

ATLAS

4TH EDITION

ATLAS



LONDON, NEW YORK, MELBOURNE,
MUNICH, AND DELHI



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MUNICH, AND DELHI

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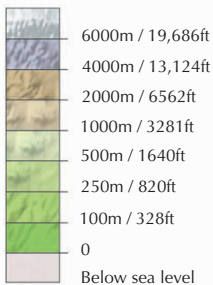
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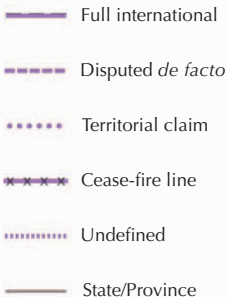
Key to map symbols

ELEVATION



- Mountain
- Depression

BORDERS



DRAINAGE FEATURES



SETTLEMENTS

- Capital city
- Major town
- Minor town
- Major port

COMMUNICATIONS



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The Political World



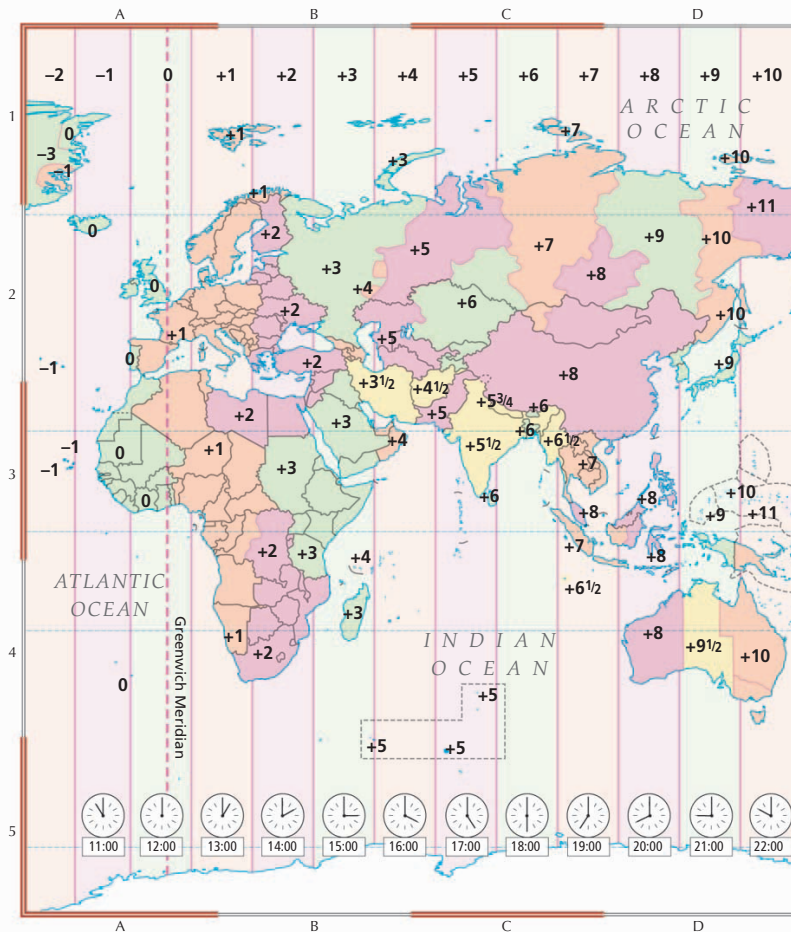


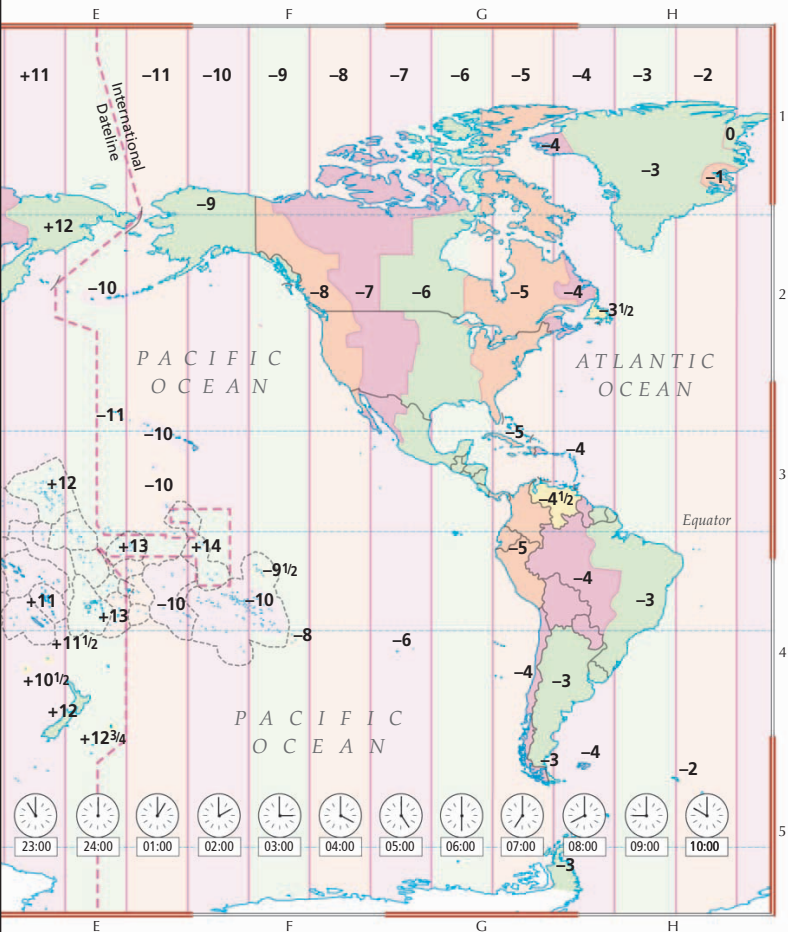
The Physical World





Time Zones





The world's regions





North & Central America









USA: The Northeast

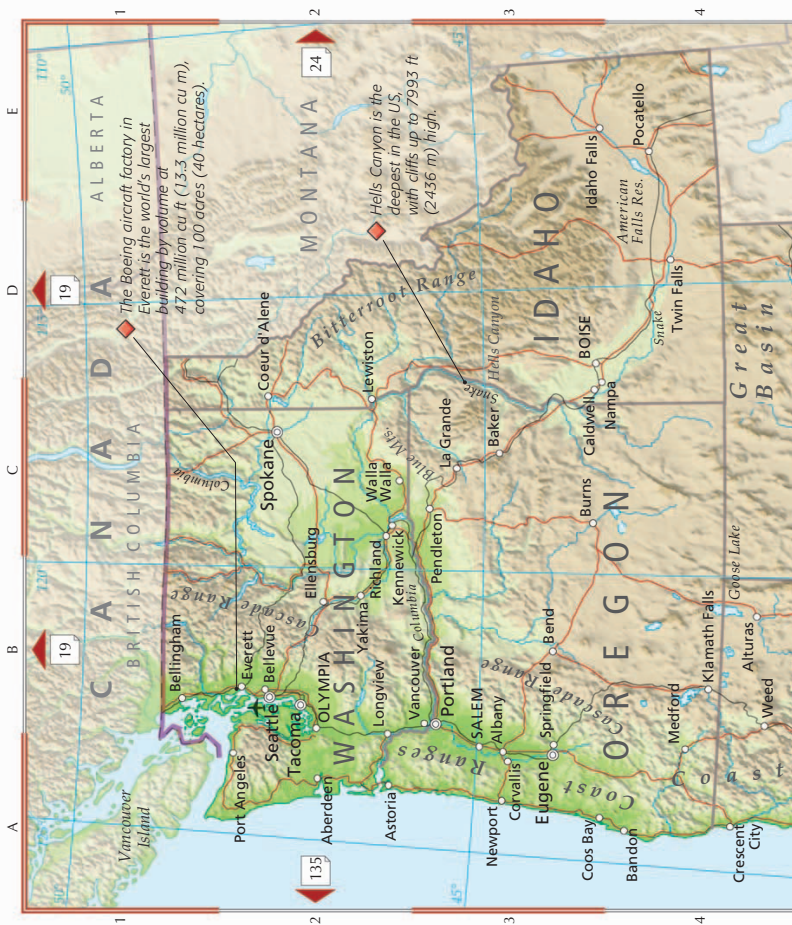


USA: Central States





USA: The West



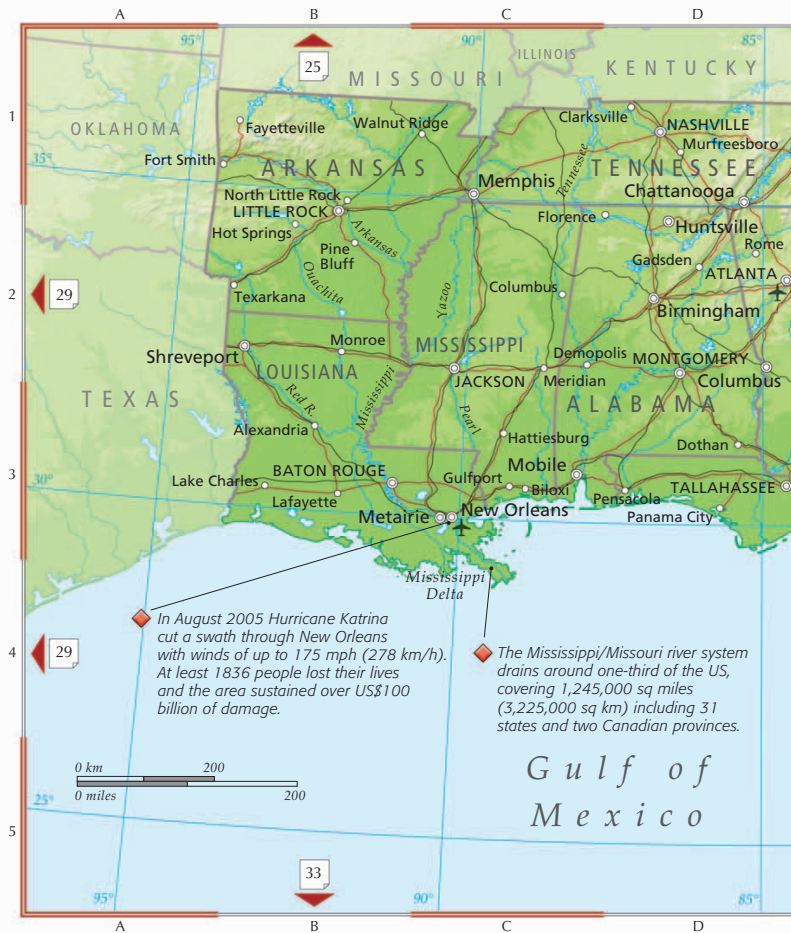


USA: The Southwest





USA: The Southeast





Mexico





Central America



◆ For many years it was thought that the sharks in Lake Nicaragua were a unique freshwater species. However, research has shown that they are in fact Bull Sharks that have swum 120 miles (190 km) up the San Juan River from the Caribbean Sea.

◆ The strongest living creature is the Rhinoceros Beetle, found in the jungles of Costa Rica. It can support up to 850 times its own body weight, equivalent to a human carrying about 70 tons (tonnes).



The Caribbean





South America







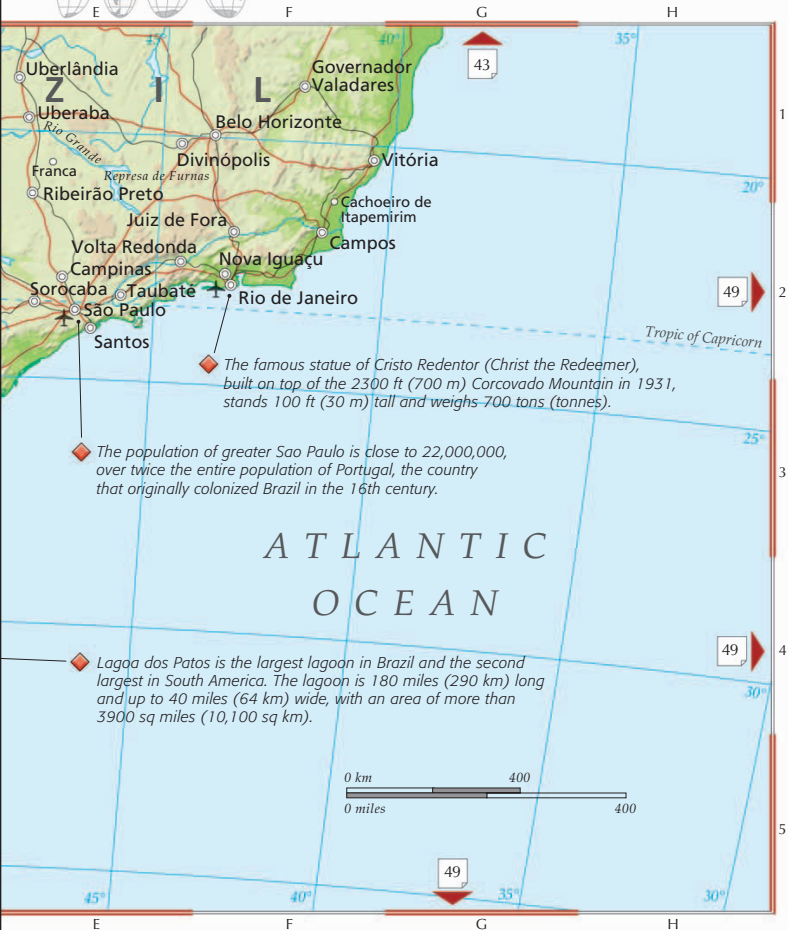
Peru, Bolivia & North Brazil





Paraguay, Uruguay & South Brazil





Southern South America





The Atlantic Ocean







Northwest Africa





Northeast Africa



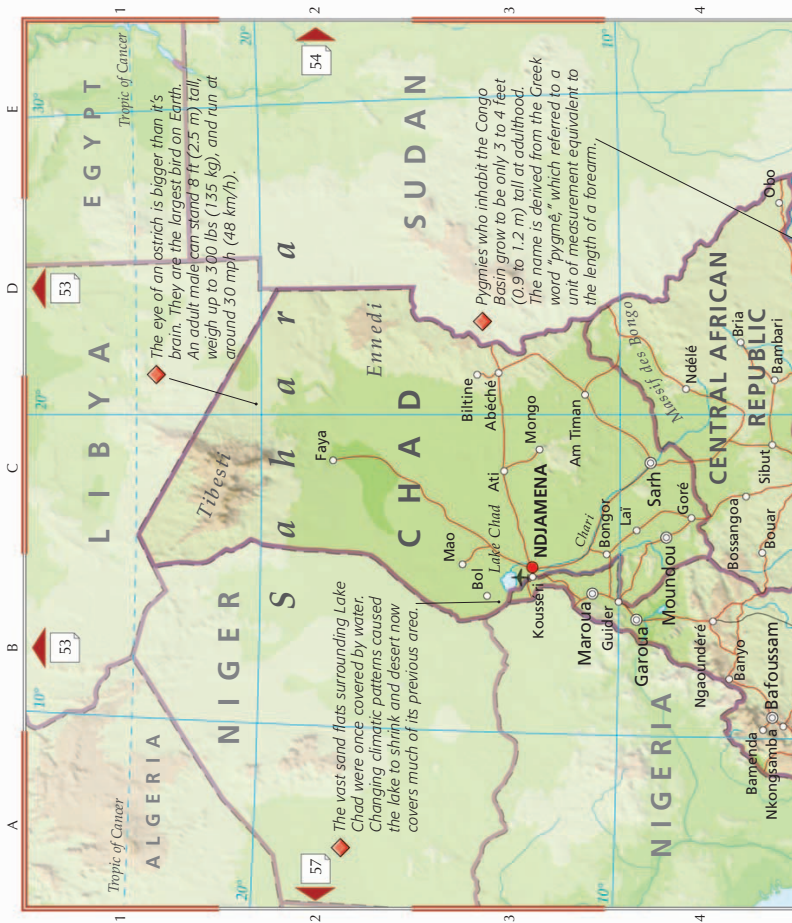


West Africa





Central Africa





◆ The only major river that flows both north and south of the equator is the Congo. It crosses the equator twice, which means that at least part of its catchment area is always experiencing a rainy season.

