

SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGIONS



FIGURE 10B-1

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REGIONS

Mainland Southeast Asia

Insular Southeast Asia

IN THIS CHAPTER

- ◆ Myanmar: Two steps forward, one step back
 - ◆ Chinese railroads in Laos
 - ◆ Oil wealth in Brunei and East Timor
- ◆ Vietnam allied with the United States
 - ◆ Indonesia takes the lead
 - ◆ The Philippines: Wary of China

CONCEPTS, IDEAS, AND TERMS

Domino theory	1
Diffusion	2
Protrusion	3
Choke point	4
<i>Entrepôt</i>	5
Growth Triangle	6
Archipelago	7
Transmigration	8
Exclave	9
Remittances	10



The regional geography of Southeast Asia evolved from the former empires of competing colonial powers whose domination ensured compliance with their imperial designs. The postcolonial states that emerged in this realm confronted strong centrifugal forces but generally succeeded in maintaining the stability of this regional framework. Neither outsiders (U.S. intervention in the 1960s aimed at dividing Vietnam into a communist North and a non-communist South) nor locals (such as insurgents in Malaysia and secessionists in Indonesia) could fracture that framework, whose national components did not begin their independent existence with much in common, either culturally or economically. There were times when it seemed that Malaysia might break up, but only Singapore left that federation in a negotiated secession without violence. Sprawling Indonesia dealt with separatists by force as well as through persuasion and accommodation. The troubled birth of East Timor in 2002, the realm's youngest state, is therefore the exception rather than the rule. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia's governments have become more representative, its economies are maturing, and the realm's key statistical indicators (see Appendix B) reflect the internal development that has taken place.

REGIONS OF THE REALM

So much of the Southeast Asian realm consists of the waters between and among its land areas that, on the globe, it seems to be much larger territorially than it really is. Indeed, the realm's mainland component is actually smaller than its island entities combined: the mainland (including the peninsular part of Malaysia) consists of about 2.1 million square kilometers (800,000 sq mi) whereas the islands, even without including Indonesian Papua (which belongs to the Pacific Realm), account for some 2.4 million square kilometers (930,000 sq mi)—a ratio of 46 to 54 percent. But, as we shall see, Malaysia overall exhibits stronger insular



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MAJOR CITIES OF THE REALM

City	Population* (in millions)
Manila, Philippines	12.7
Jakarta, Indonesia	10.3
Bangkok, Thailand	9.1
Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam	7.1
Singapore, Singapore	5.4
Yangon, Myanmar (Burma)	4.8
Hanoi, Vietnam	3.4
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	1.7
Phnom Penh, Cambodia	1.7
Vientiane, Laos	1.0

*Based on 2014 estimates.

than mainland properties, tilting the balance even further toward offshore Southeast Asia.

With 11 countries ranging from mini-states Singapore and Brunei to regional giants Indonesia and Myanmar, Southeast Asia's states fall into every World Bank income category (see Fig. G-11). Singapore got rich from trade, Brunei from oil. Myanmar remained extremely poor when it did not need to because despotic mismanagement prevented it from realizing its potential. Environmental, locational, and administrative problems plagued, and then restrained, Laos and Cambodia. But Malaysia forged ahead, Thailand is again upward bound after recent political setbacks, and conservatively communist Vietnam continues to loosen its economic shackles. There was a time not long ago when this realm as a whole was classified as part of the 'underdeveloped world', but those days are over.

Southeast Asia's first-order regionalization recognizes the mainland-island dichotomy that is obvious from any map of this realm. But things are somewhat more complicated than that because the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, occupied by the states of Malaysia and Singapore, exhibits physiographic, historical, and cultural characteristics to justify its inclusion in the insular (island) rather than the mainland region. Using the political framework as our grid, we can map the broadest regional division of Southeast Asia in Figure 10B-1:

- **Mainland region:** Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar (Burma)
- **Insular region:** Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, East Timor (Timor-Leste), and the Philippines

Special note should also be taken of the discordance between the political matrix and the cultural-geographic reality along the eastern periphery of the Insular region. Here, Indonesia controls the western half of the island of New Guinea—but all of New Guinea belongs to the neighboring Pacific Realm.

MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Five countries form the Mainland region of Southeast Asia (Fig. 10B-1): the three remnants of Indochina—Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos—in the east; Thailand in the center; and Myanmar (formerly Burma) in the west. Even though one religion, Buddhism, dominates cultural landscapes, this is a multicultural, multiethnic region (see Fig. 10A-4). Although still one of the less urbanized regions of the world, the Mainland contains several major cities and the pace of urbanization is accelerating. And as Figure 10B-1 shows, two countries (Vietnam and Myanmar) possess dual core areas.

We approach this region from the east, beginning our survey in Indochina where the United States fought and lost a disastrous war that ended in 1975, but whose impact on America continues to be felt today. After the Indochina War formally began in 1964 (U.S. involvement in Vietnam actually began earlier), some scholars warned that the conflict might spill over from Vietnam into Laos and Cambodia, and from there into Thailand, Malaysia, and even then-Burma. This view was based on the **domino theory** [1], which holds that destabilization and conflict from any cause in one country can result in the collapse of order in one or more neighboring countries, triggering a falling-domino chain of events that can affect a series of contiguous states in a region.

That did not happen, and some of the rhetoric of the time was infused with alarmist views from the West. Cambodia and Laos were indeed disastrously impacted as the original Vietnam War became the wider Indochina War, but not the other “dominoes” (in fact, the last Laotian Hmong refugees who had been driven from their homes and who had found refuge in Thailand were evicted as recently as 2009).

Still, that does not necessarily invalidate the idea of the domino effect. Powerful states that intervene in weaker countries, as the United States did in Iraq in 2003 and Russia in Georgia in 2008, do so at the risk of destabilizing those countries' neighbors by setting in motion arms races and sowing the seeds of future intraregional conflict. Ethnic-cultural strife in one state can also engulf neighboring countries, as happened in central Africa during the 1990s when Rwanda's civil wars spread into the neighboring Congo (where a government fell as a result), and also drew in Burundi and Uganda.

The domino theory remains an intriguing model framework, and in our crowded world potential dominoes abound. Its most recent, dramatic manifestation, as shown in Chapters 7A and 7B, was the **diffusion** [2] of the popular, Arab Spring uprisings across North Africa and parts of Southwest Asia in 2011.

Vietnam

Vietnam (population: 90.8 million) still carries the deep scars of the Indochina War (1964–1975), although the vast majority of Vietnamese have no personal memory of that terrible conflict. The more immediate concerns in Vietnam



FIGURE 10B-2

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today are to reconnect the country with the outside world and to integrate its 2000-kilometer (1200-mi) strip of highly elongated territory through upgraded infrastructure (Fig. 10B-2). This also is an emerging economy that is now making considerable progress. Poverty has declined dramatically over the past decade as Vietnam became a player in the global economy. In the mid-2010s, it is regarded as a “hot”

new location for assembly plants, which are attracted by wages lower than China’s and the incentives offered by more than a dozen economic development zones.

North, South, and Unification

Japan had invaded Vietnam during World War II, after which the French tried to regain control, fighting Vietnamese



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Two faces of changing Vietnam, three blocks apart in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon): a statue of the revered former communist leader Ho Chi Minh in front of City Hall; and the first Louis Vuitton store, catering to the expanding base of higher-income consumers.

nationalists in a war that lasted nine years before they were decisively ousted in 1954. But newly independent Vietnam did not become a unified state. Separate regimes took control: a communist one in the north based in Hanoi and a non-communist counterpart in the south headquartered at Saigon. Vietnam's pronounced elongation had made things difficult for the French, and now it played the same role during the postcolonial era. Note, in Figure 10B-2, that Vietnam is widest in the north and south, with a slender "waist" in its middle zone—ensuring that North and South Vietnam were worlds apart in a number of ways. For more than a decade the United States tried to prop up the Saigon regime that controlled the south, but the communists eventually prevailed; like China, Vietnam still has a communist government today. After hostilities terminated in 1975, as many as 2 million Vietnamese refugees set out in often-flimsy watercraft onto the South China Sea; of those "boat people" who survived, a majority settled in the United States.

Vietnam officially became a unified state in 1976, and since then the contrasts between north and south have slowly diminished. The capital, Hanoi, has long lagged behind bustling Saigon (now renamed Ho Chi Minh City after North Vietnam's revolutionary leader), but today its growing skyline reflects modernization and the overland links to its outport of Haiphong have been upgraded. With 3.4 million residents, Hanoi anchors the northern (Tonkin Plain) core area of Vietnam, the lower basin of the Red River (its agricultural hinterland). On rural roadways, goods are still moved by human- or animal-drawn cart, but the roads themselves are being improved. The south, however, is experiencing even more significant change and faster economic growth (see photo pair) as the government slowly, and on its own terms, opens up the country to the global economy.

Vietnam in Transition

Since the late 1980s, Vietnam's self-declared communist government has cautiously followed China's pathbreaking approach to economic development. By the mid-1990s,

free enterprise was encouraged; farmers were finally allowed to cultivate for profit; and foreign investment was welcomed, although under far more restrictive terms than in China. The government also prioritized the provision of beneficial social services, resulting in steadily rising attendance in secondary schools and health indicators that now surpass China's.

