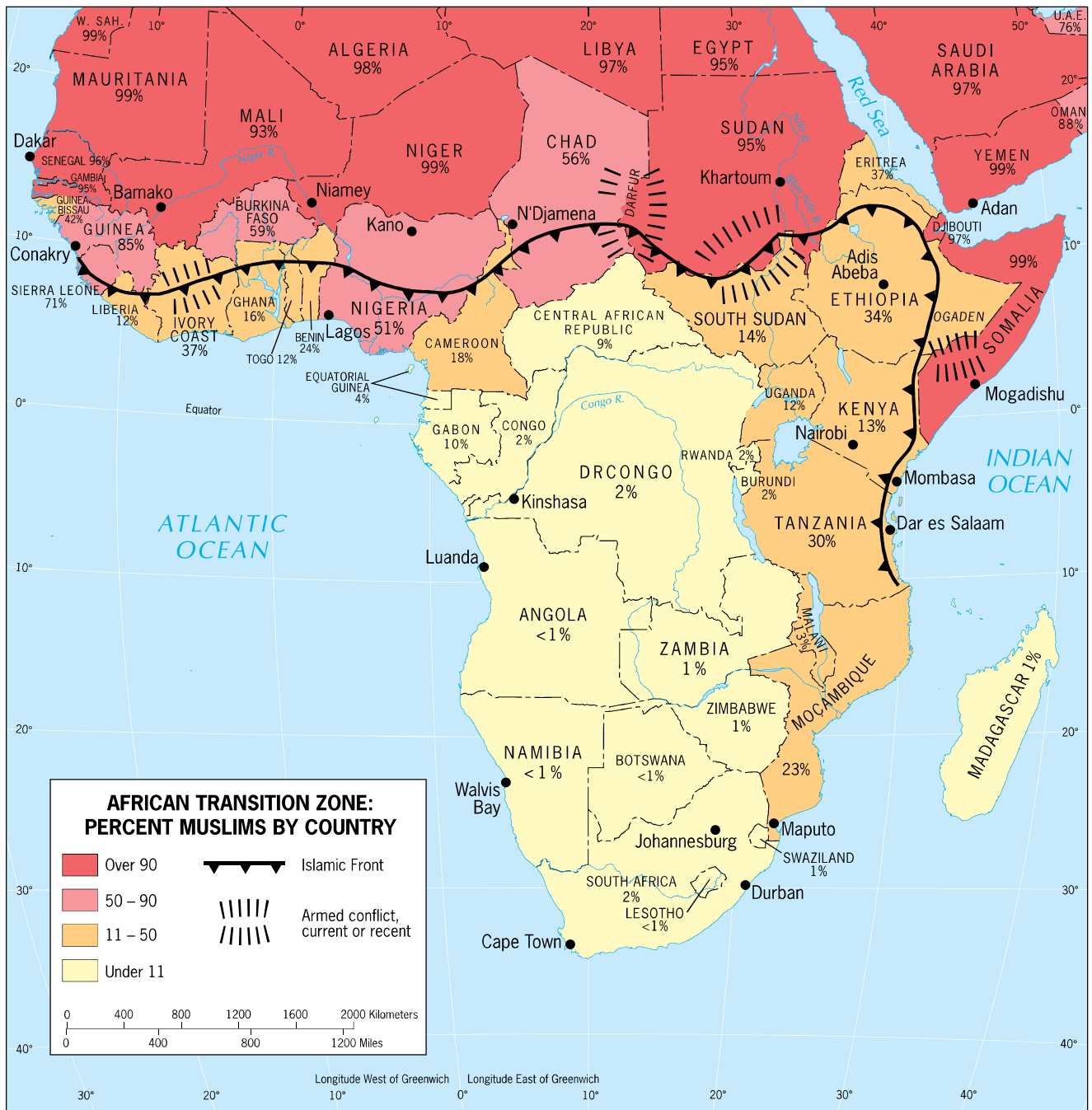


FIGURE 6B-9

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

all Muslim, live at the mercy of a desert-dominated climate that requires cross-border migration into Ethiopia's Oga-den zone in pursuit of seasonal pastures. As many as 3 to 5 million Somalis live permanently on the Ethiopian side of the border, and this is not the only division the Somali "nation" faces. The Somali people constitute an assemblage of five major ethnic groups fragmented into hundreds of clans, all engaged in an endless struggle for power as well as survival.

Early in this century's first decade, Somalia's condition as a **failed state** [9] led to the country's fragmentation into

three subdivisions (Fig. 6B-10). In the north, the sector known as **Somaliland**, which had proclaimed its independence in the 1990s and which remains by far the most stable of the three, functioned essentially as an African state, although the "international community" will not recognize it as such. In the east, a conclave of local chiefs declared their territory to be separate from the rest of Somalia, gave it the name of **Puntland**, and asserted an unspecified degree of autonomy. In the south, where the official capital, Mogadishu, is located on the Indian Ocean coast, local secular war-lords and Islamic militias continued their grim contest for



FIGURE 6B-10

© H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, J. Nijman, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

supremacy, the warlords supported by U.S. funding. In 2006, the militias stormed into the capital and took control, ousting the warlords and proclaiming their determination to create an Islamic state. In the ensuing years, the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab Islamic terrorist movement has used southern Somalia as a base from which it launched its attacks.

The absence of a functioning government also enabled organized and well-equipped pirate groups, operating from

the Somali coast, to hijack dozens of ships including huge oil tankers, demanding ransom and sometimes killing their captives. Eventually, coordinated international responses involving protective measures at sea and improved surveillance began to reduce the pirates' success rate.

In late 2012, the Somali government was able, with the help of African Union troops, to recapture Mogadishu along with a number of other areas in the southern part of the country. Islamic rebels, however, continued their hold



Reuters/AU-UN 1st Photo/Stuart Price/Landov

In late 2012, Somali government troops supported by African Union forces took back the capital city of Mogadishu. The surrounding areas remained in control of Islamist groups and it was hard to know how stable this new political arrangement would be. At least the city's residents could enjoy the beach again after the withdrawal of the extremists who banned such social gatherings of men and women. But note in this photo that few if any females dared to venture here.

on large territorial expanses in 2013, and Somalia remained a failed state.

As this chapter has underscored, Africa is a continent of infinite social diversity, and Subsaharan Africa is a realm of matchless cultural history. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the realm has become more dynamic than ever. An encouraging number of countries are developing rapidly in response to the global commodity boom, although several others remain economic backwaters. Democracy is taking hold in an unprecedented number of states, but elsewhere war and dislocation persists. Within countries, differences are growing with respect to well-being, consumption patterns, and lifestyles. South Africa, long the most vibrant Subsaharan African economy, has slowed its growth and now faces major social and political challenges. Nigeria, with the second-biggest economy, aims to become a global player but its own territorial integrity seems to be unraveling in its northern tier of States. Oil,

gas, and other natural resources are the cornerstones of this realm's progress in this decade, but building a prosperous future will require greater economic diversification and tightening cooperation throughout Subsaharan Africa.

#### POINTS TO PONDER

- South Africa was freed from Apartheid two decades ago, but it is now one of the most unequal societies on Earth.
- In 2010, Angola was China's top oil supplier; since then it has ranked second behind Saudi Arabia and ahead of third-place Iran.
- A number of low-income Subsaharan African countries have seen major revenue increases from raw material exports. How should they be spending those revenues?