Southern Africa





Europe





The North Atlantic





Scandinavia & Finland



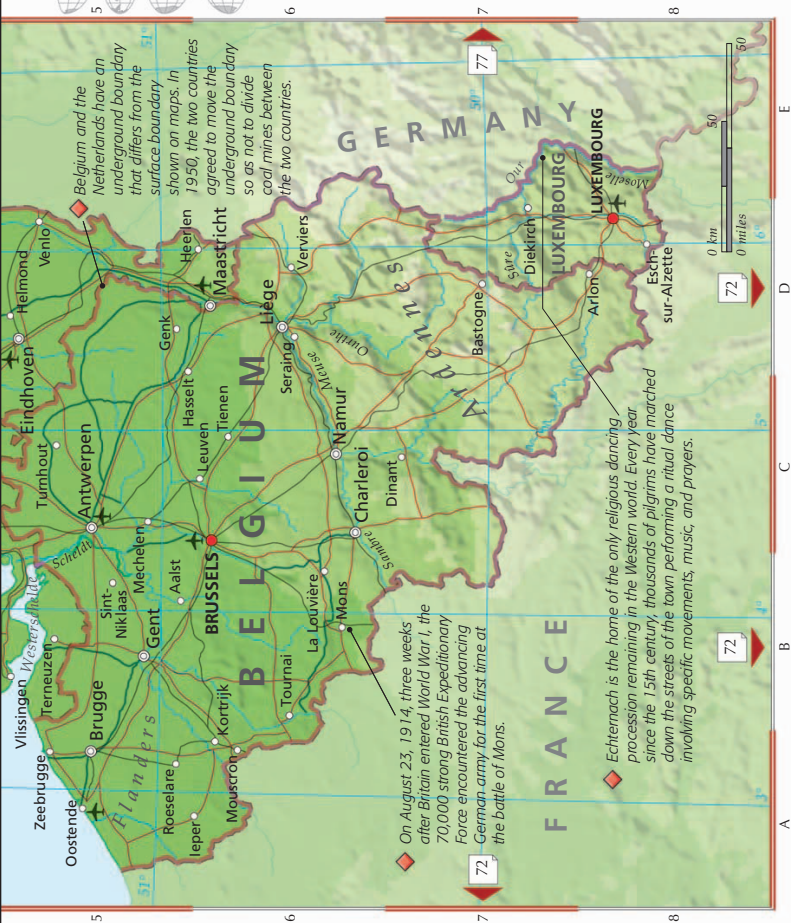
◆ The North Cape Current warms the northern coasts of Norway, Finland, and Russia's Kola Peninsula with water temperatures of 39–54°F (4–12°C) allowing this area of the Barents Sea to remain free of pack ice throughout the winter.

◆ The sun is continuously visible from late May to late July in Tromsø because of its position well north of the Arctic Circle.

◆ Scandinavia is still recovering from the last ice age, when the land was depressed 2000 ft (600 m) by the weight of the ice. Today, the Earth's crust is "rebounding" at the rate of 0.3 inches (9 mm) a year in the Gulf of Bothnia.

The Low Countries





The British Isles





France, Andorra & Monaco



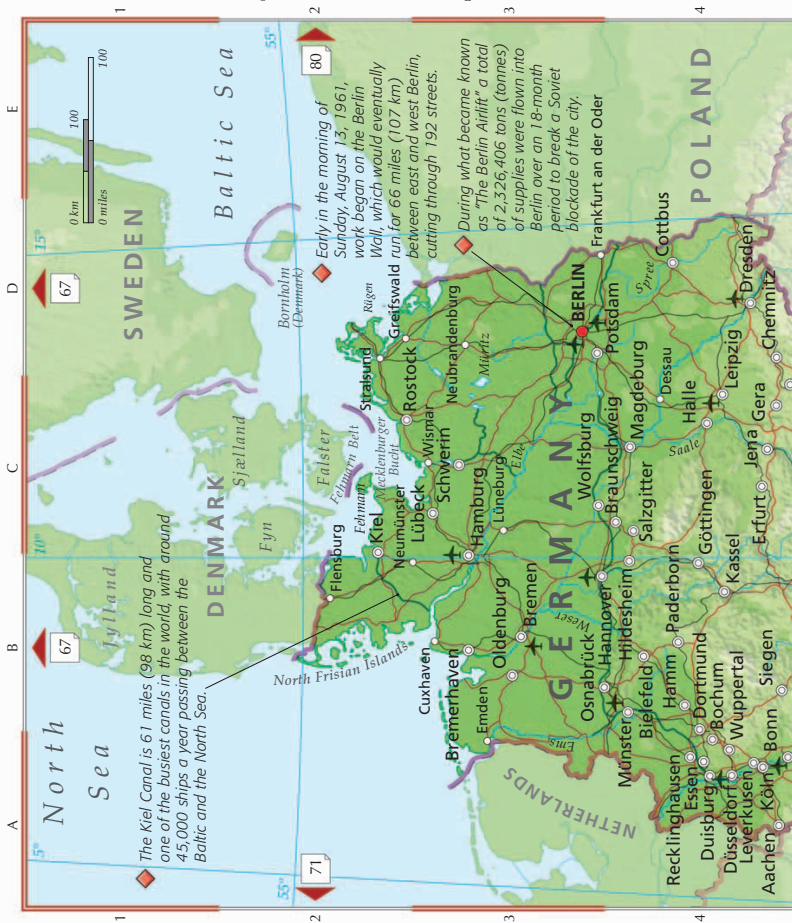


Spain & Portugal





Germany & The Alpine States









Central Europe



Southeast Europe





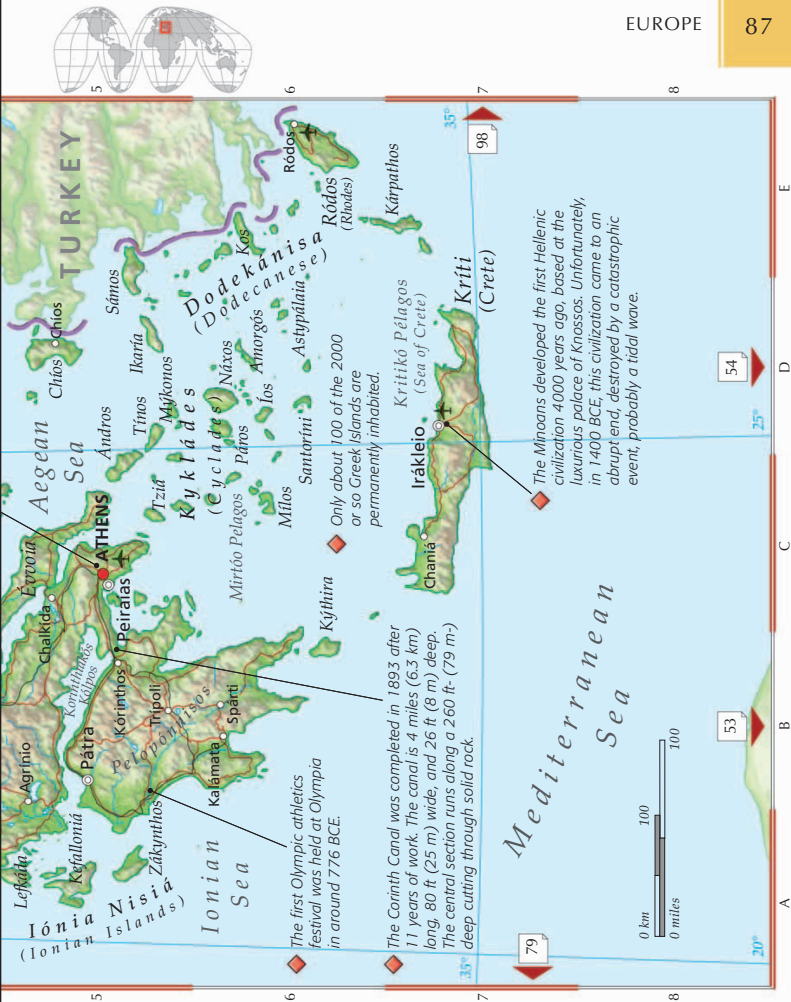
The Mediterranean





Bulgaria & Greece





The Baltic States & Belarus





Ukraine, Moldova & Romania



European Russia



North & West Asia





Russia & Kazakhstan





Turkey & the Caucasus



The Near East









South & East Asia





Western China & Mongolia





The name Gobi Desert is derived from Mongolian, meaning "waterless place." Bare rock rather than sand dunes typify the cold desert landscape that stretches for some 500,000 sq miles (1,295,000 sq km).

Having started in the 7th century BCE, work on the 3700 mile (6000 km) long Great Wall of China continued for hundreds of years. A major renovation begun in 1386 took 200 years to complete.

The Huang He (Yellow River) has flooded more than 1500 times in the last 1800 years. In 1931, catastrophic flooding was responsible for the deaths of 3.7 million people. The river has also changed its course at least nine times.

Despite a population of 1.3 billion, China has only about 200 family names.

ERATION

OLIA

NINGXIA HUIZU ZIZHIQU

CHONGQING

Hulun Buir (Hailar)

Xilinhot

Ulan Qab (Jining)

SHANXI

HUBEI

HUNAN

Tongliao

Chifeng (Ulanhad)

BEIJING

JIANGSU

JIANGXI

NORTH KOREA

SOUTH KOREA

Yellow Sea

East China Sea

TAIWAN

Sea of Japan (East Sea)

JAPAN

Nansei-shoto (to Japan)

Tropic of Cancer

97

112

113

111

110°

120°

130°

110°

120°

E

F

G

H

E

F

G

H

1

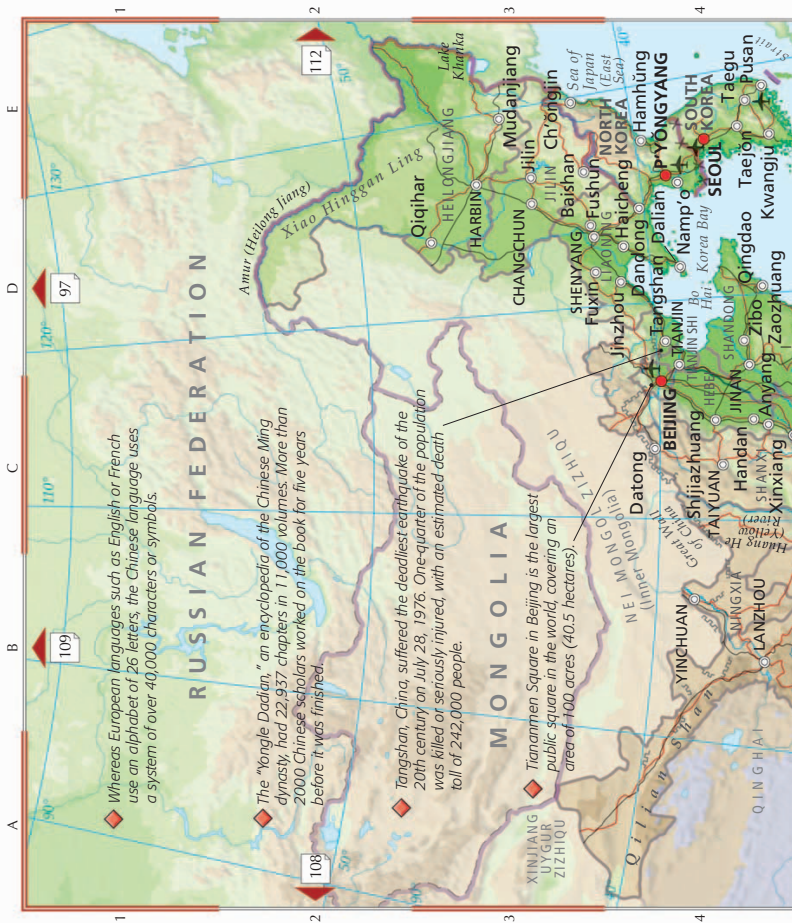
2

3

4

5

Eastern China & Korea



◆ Whereas European languages such as English or French use an alphabet of 26 letters, the Chinese language uses a system of over 40,000 characters or symbols.

◆ The "Yongle Dadian," an encyclopedia of the Chinese Ming dynasty, had 22,937 chapters in 1,000 volumes. More than 2,000 Chinese scholars worked on the book for five years before it was finished.

◆ Tangshan, China, suffered the deadliest earthquake of the 20th century on July 28, 1976. One-quarter of the population was killed or seriously injured, with an estimated death toll of 242,000 people.

◆ Tiananmen Square in Beijing is the largest public square in the world, covering an area of 100 acres (40.5 hectares).



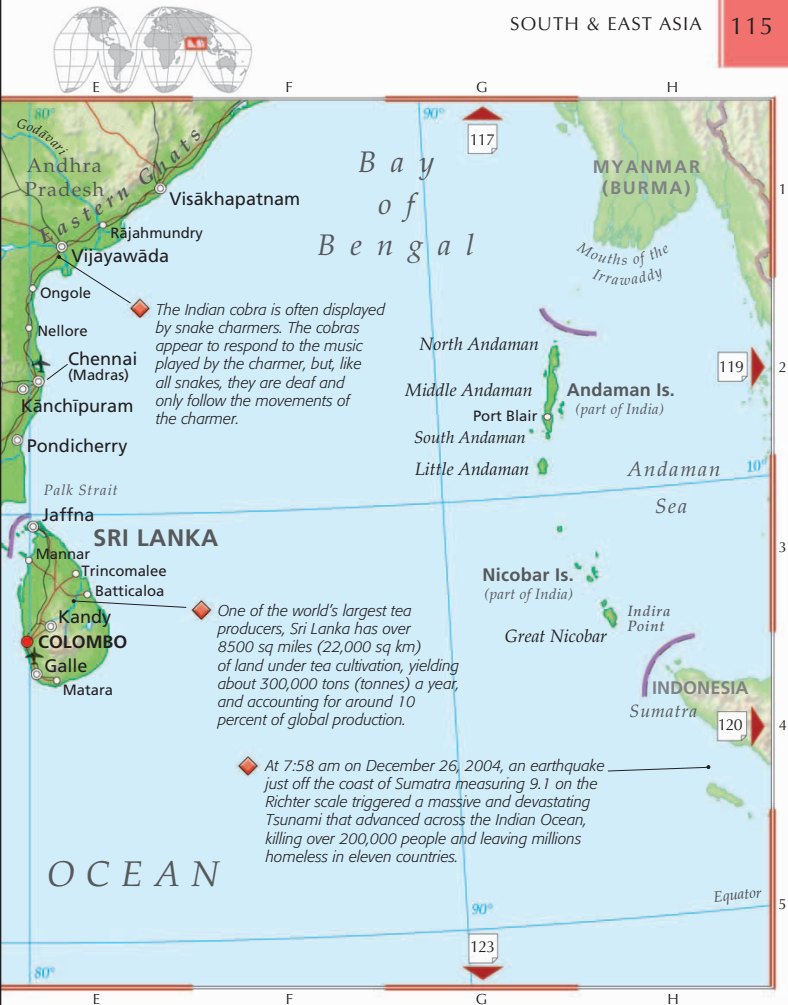
Japan





Southern India & Sri Lanka





North India & Pakistan





Aksai Chin
(administered by China,
claimed by India)

Demchok/Dēmqog
(administered by China,
claimed by India)

◆ The northern ranges of the Himalayas contain the highest mountains in the world, with average heights of more than 23,000 ft (7000 m) and many peaks higher than 26,000 ft (8000m).

◆ Cherrapunji, 4872 ft (1484 m) above sea level, has an average annual rainfall of 450 inches (1143 cm), although most of this falls during the monsoon – the winter is a virtual drought. The highest-ever seasonal rainfall was 904 inches (2298 cm).

◆ The Kingdom of Bhutan is the only country in the world to measure the happiness of its citizens.

Arunachal Pradesh
(claimed by China)

Mount Everest
29,035ft (8850m)

Tropic of Cancer

Mouths of the Ganges

◆ The heaviest hailstones on record, weighing about 2.25 lbs (1 kg), are reported to have killed 92 people in the Gopalganj area of Bangladesh on April 14, 1986.