A leading development focus in Vietnam since 2000 has been the expansion of agricultural production. One result is that the country now ranks among the five leading coffee producers in the world. However, because Vietnam's mass-produced bulk coffee is raised plantation-style in the sun, the diffusion of this crop into the interior highlands has triggered substantial deforestation, worsening the annual monsoon-related floods that plague this now-unstable countryside. Other major Vietnamese crops include rice, rubber, tea, sugar, and spices—all with increasingly favorable export opportunities.

Vietnam has been able to maintain a relatively fast-growing national economy, and was only marginally affected by the economic difficulties that have plagued much of the world since 2008. Today, Ho Chi Minh City is thriving, sparked by the rapid development of the east bank of the Saigon River, which includes a Chinese-style Special Economic Zone as well as the booming New Saigon business/residential district. In fact, the Saigon area now accounts for more than 25 percent of Vietnam's industrial output and about one-third of its tax revenues. Nonetheless, economists argue that the country is overly dependent on its state-run companies and urgently needs to enhance opportunities for private-sector initiatives. That will require relaxation of the tight economic controls that Hanoi's communist planners have imposed in their determination to prevent runaway capitalism of the Chinese variety, particularly the income disparities that come with it.

Surprisingly, Vietnam these days has become one of the most pro-American countries in Southeast Asia despite its persistence as a communist state. Because three-quarters



From the Field Notes . . .



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“Hanoi and most of the country’s other urban areas look and function much as they have for generations. Main arteries throb with commerce and traffic (still mostly bicycles and mopeds); side streets are quieter and more residential. No high-rises here, but the problems of dense urban populations are nevertheless evident. Every time I turned into a side street, the need for street cleaning and refuse collection was obvious, and drains were clogged more often than not. ‘We haven’t allowed our older neighborhoods to be destroyed like they have in China,’ said my colleague from Hanoi University, ‘but we also don’t have an economy growing so fast that we can afford to provide the services these people



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need.’ Certainly the contrast between burgeoning coastal China and slower-growing Vietnam—a matter of communist-government policy—is evident in their cities. ‘As you see, nothing much has changed here,’ she said. ‘Not much evidence of globalization. But we’re basically self-sufficient, nobody goes hungry, and the gap between the richest and the poorest here in Vietnam is a fraction of what it is now in China. We decided to keep control.’ You would find more agreement on these points here in Hanoi than in Saigon, but the Vietnamese state is stable and progressing.”

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of all Vietnamese alive today were born after 1975, what they call their (winning) “American War” is history not memory. Undoubtedly, these good feelings toward their former enemy at least partially reflect the perceived threat of China, against whom the U.S. can provide a valuable counterweight. American-Vietnamese relations have warmed considerably in recent years, and we noted in Chapter 10A that joint military exercises were initiated in 2012. In fact, Vietnam has now opened its strategically located port at Cam Ranh Bay to U.S. naval forces—who significantly modernized and expanded this superb deepwater port a half-century ago to make it their primary base of operations during the Indochina War (Fig. 10B-2).

Cambodia

Compact Cambodia is heir to the ancient Khmer Empire whose capital was Angkor and whose legacy is a vast landscape of imposing monuments including the great Buddhist-inspired temple complex, Angkor Wat. Today, more than 85 percent of Cambodia’s 15.5 million inhabitants are ethnic Khmers, with most of the remainder divided between

Vietnamese and Chinese. The present capital, Phnom Penh, lies on the Mekong River, which crosses Cambodia before it enters and forms its massive delta in Vietnam (Fig. 10B-2).

Geographically, Cambodia enjoys a number of advantages. Compact states (see Fig. 10A-10) enclose a maximum amount of territory within a minimum of boundary, and cultural homogeneity tends to diminish centrifugal forces. But sometimes the most obvious geographic opportunities are undone by destructive politics. Neither spatial morphology nor ethnic uniformity could withstand the impact of the Indochina War and the subsequent murderous exploits of the Khmer Rouge communist regime in the late 1970s.

Postwar Problems

Cambodia’s present social geography continues to suffer from the aftereffects of that war. Its internal spatial advantages notwithstanding, this country could not overcome the liability of relative location adjacent to a conflict that was bound to spill across its borders (Fig. 10B-2). In 1970, domestic discord fueled by foreign interference led to the ouster of the last king by the military; five years later, that regime was itself overthrown by communist revolutionaries, the

so-called Khmer Rouge. These new rulers embarked on a vicious course of terror and destruction in order to reconstruct *Kampuchea* (as they called Cambodia) as a rural society. They drove townspeople into the countryside where they had no place to live or work, emptied hospitals and sent the sick and dying into the streets, outlawed religion and family, and in the process killed as many as 2 million Cambodians (out of a population of 8 million). In the late 1970s, Vietnam, having won its own war, invaded Cambodia to drive the Khmer Rouge away. But this action sparked another reign of terror, and a stream of refugees crossed the border into Thailand. Eventually, remnants of the Khmer Rouge managed to establish a base in northwestern Cambodia, where their murderous leader, Pol Pot, who was never brought to justice for the genocide he masterminded, committed suicide in 1998.

The country's postwar trauma still lingers. Once self-sufficient and able to feed others, it now must import food. Rice and beans are the subsistence crops, but the dislocation in the farmlands set production back severely, and continuing strife in the countryside has disrupted supply routes for years. If there is hope for future economic growth, it may lie in recently discovered offshore oil reserves near Cambodia's relatively short coastline. Income from oil exports began in 2012 and could approach U.S. \$2 billion annually by the end of this decade, a significant boost for an otherwise weak economy that relies heavily on its garment-industry exports. There are some bright spots as well. Investments from abroad have increased in this decade, mostly by producers seeking to shift their operations away from China (where wages are steadily rising) to capitalize on the much lower cost of labor in Cambodia and other disadvantaged Southeast Asian countries. One result is that employment in the Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone, which strongly relies on foreign revenues, impressively doubled its workforce from 10,000 in 2012 to 20,000 in 2013. Cambodians are also optimistic that growing tourism, largely focused on the Angkor temple complex, is now on the way to becoming a mainstay of the economy.

Laos

Landlocked Laos has no fewer than five neighbors, one of which is East Asia's giant, China (Fig. 10B-2). The Mekong River forms a long stretch of its western boundary, and the important sensitive border with Vietnam to the east lies in mountainous terrain. With only 6.8 million people (over half of them ethnic Lao, related to the Thai of Thailand), Laos lies surrounded by comparatively powerful states. The country has a woefully inadequate infrastructure, hardly any industry, and less than 5 percent of its land is suitable for agriculture. Laos is barely more than 25 percent urbanized; the capital, Vientiane, lies on the Mekong and has an oil pipeline to Vietnam's coast.

Laos has long included one small corner of the *Golden Triangle* of opium poppy-cultivation fame, but under international (especially U.S. and European) pressure, the com-

munist regime has forced the mainly hill-tribe people who produce most of it to abandon those crops. Because this was the only way they could make a living, these farmers were sent to resettlement villages in the lowlands, where they contracted malaria and other diseases not prevalent in their upland domain and were subject to cultural disintegration. The reward for the authorities was the continuation of foreign aid; the cost to the powerless hill people (especially the women) is incalculable. Here is an outstanding example of the power of the globalizing core reaching into the weakest of peripheries.

Communist Laos has been very slow to follow the examples from elsewhere in the region to open up its economy. A much belated move in 2011 was the opening of the first stock market in Vientiane. A major new hydropower project on the central Laotian Nam Theun River, a tributary of the Mekong, began operating in 2010 and now provides electricity to much of the middle part of the country as well as selling surplus power to Thailand. And a high-speed rail line now under construction from Vientiane to Kunming in China is certain to pull the country more tightly into the Chinese orbit. For now, though, Laos is more closely tied to neighboring Thailand, still its number-one trading partner.

In 2012, the country launched its biggest hydroelectric dam project on the Mekong at Xayaburi in northern Laos (Fig. 10B-2), but almost immediately drew criticism from downstream Cambodia and Vietnam. Many knowledgeable observers claim this dam will have disastrous consequences in those countries, especially for the tens of millions who depend on fishing for their livelihood. This contested project has already been suspended and restarted in 2013, making it unlikely that a clear path can be forged toward completing construction by the 2019 target date.

Thailand

In virtually every way, Thailand is the leading Mainland state. In contrast to its neighbors, Thailand has been a strong participant in the realm's economic development. Its capital, Bangkok (population: 9.1 million), is by far the largest urban center in the Mainland region and one of the world's most prominent primate cities. The country's population of nearly 71 million is growing at the slowest rate (equal to Singapore's) in this geographic realm.