XINJIANGUYGUR
ZIZHIQU

C H I N A QINGHAI

XIZANG ZIZHIQU
(Tibet)

H i m a l a y a s

Bareilly

Uttar Pradesh
Lucknow

Kānpur

Allahābād

Jabalpur

Raipur

Orissa

Warangal

Visākhatnam

Vārānasi

Gaya

Dhanbād

Rānchi

Cuttack

Eastern Ghats

Godāvari

Patna

Bihār

Rājshahi

Bengal

Kolkata
(Calcutta)

Comilla

Khulna

Saidpur

Jamālpur

West Bengal

BANGLADESH

DHAKA

Chittagong

B a y
o f
B e n g a l

Guwāhātī

Dispur

Kohima

Sylhet

Imphāl

MYANMAR
(BURMA)

108

108

118

115

Mainland Southeast Asia



Maritime Southeast Asia





The Indian Ocean





Australasia & Oceania





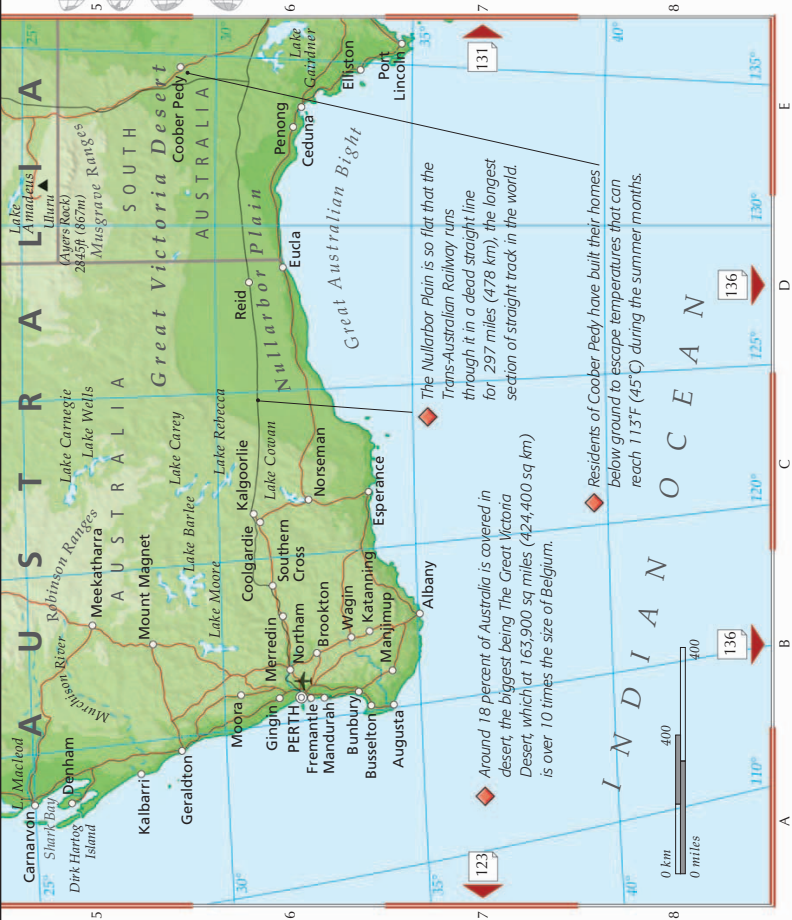
The Southwest Pacific





Western Australia





Eastern Australia





New Zealand

A B C D E

127

T a s m a n
S e a

The lizardlike tuatara is found on some of the islands and rocky stacks off New Zealand. It is the sole remaining representative of the reptilian order Sphenodontia, which first evolved before the dinosaurs. It has a third "eye" on the top of its head, which is sensitive to light.

Three Kings Islands

North Cape

Great Exhibition Bay

Te Kao

Kaitaia

Ninety Mile Beach is in fact only about 55 miles (88 km) long. Nevertheless, this still makes it one of the longest sandy beaches in the world.

Paihia

Kaikohe

Whangarei

Ruawai

Great Barrier Island

Warkworth

Hauraki Gulf

Around 130 CE, something in the order of 33 billion tons (tonnes) of pumice was ejected in a massive volcanic eruption that left a 20,000 sq mile (51,800 sq km) debris field and created an enormous caldera that subsequently became Lake Taupo.

Takapuna

Auckland

Waiuku

Whitianga

Manurewa

Paeroa Bay of Plenty

East Cape

Tauranga

Lake Rotorua

Ruatoria

Kaitiaki

Te Kuiti

Rotorua

Taupo

Lake Taupo

Gisborne

Wairoa

Harakeke Bay

Hastings

Waipawa

127

1

2

131

135

N o r t h I s l a n d

3

More than 46 million sheep thrive in New Zealand's mild climate, outnumbering the human population by 12 to 1.

New Plymouth

Taumarunui

Stratford

Napier

Taihape

Hawera

Wanganui

Palmerston North

Woodville

Levin

Cape Turnagain

NEW ZEALAND

South Taranaki Bight

Kaitiaki

Cape Farewell

Tasman Bay

Paraparaumu

Masterton

4

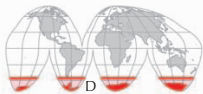


The Pacific Ocean





Antarctica





Arctic

F G H



The world factfiles





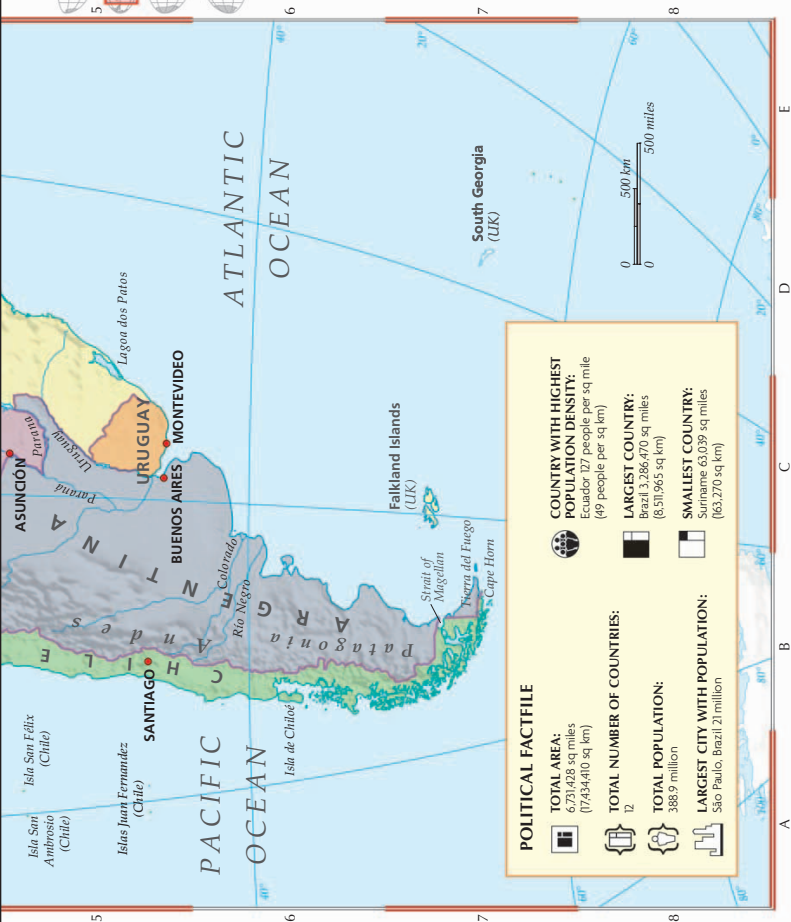
North & Central America






South America






POLITICAL FACTFILE

 **TOTAL AREA:**
6,731,428 sq miles
(17,434,410 sq km)


 **TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES:**
12


 **TOTAL POPULATION:**
388.9 million

 **LARGEST CITY WITH POPULATION:**
São Paulo, Brazil 21 million



COUNTRY WITH HIGHEST POPULATION DENSITY:
Ecuador 127 people per sq mile
(49 people per sq km)

 **LARGEST COUNTRY:**
Brazil 3,286,470 sq miles
(8,511,965 sq km)

 **SMALLEST COUNTRY:**
Suriname 63,039 sq miles
(163,270 sq km)





**POLITICAL FACTFILE**

 **TOTAL AREA:**
11,437,866 sq miles
(29,624,290 sq km)


 **TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES:**
53

 **TOTAL POPULATION:**
1008.4 million

 **LARGEST CITY WITH POPULATION:**
Cairo, Egypt 14.8 million

 **COUNTRY WITH HIGHEST POPULATION DENSITY:**
Mauritius 1794 people per sq mile
(693 people per sq km)

 **LARGEST COUNTRY:**
Sudan 967,493 sq miles
(2,505,810 sq km)

 **SMALLEST COUNTRY:**
Seychelles 17.6 sq miles
(455 sq km)

Europe

A

B

C

D

POLITICAL FACTFILE

**TOTAL AREA:**

3,739,678 sq miles
(9,685,756 sq km)

**TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES:**

46

**TOTAL POPULATION:**

717.8 million

**LARGEST CITY WITH POPULATION:**

Moscow, European Russia 13.5 million

**COUNTRY WITH HIGHEST POPULATION DENSITY:**

Monaco 42,667 people per sq mile
(16,410 people per sq km)

**LARGEST COUNTRY:**

European Russia 1,527,341 sq miles
(3,955,818 sq km)

**SMALLEST COUNTRY:**

Vatican City, Italy 0.17 sq miles
(0.44 sq km)

1

2

3

4

5

REYKJAVÍK

ICELAND

Faeroe Islands
(Denmark)

Shetland Islands

Outer
HebridesBritish
Isles

IRELAND

DUBLIN

UNITED
KINGDOM

LONDON

Channel Is.
(UK)BELGIUM
BRUSSELS

PARIS

FRANCE

MONACO

SWITZERLAND

BERN

ANDORRA

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG

NETH.
THE HAGUE

AMSTERDAM

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

North
Sea

DENMARK

COPENHAGEN

NETH.

THE HAGUE

BELGIUM

BRUSSELS

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG

MONACO

SWITZERLAND

BERN

ANDORRA

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG

NETH.

THE HAGUE

AMSTERDAM

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

GERMANY

Norwegian
Sea

M O N T E N E G R O

S E R B I A

C R O A T I A

S L O V E N I A

C Z E C H R E P U B L I C

P R A G U E

L I E C H.

B R A T I S L A V A

A U S T R I A

S L O V E N I A

L I U B L J A N A

C R O A T I A

S A R A J E V O

B O S N I A & H E R Z E G O V I N A

ATLANTIC
OCEANMadeira
(Portugal)Canary Islands
(Spain)

PORTUGAL

LISBON

MADRID

SPAIN

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

A F R I C A

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REYKJAVÍK

ICELAND

Faeroe Islands
(Denmark)

Shetland Islands

Outer
HebridesBritish
Isles

IRELAND

DUBLIN

UNITED
KINGDOM

LONDON

Channel Is.
(UK)BELGIUM
BRUSSELS

PARIS

FRANCE

MONACO

SWITZERLAND

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NETH.
THE HAGUE

AMSTERDAM

GERMANY

GERMANY

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North
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THE HAGUE

BELGIUM

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THE HAGUE

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Norwegian
Sea

M O N T E N E G R O

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C R O A T I A

S L O V E N I A

C Z E C H R E P U B L I C

P R A G U E

L I E C H.

B R A T I S L A V A

A U S T R I A

S L O V E N I A

L I U B L J A N A

C R O A T I A

S A R A J E V O

B O S N I A & H E R Z E G O V I N A

ATLANTIC
OCEANMadeira
(Portugal)Canary Islands
(Spain)

PORTUGAL

LISBON

MADRID

SPAIN

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR

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POLITICAL FACTFILE



TOTAL AREA:

17,006,354 sq miles
(44,046,472 sq km)



TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES:

49



TOTAL POPULATION:

4148.4 million



LARGEST CITY WITH POPULATION:

Tokyo, Japan 33.8 million



COUNTRY WITH HIGHEST POPULATION DENSITY:

Singapore 20,072 people per sq mile
(7765 people per sq km)



LARGEST COUNTRY:

Asiatic Russia 5,065,394 sq miles
(13,119,382 sq km)



SMALLEST COUNTRY:

Maldives 116 sq miles
(300 sq km)



Australasia & Oceania





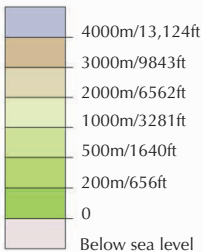
Key to factfile maps

FOREWORD

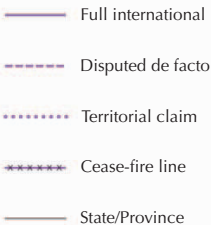
This factfile is intended as a guide to a world that is continually changing as political fashions and personalities come and go. Nevertheless, all the material in these factfiles has been researched from the most up-to-date and authoritative sources to give an incisive portrait of the geographical, social, and economic characteristics that make each country unique.

KEY TO MAP SYMBOLS

ELEVATION



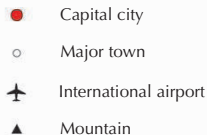
BORDERS



DRAINAGE FEATURES



SYMBOLS



The asterisk in the Factfile denotes the country's official language(s)

Date of formation denotes the date of political origin or independence; the second date (if any) identifies when its current borders were established

The area figure denotes total land area



Afghanistan

About 75% of this landlocked Asian country is inaccessible. The Islamist *Taliban*, ousted in 2001, continue to fight a guerrilla war against Afghan and NATO-led forces.



GEOGRAPHY

Predominantly mountainous. Highest range is the Hindu Kush. Mountains are bordered by fertile plains. Desert plateau in the south.



CLIMATE

Harsh continental. Hot, dry summers. Cold winters with heavy snow, especially in the Hindu Kush.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Mujahideen factions fought first against Soviet invaders (from 1979), and then against each other (after 1989), before the *Taliban* won control in 1996. Under their strict Islamist regime women were denied all rights and ethnic tensions were exacerbated. The US assisted anti-*Taliban* forces in 2001 as part of its “war on terrorism.” A new democratic government struggles to maintain control as insurgency continues.



THE ECONOMY

Mainly agricultural, severely disrupted by war. Illicit opium trade is big cash earner. Natural gas pipeline planned from the Caspian Sea to Pakistan.



INSIGHT: *The UN estimates that it could take 100 years to remove the 10 million landmines laid since 1979*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Islamic State of Afghanistan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1919

CAPITAL: Kabul

POPULATION: 28.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 250,000 sq. miles (647,500 sq. km)

DENSITY: 112 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Pashtu*, Dari*, Tajik, other

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 84%, Shi'a Muslim 15%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Pashtun 38%, Tajik 25%, Hazara 19%, Uzbek, Turkmen, other 18%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Afghan = 100 pul

Albania



Lying at the southeastern end of the Adriatic Sea, Albania was the last east European country to liberalize its economy. The regional strife of the 1990s has left a difficult legacy.



GEOGRAPHY

Narrow coastal plain. Interior is mostly hills and mountains. Forest and scrub cover over 40% of the land.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean coastal climate, with warm summers and cool winters. Mountains receive heavy rains or snows in winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The pace of economic reform remains a major issue. EU membership, applied for in 2009, is a distant prospect. Mosques and churches have reopened in what was once the world's only officially atheist state. The Greek minority in the south suffers much discrimination.



INSIGHT: *The Albanians' name for their country, Shqipërisë, means "Land of the Eagles"*



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas reserves have potential to offset rudimentary infrastructure and lack of foreign investment. Organized crime problem.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Albania

DATE OF FORMATION: 1912

CAPITAL: Tirana

POPULATION: 3.16 million

TOTAL AREA: 11,100 sq. miles
(28,748 sq. km)

DENSITY: 298 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Albanian*, Greek

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 70%,
Orthodox Christian 20%,
Roman Catholic 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Albanian 93%, Greek 5%,
other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Lek = 100 qindarka (qintars)



Algeria



Africa's second-largest country, Algeria won independence from France in 1962. Today, national reconciliation is key to recovery from a conflict launched by Islamic extremists in 1992.



GEOGRAPHY

85% of the country lies within the Sahara Desert. Fertile coastal region with plains and hills rises from the southeast to the Atlas Mountains.



CLIMATE

Coastal areas are warm and temperate, with most rainfall during the mild winters. The south is very hot, with negligible rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Algerians are predominantly Arab, under 30 years of age, and urban. Most indigenous Berbers consider the mountainous Kabylia region in the northeast to be their homeland. They have been granted greater ethnic rights in recent years. The Sahara sustains just 500,000 people, mainly oil workers and Tuareg nomads with goat and camel herds, who move between the irrigated oases.

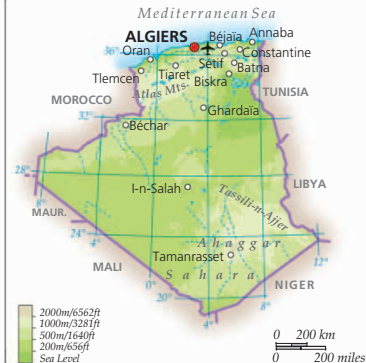


THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas exports. Political turmoil has led to exodus of skilled foreign labor. Limited agriculture.



INSIGHT: *The world's highest dunes are located in the deserts of east central Algeria*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Algiers

POPULATION: 34.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 919,590 sq. miles
(2,381,740 sq. km)

DENSITY: 38 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Tamazight, French

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 99%,
Christian and Jewish 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 75%, Berber 24%,
European and Jewish 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Algerian dinar = 100 centimes

Andorra



A tiny landlocked principality, Andorra lies high in the eastern Pyrenees between France and Spain. It held its first full elections in 1993. Tourism is the main source of income.



GEOGRAPHY

High mountains, with six deep, glaciated valleys that drain into the Valira River as it flows into Spain.



CLIMATE

Cool, wet springs followed by dry, warm summers. Mountain snows linger until March.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Immigration is strictly monitored and restricted by quota to French and Spanish nationals seeking employment in Andorra. Low taxes attract wealthy expatriates. A referendum in 1993 ended 715 years of semifeudal status, but Andorran society remains conservative.



INSIGHT: *Andorra's coprincipality status dates from the 13th century.*

The "princes" are the president of France and the bishop of Urgel in Spain.



THE ECONOMY

Tourism and duty-free sales dominate the economy. Banking secrecy laws and low consumer taxes promote investment and commerce. France and Spain effectively decide economic policy. Dependence on imported food and raw materials.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Principality of Andorra

DATE OF FORMATION: 1278

CAPITAL: Andorra la Vella

POPULATION: 82,200

TOTAL AREA: 181 sq. miles
(468 sq. km)

DENSITY: 457 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish, Catalan*, French, Portuguese

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Spanish 46%, Andorran 28%, other 18%, French 8%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Angola

Located in southwest Africa, Angola suffered a civil war following independence from Portugal in 1975, until a 2002 peace deal. Hundreds of thousands of people died.



GEOGRAPHY

Most of the land is hilly and grass-covered. Desert in the south. Mountains in the center and north.



CLIMATE

Varies from temperate to tropical. Rainfall decreases north to south. Coast is cooler and dry.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Civil war pitched the ruling Kimbundu-dominated MPLA against UNITA, representing the Ovimbundu. Multiparty elections in 1991–1992, after the MPLA had abandoned Marxism, failed to stall the war for long. Power-sharing from 2002 ended when the MPLA won the 2008 election; a presidential poll has yet to be held.



INSIGHT: Angola has the greatest number of amputees (caused by landmines) in the world



THE ECONOMY

Potentially one of Africa's richest countries, but long civil war hampered economic development. Oil and diamonds are exported.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Angola

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Luanda

POPULATION: 18.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 481,351 sq. miles
(1,246,700 sq. km)

DENSITY: 38 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Portuguese*, Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 50%, other 30%, Protestant 20%

ETHNIC MIX: Ovimbundu 37%, other 25%, Kimbundu 25%, Bakongo 13%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Readjusted kwanza = 100 lwei

Antarctica



The circumpolar continent of Antarctica is almost entirely covered by ice, some up to 1.2 miles (2 km) thick. It also contains 90% of the Earth's freshwater reserves.



GEOGRAPHY

The bulk of Antarctica's ice is contained in the Greater Antarctic Ice Sheet – a huge dome that rises steeply from the coast and flattens to a plateau in the interior.



CLIMATE

Powerful winds create a storm belt around the continent, which brings cloud, fog, and blizzards. Winter temperatures can fall to -112°F (-80°C).

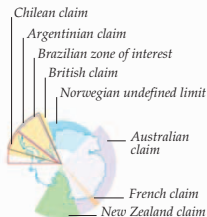


PEOPLE & SOCIETY

No indigenous population. Scientists and logistical staff work at the 40 permanent, and as many as 100 temporary, research stations. A few Chilean settler families live on King George Island. Tourism is mostly by cruise ship to the Antarctic Peninsula. Annual tourist numbers have reached nearly 50,000.



Territorial Claims:



The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 holds all territorial claims in abeyance in the interest of international cooperation



FACTFILE

DATE OF FORMATION: 1961
TOTAL AREA: 5,405,000 sq. miles
 (14,000,000 sq. km)

INSIGHT: If the ice sheets of Antarctica were to melt, the world's oceans would rise by as much as 200–210 ft (60–65 m)



Antigua & Barbuda

A former colony of Spain, France, and the UK, Antigua and Barbuda lies at the outer edge of the Leeward Islands group in the Caribbean, and includes the uninhabited islet of Redonda.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly low-lying limestone and coral islands with some higher volcanic areas. Antigua's coast is indented with bays and harbors.



CLIMATE

Tropical, moderated by trade winds and sea breezes. Humidity and rainfall are low for the region.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population almost entirely of African origin, with small communities of Europeans and South Asians. Women's status has risen as a result of greater access to education. Wealth disparities are small. The Bird family dominated politics from 1960, but lost power to the United Progressive Party (UPP) from 2004.



INSIGHT: In 1865, Redonda was "claimed" by an eccentric Englishman as a kingdom for his son



THE ECONOMY

Tourism is the main source of revenue and the biggest provider of jobs. Financial services and Internet gambling are expanding. High debt.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Antigua and Barbuda

DATE OF FORMATION: 1981

CAPITAL: St. John's

POPULATION: 82,800

TOTAL AREA: 170 sq. miles

(442 sq. km)

DENSITY: 487 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, English patois

RELIGIONS: Anglican 45%, other Protestant 42%, Roman Catholic 10%, other 2%, Rastafarian 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 95%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: E. Caribbean \$ = 100 cents

Argentina



Argentina occupies most of southern South America. After 30 years of intermittent military rule, democracy returned in 1983. Economy has slowed since its recovery from 2001 crash.



GEOGRAPHY

The Andes form a natural border with Chile in the west. East are the heavily wooded plains (Gran Chaco) and treeless but fertile Pampas plains. Bleak and arid Patagonia in the south.



CLIMATE

The Andes are semiarid in the north and snowy in the south. Pampas have a mild climate with summer rains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

People are largely of European descent; over one-third are of Italian origin. Indigenous peoples are now in a minority, living mainly in Andean regions or in the Gran Chaco. The middle classes were worst hit by the economic meltdown of 2001–2002.



INSIGHT: *The Tango originated in the poorer quarters of Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century*



THE ECONOMY

Agricultural exports restored growth from 2003, but bad drought in 2008 coincided with global downturn.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Argentina

DATE OF FORMATION: 1816

CAPITAL: Buenos Aires

POPULATION: 40.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 1,068,296 sq. miles
(2,766,890 sq. km)

DENSITY: 38 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Italian, Amerindian languages

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 90%, other 6%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Indo-European 83%, Mestizo 14%, Jewish 2%, Amerindian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Argentine peso = 100 centavos



Armenia



The smallest of the former USSR's republics, Armenia lies landlocked in the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. After 1988, a confrontation with Azerbaijan dominated national life.



GEOGRAPHY

Rugged and mountainous, with expanses of semidesert and a large lake in the east: Sevana Lich.



CLIMATE

Continental climate, with little rainfall in the lowlands. The winters are often bitterly cold.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Christianity is the dominant religion, but minority groups are well integrated. War with Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh forced 350,000 Armenians living in Azerbaijan to return home, many to live in poverty. There are close and important ties to the seven-million-strong Armenian diaspora.



INSIGHT: *In the 4th century, Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as its state religion*



THE ECONOMY

Overseas remittances and agriculture each account for a sixth of GDP. Main products are wine, tobacco, potatoes, and fruit. Well-developed machine-building and manufacturing – includes textiles and bottling of mineral water.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Armenia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Yerevan

POPULATION: 3.08 million

TOTAL AREA: 11,506 sq. miles
(29,800 sq. km)

DENSITY: 268 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Armenian*, Azeri, Russian

RELIGIONS: Armenian Apostolic Church (Orthodox) 88%, Armenian Catholic Church 6%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Armenian 98%, Yezidi 1%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Dram = 100 luma

Australia



An island continent in its own right, Australia is the world's sixth-largest country. European settlement began over 200 years ago. Most Australians now live in cities along the coast.



GEOGRAPHY

Located between the Indian and Pacific oceans, Australia has a variety of landscapes, including tropical rainforests, the arid plateaus, ridges, and vast deserts of the "red center," the lowlands and river systems draining into Lake Eyre, rolling tracts of pastoral land, and magnificent beaches around much of the coastline. In the far east are the mountains of the Great Dividing Range. Famous natural features include Uluru (Ayers Rock) and the Great Barrier Reef.



CLIMATE

The west and south are semi-arid with hot summers. The arid interior can reach 120°F (50°C) in the central desert areas. The north is hot throughout the year, and humid during the summer monsoon. East, southeast, and southwest coastal areas are temperate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The first settlers arrived in Australia at least 100,000 years ago. Today, the Aborigines make up around 2% of the population. European colonization began in 1788, and was dominated by British and Irish immigrants, some of whom were convicts. White-only immigration drives brought many Europeans to Australia, but since the 1960s multi-culturalism has been encouraged and most new settlers are Asian; Cantonese has overtaken Italian as the second most widely spoken language. Wealth disparities are small, but Aborigines, the exception in an otherwise integrated society, are marginalized: their average life expectancy is around 11 years less than other Australians. The new Labor government from 2007 has overturned right-wing policies on illegal immigration and has signed up to limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Commonwealth of Australia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1901

CAPITAL: Canberra

POPULATION: 21.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 2,967,893 sq. miles
(7,686,850 sq. km)

DENSITY: 7 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Cantonese, other

RELIGIONS: Various Protestant 38%, other 36%, Roman Catholic 26%

ETHNIC MIX: European 90%, Asian 7%, Aboriginal 2%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Australian dollar = 100 cents

THE ECONOMY

Efficient mining and agriculture: particular success in viticulture. Large resource base: coal, iron ore, bauxite, and most other minerals. Protectionism abandoned to open up Australian markets. Concentration on trade with Asia: China's expanding demand for minerals spurred a return to strong economic growth after the 1997

Asian financial crisis. China now rivals Japan as Australia's major trading partner. Upward trend in Asian visitor arrivals has strengthened tourism.

INSIGHT: Sydney has the world's largest suburban area, a conurbation so vast that the city is twice as large as Beijing and six times the size of Rome



Austria



Bordering eight countries in the heart of Europe, Austria was created in 1918 after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Neutral after World War II, it joined the EU in 1995.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly mountainous. Alps and foothills cover the west and south. Lowlands in the east are part of the Danube River basin.



CLIMATE

Temperate continental climate. The western Alpine regions have colder winters and more rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Though Austrians speak German, they like to stress their distinctive identity in relation to Germany. Vienna is a major cultural center. Minorities are few; there are some ethnic Croats, Slovenes, and Hungarians, plus refugees from conflict in former Yugoslavia. Though strongly Roman Catholic, Austrian society is less conservative than some southern German *Länder*. Class divisions remain strong.



THE ECONOMY

Large manufacturing base, despite lack of energy resources. The skilled labor force is key to high-tech exports. Eurozone membership since 2002 has boosted investment.



INSIGHT: Many of the world's great composers were Austrian, including Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, and Strauss



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Austria

DATE OF FORMATION: 1918

CAPITAL: Vienna

POPULATION: 8.36 million

TOTAL AREA: 32,378 sq. miles
(83,858 sq. km)

DENSITY: 262 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: German*, Croatian, Slovenian, Hungarian (Magyar)

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 78%, nonreligious 9%, other 8%, Protestant 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Austrian 93%, Croat, Slovene, and Hungarian 6%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Azerbaijan



Situated on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, it was the first Soviet republic to declare independence in 1991. Territorial disputes with Armenia have dominated politics since.



GEOGRAPHY

Caucasus Mountains in west, including Naxçivan exclave south of Armenia. Flat, low-lying terrain on the coast of the Caspian Sea.



CLIMATE

Low rainfall. Continental, with bitter winters, inland. Subtropical in coastal regions.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Azeris, a Muslim people with ethnic links to Turks, form a large majority. Thousands of Armenians, Russians, and Jews have left since independence. Influx of half a million Azeri refugees fleeing war with Armenia over the disputed enclave of Nagorno Karabakh. Armenians there operate with de facto independence. The status of women deteriorated after the fall of communism but they are slowly regaining their position.



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas exports drive economic growth. Pipeline to Ceyhan, Turkey, has opened up European market. Severe pollution in Baku.



INSIGHT: *The fire-worshipping Zoroastrian faith originated in Azerbaijan in the 6th century BCE*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Azerbaijan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Baku

POPULATION: 8.83 million

TOTAL AREA: 33,436 sq. miles
(86,600 sq. km)

DENSITY: 264 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Azeri*, Russian

RELIGIONS: Shi'a Muslim 68%,
Sunni Muslim 26%, Russian Orthodox 3%,
Armenian Orthodox 2%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Azeri 91%, other 3%,
Lazs 2%, Russian 2%, Armenian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: New manat = 100 gopik

Bahamas



Located off the Florida coast in the western Atlantic, the Bahamas comprises an archipelago of some 700 islands and 2400 cays, only around 30 of which are inhabited.



GEOGRAPHY

Long, mainly flat coral formations with a few low hills. Some islands have pine forests, lagoons, and mangrove swamps.



CLIMATE

Subtropical. Hot summers and mild winters. Heavy rainfall, especially in summer. Hurricanes can strike in July–December.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Over 60% of the population live on New Providence. Tourism employs over 40% of the labor force. There are marked wealth disparities, from urban professionals in the banking sector to traditional fishermen on outlying islands and illegal Haitian and Cuban immigrants. More women are now entering the professions. Government priorities are tackling narcotics trafficking and money laundering.



THE ECONOMY

Major tourist destination, especially for US visitors. Financial services: banking and insurance.



INSIGHT: *The country's extensive merchant fleet consists mainly of "flag-of-convenience" vessels registered by foreign owners*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Commonwealth of the Bahamas

DATE OF FORMATION: 1973

CAPITAL: Nassau

POPULATION: 341,700

TOTAL AREA: 5382 sq. miles
(13,940 sq. km)

DENSITY: 88 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, English Creole, French Creole

RELIGIONS: Baptist 32%, other 29%, Anglican 20%, Roman Catholic 19%

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 85%, other 15%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Bahamian dollar = 100 cents



Bahrain

Bahrain is an archipelago of 49 islands between the Qatar peninsula and the Saudi Arabian mainland. Only three of the islands are inhabited. It was the first Gulf emirate to export oil.



GEOGRAPHY

All islands are low-lying. The largest, Bahrain Island, is mainly sandy plains and salt marshes.



CLIMATE

Summers are hot and humid. Winters are mild. Low rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The key social division is between the Shi'a majority and Sunni minority. Sunnis hold the best jobs in bureaucracy and business while Shi'as tend to do menial work. The al-Khalifa family has ruled since 1783, but transformed Bahrain into a constitutional monarchy, with limited democracy, in 2002. Bahrain is socially liberal.



INSIGHT: *The 16 Hawar Islands were awarded to Bahrain in 2001 after a lengthy dispute with Qatar*



THE ECONOMY

Main exports are refined petroleum and aluminum products. As oil reserves run out, natural gas is of increasing importance. Major Middle East offshore banking center, hit by global banking crisis in 2008–2009.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Bahrain

DATE OF FORMATION: 1971

CAPITAL: Manama

POPULATION: 791,500

TOTAL AREA: 239 sq. miles
(620 sq. km)

DENSITY: 2899 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Shi'a) 99%,
other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Bahraini 70%, Iranian,
Indian, and Pakistani 24%, other 6%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed monarchical-
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Bahraini dinar = 1000 fils

Bangladesh



Bangladesh lies at the north end of the Bay of Bengal and frequently suffers devastating flood, cyclones, and famine. It seceded from Pakistan in 1971.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly flat alluvial plains and deltas of the Brahmaputra and Ganges rivers. Southeast coasts are fringed with mangrove forests.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid. During the monsoon, water levels can rise 20 ft (6 m) above sea level.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

After a period of military rule, Bangladesh returned to democracy in 1991; political instability has continued, however, and corruption is a major problem. Half of the population live in poverty, but living standards are improving. Women are prominent in politics, but their rights are neglected.