As Figure 10B-1 reveals, Thailand occupies the heart of Southeast Asia's Mainland region. Even though Thailand has no Red, Mekong, or Irrawaddy Delta, its central lowland is watered by a set of streams that flow off the northern highlands and the Khorat Plateau to the east. One of these waterways, the Chao Phraya, is the Rhine of Thailand and forms the axis of the country's core area (Fig. 10B-3). From the head of the Gulf of Thailand to Nakhon Sawan, this river is a highway for boat traffic. Barge trains loaded with rice head toward the coast, ferries move upstream, and freighters transport tin and tungsten (of which Thailand is among the world's leading



FIGURE 10B-3

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producers). Bangkok sprawls along both sides of the lower Chao Phraya floodplain, here flanked by skyscrapers, pagodas, modern factories, boatsheds, ferry landings, luxury hotels, and myriad modest dwellings, all built in crowded confusion on swampy terrain. During the second half of 2011, Thailand suffered its worst flooding since 1940, most of it occurring in the densely populated Chao Phraya Basin. This months-long disaster displaced well over a million people, drowning more than 400 of them; temporarily inundated almost two-thirds of the country, including the low-lying area

around Bangkok (see photo); and caused such widespread damage to both agriculture and industry that at least 700,000 people were put out of work, many permanently.

Over the past few decades, only political instability and uncertainty have inhibited economic progress. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament, but its progress toward stable democracy has experienced a number of setbacks. In 2006, the armed forces ousted a controversial but popular prime minister, and uncertainty reigned until the country's first female prime minister was elected in

AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

BANGKOK

WITH A POPULATION of just over 9 million, Bangkok is mainland Southeast Asia's largest city, a sprawling metropolis on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, an urban agglomeration without a true center, an aggregation of neighborhoods ranging from the immaculate to the impoverished. In this city of great distances and sweltering tropical temperatures, getting around is often difficult because roadways are choked with traffic. A (diminishing) network of waterways affords the easiest way to travel, and life focuses on the busiest waterway of all, the Chao Phraya. Ferries and water taxis carry tens of thousands of commuters and shoppers across and along this bustling riverine artery, flanked by a growing number of high-rise office buildings, luxury hotels, and ultramodern condominiums. Many of these contemporary structures reflect the Thais' fondness for domes, columns, and small-paned windows, creating a skyline unique in Asia.

Gold is Buddhist Thailand's symbol, adorning religious and nonreligious architecture alike. From a high vantage point in the city, you can see hundreds of golden spires, pagodas, and façades rising above the townscape. The Grand Palace, where royal, religious, and public buildings are crowded inside a white, crenellated wall 2 kilometers (more than 1 mi) long, is a gold-laminated city within a city embellished by ornate



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gateways, dragons, and statuary. Across the mall in front of the Grand Palace are government buildings sometimes targeted by rioters in Bangkok's volatile political environment. And not far away are Chinatown (see photo in Chapter 10A) and myriad markets, all components of Bangkok's throbbing commercial life.

Crowds awaiting transportation swarm onto one of the few buses available during the height of Bangkok's historic, months-long flood in November 2011. This is the upscale Lat Phrao District, home to one of the city's largest shopping complexes, located northeast of the CBD and well away from the banks of the overflowing Chao Phraya River.



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2011. But Yingluck Shinawatra is the sister of that ousted predecessor, which casts a shadow over her rule as the country tries to calm down, refocus its energies on resuming economic progress, and deal with the continuing challenges of flood recovery as well as Islamic violence in the far south.

The Restive Peninsular South

Thailand has a compact heartland that contains the core area, capital, and leading zones of productive capacity, whereas a 1000-kilometer (600-mi) **protrusion [3]** (a corridor of land extending away from the rest of the state), in places less than 32 kilometers (20 mi) in width, extends southward to the border with Malaysia (Fig. 10B-3). The boundary that defines this protrusion runs down the length of the upper Malay Peninsula to the narrow Kra Isthmus, where neighboring Myanmar peters out and what's left of Thailand to the south fronts both the Andaman Sea (an arm of the Indian Ocean) and the Gulf of Thailand.



From the Field Notes . . .



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“Thailand exhibits one of the world’s most distinctive cultural landscapes, both in its urban and its rural areas. Graceful pagodas, stupas, and spirit houses of Buddhism adorn city and countryside alike. Gold-layered spires rise above, and beautify cities and towns that would otherwise be drab and featureless. The architecture of Buddhism has diffused into public architecture, so that many secular buildings, from businesses to skyscrapers, are embellished by something approaching a national style. The grandest expression of the form undoubtedly is a magnificent assemblage of structures within the walls of the Grand Palace in the capital, Bangkok, of which a small sample is shown here. Climb onto the roof of any tall building in the city’s center, however, and the urban scene will display hundreds of such graceful structures, interspersed with the modern and the traditional townscape.”

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In the entire country, no place lies farther from the capital than the southern end of this tenuous protrusion. Consider this spatial situation in the cultural context of Figure 10A-4. The Malay ethnic population group extends northward from Malaysia more than 300 kilometers (200 mi) into Thai territory. In Thailand’s five southernmost provinces (Fig. 10B-3, inset map), close to 90 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims (the figure for Thailand as a whole is less than 6 percent). Moreover, the international border between Thailand and Malaysia is porous; in fact, you can cross it at will almost anywhere along the Kolok River by canoe, and inland it is a matter of walking a forest trail.

For more than a century, the southern provinces have had closer ties with Malaysia across the border than with the Thai capital 1000 kilometers (600 mi) to the north. Rising Islamic militancy and violence pose a growing challenge to the Bangkok government (more than 5000 have been killed and thousands more maimed by terrorist attacks here over the past dozen years). This schism was also reflected in the most recent elections, where support for the national party in power (the Pheu Thai) was concentrated in northern Thailand and almost nonexistent in the far south. Most recently, terrorist bombs in 2012 claimed more than 100 victims in Yala (Fig. 10B-3) and were also aimed at the town’s large ethnic-Chinese community. Overall, Thailand’s

pronounced protrusion, its porous Malaysian border, and the vulnerable location of Phuket and other Andaman-coast resorts (key components of the important Thai tourist industry), combine to increasingly raise concern over this distant outpost of the national territory.

Myanmar

Thailand’s western neighbor, Myanmar (unofficially also referred to as Burma, its older name), is one of Asia’s poorest countries. Long oppressed by one of the world’s most corrupt and brutal military dictatorships, its government turned a corner in 2011 and soon surprised the world by taking bold steps forward. Grinding poverty, crippling isolation along with sanctions (imposed by much of the world because of human rights violations), and growing dependence on China must finally have played a part in pushing Myanmar’s leadership in a new direction.

In December 2011, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Myanmar (and very publicly met with the revered, former dissident Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), the first official U.S. visit to the country in half a century. In the wake of this opening, foreign investments and an upsurge in tourism followed, and the United States, Norway, and Australia were among the first countries to lift sanctions

and restart economic and diplomatic relations. But Myanmar's ties with China are still strong and the PRC has vested interests in keeping this country inside its orbit. When the West embargoed and worked to isolate Myanmar's military regime in years past, China took the opportunity to invest an estimated U.S. \$27 billion here; the Chinese are likely to retain their influence in Myanmar for some time to come even as the country opens up to the rest of the world.

Myanmar's geographic challenges are complicated by a shift during colonial times of the Burmese core area from north to south. Prior to the colonial period, the core of embryonic Burma lay in the so-called dry zone between the Arakan Mountains in the far west and the Shan Plateau, which covers the country's triangular easternmost extension (Fig. 10B-4). The urban hub of the state was Mandalay, with its central situation and relative proximity to the surrounding



FIGURE 10B-4

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non-Burmese highlands. Then the British developed the agricultural potential of the Irrawaddy Delta farther south, and Rangoon—now renamed Yangon—became the capital and leading focus of the colony. The Irrawaddy River links the old and new core areas, but the center of gravity has been located in the south since the late nineteenth century.

In 2006, the military junta moved the capital 300 kilometers (200 mi) northward from Yangon to a newly constructed national-government center—ostensibly a “city”, but it barely qualifies as such because it is poorly connected to the rest of the country and has few urban amenities. Situated next to the interior town of Pyinmana, the new capital was named Naypyidaw, with the government asserting that its more central location would yield greater administrative efficiency as well as better protection against (unspecified) enemies.

As Figure 10B-4 indicates, the peripheral peoples of Myanmar occupy significant parts of the country that are designated as seven different States. The majority Burman-dominated areas (68 percent of a national population of just under 56 million) are designated as Divisions. Among the leading minorities, the Shan of the northeast and far north, who are related to the neighboring Thai, account for about 9 percent of the population, or 5 million. The Kayin (Karen), who constitute more than 7 percent (4 million), live in the neck of Myanmar’s protrusion and have proclaimed their desire to create an autonomous territory within a federal Myanmar. The Rakhine (3.5 percent, roughly 2 million) of the far western coast facing the Bay of Bengal have long struggled with their Muslim minority and have talked about secession since the time of British rule. The Mon (2.2 percent, or 1.2 million) were in what is today Myanmar long before the Burmans and introduced Buddhism to the Irrawaddy Basin; they want the return of ancestral lands from which they were ousted.

When Myanmar finally shook off the excesses of dictatorship in 2011 and embraced long awaited reforms, it was hoped this would usher in a period of national progress and democratic advance. In some respects, this has occurred as political prisoners were freed, press censorship was largely ended, and long overdue elections took place. But the end of that lengthy era of repression was accompanied by the resurfacing of long-simmering ethnic tensions which have already spawned two serious outbreaks of sectarian violence. The first was a bloody conflict over autonomy that flared up in 2011–2012 in the northernmost State of Kachin between government forces and the Kachin Independence Army. This strife also has potential international ramifications because the Kachin (1.5 percent [just under one million] of Myanmar’s population) are part of a larger ethnic

community that spills across both the Chinese and Indian borders. The wider second conflict emerged in late 2012 in the form of violent attacks on the country’s Muslim minority, who constitute about 2 million or just under 4 percent of the national population. The worst violence broke out in Rakhine State, home to almost a million Muslims known as Rohingyas, whose ancestors hailed from what is now neighboring Bangladesh. By early 2013, the communal unrest in selected places had evolved into ethnic cleansing, with hundreds killed, thousands of homes destroyed or taken over, and tens of thousands driven away to become internal refugees. Anti-Islamic rioting was also spreading to other parts of the country: the town of Meiktila south of Mandalay in central Myanmar experienced an especially bloody wave of fighting between Buddhists and Muslims (see photo).

Myanmar’s long coastline on the waters of the Indian Ocean offers promising opportunities now that the country is opening up to international trade. In the north at Sittwe, a joint venture with India has facilitated major port renovations. India’s chief interest is to increase the accessibility of its landlocked easternmost States, an impoverished highland periphery difficult to reach via overland routes from the Brahmaputra Valley to the north. A fully

Smoke rises from a burning Muslim neighborhood torched by Buddhist mobs during the height of a four-day riot in Meiktila in late March 2013. Communal rage in this central Myanmar town was triggered by a heated quarrel between the Muslim owner of a gold shop and a pair of Buddhist customers over the value of a gold hair clip. Events rapidly escalated, and after Muslim youths attacked and killed a Buddhist monk, Buddhists responded in an extended rampage against Muslim residential areas and several mosques, killing more than 40 and temporarily displacing 13,000. Despite a presidential declaration of a state of emergency in this locality, police authorities reportedly stood by without intervention as the violence ran its course.



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developed port at Sittwe would allow the opening of a shorter and easier southern routeway. Sittwe's enhanced port is designed so that ocean-going ships can offload their goods onto smaller vessels that are able to sail up the Kaladan River to the Indian border; from there, trucks using improved roads will cover the final leg (Fig. 10B-4).

In the south, a far more significant enterprise from Myanmar's point of view is the so-called Dawei Development Project, a joint initiative with neighboring Thailand to convert the small southern city of Dawei on the Andaman Sea into a world-class port facility. A key first step is the construction of a 160-kilometer (100-mi) highway eastward from Dawei to Thailand's Kanchanaburi (a town with good surface connections to the lower Chao Phraya Basin), located halfway between Dawei and Bangkok (Fig. 10B-4). Plans also call for Dawei to become Myanmar's primary industrial node, a newly-built complex modeled after the special economic zones of the Pacific Rim. For Myanmar, this could spark a noteworthy entry into the global economy, while far more advanced Thailand would gain valuable direct access for its booming core area to the nearby Andaman Sea and India beyond it.

■ INSULAR SOUTHEAST ASIA

On the peninsulas and islands of Southeast Asia's southern and eastern periphery lie six of the realm's 11 states (Fig. 10B-1). Few regions in the world contain so diverse a set of countries. Malaysia, the former British colony, consists of two major territories separated by hundreds of kilometers of South China Sea. The realm's southernmost state, Indonesia, sprawls across thousands of islands from Sumatera in the west to New Guinea in the east. North of the Indonesian archipelago lies the Philippines, another island-chain country that once was a U.S. colony. These are three of the most severely fragmented states on Earth, and each has faced the challenges that such politico-geographical division brings. This Insular region of Southeast Asia also contains three small but significant sovereign entities: a city-state, a sultanate, and a mini-state. The city-state is Singapore, once a part of Malaysia (and one instance in which internal centrifugal forces were too powerful to be overcome). The sultanate is Brunei, an oil-rich Muslim territory on the island of Borneo that seems to be transplanted from the Persian Gulf. The mini-state is impoverished East Timor, which only achieved independence in 2002. Few parts of the world are more varied or interesting geographically.

Mainland–Island Malaysia

The state of Malaysia represents one of the three categories of fragmented states discussed in Chapter 10A: the mainland–island type, in which one portion of the national territory lies on a continent and the other on one or more islands. Malaysia is a colonial political artifice that combines a pair of decidedly disparate components into a single state: the southern end of the Malay Peninsula and the northern

sector of the island of Borneo. These are known, respectively, as *West Malaysia* and *East Malaysia* (Fig. 10B-1). The appellation “Malaysia” came into use in 1963, when the original Federation of Malaya, on the Malay Peninsula, was expanded to incorporate the territories of Sarawak and Sabah in Borneo. When the name Malaya is used, it refers to the peninsular part of the Federation, whereas Malaysia refers to the total political entity.

Ethnic Components

The Malays of the peninsula, traditionally a rural people, displaced older aboriginal communities there and now constitute just over 50 percent of the country's population of 29.9 million. They possess a compelling cultural identity expressed in adherence to the Muslim faith, a common language, and a sense of territoriality that arises from their perceived Malayan origins and their collective view of Chinese, Indian, European, and other foreign intruders.

The Chinese came to the Malay Peninsula as well as to northern Borneo in substantial numbers during the colonial period, and today they constitute just under 25 percent of Malaysia's population (they are the largest ethnic group in Sarawak). Hindu South Asians were in this area long before the Europeans, and for that matter before the Arabs and Islam arrived on these shores; today they still form a substantial minority of 7 percent of the population, clustered, like the Chinese, on the western side of the peninsula.

Malaysia's ethnic and racial groups have long coexisted in relative harmony but relations today are marked by rising social tensions. As Malays increasingly make claims based on ‘majority rights’, the Chinese find themselves in much the same minority position that characterize the Overseas Chinese across the realm. The Indian population is much smaller and feels ever more crowded out. Add religious tensions to the mix (for example, Muslim demands for a separate Sharia legal system) and the notion of a common Malaysian identity now looks more fragile than in the past. The ruling ethnic Malay government extended its hold on power in the 2013 elections, but did so by the narrowest of margins—a sign of the deepening political polarization in this country and the increasingly vocal dissent among its minorities.

West Malaysia: The Dominant Peninsula

The populous peninsular part of Malaysia remains the country's dominant sector with 11 of its 13 States and about 80 percent of its population. Here, the Malay-dominated government has very tightly controlled economic and social policies while pushing the country's modernization. During the Asian economic boom of the 1990s, Malaysia's government embraced the notion of symbols: the capital, Kuala Lumpur, was endowed with (at that time) the world's tallest building; a space-age airport that outpaced Malaysia's needs; a high-tech administrative capital was built at Putrajaya; and a nearby development was called Cyberjaya—all part of a so-called *Multimedia Supercorridor* to anchor Malaysia's core area (Fig. 10B-5).



FIGURE 10B-5

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Malaysia's headlong rush to modernize caused a backlash among more conservative Muslims, which in 2001 led to Islamist victories in two States, tin-producing Kelantan and energy-rich but socially poor Terengganu. As the fundamentalist governments in those eastern States imposed strict religious laws, Malaysians talked of two corridors marking their country: the Multimedia Supercorridor in the west and the Mecca Corridor in the east (Fig. 10B-5). But over the past decade, Islamist fervor in the Mecca Corridor, which had featured calls for a *jihad* in Malaysia, has steadily subsided.

The Strait of Malacca (Melaka) to the west continues to be one of the world's busiest and most strategic waterways, a crucial **choke point** [4] (a narrow waterway that constrains navigation) in the flow of resources and goods between major world realms. Malaysia, despite the loss of Singapore and notwithstanding its recurrent ethnic troubles, has become a leading player in Southeast Asia. The strong skills and modest wages of the local workforce have attracted many companies, and the government has capitalized on its opportunities, such as encouraging the creation of a high-technology manufacturing complex on the far

northwestern island of Pinang, where Chinese outnumber Malays by two to one.

East Malaysian Borneo

The decision to combine the 11 Sultanates of Malaya with the States of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo (Fig. 10B-1), creating the country we now call Malaysia, had far-reaching consequences. Those two States may constitute 60 percent of Malaysia's territory, but they are home to barely 20 percent of the population. They endowed Malaysia with major energy resources, huge stands of timber, and vast tracts of land suitable for palm oil plantations (the country is now the world's leading exporter, and these two States produce 55 percent of the national crop [see box in Chapter 10A]). But they also complicated Malaysia's ethnic complexion because each State contains more than two dozen indigenous groups (as noted above, the immigrant Chinese form Sarawak's largest ethnic group). These locals complain that the federal government in Kuala Lumpur treats Malaysian Borneo as a colony, and politics here are contentious and fractious. It is therefore likely that Malaysia will eventually confront devolutionary forces in East Malaysia.

Brunei

Also located on Borneo—along the coast near where Sarawak and Sabah meet—is Brunei (Fig. 10B-1), a rich, oil-exporting Islamic sultanate far from the Persian Gulf. Brunei, the remnant of a former Islamic kingdom that once controlled all of Borneo and areas beyond, came under British control and was granted independence in 1984. Just slightly larger than Delaware and with a population of about 450,000, the sultanate is a mere mini-state—except for the discovery of oil in 1929 and natural gas in 1965, which made it Southeast Asia's richest country. And there are indications that further discoveries will be made in the offshore zone owned by Brunei. The Sultan of Brunei rules as an absolute monarch; his palace in the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, is reputed to be the world's largest. He will have no difficulty finding customers for his oil in energy-poor eastern Asia.