INSIGHT: *Torrential monsoon rains flood two-thirds of the country every year*



THE ECONOMY

Agriculture is vulnerable to unpredictable climate. Bangladesh accounts for 90% of world jute fiber exports. Poor infrastructure deters investment. Growing textile industry.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: People's Republic of Bangladesh

DATE OF FORMATION: 1971

CAPITAL: Dhaka

POPULATION: 162 million

TOTAL AREA: 55,598 sq. miles
(144,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 3138 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bengali*, Urdu, Chakma, Marma, Garo, Khasi, Santhali, Tripuri, Mro

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 87%, Hindu 12%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Bengali 98%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Taka = 100 poisha



Barbados

Barbados is the most easterly of the Caribbean islands. Once solely inhabited by the native Arawak, Barbados was first colonized by British settlers in the 1620s.



GEOGRAPHY

Encircled by coral reefs. Fertile and predominantly flat, with a few gentle hills to the north.



CLIMATE

Moderate tropical climate. Sunnier and drier than its more mountainous neighbors.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Some latent tension between white community, which controls politics and much of the economy, and majority black population, but violence is rare. Increasing social mobility has enabled black Barbadians to enter the professions. Despite political stability, and good welfare and education services, pockets of abject poverty remain.



INSIGHT: Barbados retains a strong British influence and is referred to by its neighbors as "Little England"



THE ECONOMY

Well-developed tourism sector based on climate and accessibility. Financial services, offshore banking, and information processing are key industries. Sugar production has dwindled. High cost of living.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Barbados

DATE OF FORMATION: 1966

CAPITAL: Bridgetown

POPULATION: 255,900

TOTAL AREA: 166 sq. miles
(430 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1542 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bajan (Barbadian English), English*

RELIGIONS: Anglican 40%, other 24%, nonreligious 17%, Pentecostal 8%, Methodist 7%, Roman Catholic 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 92%, other 8%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Barbados dollar = 100 cents

Belarus



Literally “White Russia,” Belarus lies landlocked in eastern Europe. It reluctantly became independent when the USSR broke up in 1991. It has few resources other than agriculture.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly plains and low hills. The Dnieper and Dvina rivers drain the eastern lowlands. Vast Pripet Marshes in the southwest.



CLIMATE

Extreme continental climate. Winters are long, sub-freezing, but mainly dry; summers are hot.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Only 2% of people are non-Slav, so ethnic tension is minimal. Russian culture dominates. Belarus was the slowest ex-Soviet state to implement political reform; President Lukashenko has been labeled as Europe’s last dictator. Enthusiasm for a merger with Russia has waned. Wealth is held by a small ex-Communist elite. Fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine still seriously affects health and the environment.



THE ECONOMY

Low unemployment. Industry outmoded and mainly state-owned. Depends on Russia for energy and raw materials: tensions over natural gas prices.



INSIGHT: *The number of cancer and leukemia cases soared after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Belarus

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Minsk

POPULATION: 9.63 million

TOTAL AREA: 80,154 sq. miles
(207,600 sq. km)

DENSITY: 120 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Belarussian*, Russian*

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 60%, other (including Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant) 32%, Roman Catholic 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Belarussian 81%, Russian 11%, Polish 4%, Ukrainian 2%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Belarussian rouble = 100 kopeks



Belgium



Belgium lies in northwestern Europe. Its history has been marked by tensions between the majority Dutch-speaking (Flemish) and minority French-speaking (Walloon) communities.



GEOGRAPHY

Low-lying coastal plain covers two-thirds of the country. Land becomes hilly and forested in the southeast (Ardennes) region.



CLIMATE

Maritime climate with Gulf Stream influences. Temperatures are mild, with heavy cloud cover and rain. More rainfall and weather fluctuations at the coast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Since 1970, Flemish regions have become more prosperous than those of the minority Walloons, overturning traditional roles and increasing friction. Belgium moved to a federal system from 1980 in order to contain tensions, but recent fractious politics have raised doubts over the union's survival. Brussels hosts key European Union institutions.



THE ECONOMY

Variety of industrial exports, including steel, glassware, cut diamonds, and textiles. Very high levels of public debt. Bureaucracy larger than European average.

INSIGHT: *The Ardennes region, in the southeast of the country, is famous for its forests, lakes, and cuisine*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Belgium

DATE OF FORMATION: 1830

CAPITAL: Brussels

POPULATION: 10.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 11,780 sq. miles
(30,510 sq. km)

DENSITY: 840 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Dutch*, French*, German*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 88%, other 10%, Muslim 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Flemish 58%, Walloon 33%, other 6%, Italian 2%, Moroccan 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Belize



Belize lies on the eastern shore of the Yucatan Peninsula. Formerly called British Honduras, Belize was the last Central American country to gain its independence, in 1981.



GEOGRAPHY

Almost half the land area is forested. Low mountains in southeast. Flat swampy coastal plains.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Very hot and humid, with May–December rainy season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

English-speaking black Creoles are outnumbered by Spanish speakers, including native *mestizos* and immigrants from neighboring states. The Creoles have traditionally dominated society, but high levels of emigration to the US have weakened their influence. The Afro-Carib *garifuna* have their own language. Corruption, and trafficking of people and narcotics, are major problems.



INSIGHT: *Belize's barrier reef is the second-largest in the world*



THE ECONOMY

Tourism, agriculture, and offshore banking. Oil extraction began in 2005. Sugar, textiles, lobsters, and shrimp are exported. Serious hurricane damage is a recurring problem.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Belize

DATE OF FORMATION: 1981

CAPITAL: Belmopan

POPULATION: 306,800

TOTAL AREA: 8867 sq. miles
(22,966 sq. km)

DENSITY: 35 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English Creole, Spanish, English*, Mayan, Garifuna (Carib)

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 62%, other 20%, Anglican 12%, Methodist 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 49%, Creole 25%, Maya 11%, other 9%, Garifuna 6%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Belizean dollar = 100 cents



Benin



Benin stretches north from the west African coast. In 1990, Benin became one of the pioneers of African democratization, ending 17 years of one-party Marxist-Leninist rule.



GEOGRAPHY

Sandy coastal region. Numerous lagoons lie just behind the shoreline. Forested plateaus inland. Mountains in the northwest.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid in the south. Two rainy seasons. Hot, dusty *harmattan* winds blow during the December–February dry season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

There are 42 different ethnic groups. The southern Fon have tended to dominate politics. Other major groups are the Adja and Yoruba. The northern Fulani follow a nomadic lifestyle. North–south tension is mainly due to the south being more developed. French culture, centered on Cotonou, is highly prized. Substantial differences in wealth reflect a strongly hierarchical society.



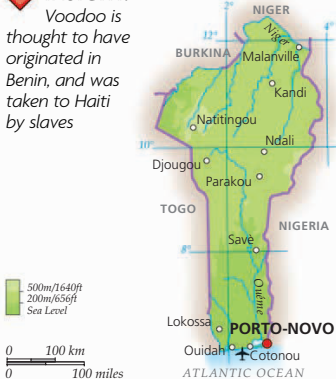
THE ECONOMY

Strong agricultural sector: cash crops include cotton, oil palm, and cashew nuts. Large-scale smuggling is a serious problem. France is the main aid donor.



INSIGHT:

Voodoo is thought to have originated in Benin, and was taken to Haiti by slaves



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Benin

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Porto-Novo

POPULATION: 8.94 million

TOTAL AREA: 43,483 sq. miles
(112,620 sq. km)

DENSITY: 209 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Fon, Bariba, Yoruba, Adja, Houeda, Somba, French*

RELIGIONS: 50%, Muslim 30%,
Christian 20%

ETHNIC MIX: Fon 41%, other 21%,
Adja 16%, Yoruba 12%, Bariba 10%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Bhutan



Perched in the eastern Himalayas between India and China lies the landlocked Kingdom of Bhutan. It is largely closed to the outside world to protect its culture; TV was banned until 1999.



GEOGRAPHY

Low, tropical southern strip rising through fertile central valleys to high Himalayas in the north. Around 70% of the land is forested.



CLIMATE

South is tropical, north is alpine, cold, and harsh. Central valleys warmer in east than west.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The king was absolute monarch until 1998, and the first democratic elections were held a decade later. Most people are devoutly Buddhist and originate from Tibet. The Hindu Nepalese settled in the south. Bhutan has 20 languages. In 1988, Dzongkha (a Tibetan dialect native to just 16% of the people) was made the official language. The Nepalese community regard this as "cultural imperialism," causing considerable ethnic tensions.



THE ECONOMY

Reliant on India for trade. Most people farm their own plots of land and herd cattle and yaks. Steep land unsuited for cultivation. Development of cash crops for Asian markets.



INSIGHT: In 2004 Bhutan became the first country in the world to ban smoking and the sale of tobacco



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Bhutan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1656

CAPITAL: Thimphu

POPULATION: 697,300

TOTAL AREA: 18,147 sq. miles
(47,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 38 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Dzongkha*, Nepali

RELIGIONS: Mahayana Buddhist 70%,
Hindu 24%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Bhute 50%, other 25%,
Nepalese 25%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed monarchical–
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Ngultrum = 100 chetrum



Bolivia

Landlocked high in central South America, Bolivia is one of the region's poorest countries. La Paz is the world's highest capital city: 13,385 feet (3631 m) above sea level.



GEOGRAPHY

A high windswept plateau, the *altiplano*, lies between two Andean mountain ranges. Semiarid grasslands to the east; dense tropical forests to the north.



CLIMATE

Altiplano has extreme tropical climate, with night-frost in winter. North and east are hot and humid.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The indigenous majority faces widespread discrimination. Wealthy Spanish-descended families have traditionally controlled the economy. Amerindian Evo Morales, president from 2005, pledged to cut poverty, legalize coca, and redistribute land.



INSIGHT: *Between 1825 and 1982*

Bolivia averaged more than one armed coup a year



THE ECONOMY

Gold, silver, zinc, tin, oil, natural gas: all vulnerable to world price fluctuations. Social issues and nationalization of natural gas sector deter investors. Major coca producer. Lack of manufacturing. Rich eastern provinces want autonomy.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Bolivia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1825

CAPITAL: La Paz (administrative);

Sucre (judicial)

POPULATION: 9.86 million

TOTAL AREA: 424,162 sq. miles

(1,098,580 sq. km)

DENSITY: 24 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Aymara*, Quechua*, Spanish*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 93%,
other 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Quechua 37%, Aymara 32%,
mixed 13%, European 10%, other 8%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Boliviano = 100 centavos

Bosnia & Herzegovina



Perched in the highlands of southeast Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the focus of the bitter ethnic conflict which accompanied the early 1990s dissolution of the Yugoslav state.



GEOGRAPHY

Hills and mountains, with narrow river valleys. Lowlands in the north. Mainly deciduous forest covers about half of the total area.



CLIMATE

Continental. Hot summers and cold, often snowy winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Despite sharing the same origin and spoken language, Bosnians have been divided by history between Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosniaks. Ethnic cleansing was practiced by all sides in the civil war, displacing about 60% of the population. Hopes for EU integration will require further ethnic reconciliation.



INSIGHT: *The murder of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo in 1914 triggered the First World War*



THE ECONOMY

Potential to recover status as a thriving market economy with a strong manufacturing base, but still struggles with resettling refugees and the legacy of war. Little investment.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Bosnia and Herzegovina

DATE OF FORMATION: 1992

CAPITAL: Sarajevo

POPULATION: 3.77 million

TOTAL AREA: 19,741 sq. miles
(51,129 sq. km)

DENSITY: 191 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bosnian*, Serbian*, Croatian*

RELIGIONS: Muslim 40%, Orthodox Christian 31%, Catholic 15%, other 14%

ETHNIC MIX: Bosniak 44%, Serb 31%, Croat 17%, other 8%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Marka = 100 pfeninga



Botswana



Landlocked in the heart of southern Africa, Botswana boasts the world's largest inland river delta. Diamonds provide potential wealth, but the country is crippled by HIV/AIDS.



GEOGRAPHY

Lies on vast plateau, high above sea level. Hills in the east. Kalahari Desert in center and southwest. Swamps and salt pans elsewhere and in Okavango Basin.



CLIMATE

Dry and prone to drought. Summer wet season, April–October. Winters are warm, with cold nights.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The nomadic San bushmen, the first inhabitants, are marginalized. One in four adults are living with HIV/AIDS; only Swaziland is worse affected. Life expectancy is around 50 years. Diamond revenue has widened wealth inequalities.



INSIGHT: *Water, Botswana's most precious resource, is honored in the name of the currency – pula*



THE ECONOMY

Overreliance on diamonds: vulnerable to world price fluctuations. Beef is exported to Europe. Tourism aimed at wealthy wildlife enthusiasts. AIDS is devastating the population.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Botswana

DATE OF FORMATION: 1966

CAPITAL: Gaborone

POPULATION: 1.95 million

TOTAL AREA: 231,803 sq. miles
(600,370 sq. km)

DENSITY: 9 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Setswana, English*, Shona, San, Khoikhoi, isiNdebele

RELIGIONS: Traditional beliefs 50%, Christian (mainly Protestant) 30%, other (including Muslim) 20%

ETHNIC MIX: Tswana 98%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Pula = 100 thebe

Brazil



Covering almost half of South America, Brazil is the site of the world's largest and ecologically most important rainforest. The country has immense natural and economic resources.



GEOGRAPHY

Rainforest grows around the massive Amazon River and its delta, covering almost half of Brazil's total land area. Apart from the basin of the River Plate to the south, the rest of the country consists of highlands. The mountainous east is part-forested and part-desert. The coastal plain in the southeast has swampy areas. The Atlantic coastline is 1240 miles (2000 km) long.



CLIMATE

Brazil's share of the Amazon Basin has a model tropical equatorial climate, with high temperatures and rainfall all year round. The Brazilian plateau has far greater seasonal variation. The dry northeast suffers frequent droughts, though coastal regions are occasionally flooded by bouts of torrential rain. The south has hot summers and cool winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Diverse population includes Amerindians, black people of African descent, European immigrants, and those of mixed race. Amerindians suffer prejudice from most other groups. Shanty towns in the cities attract poor migrants from the northeast. Urban crime, violent land disputes, and unchecked development in Amazonia tarnish Brazil's image as a modern nation. Catholicism and the family unit remain strong.



THE ECONOMY

Dominant regional economy. Huge potential for growth based on abundant natural resources. A leading exporter of coffee, sugar, and orange juice. Social tension threatens stability. Infrastructure needs investment.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federative Rep. of Brazil

DATE OF FORMATION: 1822

CAPITAL: Brasília

POPULATION: 194 million

TOTAL AREA: 3,286,470 sq. miles
(8,511,965 sq. km)

DENSITY: 59 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Portuguese*, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, other

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 74%, Protestant 15%, atheist 7%, other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: White 54%, Mixed race 38%, Black 6%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Real = 100 centavos

INSIGHT: Since 1900, a third of Brazil's indigenous Amerindian groups have become extinct due to disease, starvation, or the forceful taking of land by miners, loggers, and settlers



Brunei



Lying on the northern coast of the island of Borneo, Brunei is surrounded and divided in two by the Malaysian state of Sarawak. It has been independent since 1984.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly dense lowland rainforest and mangrove swamps, with some mountains in the southeast.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Six-month rainy season with very high humidity.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Malays benefit from positive discrimination. Many in the Chinese community are stateless. Since a failed rebellion in 1962, Brunei has been ruled by decree of the sultan. In 1990, "Malay Muslim Monarchy" was introduced, promoting Islamic values as state ideology. Women, less restricted than in some Muslim states, usually wear headscarves but not the veil.



INSIGHT: *The sultan spent US\$350 million building the world's largest palace at Bandar Seri Begawan*



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas production has brought one of the world's highest standards of living. Massive overseas investments. Major consumer of high-tech hi-fi, video equipment, and Western designer clothes.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Sultanate of Brunei

DATE OF FORMATION: 1984

CAPITAL: Bandar Seri Begawan

POPULATION: 399,700

TOTAL AREA: 2228 sq. miles
(5770 sq. km)

DENSITY: 196 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Malay*, English, Chinese

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 66%, Buddhist 14%, other 10%, Christian 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Malay 67%, Chinese 16%, other 11%, indigenous 6%

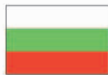
GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Brunei dollar = 100 cents



Bulgaria

Located in southeastern Europe, Bulgaria was under communist rule from 1947 to 1989. Political and economic reform since then enabled it to join the EU in 2007.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountains run east–west across center and along southern border. Danube plain in north, Thracian plain in southeast. Black Sea to the east.