Brunei's territory is not only small but is also fragmented (see the inset map in Fig. 10B-7). A tiny sliver of Malaysian land separates the larger west (where the capital lies) from the east, and Brunei Bay provides a water link between the country's two parts. It has been proposed that Brunei purchase this separating corridor from the Malaysians, but no action has yet been taken.

Brunei's steadily growing population—in which immigration plays a larger role than internal natural increase—is ethnically two-thirds Malay and 12 percent Chinese. Most inhabitants live and work near the offshore oilfields in the northern district of Brunei Muara that includes the capital city. Evidence of profligate spending is everywhere, ranging from sumptuous palaces to magnificent mosques to the most luxurious of hotels. In this respect Brunei offers a stark contrast to surrounding East Malaysia, but even within Brunei there are significant differences. The country's interior, where

a small minority of indigenous groups survive, remains an area of subsistence agriculture and rural isolation, its villages a world apart from the modern splendor of Bandar Seri Begawan.

Singapore

In 1965, a fateful event occurred in Southeast Asia. Singapore, the crown jewel of British colonialism in this realm,

VOICE FROM THE

Region

SINGAPORE



© Teresa Tan Sze Kai

Teresa Tan Sze Kai,
student, 28 years old

"Like every Singapore citizen, I own a pink identity card, which features my mugshot, thumbprint, name, date and country of birth, gender, and—contentiously—race. I was born in Singapore and learned to be proud of the multicultural, multiracial, and multireligious society that is inscribed in our Constitution. Traditionally, we are divided into Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Other Groups (CMIO),

but many of us don't fit these labels anymore. I am half-Peranakan (Peranakan is a mixed race of Chinese and Malay) but my identity card indicates that I am Chinese. I have friends who are of mixed parentage but they are registered only under their father's race (which is already mixed). Race matters because public policies are formulated according to these supposed racial lines. For example, at school each race is assigned a mother tongue: those labeled as Chinese are all taught Mandarin; those designated as Indians must learn Tamil; and the wide range of people who are classified as Malay are taught that language, and they are also closely linked to the Muslim religion. This leads to some ethnic stereotyping that can cause problems. Our government is trying to maintain the race ratio by orchestrating an influx of Mainland Chinese to replace the majority Singaporean Chinese (whose numbers are shrinking due to low fertility rates). But the Singaporean Chinese believe they are culturally different from the Mainlanders. Some of the new immigrants haven't really assimilated and there have been incidents that have heightened tensions. We are a global city and we have thrived in a world that is increasingly interconnected, yet we are always grappling with our sense of identity and degree of "Singaporeanness." Recently, the government started giving people a choice to register under dual races, and that is a step in the right direction. We are evolving rapidly, and I am confident we will overcome these challenges."



FIGURE 10B-6

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succeeded from the recently independent (1963) Malaysian Federation and became a sovereign state, albeit a mini-state (Fig. 10B-6). With its magnificent relative location, its multiethnic and well-educated population, and its no-nonsense government, Singapore then overcame the severe limitations of space and the absence of raw materials to become one of the leading economic tigers of East and Southeast Asia. While GDP per capita skyrocketed from U.S.\$511 in 1965 to \$51,162 in 2012, that of neighboring Malaysia advanced from \$333 to only \$10,304 during the same time span.

With a mere 619 square kilometers (239 sq mi) of territory, space is at a premium in Singapore, and this is a constant challenge for the government. Singapore's only local spatial advantage over Hong Kong was that its small territory is less fragmented (there are just a few small islands in addition to the compact main island). With a population of 5.4 million and a robustly expanding economy,

Singapore's highest priority is to develop ultramodern but space-conserving manufacturing and service industries. Benefiting from its relative location, the old port of Singapore had become one of the world's busiest (by number of ships served) even before its independence. It thrived as an **entrepôt** [5] between the Malay Peninsula, the rest of Southeast Asia, Japan, and other emerging economic powers on the western Pacific Rim. Crude oil from Southeast Asia still is unloaded and refined in Singapore, then shipped to East Asian destinations. Raw rubber from the adjacent peninsula and from Indonesia's nearby island of Sumatra is shipped to China, Japan, the United States, and many other countries. Timber from Malaysia, rice, spices, and other foodstuffs are processed and forwarded via Singapore. In return, automobiles, machinery, and equipment are imported into Southeast Asia and distributed almost exclusively through Singapore.

Singapore's current development strategy stresses two primary objectives. The first is to focus its industries more tightly on cutting-edge information technology, automation, and biotechnology. The second is the forging of an ever stronger **Growth Triangle [6]** involving Singapore's developing neighbors, Malaysia and Indonesia; accordingly, the latter two countries would supply the necessary raw materials and relatively inexpensive labor, and Singapore would supply the capital and technical expertise.

The ethnic composition of Singapore's population today is 74 percent Chinese, 13 percent Malay, and 9 percent South Asian. The government is Chinese-dominated, and its policies have served to sustain ethnic-Chinese control. Indeed, the Singapore government has encouraged immigration from the PRC to stabilize the ethnic mosaic of the city-state, where natural-increase rates, especially among its native Chinese, have for some time been well below the replacement level. However, as the *Voice From the Region* box illustrates, ethnic as well as racial harmony in Singapore is still a work in progress.

Indonesia

The fourth-largest country in the world in terms of human numbers is also the globe's most expansive **archipelago [7]**. Spread across a chain of more than 17,000 mostly volcanic islands, Indonesia's 247 million people live both separated and clustered—separated by water and clustered on islands large and small.

The complicated map of Indonesia requires some close study (Fig. 10B-7). Five large islands dominate the archipelago territorially, but one of these, easternmost New Guinea, is not part of the Indonesian culture sphere, although its western half is under Indonesian control. The other four major islands are collectively known as the Greater Sunda Islands: **Jawa** (Java),* the smallest but by far the most heavily populated and important; **Sumatera** (Sumatra) in the west, directly across the Strait of Malacca from Malaysia; **Kalimantan**, the southern, Indonesian sector of sizeable, compact, mini-continent Borneo; and wishbone-shaped **Sulawesi** (Celebes) to the east. Extending eastward from Jawa are the Lesser Sunda Islands, including Bali and, towards the eastern end, Timor. Another important island chain that lies

*As in Africa and South Asia, names and spellings have changed with independence. In this chapter we use contemporary spellings, except when we refer to the colonial era. Thus Indonesia's four major islands are Jawa, Sumatera, Kalimantan (the Indonesian portion of Borneo), and Sulawesi. Prior to independence they were respectively known as Java, Sumatra, Dutch Borneo, and Celebes.



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↑ The skyline of Jakarta's CBD as seen from atop the towering Monas (National Monument) that rises at the center of the Indonesian capital's main ceremonial space, Merdeka (Freedom) Square. Air quality on this day is as good as it gets here in this megacity usually shrouded in smog, produced by local factories and motor vehicles, and intensified by the region's frequent large-scale forest fires and eruptions of volcanic ash.

within Indonesia is the Maluku (Molucca) Islands, between Sulawesi and New Guinea. The central water body of Indonesia is the Java Sea.

The Major Islands

Indonesia is a Dutch colonial creation they named the East Indies, and Jawa was chosen as its colonial headquarters with Batavia (now Jakarta) as the capital. Today, **Jawa** remains the core of Indonesia. With almost 150 million inhabitants, Jawa is one of the world's most densely peopled places (see Figs. G-8 and 10A-3) as well as one of the most agriculturally productive, with its terraced rice paddies rising up the highly fertile flanks of dozens of active volcanoes. This combination of extreme population density atop a tectonically active crustal zone has the potential for disaster. As recently as late 2010, a ferocious two-week-long eruption of Mount Merapi near the south-coast city of Yogyakarta killed nearly 200 people and disrupted the lives of thousands.

Jawa also is the most highly urbanized part of a country in which 57 percent of the people still live off the land. The primate city of Jakarta has today become the heart of the much larger Greater Jakarta conurbation that also encompasses the large cities of Bogor, Depok, Bekasi, and Tangerang/South Tangerang. Since 1990, the population of this megalopolis has nearly doubled from less than 15 to more than 28 million today—and is already home to 11 percent of Indonesia's entire population as well as 27 percent of its urban population. Thousands of factories, their owners taking advantage of low prevailing wages, have been



FIGURE 10B-7

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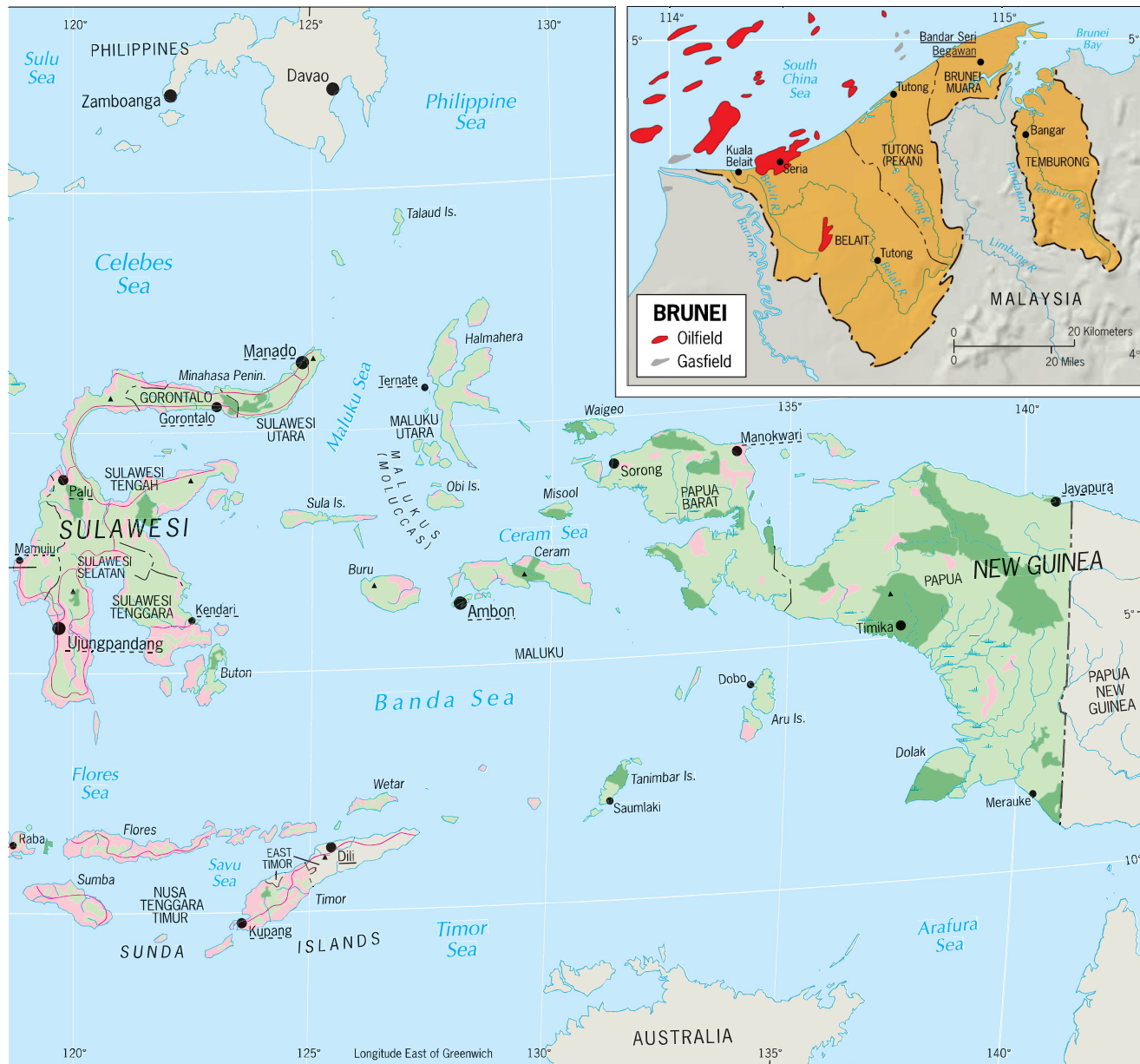
built in this sprawling conurbation, badly straining its infrastructure and overburdening the port of Jakarta.

As has always been the case in Indonesia, Jawa is where the power lies. As a cultural group (though itself heterogeneous), the ethnic Jawanese constitute about 45 percent of Indonesia's population. And with Indonesia containing the biggest Muslim population of any country, Jawa also is the main base for two broad national Islamic movements; one is comparatively moderate, but the other is increasingly fundamentalist and militant (its most radical group being *Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)*, perpetrator of several deadly terrorist bombings).

Sumatera, Indonesia's westernmost island, forms the western shore of the busy Strait of Malacca; Singapore lies across the Strait from approximately the middle of the

island. Although much larger than Jawa, Sumatera has only about one-third as many people (almost 50 million). In colonial times the island became a base for rubber and palm oil production; its high relief makes possible the cultivation of a wide variety of crops, and neighboring Bangka and Belitung yield petroleum and natural gas. Palembang is the key urban center in the south. In recent years, the northeastern coastlands of Sumatera, along with parts of mainland Malaysia and southern Kalimantan, have been blanketed by large, expanding palm oil plantations that drive up export revenues (but at huge cost to the environment, as discussed in the box in Chapter 10A).

In the island's far north, the Acehnese fought the Dutch well into the twentieth century and, after Indonesia became a sovereign state, demanded autonomy and even



outright independence (yet all they gained was recognition as a “Special Territory” rather than a province). Rebels fought the Indonesian military to a costly stalemate here, and thousands died in the conflict—which would probably still be going on but for a dramatic turn of events. The seafloor epicenter of the great 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami lay near the far northern coast of Sumatra, and Aceh was directly in the path of the most powerful ocean waves. Entire towns and roads were swept away by tsunamis, and tens of thousands died; Banda Aceh, the Special Territory’s capital city, was devastated. The international relief effort opened Aceh to foreigners in ways the Indonesians had long prevented, and the Indonesian army as well as the rebels were engaged in rescue missions rather than warfare. This combination of circumstances facilitated a truce and

a negotiated peace agreement under which the rebels agreed to drop their demand for independence and the Indonesian military withdrew.

Kalimantan is the Indonesian sector of the island of Borneo, a slab of the Earth’s crystalline crust whose backbone of tall mountains is of erosional, not volcanic, origin. Larger than Texas, Borneo has a deep, densely rainforested interior that is a last refuge for some 35,000 orangutans as well as dwindling numbers of Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, and tigers. Along with a number of indigenous peoples, these wildlife species survive even as loggers and farmers relentlessly penetrate their shrinking habitat. Borneo’s Pleistocene heritage sustains a comparatively small human population (about 15 million on the Indonesian side, just 6 percent of the country’s population) on poor tropical soils. Indigenous

AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

JAKARTA

JAKARTA, CAPITAL OF Indonesia and the realm's second-largest city, sometimes is called the Kolkata (Calcutta) of Southeast Asia. Stand on the elevated highway linking the port to the city center and see the villages built on top of garbage dumps by scavengers using what they can find in the refuse, and the metaphor seems to fit. There is poverty here unlike that in any other Southeast Asian metropolis.

But there are other sides to Jakarta, which has just attained megacity status with its 2014 population of 10.3 million. Indonesia's economic progress has made its mark here, and the evidence is everywhere. Television antennas and satellite dishes rise like a forest from rusted, corrugated-iron rooftops. Cars (almost all, it seems, late-model), mopeds, and bicycles clog the streets, day and night. A meticulously manicured part of the city center contains a cluster of high-rise hotels, office buildings, and luxury-apartment complexes. Billboards advertise planned communities on well-located, freshly cleared land.

Jakarta's population is a cross-section of Indonesia's, and the silver domes of Islam rise above the cityscape alongside Christian churches and Hindu temples. The city always was cosmopolitan, beginning as a cluster of villages at the mouth of the Ciliwung River under Islamic rule, becoming a Portuguese stronghold and later, as Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies. Advantageously situated on the northwestern coast of Jawa, Indonesia's most populous island, Jakarta is bursting at the seams with growth. Sail into the port, and hundreds of vessels, carrying flags from Russia to Argentina, await berths. Travel to the outskirts, and huge shantytowns are being expanded by a constant stream of new arrivals. So vast is the human agglomeration—nobody really knows how many people have descended on this megacity—that most live without adequate (or any) amenities.

Jakarta is the biggest city in the world without a metro transit system, but one is now finally under construction with



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the first of its two routes expected to open in 2017. In the meantime, public transport continues to rely exclusively on buses, and the city's traffic jams are notorious (transport delays are estimated to cost U.S. \$3 billion per year), especially when heavy equatorial rains cause flooding in many neighborhoods. Since the 2000s, the worsening gridlock has prompted discussions about moving the capital some 50 kilometers (30 mi) to the south; but in 2013 the government distanced itself from that idea, stressing instead the urgent need to improve drainage throughout the city while building a much better highway infrastructure. Most Jakartans, however, are unimpressed, and none of this talk has made a dent in alleviating their frustrations.

peoples, principally the Dayak clans, have traditionally had less impact on the natural environment than the Indonesian and Chinese immigrants as well as the multinational corporations that log the forests and clear woodland for farms. As Figure 10B-7 shows, the only towns of any size in Kalimantan lie on or near the coast; routes into the interior are still few and far between.

Sulawesi consists of a set of intersecting, volcanic mountain ranges rising above sea level; the 800-kilometer (500-mi) Minahasa Peninsula, propelled by volcanic activity, continues to build itself into the Celebes Sea. This northern peninsula, a favorite of the Dutch colonizers, remains the most developed part of an otherwise rugged and remote island, with Manado its relatively prosperous urban

focus. Seven major ethnic groups inhabit the valleys and basins between the mountains, but the population of about 18 million also includes many immigrants from Jawa, especially in and around the southern center of Ujungpandang. Subsistence farming is the leading mode of life, although logging, some mining, and fishing augment the economy. Clashes between Muslims and Christians occur intermittently in remote areas.

Papua, the Indonesian name for the western part of the island of New Guinea, has become an issue in Indonesian politics. Bordered on the east by a classic superimposed geometric boundary (Figs. 10B-7; 10A-9, lower-left map), it was taken over by Indonesia from the Dutch in 1969. Papua contains about 22 percent of Indonesia's territory, but



From the Field Notes . . .