CLIMATE

Warm summers and snowy winters, especially in mountains. East winds bring seasonal extremes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The communists tried forcibly to suppress cultural identities, leading to a large exodus of Bulgarian Turks in 1989. Later privatization programs left many Turks landless, prompting further emigration. Roma suffer discrimination at all levels of society. Women have equal rights in theory, but society remains patriarchal. EU accession included caveats demanding further action against organized crime, human trafficking, and corruption.



THE ECONOMY

Good agricultural production, including grapes, for well-developed wine industry, and tobacco. Expertise in software development. Industry and infrastructure are outdated.



INSIGHT: *Archaeologists have found evidence of wine-making in Bulgaria dating back over 5000 years*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Bulgaria

DATE OF FORMATION: 1908

CAPITAL: Sofia

POPULATION: 7.54 million

TOTAL AREA: 42,822 sq. miles
(110,910 sq. km)

DENSITY: 177 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bulgarian*, Turkish, Romani

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 83%, Muslim 12%, other 4%, Catholic 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Bulgarian 84%, Turkish 9%, Roma 5%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Lev = 100 stotinki

Burkina



The west African state of Burkina was known as Upper Volta until 1984. It became a multiparty state in 1991, though former military ruler Blaise Compaoré remains in power.



GEOGRAPHY

The Sahara covers the north of the country. The south is largely savanna. The three main rivers are the Black, White, and Red Voltas.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Dry, cool weather November–February. Erratic rain March–April, mostly in southeast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

No single ethnic group is dominant, but the Mossi, from around Ouagadougou, have always played an important part in government. The people from the west are much more ethnically mixed. Extreme poverty has led to a strong sense of egalitarianism. Most women are still denied access to education, though their absence from public life belies their real power and social influence.



THE ECONOMY

Cotton is the major cash crop, but the encroaching Sahara Desert is restricting agriculture. Beneficiary of foreign debt cancellation plans.



INSIGHT: Droughts and poor soils mean that many Burkinabes seek work southward in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Burkina Faso

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Ouagadougou

POPULATION: 15.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 105,869 sq. miles
(274,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 149 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Mossi, Fulani, French*, Tuareg, Dyula, Songhai

RELIGIONS: Muslim 55%,
Traditional beliefs 35%, Roman Catholic 9%,
other Christian 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Other 52%, Mossi 48%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Burundi



Small, densely populated and landlocked, Burundi lies just south of the equator, on the Nile–Congo watershed in central Africa. Its people have the world's lowest per capita income.



GEOGRAPHY

Hilly with high plateaus in center and savanna in the east. Great Rift Valley on western side.



CLIMATE

Temperate, with high humidity. Heavy and frequent rainfall, mostly October–May. Highlands have frost.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Burundi has been riven by ethnic conflict between majority Hutu and the Tutsi, who controlled the army – with repeated large-scale massacres: hundreds of thousands of people have died since 1993. The constitution now guarantees an ethnic balance in the government and army. Twa pygmies were not involved in the conflict.



INSIGHT: *Burundi's fertility rate is one of the highest in Africa. On average, women have seven children*



THE ECONOMY

Overwhelmingly agricultural economy, mostly subsistence. Small quantities of gold and tungsten. Potential of oil in Lake Tanganyika. Little prospect of lasting stability.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Burundi

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Bujumbura

POPULATION: 8.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 10,745 sq. miles
(27,830 sq. km)

DENSITY: 838 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kirundi*, French*,
Kiswahili

RELIGIONS: Christian (mainly Roman Catholic)
60%, traditional beliefs 39%,
Muslim 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Hutu 85%, Tutsi 14%, Twa 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Burundi franc = 100 centimes

Cambodia



Located on the Indochinese peninsula in southeast Asia, Cambodia has emerged from genocide, civil war, and invasion from Vietnam. Tourists are returning. Rice is the principal crop.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly low-lying basin. Tônlé Sap (Great Lake) drains into the Mekong River. Forested mountains and plateau east of the Mekong.



CLIMATE

Tropical. High temperatures throughout the year. Heavy rainfall during May–October monsoon.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Devastated by US bombing, then by the Khmer Rouge regime, whose extreme Marxist program killed over a million between 1975 and 1979, Cambodia then endured further civil conflict and Vietnamese occupation. The effects are still felt, reflected in the high rates of orphans, widows, and land-mine victims. A fragile stability has lasted since elections in 1993. King Norodom Sihanouk, a key figure in politics, abdicated in 2004.



THE ECONOMY

Economy is heavily aid-reliant, still recovering from civil war. Exports rubber and timber. Self-sufficient in rice. Garment industry is growing. Land disputes and corruption issues.



INSIGHT: Cambodia has many impressive temples, dating from when the country was the center of the Khmer Empire



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Cambodia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1953

CAPITAL: Phnom Penh

POPULATION: 14.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 69,900 sq. miles
(181,040 sq. km)

DENSITY: 217 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Khmer*, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cham

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 93%, Muslim 6%, Christian 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Khmer 90%, other 5%, Vietnamese 4%, Chinese 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Riel = 100 sen



Cameroon



Situated in the corner of the Gulf of Guinea, Cameroon was effectively a one-party state for 30 years. Multiparty elections, since 1992, regularly return that same party to power.



GEOGRAPHY

Over half the land is forested: equatorial rainforest in north, evergreen forest and wooded savanna in south. Mountains in the west.



CLIMATE

South is equatorial, with plentiful rainfall, declining inland. Far north is beset by drought.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Around 230 ethnic groups; no single group is dominant. The Bamileke is the largest, though it has never held political power. North-south tensions are diminished by the ethnic diversity. There is more rivalry between majority French- and minority English-speakers.



INSIGHT: Cameroon's name

derives from the Portuguese word *camarões*, after the shrimp fished by the early European explorers



THE ECONOMY

Oil reserves. Very diversified agricultural economy – timber, cocoa, bananas, coffee. Fuel smuggling from Nigeria undermines refinery profits. Corruption. Port for Chad and CAR.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Cameroon

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Yaoundé

POPULATION: 19.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 183,567 sq. miles
(475,400 sq. km)

DENSITY: 109 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bamileke, Fang, Fulani, French*, English*

RELIGIONS: Catholic 35%, traditional beliefs 25%, Muslim 22%, Protestant 18%

ETHNIC MIX: Highlanders 31%, other 39%, equatorial Bantu 19%, Kirdi 11%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Canada



Canada extends from the Arctic to its US border along the 49th parallel. Unified under British rule from 1763, its development and expansion attracted large-scale immigration.



GEOGRAPHY

The world's second-largest country, stretching north to Cape Colombia on Ellesmere Island, south to Lake Erie, and across five time zones from the Pacific seaboard to Newfoundland. Arctic tundra and islands in the far north give way southward to forests, interspersed with lakes and rivers, and then the vast Canadian Shield, which covers over half the area of Canada. Rocky Mountains in west, beyond which are the Coast Mountains, islands, and fjords. Fertile lowlands in the east.



CLIMATE

Ranges from polar and subpolar in the north, to continental in the south. Winters in the interior are colder and longer than on the coast, with temperatures well below freezing and deep snow; summers are hotter. Pacific coast has the mildest winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Two-thirds of the population live in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence lowlands, fostering some shared cultural values with the neighboring US. Important differences, however, include wider welfare provision and Commonwealth membership. The French-speaking Québécois wish to preserve their culture and language from further Anglicization, and demand to be recognized as a “distinct society.” The government welcomes ethnic diversity among immigrants, promoting a policy that encourages each group to maintain its own culture. Land claims made by the indigenous peoples are being redressed. Nunavut, an Inuit-governed territory that covers nearly a quarter of Canada's land area, was created from a portion of the Northwest Territories in 1999. Women are well represented at most levels of business and government.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Canada
DATE OF FORMATION: 1867
CAPITAL: Ottawa
POPULATION: 33.6 million
TOTAL AREA: 3,855,171 sq. miles (9,984,670 sq. km)
DENSITY: 9 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, French*, other
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 44%, Protestant 29%, other 27%
ETHNIC ORIGIN: British, French, and other European 87%, Asian 9%, Amerindian, Métis, and Inuit 4%
GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system
CURRENCY: Canadian dollar = 100 cents

THE ECONOMY

Wide-ranging resources, providing exports, cheap energy, and raw materials for manufacturing, underpin a high standard of living, with smaller wealth disparities than in the US. Prices for primary exports fluctuate, but the high oil price has encouraged development of Alberta's vast oil fields. Manufactured exports have flourished under growing global

competition, especially since the creation of the NAFTA free trade area, but reliance on the US market makes the Canadian economy vulnerable to US slowdowns. Unemployment rose during the 2009 recession.

INSIGHT: *The Magnetic North Pole, where the dipping needle of a compass stands still, migrates across northern Canada*



Cape Verde



Off the west coast of Africa, in the Atlantic Ocean, lies the group of islands that make up Cape Verde, a Portuguese colony until it gained independence in 1975.



GEOGRAPHY

Ten main islands and eight smaller islets, all of volcanic origin. Mostly mountainous, with steep cliffs and rocky headlands.



CLIMATE

Warm, and very dry. Subject to droughts that can sometimes last for years at a time.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are of mixed Portuguese–African origin; the rest are descendants of African slaves or more recent immigrants. Creolization of the culture negates ethnic tensions. Almost half of the population live on Santiago. Around 700,000 Cape Verdeans live abroad, mostly in the US.



INSIGHT: *Poor soils and lack of surface water mean that Cape Verde is dependent on food aid*



THE ECONOMY

Most people are subsistence farmers. Clothing is the main export. No natural resources. Mid-Atlantic location ensures work maintaining ships and planes.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Cape Verde

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Praia

POPULATION: 505,600

TOTAL AREA: 1557 sq. miles
(4033 sq. km)

DENSITY: 325 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Creole, Portuguese*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 97%,
other 2%, Protestant 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestiço 60%, African 30%,
other 10%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed presidential-
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: C.V. escudo = 100 centavos



Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a landlocked country lying between the basins of the Chad and Congo Rivers. Politics has suffered frequent interruption by military coups.



GEOGRAPHY

Comprises a low plateau, covered by scrub or savanna. North is arid. Equatorial rainforests in the south. The Ubangi River forms the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



CLIMATE

The south is equatorial; the north is hot and dry. Rain occurs all year round, with heaviest falls between July and October.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Baya and Banda are the largest ethnic groups, but the lingua franca is Sango, a trading creole spoken by the minorities in the south who have traditionally provided most political leaders. Less than 2% of the population live in the north. Recent rebellions by northern groups have displaced thousands of people.



THE ECONOMY

Dominated by subsistence farming. Exports include diamonds, cotton, timber, and coffee. Aid needed to support refugees. Instability and poor infrastructure hinder progress.



INSIGHT: "Emperor" Bokassa's eccentric rule from 1965 to 1979 was followed by military dictatorship until democracy was restored in 1993



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Central African Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Bangui

POPULATION: 4.42 million

TOTAL AREA: 240,534 sq. miles
(622,984 sq. km)

DENSITY: 18 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Sango, Banda, Gbaya, French*

RELIGIONS: Traditional beliefs 60%, Christian 35%, Muslim 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Baya 34%, Banda 27%, Mandjia 21%, Sara 10%, other 8%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Chad



Landlocked in north-central Africa, Chad has had a turbulent history since independence from France in 1960. Intermittent periods of civil war followed a military coup in 1975.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Mostly plateaus sloping west-ward to Lake Chad. Northern third is Sahara. Tibesti Mountains in north rise to 10,826 ft (3300 m).

CLIMATE

Three distinct zones: desert in north, semiarid region in center, and tropics in south.

PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Half the population live in the southern fifth of Chad. The northern third has only 100,000 people, mainly Muslim Touhou nomads. Democracy was restored in 1996 by ex-coup leader Idriss Déby. Instability has continued, first with tension between Muslims and southern Christians and, more recently, with rebellions in the east.



INSIGHT: Lake Chad is slowly drying up – it is now estimated to be just 10% of the size it was in 1970

**THE ECONOMY**

The discovery of oil, and the opening of a pipeline to the coast via Cameroon, are transforming Chad's economy, though the new wealth is unlikely to reach most people.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Chad

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: N'djamena

POPULATION: 11.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 495,752 sq. miles
(1,284,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 23 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French*, Sara, Arabic*, Maba
RELIGIONS: Muslim 55%, traditional beliefs 35%, Christian 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Other 30%, Sara 28%, Mayo-Kebbi 12%, Arab 12%, Ouaddai 9%, Kanem-Bornou 9%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Chile

Chile extends in a ribbon down the west coast of South America. It returned to elected civilian rule in 1989 after a referendum forced out military dictator General Pinochet.



GEOGRAPHY

Fertile valleys in the center between the coast and the Andes. Atacama Desert in north. Deep-sea channels, lakes, and fjords in south.



CLIMATE

Arid in the north. Hot, dry summers and mild winters in the center. Higher Andean peaks have glaciers and year-round snow. Very wet and stormy in the south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are of mixed Spanish–Amerindian descent, and are highly urbanized. Almost a third of the population live in Santiago, many in large slums. There are three main indigenous groups, including the Rapa Nui of Easter Island. General Pinochet's dictatorship was brutally repressive, but the business and middle classes prospered.



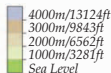
THE ECONOMY

World's biggest copper producer. Growth in foreign investment due to political stability. Exports include wine, fishmeal, fruits, and salmon.



INSIGHT:

Chile's Atacama Desert is the driest place on Earth



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Chile

DATE OF FORMATION: 1818

CAPITAL: Santiago

POPULATION: 17 million

TOTAL AREA: 292,258 sq. miles
(756,950 sq. km)

DENSITY: 59 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Amerindian languages

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 80%, other and nonreligious 20%

ETHNIC MIX: Mixed and European 90%, other Amerindian 9%, Mapuche 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Chilean peso = 100 centavos

China



Covering a vast area of eastern Asia, China is bordered by 14 countries. A one-party Communist state since 1949, it has recently become a dominant force in global manufacturing.



GEOGRAPHY

A land of huge physical diversity, China has a long Pacific coastline to the east. Two-thirds of the country is uplands. The southwestern mountains include Tibet, the world's highest plateau; in the northwest, the Tien Shan Mountains separate the arid Tarim and Dzungarian basins. The rolling hills and plains of the low-lying east are home to two-thirds of the population.

CLIMATE



China is divided into two main climatic regions. The north and west are semiarid or arid, with extreme temperature variations. The south and east are warmer and more humid, with year-round rainfall. Winter temperatures vary with latitude, but are warmest on the subtropical southeast coast. Summer temperatures are more uniform, rising above 70°F (21°C).



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are Han Chinese. The rest of the population belong to one of 55 minority nationalities, or recognized ethnic groups. Many of these groups have a disproportionate political significance as they live in strategic border areas. A policy of resettling Han Chinese in remote regions is deeply resented and has led to uprisings in Xinjiang and Tibet. The government has relaxed the one-child family policy, particularly for minorities, after some small groups were brought close to extinction. Chinese society is patriarchal in practice, and generations tend to live together. However, economic change is breaking down the social controls of the Mao Zedong era. Divorce and unemployment are rising; materialism has replaced the puritanism of the past. A resurgence of religious belief has occurred in recent years.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: People's Rep. of China

DATE OF FORMATION: 960

CAPITAL: Beijing

POPULATION: 1.35 billion

TOTAL AREA: 3,705,386 sq. miles
(9,596,960 sq. km)

DENSITY: 374 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Mandarin*, other

RELIGIONS: Nonreligious 59%, traditional beliefs 20%, other 13%, Buddhist 6%, Muslim 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Han 92%, other 4%, Hui 1%, Miao 1%, Manchu 1%, Zhuang 1%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Yuan = 10 jiao = 100 fen

THE ECONOMY

China has shifted from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy; liberalization has gone furthest in the south where the emerging business class is based. The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001–2005) emphasized rapid development; the Eleventh Plan aims to reduce wealth disparities. Exports led sustained GDP growth from 2003; China has become the world's third-largest

economy. Faced with a global downturn from 2008, Chinese stimulus packages have boosted domestic spending. The buying power of China's huge market for raw materials and consumer goods could drive global recovery.