"I drove from Manado on the Minahasa Peninsula in north-eastern Sulawesi to see the ecological crisis at Lake Tondano,



© H.J. de Blij

where a fast-growing water hyacinth is clogging the water and endangering the local fishing industry. On the way, in the town of Tomolon, I noticed this side street lined with prefabricated stilt houses in various stages of completion. These, I was told, were not primarily for local sale. They were assembled from wood taken from the forests of Sulawesi's northern peninsula, then taken apart again and shipped from Manado to Japan. 'It's a very profitable business for us,' the foreman told me. 'The wood is nearby, the labor is cheap, and the market in Japan is insatiable. We sell as many as we can build, and we haven't even begun to try marketing these houses in Taiwan or China.' At least, I thought, this wood was being converted into a finished product, unlike the mounds of logs and planks I had seen piled up in the ports of Borneo awaiting shipment to East Asia."

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its (fast-growing) population is only 3.8 million—just 1.5 percent of the national total. The indigenous inhabitants of this territory, which is in effect a colony, are Papuan, most living in the remote reaches of this mountainous and densely forested island. Papua is economically important to Indonesia, for it contains what is reputed to be the world's richest gold mine and its third-largest open-pit copper mine. But political consciousness has now reached the Papuans: the Free Papua Movement has become increasingly active, holding small demonstrations in the capital (Jayapura), displaying a Papuan flag, and demanding recognition.

Diversity in Unity

Indonesia's survival as a unified state is as remarkable as India's or Nigeria's. With more than 300 discrete ethnic clusters, over 250 languages, and just about every religion practiced on Earth (although Islam dominates), actual and potential centrifugal forces are quite powerful here. Wide waters and high mountains perpetuate both cultural distinctions and differences. Indeed, Indonesia's national motto is *bhinneka tunggal ika*: diversity in unity.

It is not just the numerous Javanese who have their own ethnic identity; there are also the Sundanese (who constitute roughly 16 percent of Indonesia's population), the Madurese (around 3.5 percent), and others. Perhaps the best impression of this cultural diversity comes from the string of islands that extends eastward from Jawa to Timor, the Lesser Sunda Islands (Fig. 10B-7). The rice growers of Bali adhere to a modified version of Hinduism, giving the

island a unique cultural atmosphere; the population of Lombok is mainly Muslim, with some Balinese Hinduism; next comes Sumbawa, a Muslim community; Flores is mostly Roman Catholic. In western Timor, Protestant groups dominate; in independent East Timor, where the Portuguese ruled, Roman Catholicism still prevails.

Nevertheless, Indonesia nominally is the largest Muslim country in the world: overall, 88 percent of the people adhere to Islam, and in the cities the silver domes of neighborhood mosques rise densely above the townscape. Although until recently Indonesian Islam has been relatively moderate, as noted earlier more overt Islamization has been on the rise, with new laws banning public displays of affection and limiting the kinds of clothing women may wear in public.

Transmigration and the Outer Islands

Jawa contains no less than 58 percent of the total population of nearly 250 million on barely 7 percent of Indonesia's territory; with close to 150 million people on an island the size of Louisiana, population pressure here is staggering. Since colonial times, Jawa leaned toward overpopulation while many of the outer islands were very sparsely inhabited. From 1974 to 2001, the Indonesian government embarked on a policy known as **transmigration [8]** (*transmigrasi* in the Bahasa Indonesian language), inducing many from the densely populated inner islands (especially Jawa, Bali, and Madura) to relocate to such sparsely inhabited outer islands as Kalimantan and Sulawesi. During the last quarter of the twentieth

century, millions moved to these peripheral locales as part of this government-sponsored program.

As many as 8 million Javanese were relocated to other islands, but surveys showed that half of these migrants experienced a decline in their standard of living; many were reduced to bare subsistence on tropical-forest land confiscated from its indigenous inhabitants that turned out to be unsuitable for the farming methods used by the settlers. Cultural conflict, ecological havoc, and rampant deforestation finally led the Indonesian government to cancel the program in 2001, but the damage it did will long outlive this ill-fated initiative.

Today, Indonesia's stature within Southeast Asia is on the rise and some observers argue it is about ready to join the ranks of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China). That may be a stretch, especially since Indonesia's growth has been disproportionately dependent on the global commodity boom of recent years (e.g., coal, natural

gas, palm oil, rubber) and the economy is not sufficiently diversified. But this is already by far the biggest country in the realm and it is now making steady progress toward achieving a commensurate level of economic development and prosperity. But centrifugal forces are intensifying as well (growing Islamic militancy in Jawa is of particular concern), and ongoing decentralization and devolution throughout this immense archipelago will continue to challenge the central government.

East Timor

As Figure 10B-8 shows, Timor is the easternmost of the sizeable Lesser Sunda Islands, and throughout the Dutch colonial period the Portuguese maintained a colony on the eastern half of it. In 1975, Indonesian forces overran that colony and annexed it formally in 1976. Indonesian rule, however, was even less benign than the Portuguese had been, and soon

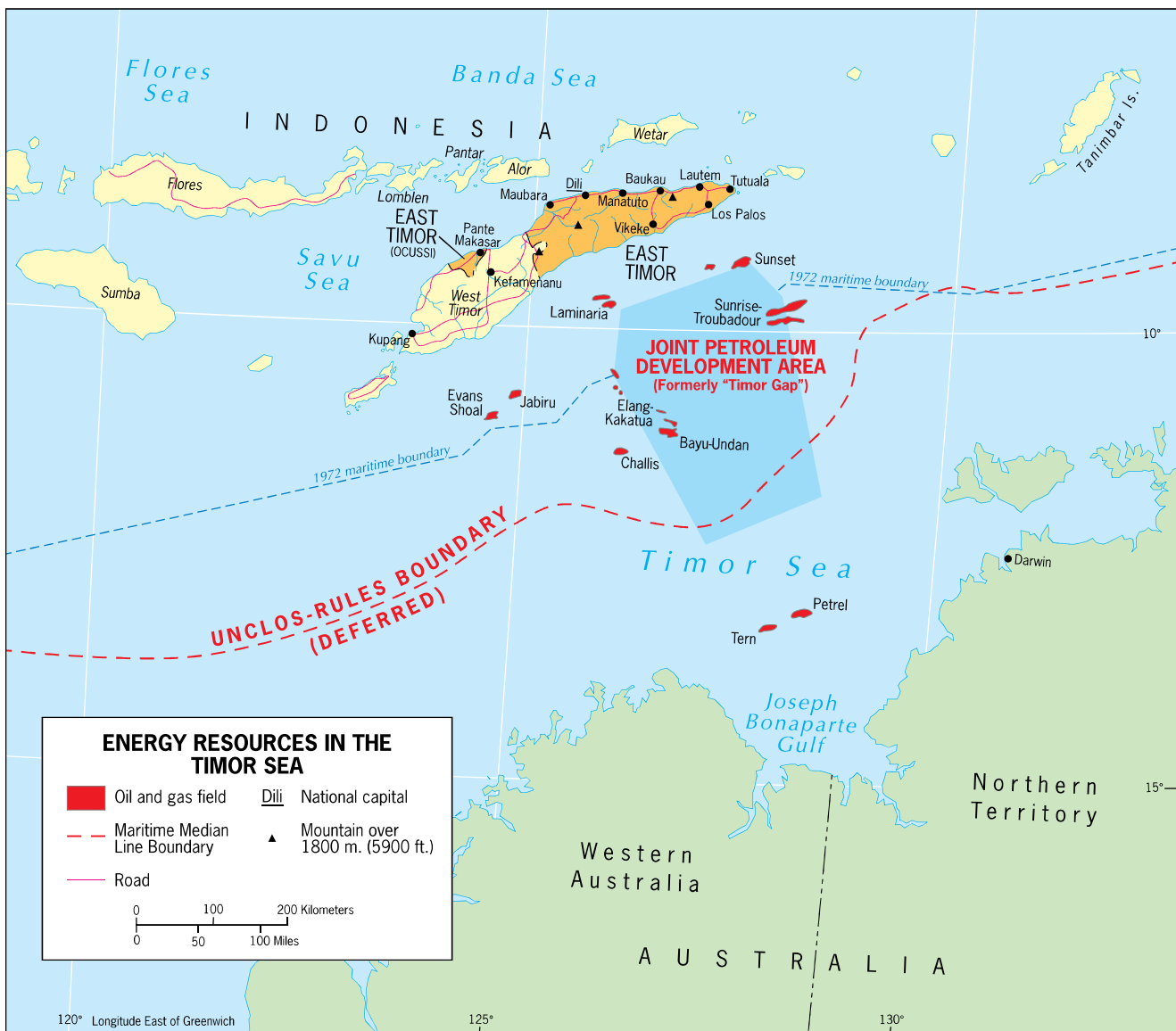


FIGURE 10B-8

a bitter struggle for independence was under way. Eventually, under UN supervision, the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence in 1999; but Indonesia refused to let go, and unleashed a brutal military occupation. It took another three years of armed conflict and foreign intervention (led by Australia, which had supported Indonesia before 1999) until independence was finally realized in 2002. By then, the violence had devastated much of this mini-state and its infrastructure.