INSIGHT: *China has the world's oldest continuous civilization. Its recorded history began 4000 years ago, with the Shang dynasty*



Colombia



Lying in northwest South America, Colombia has coastlines on both the Caribbean and the Pacific. It is primarily noted for its coffee, emeralds, gold, and cocaine trafficking.



GEOGRAPHY

The densely forested and almost uninhabited east is separated from the western coastal plains by the Andes, which divide into three ranges (*cordilleras*) with intervening valleys.



CLIMATE

Coastal plains are hot and wet. The highlands are much cooler. The equatorial east has two wet seasons.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Colombians are of mixed blood. Blacks and Amerindians have the least political representation. Civil conflict over four and a half decades has displaced millions of people, and left over 200,000 dead. The fighting is deeply entwined with the narcotics trade. Violent crime is common.



INSIGHT: Over 50% of the world's cocaine is produced in Colombia



THE ECONOMY

Healthy and diversified export sector – includes coffee and coal. Considerable growth potential, but drugs-related violence and corruption deter foreign investors.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Colombia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1819

CAPITAL: Bogotá

POPULATION: 45.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 439,733 sq. miles
(1,138,910 sq. km)

DENSITY: 114 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Wayuu, Páez, other Amerindian languages

RELIGIONS: Catholic 95%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 58%, White 20%, European-African 14%, African 4%, African-Amerindian 3%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Col. peso = 100 centavos



Off the east African coast, between Mozambique and Madagascar, lies the archipelago republic of the Comoros, comprising three main islands and a number of smaller islets.



GEOGRAPHY

Main islands are of volcanic origin and are heavily forested. The remainder are coral atolls.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid all year round, especially on the coasts. November to May is hottest and wettest period.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Comoros has absorbed a diversity of people over the years, including Africans, Arabs, Polynesians, and Persians. There have also been Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Indian immigrants. Ethnic discord is rare, but regional tensions between islands are marked. The country is politically unstable and there have been frequent coups. A fragile new federal system has been in place since 2002. Wealth is concentrated within a political and business elite.



THE ECONOMY

One of the world's poorest countries. Subsistence-level farming. Vanilla and cloves are main cash crops. Lack of basic infrastructure.



INSIGHT: *The Comoros is the world's largest producer of ylang-ylang – an extract from tree blossom used in manufacturing perfumes*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Union of the Comoros

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Moroni

POPULATION: 676,000

TOTAL AREA: 838 sq. miles
(2170 sq. km)

DENSITY: 785 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Comoran*, French*

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 98%, Roman Catholic 1%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Comoran 97%, other 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Comoros franc = 100 centimes

Congo



Astride the equator in west-central Africa, this former French colony emerged from 20 years of Marxist-Leninist rule in 1990. Democracy was soon overshadowed by years of violence.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly forest- or savanna-covered plateaus, drained by the Ubangi and Congo river systems. Narrow coastal plain is lined with sand dunes and lagoons.



CLIMATE

Hot, tropical. Temperatures rarely fall below 86°F (30°C). Two wet and two dry seasons. Rainfall is heaviest south of the equator.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

One of the most tribally conscious and heavily urbanized countries in Africa, with most people living in the Brazzaville–Pointe-Noire region. Main tensions are between the Bakongo in the north and the Mbochi in the south. Relative peace was secured in 1999, and “ninja” rebels in the Pool region, around Brazzaville, signed a peace deal in 2003.



THE ECONOMY

Oil provides over 95% of export revenue. Timber is extracted. Foreign debt high. Substantial industrial base around Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.



INSIGHT: In 1970, Congo became the first African country to declare itself a communist state



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Congo

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Brazzaville

POPULATION: 3.68 million

TOTAL AREA: 132,046 sq. miles
(342,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 28 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kongo, Teke, Lingala, French*

RELIGIONS: Traditional 50%, Catholic 25%, Protestant 23%, Muslim 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Bakongo 51%, Teke 17%, other 16%, Mbochi 11%, Mbédé 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Congo, (DRC)

Lying in east-central Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of Africa's largest countries, and the scene of one of its worst regional wars.



GEOGRAPHY

Rainforested basin of Congo River occupies 60% of the land area. High mountain ranges and lakes stretch down the eastern border.



CLIMATE

Tropical and humid. Distinct wet and dry seasons south of the equator. The north is mainly wet.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

There are 12 main ethnic groups and around 190 smaller ones. The indigenous forest pygmies, victimized in the war, are now a marginalized group. Civil war from 1996 drew neighboring countries into a bloody conflict. Tentative peace in 2003 was soon undermined by rebels in the east.



INSIGHT: *The DRC's rainforests comprise 6% of the world's, and 50% of Africa's, remaining woodlands*



THE ECONOMY

Rich resource base: minerals (copper, coltan, cobalt, diamonds) dominate export earnings. War and decades of corruption have caused economic collapse. Food aid is needed to ease humanitarian crisis.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Republic of the Congo

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Kinshasa

POPULATION: 66 million

TOTAL AREA: 905,563 sq. miles
(2,345,410 sq. km)

DENSITY: 75 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kiswahili, Tshiluba, French*

RELIGIONS: Christian 70%, Kimbanguist 10%, traditional beliefs 10%, Muslim 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Other 55%, Mongo, Luba, Kongo, and Mangbetu-Azande 45%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Congolese franc = 100 centimes

Costa Rica



Costa Rica, Central America's most stable country, is rich in pristine scenery and exotic wildlife. Its neutrality in foreign affairs is long-standing, but it has strong ties with the US.



GEOGRAPHY

Coastal plains of swamp and savanna rise to a fertile central plateau, which leads to a mountain range with active volcanic peaks.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid in coastal regions. Temperate central uplands. High annual rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are *mestizo*, of partly Spanish origin. There is a black, English-speaking minority and around 35,000 indigenous Amerindians. Plantation owners are the wealthiest group, while one in six people live in poverty. Nonetheless, living standards are high for the region, and education and healthcare provision is good.



INSIGHT: *Costa Rica's 1949 constitution bans a national army*



THE ECONOMY

Stability has attracted multinationals. The main exports are bananas, pineapples, coffee, and beef, but all are vulnerable to fluctuating world prices. History of high inflation. Pioneer of eco-tourism. Pledged to be carbon neutral by 2021.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Costa Rica

DATE OF FORMATION: 1838

CAPITAL: San José

POPULATION: 4.58 million

TOTAL AREA: 19,730 sq. miles
(51,100 sq. km)

DENSITY: 232 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, English Creole, Bribri, Cabecar

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 76%, other (including Protestant) 24%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo and European 96%, Black 2%, Chinese 1%, Amerindian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: C.R. colón = 100 céntimos



Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

One of the larger nations along the coast of west Africa, Côte d'Ivoire is the world's biggest cocoa producer. An image of stability was rocked by civil war in 2002–2005.



GEOGRAPHY

Sandy coastal strip backed by a largely rainforested interior, and a savanna plateau in the north.



CLIMATE

High temperatures all year round. South has two wet seasons; north has one, with lower rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

There are over 60 tribes; the largest is the Baoulé (an Akan group). Southern Christians harbor resentment against non-Ivorian Muslims in the north. Plantations employ millions of migrant workers (including children), though thousands fled back to Burkina during the civil war. Rebels joined a transitional government in 2007.



INSIGHT: *The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro is the largest church in the world*



THE ECONOMY

Main crops are cocoa and coffee. Oil is now major export. Good infrastructure. Lack of professional training. Instability deters investment.



1000m/3281ft
500m/1640ft
200m/656ft
Sea Level

0 100 km
0 100 miles

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Yamoussoukro

POPULATION: 21.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 124,502 sq. miles
(322,460 sq. km)

DENSITY: 172 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Akan, French*, Krou, other

RELIGIONS: Muslim 38%, Christian 31%, traditional beliefs 25%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Akan 42%, Voltaïque 18%, Mandé du Nord 17%, Krou 11%, other 12%

GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Croatia



Though it was controlled by Hungary from medieval times and was a part of the Yugoslav state for much of the 20th century, Croatia has a very strong national identity.



GEOGRAPHY

Rocky, mountainous Adriatic coastline is dotted with islands. Interior is a mixture of wooded mountains and broad valleys.



CLIMATE

The interior has a temperate continental climate. Mediterranean climate along the Adriatic coast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Croats are distinguished from Bosniaks and Serbs by their Roman Catholic faith and use of the Latin alphabet. Many Serbs fled Croatia during the early 1990s conflict that accompanied Yugoslavia's breakup. Minority rights and fighting organized crime are key issues in the quest for EU membership by 2011.



INSIGHT: Croatia only regained control of Serb-occupied Eastern Slavonia, around Vukovar, in 1998



THE ECONOMY

The war cost the economy an estimated \$50 billion. Unemployment has been persistently high. Corruption deters foreign investment. Tourism is mainly on the Dalmatian coast.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Croatia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Zagreb

POPULATION: 4.42 million

TOTAL AREA: 21,831 sq. miles
(56,542 sq. km)

DENSITY: 202 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Croatian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 88%,
other 7%, Orthodox Christian 4%,
Muslim 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Croat 90%, other 5%,
Serb 5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Kuna = 100 lipa



Cuba



A former Spanish colony, Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean. It became the only communist country in the Americas after Fidel Castro seized power in 1959.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly fertile plains and basins. Three mountainous areas. Forests of pine and mahogany cover one-quarter of the country.



CLIMATE

Subtropical. Hot all year round, and very hot in summer. Heaviest rainfall in the mountains. Hurricanes can strike in the fall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Castro regime has reduced formerly extreme wealth disparities, given education a high priority, and established an efficient health service. Political dissent, however, is not tolerated. A dramatic fall in living standards since the late 1980s has led thousands of Cubans to flee to the US, to seek asylum. About 70% of Cubans are of Spanish descent. There is little ethnic tension.



THE ECONOMY

Sugar industry now superseded by tourism and nickel. US trade embargo, since 1961. Shortages drive a black market. Parallel use of US dollar (1993–2004), and then convertible peso, has boosted investment but created a “dollarized” elite.



INSIGHT: *Fidel Castro had become the world's longest-serving non-hereditary ruler before handing power to his brother Raúl in 2006*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Cuba

DATE OF FORMATION: 1902

CAPITAL: Havana

POPULATION: 11.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 42,803 sq. miles
(110,860 sq. km)

DENSITY: 262 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish

RELIGIONS: Nonreligious 49%, Roman Catholic 40%, atheist 6%, other 4%, Protestant 1%

ETHNIC MIX: White 66%, European–African 22%, Black 12%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Cuban peso = 100 centavos

Cyprus



Cyprus lies south of Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean. Since 1974, it has been partitioned between the Turkish-occupied north and the Greek-Cypriot south.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountains in the center-west give way to a fertile plain in the east, flanked by hills to the northeast.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean. Summers are hot and dry. Winters are mild, with snow in the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Greek majority practice Orthodox Christianity. Since the 16th century, a minority community of Turkish Muslims has lived in the north of the island. In 1974 Turkish troops occupied the north and proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), but it is recognized only by Turkey. Over 100,000 mainland Turks have settled there since. UN-led mediation failed to reunite the island ahead of EU accession in 2004, so the north was left out of membership.



THE ECONOMY

Financial services and tourism. Eurozone member with best economic performance and lowest unemployment in 2009 downturn. North suffers from lack of investment and lower wages.



INSIGHT: *The Green Line, which separates north from south, was opened for the first time in 2003*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Cyprus

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Nicosia

POPULATION: 871,000

TOTAL AREA: 3571 sq. miles
(9250 sq. km)

DENSITY: 244 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Greek*, Turkish*

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 78%,
Muslim 18%, other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Greek 81%, Turkish 11%,
other 8%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential systems

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents
(new Turkish lira in TRNC = 100 kurus)



Czech Republic

Once part of Czechoslovakia, a central European communist state in 1948–1989, the Czech Republic peacefully dissolved its union with Slovakia in 1993. It joined the EU in 2004.



GEOGRAPHY

Landlocked in central Europe. Bohemia, the western territory, is a plateau surrounded by mountains. Moravia, in the east, is characterized by hills and lowlands.



CLIMATE

Cool, sometimes cold winters and warm summer months, which bring most of the annual rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Secular and urban society, with high divorce rates. Czechs make up the vast majority of the population, while the next largest group are Moravians. The 300,000 Slovaks left after partition are now permitted dual citizenship. Ethnic tensions are few, but there is widespread hostility toward the Roma minority. A new commercial elite is emerging alongside postcommunist entrepreneurs.



THE ECONOMY

Traditional heavy industries (machinery, iron, car-making) have been successfully privatized. Prague attracts tourists. Skilled workforce. Will join euro in 2013 at earliest.



INSIGHT: *Charles University in Prague was founded in the 13th century*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Czech Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1993

CAPITAL: Prague

POPULATION: 10.4 million

TOTAL AREA: 30,450 sq. miles
(78,866 sq. km)

DENSITY: 341 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Czech*, Slovak, Hungarian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 39%,
atheist 38%, other 18%, Protestant 3%,
Hussite 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Czech 90%, other 4%,
Moravian 4%, Slovak 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Czech koruna = 100 haleru

Denmark



Denmark occupies the Jutland peninsula and over 400 islands in southern Scandinavia. Greenland and the Faeroe Islands are self-governing associated territories.



GEOGRAPHY

Fertile farmland covers two-thirds of the terrain, which is among the flattest in the world. About 100 islands are inhabited.



CLIMATE

Damp, temperate climate with mild summers and cold, wet winters. Rainfall is moderate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Income distribution is the most even in the West: society is egalitarian with few tensions. Cultural clashes have arisen with immigrant minorities. Almost all women now work and Denmark is a world leader in childcare provision. Marriage is becoming less common, even for couples with children.



INSIGHT: Denmark is Europe's oldest kingdom – the monarchy dates back to the 10th century



THE ECONOMY

Natural gas and oil reserves. Skilled workforce key to high-tech industrial success. Pork, bacon, dairy products are exported. Opted not to join the euro, though its currency is pegged.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Denmark

DATE OF FORMATION: 950

CAPITAL: Copenhagen

POPULATION: 5.47 million

TOTAL AREA: 16,639 sq. miles
(43,094 sq. km)

DENSITY: 334 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Danish

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 89%,
other 10%, Roman Catholic 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Danish 96%, other (including
Scandinavian and Turkish) 3%, Faeroese
and Inuit 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Danish krone = 100 øre



Djibouti

A city-state with a desert hinterland, Djibouti lies in northeast Africa on the Red Sea. Once known as the French Territory of the Afars and Issas, independence came in 1977.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly low-lying desert and semidesert, with a volcanic mountain range in the north.



CLIMATE

Almost no rain, though the monsoon is very humid. The 109°F (45°C) heat of summer is unbearable.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The main ethnic groups are the Issas in the south, and the nomadic Afars in the north. Tensions between them developed into a guerrilla war in 1991–1994. Smaller tribal groups make up the rest of the population, and the rural peoples are mostly nomadic. Wealth is concentrated in Djibouti city. France exerts considerable influence in Djibouti, supporting it financially and maintaining a naval base and a military garrison.

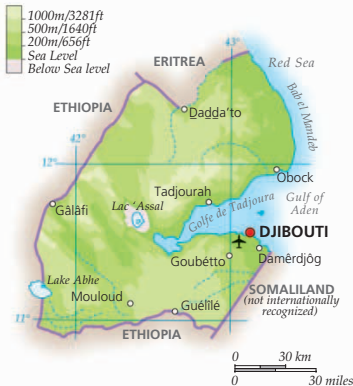


THE ECONOMY

Djibouti's major assets are its ports in a key Red Sea location.



INSIGHT: *Chewing the leaves of the mildly narcotic qat shrub is an age-old social ritual in Djibouti*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Djibouti

DATE OF FORMATION: 1977

CAPITAL: Djibouti

POPULATION: 864,200

TOTAL AREA: 8494 sq. miles
(22,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 97 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Somali, Afar, French*, Arabic*

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 94%, Christian 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Issa 60%, Afar 35%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Djibouti franc = 100 centimes

Dominica



Dominica is renowned as the Caribbean island that resisted European colonization until the 18th century. It achieved independence from the UK in 1978.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountainous and densely forested. Volcanic activity has given the land very fertile soils, hot springs, geysers, and black sand beaches.