East Timor's leaders proclaimed the official name of their country to be *Timor-Leste*, the Portuguese version of "Timor East." Nation-building in this Connecticut-sized country continues to be a formidable proposition. And Figure 10B-8 helps explain why Australia first supported Indonesia in its effort to absorb East Timor: by doing so, Australia would benefit from Indonesia's compliance in the delimitation of maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea, giving Australia a larger share of the known oil and gas reserves than an independent East Timor would be likely to relinquish. In the end, difficult negotiations between powerful and technologically capable Australia and weak and incapable East Timor produced a settlement that gave East Timor an acceptable share of future revenues—but not before Australia's international reputation for fairness was further damaged. On the map, the red maritime boundary is the one delimited under United Nations regulations; the blue boundary represents the bilateral agreement between Indonesia and Australia. At issue is the "gap" between them, most of it on East Timor's side but now a "joint petroleum development area."

As Figure 10B-8 shows, East Timor is a fragmented country, with a dominant east (where the coastal capital, Dili, is located) and a tiny **exclave** [9] on the northern coast of Indonesian West Timor named Oucssi (sometimes mapped as "Oucssi-Ambeno Province"). Even though East Timor is an overwhelmingly agricultural country, farming has been neglected during the turmoil of recent decades. To make matters worse, its population of 1.2 million continues to grow explosively, exhibiting a yearly natural-increase rate of 2.6 percent (30 percent higher than that of Laos, the realm's second-fastest-growing country); not surprisingly, East Timor's fertility rate of 5.7 children per woman is one of the world's highest. Despite encouraging annual economic growth rates since the late 2000s—and the prospect of billions of dollars of future oil revenues—the nation-building project here has barely begun to deal with the country's severe poverty as well as the lingering devastation of a prolonged conflict in which some 100,000 civilians were killed by the Indonesian military.

The Philippines

North of Indonesia, across the South China Sea from Vietnam, and south of Taiwan lies a lengthy archipelago of more than 7000 islands (less than 500 of them larger than 1 square kilometer [0.4 sq mi] in area) inhabited by 100 million people. These islands of the Philippines can be viewed as three groups: (1) Luzon, largest of all, and Mindoro in the

north; (2) the Visayan group in the center; and (3) Mindanao, second-largest, located in the south (Fig. 10B-9). Southwest from Mindanao lies a small group of islands, the Sulu Archipelago, nearest to Malaysian Borneo, where Muslim-based insurgencies have kept this area in turmoil.

Few of the generalizations we have been able to make for Southeast Asia could apply to the Philippines without qualification. The country's location relative to the mainstream of change in this part of the world has had much to do with this situation. The islands, inhabited by peoples of Malay ancestry with Indonesian strains, shared with much of the rest of Southeast Asia an early period of Hindu cultural influence, which was strongest in the south and southwest and diminished northward. Next came the Chinese invasion, felt more strongly on the largest island of Luzon in the northern part of the Philippine archipelago. Islam's arrival was delayed somewhat by the position of the Philippines well to the east of the mainland and to the north of the Indonesian islands. The few southern Muslim beachheads were soon overwhelmed by the Spanish invasion during the sixteenth century. Today the Philippines, adjacent to the world's largest Muslim state (Indonesia), is 81 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent Protestant, and only 5 percent Muslim.

Out of the Philippines melting pot, where Malay, Arab, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, and American elements have met and mixed, has emerged the distinctive Filipino culture. It is not a homogeneous or unified culture, as is reflected by the dozens of Malay languages in use in the islands, but it is in many ways unique. At independence in 1946, the largest of the Malay languages, Tagalog (also called Pilipino), became the country's official language. But English is widely learned as a second language, and a Tagalog-English hybrid, "Taglish," is increasingly heard today. The Chinese component of the population is small (barely 2 percent) but dominant in local business.

The Philippines' small Muslim population, concentrated in the southernmost flank of the archipelago, and especially on densely forested Basilan Island (Fig. 10B-9), has long decried its marginalization in this predominantly Christian country. Over the past generation, a half-dozen Muslim organizations have promoted the Muslim cause through tactics ranging from peaceful negotiation with the government to violent insurgency.

The Philippines' population, concentrated where the good farmlands lie, is densest in three general areas: (1) the northwestern and south-central part of Luzon; (2) the southeastern extension of Luzon; and (3) the islands of the Visayan Sea between Luzon and Mindanao (see Fig. 10A-3). Luzon is the site of the capital, Manila-Quezon City (12.7 million—one-eighth of the entire population of the country), a sprawling megacity facing the South China Sea.

Prospects

The Philippines seems to get little mention in discussions of Asia-Pacific developments, even though it would seem to be well positioned to share in the realm's economic growth. Agriculture continues to dominate the Philippines'



FIGURE 10B-9

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economy. Alluvial as well as volcanic soils, together with ample moisture in this tropical environment, enable self-sufficiency in rice and other staples and make the Philippines a net exporter of farm products despite a high population growth rate of 1.9 percent. In the industrial sphere, the country has participated in offshore manufacturing in its numerous Export Processing Zones, which are similar to the Mexican maquiladoras discussed in Chapters 4A and 4B; electronics and textile production in particular are expanding continuously (mostly in metropolitan Manila), propelled by growing foreign investment.

Nonetheless, unemployment remains high, trade linkages are insufficient, further land reform is badly needed, and social restructuring (reducing the controlling influence of a comparatively small group of families over national affairs) must proceed. Perhaps more than any other people, Filipinos

take jobs in foreign countries in massive numbers, proving their capacity to succeed in jobs they cannot find at home. More than 10 million Filipinos, about a quarter of the total workforce, are now employed abroad. The global merchant marine would not exist without Filipino sailors, and Filipina nurses and domestic workers can be found from Dubai to Dublin to Dubuque. Funds sent home to family members by the emigrants make the Philippines a world leader in monetary inflow known as **remittances** [10], constituting about 10 percent of the country's GDP.

Overall, the Philippines now sustains a lower-middle-income economy, and given a longer period of political stability and success in mitigating the problems outlined above, it should be able to rise to the next level and finally take its place among the Pacific Rim's growth poles. Currently, the Philippines is pursuing a pair of niches in the

AMONG THE REALM'S GREAT CITIES . . .

MANILA

MANILA, CAPITAL OF the Philippines and the realm's largest city, was founded by the Spanish invaders of Luzon more than four centuries ago. The colonial conquerors made a good choice in terms of site and situation. Manila sprawls at the mouth of the Pasig River where it enters one of Asia's finest natural harbors. To the north, east, and south a crescent of mountains encircles the city, which lies just 1000 kilometers (600 mi) southeast of China's Hong Kong.

Manila, named after a flowering shrub in the local marshlands, is bisected by the Pasig, which is bridged at numerous points. The old walled city, Intramuros, lies to the south. Despite heavy bombardment during World War II, some of the colonial heritage survives in the form of churches, monasteries, and convents. St. Augustine Church, completed in 1599, is one of the city's landmarks.

The CBD of Manila lies on the north side of the river. Although Manila has a well-defined commercial center with several avenues of luxury shops and modern buildings, the skyline does not reflect the high level of energy and activity common in Pacific Rim cities on the opposite side of the South China Sea. Neither is Manila a city of notable architectural achievements. Wide, long, and straight avenues flanked by palm, banyan, and acacia trees give it a look similar to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In 1948, a newly built city immediately to the northeast of Manila was inaugurated as the *de jure* capital of the Philippines and named Quezon City. The new facilities were eventually to house all government offices, but many func-



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tional components of the national government never made the move. In the meantime, Manila's growth overtook Quezon's, so that it became part of the Greater Manila metropolis (which is now home to 12.7 million). Although the proclamation of Quezon City as the Philippines' official capital was never rescinded, Manila remains the *de facto* capital today.

global economy: international call centers and the outsourcing of digital services through such Internet websites as *oDesk*—one of several that serves as a global marketplace for digital services by freelancers performing data entry and other basic back-office work. However, the latter is highly unpredictable as a growth industry, and the pay is certainly low by worldwide standards.

In its foreign relations, this country is changing course. In the 1990s it terminated the lease for a U.S. naval base, but now the Philippines government is once again seeking closer relations with the United States. This is in no small part driven by the growing assertiveness of China in the South China Sea and the persistent disputes between China and the Philippines over the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal (discussed in Chapter 10A). In response, American and Filipino forces now annually conduct joint naval exercises in the South China Sea, which are widely interpreted as a show of solidarity in contested waters that have long attracted Chinese attention and (still-ambiguous) claims.

POINTS TO PONDER

- China's growing regional dominance affects not only lands and peoples, but also waters and unpopulated islands. What do Vietnam and the Philippines have in common in this respect?
- Reforming Myanmar is witnessing the eruption of long-suppressed religious strife as Buddhists and Muslims clash. How are other states in the realm dealing with religious tensions?
- Under Malaysia's constitution, a person of Malay ancestry (unlike someone with Chinese or South Asian roots) is automatically registered as a Muslim.
- Singapore in 2013 experienced the worst air pollution in the city-state's history. The cause lay in Indonesia. What does the growth of palm oil cultivation have to do with this?