CLIMATE

Tropical, cooled by constant trade winds. Heavy annual rainfall. Tropical depressions and hurricanes are likely June–November.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority of Dominicans are descendants of African slaves brought over to work on banana plantations. The Carib Territory on the northeast of the island is home to the only surviving indigenous community in the Caribbean. Wealth disparities are not as marked as elsewhere in the region, but the alleviation of poverty has become a major plank of government policy.

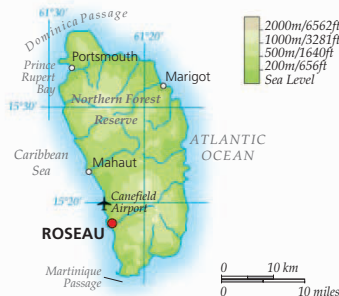


THE ECONOMY

Based on bananas, but has lost preferential access to EU market. Some diversification: flowers, coffee, fruit. Agriculture vulnerable to hurricanes. Eco-tourism. Some offshore banking.



INSIGHT: *Dominica is known as "Nature Island," due to its spectacular flora and fauna*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Commonwealth of Dominica

DATE OF FORMATION: 1978

CAPITAL: Roseau

POPULATION: 70,400

TOTAL AREA: 291 sq. miles (754 sq. km)

DENSITY: 243 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French Creole, English*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 77%, Protestant 15%, other 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 87%, Mixed race 9%, Carib 3%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: East Caribbean dollar = 100 cents



Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. Spanish-speaking, it seeks closer ties to the anglophone West Indies.



GEOGRAPHY

Highlands and rainforested mountains – including the highest peak in the Caribbean, Pico Duarte – interspersed with fertile valleys. Extensive coastal plain in the east.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid close to sea level, cooler at altitude. Heavy rainfall, especially in the northeast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

White landowners – especially those descended from the original Spanish settlers – form the wealthy elite. Mixed-race majority controls commerce and forms the bulk of the professional middle classes. White and mixed-race women are entering the professions. Great disparities of wealth exist; the black and Haitian-immigrant populations occupy the bottom of the social ladder.



THE ECONOMY

Mining (nickel and gold), sugar, and textiles. Tourism, remittances, and exports all rely heavily on US market. Hidden economy based on transshipment of narcotics to the US.



INSIGHT: *Santo Domingo is the oldest city in the Americas. It was founded in 1496 by the brother of Christopher Columbus*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Dominican Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1865

CAPITAL: Santo Domingo

POPULATION: 10.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 18,679 sq. miles
(48,380 sq. km)

DENSITY: 540 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, French Creole

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 92%, other and nonreligious 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Mixed race 75%, White 15%, Black 10%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Dominican Republic peso
= 100 centavos

East Timor



East Timor occupies the once Portuguese-owned eastern half of the island of Timor. Invaded by Indonesia in 1975, it became independent in 2002 following a long struggle.



GEOGRAPHY

A narrow coastal plain gives way to forested highlands. The mountain backbone rises to 9715 ft (2963 m).



CLIMATE

Tropical. Heavy rain in wet season (December–March), then dry and hot, particularly in the north.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The population is almost entirely Roman Catholic. The Timorese are a mix of Malay and Papuan peoples, and many indigenous Papuan tribes survive. There is an urban Chinese minority, and ethnic Indonesian settlers became numerous after annexation in 1975. Preindependence violence in 1999 was politically rather than ethnically motivated. Women do not have access to the professions and levels of domestic violence are notably high. Living standards are low.

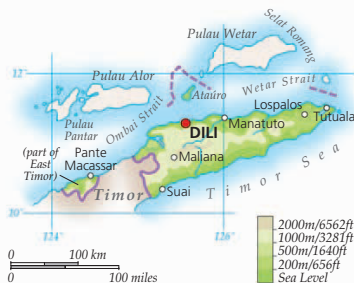


THE ECONOMY

Widespread poverty. Violence in 1999 damaged infrastructure. Riots in 2006 undermined stability, further deterring foreign investment. Agreement with Australia on division of oil revenue from the Timor Sea.



INSIGHT: Once dependent on sandalwood, the economy is being transformed by oil under the Timor Sea



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

DATE OF FORMATION: 2002

CAPITAL: Dili

POPULATION: 1.13 million

TOTAL AREA: 5756 sq. miles
(14,874 sq. km)

DENSITY: 201 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Tetum*, Bahasa Indonesia, Portuguese*

RELIGIONS: Catholic 95%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Malay/Papuan groups c. 85%, Indonesian c. 13%, Chinese 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents



Once part of the Inca heartland, Ecuador lies on the western coast of South America. Its territory includes the fascinating Galápagos Islands, 610 miles (970 km) to the west.



GEOGRAPHY

Broad coastal plain, inter-Andean central highlands, dense jungle in upper Amazon basin.



CLIMATE

The climate is hot and moist on the coast, cool in the Andes, and hot equatorial in the Amazon basin.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are of Amerindian-Spanish extraction (mestizo). Black communities exist on the coast. The strong and largely unified Amerindian movement leads the pressure for social reform; one in eight people live in extreme poverty. Recent left-wing policies have given greater rights to women, the poor, and Amerindians.



INSIGHT: *Darwin's study on the Galápagos Islands in 1856 played a major part in his theory of evolution*



THE ECONOMY

Oil provides half of export earnings. World's biggest banana exporter. US dollar offers stability, but less control. Defaulted on debt in 2008, prioritizing social spending.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Ecuador

DATE OF FORMATION: 1830

CAPITAL: Quito

POPULATION: 13.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 109,483 sq. miles
(283,560 sq. km)

DENSITY: 127 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Quechua, other Amerindian languages

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 93%; Protestant, Jewish, and other 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 55%, Amerindian 25%, White 10%, Black 10%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents

Egypt



Occupying the northeast corner of Africa, Egypt is divided by the highly fertile Nile Valley. Its essentially pro-Western, military-backed regime is being challenged by Islamic fundamentalists.



GEOGRAPHY

Fertile Nile Valley separates arid Libyan Desert from smaller semiarid eastern desert. Sinai peninsula has mountains in south.



CLIMATE

Summers are very hot, but winters are cooler. Rainfall is negligible, except on the coast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Despite a long tradition of ethnic and religious tolerance, the rise of Islam has sparked clashes between Muslims and Copts (Coptic Christianity is one of the Church's earliest branches). Women play a full part in education and the economy, though this is threatened by Islamism. Rapidly growing population is a problem. Poverty is rife around Cairo.



INSIGHT: *In 450 BCE Herodotus visited the already-ancient pyramids*



THE ECONOMY

Oil and gas. Cotton. Tolls from the Suez Canal. Successful tourist industry, in spite of terrorist attacks. High birth-rate and rural poverty.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Arab Republic of Egypt

DATE OF FORMATION: 1936

CAPITAL: Cairo

POPULATION: 83 million

TOTAL AREA: 386,660 sq. miles
(1,001,450 sq. km)

DENSITY: 216 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, French, English, Berber

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 94%, Coptic Christian and other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Egyptian 99%, other (Nubian, Armenian, Greek, Berber) 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Egyptian pound = 100 piastres



El Salvador

El Salvador is Central America's smallest and most densely populated country. Already struggling to recover from a civil war in the 1980s, it was badly struck by earthquakes in 2001.



GEOGRAPHY

El Salvador is a narrow coastal belt backed by two mountain ranges. There is a central plateau. The country is located within a seismic zone, and there are more than 20 volcanic peaks.



CLIMATE

Tropical coastal belt is very hot, with seasonal rains. Cooler, temperate climate in highlands.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population is largely mestizo; ethnic tensions are few. The 1981–1991 civil war was fought between the US-backed right-wing government and left-wing FMLN guerrillas, over gross economic disparities, which still exist despite some reform. During the war, 75,000 people died, many of whom were unarmed civilians, and human rights abuses were widespread. The FMLN won the presidency in 2009.



THE ECONOMY

Coffee, sugar. Garment industry. Remittances from overseas. Frequent natural disasters damage infrastructure and homes and deepen country's reliance on aid. Five-year anti-poverty program for north from 2007.



INSIGHT: *Independent since 1841, El Salvador is named after Jesus Christ, "the savior" of Christians*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of El Salvador

DATE OF FORMATION: 1841

CAPITAL: San Salvador

POPULATION: 6.16 million

TOTAL AREA: 8124 sq. miles
(21,040 sq. km)

DENSITY: 770 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 80%,
Evangelical 18%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 94%, Amerindian 5%,
White 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Salvadorean colón
= 100 centavos; US dollar = 100 cents

Equatorial Guinea



Comprising the mainland territory of Río Muni and five islands on the west coast of central Africa, Equatorial Guinea, despite its name, lies just north of the equator.



GEOGRAPHY

The islands are mountainous and volcanic. The mainland is lower, with mangrove swamps along the coast.



CLIMATE

The island of Bioko is extremely wet and humid. The mainland is only marginally drier and cooler.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa. Río Muni is sparsely populated and most people there are Fang, an ethnic group also found in Cameroon and northern Gabon. Bioko is populated by Bubi and a minority of Creoles known as Fernandinos. Tensions between the two territories have been reignited by the discovery of oil off Bioko. Wealth is concentrated in the ruling clan; oil revenue in the last decade has made little impact on most people.

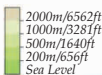


THE ECONOMY

Oil and gas now account for 97% of exports; the government has promised to reinvest the new funds in development. Timber, cocoa, coffee.



INSIGHT: *In 2003, state radio declared President Obiang Nguema to be "like God in Heaven"*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Equatorial Guinea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1968

CAPITAL: Malabo

POPULATION: 676,300

TOTAL AREA: 10,830 sq. miles
(28,051 sq. km)

DENSITY: 62 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Fang, Bubi, French*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Fang 85%, other 11%, Bubi 4%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Eritrea



Lying along the southwest shore of the Red Sea, Eritrea won a long war for independence from Ethiopia in 1993. The two neighbors fought a bitter border war in 1998–2000.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly consists of rugged mountains, bush, and the Danakil Desert, which falls below sea level.



CLIMATE

Warm in the mountains; desert areas are hot. Droughts from July onward are common.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Tigrinya-speakers, mainly Orthodox Christians, are the most numerous of nine main ethnic groups. A strong sense of nationhood has been forged by war. Women played a vital role in combat. Over 80% of people are subsistence farmers. Multiparty elections, expected since 1997, have been persistently postponed.



INSIGHT: *Eritrea is the only country to secede successfully in postcolonial Africa*



THE ECONOMY

Legacy of disruption and destruction from wars; resettlement of refugees. Susceptible to drought and famine: dependent on food aid. Most of the population live at subsistence level. Potential for extraction of gold, copper, and oil. Red Sea location: port at Massawa.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: State of Eritrea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1993

CAPITAL: Asmara

POPULATION: 5.07 million

TOTAL AREA: 46,842 sq. miles
(121,320 sq. km)

DENSITY: 112 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Tigrinya*, English*, Tigre, Afar, Arabic*, Bilen, Kunama, other

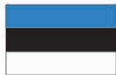
RELIGIONS: Christian 45%, Muslim 45%, other 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Tigray 50%, Tigre 31%, other 9%, Saho 5%, Afar 5%

GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime

CURRENCY: Nakfa = 100 cents

Estonia



The smallest and most Western-oriented of the former Soviet-ruled Baltic states, Estonia is also the most developed, but its standard of living is well below the EU average.



GEOGRAPHY

Estonia's terrain is flat, boggy, and partly forested, with over 1500 islands. Lake Peipus forms much of the eastern border with Russia.



CLIMATE

Maritime, with some continental extremes. Harsh winters, with cool summers and damp springs.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Estonians are related ethnically and linguistically to the Finns. Friction between ethnic Estonians and the large Russian minority led to a reassertion of Estonian culture and language. Outright discrimination against the Russian language was only ended in 2000. Estonians are predominantly Lutheran. Families are small and divorce rates are high. Market reforms have increased prosperity; a few people have become very rich.



THE ECONOMY

Timber and oil shale. Currency pegged to euro: hopes to join in 2011. Good productivity. Strong growth accompanied EU accession, but first EU country to enter recession in 2008.



INSIGHT: Estonia pioneered online voting in 2007, and plans voting by cell phone in 2011



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Estonia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Tallinn

POPULATION: 1.34 million

TOTAL AREA: 17,462 sq. miles
(45,226 sq. km)

DENSITY: 77 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Estonian*, Russian

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 56%,
Orthodox Christian 25%,
other 19%

ETHNIC MIX: Estonian 68%, Russian 26%,
other 4%, Ukrainian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Kroon = 100 senti



Ethiopia



The former empire of Ethiopia once dominated northeast Africa. A Marxist regime in 1974–1991, now a free-market democracy, it has suffered economic, civil, and natural crises.



GEOGRAPHY

Great Rift Valley divides mountainous northwest region from desert lowlands in northeast and southeast. Ethiopian Plateau is drained mainly by the Blue Nile.



CLIMATE

Moderate, with summer rains. Highlands are warm, with night frost and snowfalls on the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

76 Ethiopian nationalities speak 286 languages. Oromo (or Gallas) are the largest group. Ethnic representation is a major political issue. Orthodox Christianity has a very ancient history in Ethiopia. Former emperor Haile Selassie inspired Rastafarianism.

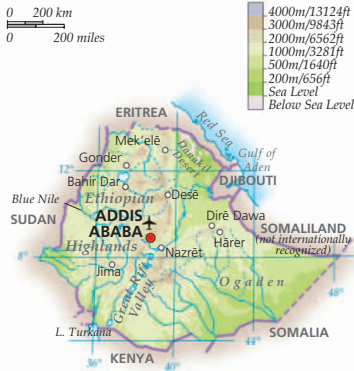


INSIGHT: *King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba are said to have founded the Kingdom of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) c. 1000 BCE*



THE ECONOMY

Overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture; coffee is main export crop. War-damaged infrastructure and periodic serious droughts and famines undermine growth. There is a heavy reliance on food aid. Landlocked since secession of Eritrea.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1896

CAPITAL: Addis Ababa

POPULATION: 82.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 435,184 sq. miles

(1,127,127 sq. km)

DENSITY: 193 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Amharic*, Tigrinya, other

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 40%, Muslim 40%, traditional 15%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Oromo 32%, Amhara 30%, other 26%, Tigray 6%, Somali 6%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Ethiopian birr = 100 cents

Fiji



A volcanic archipelago in the South Pacific, with two large islands and 880 islets. Tensions between native Fijians and the Indian minority have sparked a succession of coups.



GEOGRAPHY

Main islands are mountainous, fringed by coral reefs. Remainder are limestone and coral formations.



CLIMATE

Tropical. High temperatures all year round. Cyclones are a hazard.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The British introduced workers from India in the late 19th century, and by 1946 their descendants outnumbered the indigenous Fijian population. Ethnic-Fijian nationalism is strong. Many Indo-Fijians left after the 1987 coup, restoring ethnic Fijians to a majority. In 2000, the first Indian-dominated government was ousted. The army led another coup in 2006. Women are lobbying for more rights.



INSIGHT: Both Fijians and Indians

practice fire-walking; Indians walk on hot embers, Fijians on heated stones



THE ECONOMY

Tourism was main sector, though damaged by instability. Coups have also caused international isolation. All sectors struggling: sugar production, gold mining, textiles, timber, and commercial fishing.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Fiji Islands

DATE OF FORMATION: 1970

CAPITAL: Suva

POPULATION: 849,200

TOTAL AREA: 7054 sq. miles
(18,270 sq. km)

DENSITY: 120 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Fijian, English*, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu

RELIGIONS: Hindu 38%, Methodist 37%, Catholic 9%, Muslim 8%, other 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Melanesian (Fijian) 51%, Indian 44%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime

CURRENCY: Fiji dollar = 100 cents



Finland



Finland's language and national identity have been influenced by both its Scandinavian and Russian neighbors. Once aligned with the USSR, Finland is now a member of the EU.



GEOGRAPHY

South and center are flat, with low hills and many lakes. Uplands and low mountains in the north. 60% of the land area is forested.



CLIMATE

Long, harsh winters with frequent snowfalls. Short, warmer summers. Rainfall is low, and decreases northward.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

One in four of the population lives in the Greater Helsinki region. Swedish-speakers live mainly in the Åland Islands in the southwest. The Sámi (Lapps) lead a seminomadic existence inside the Arctic Circle. Women make up 48% of the labor force, continuing a long tradition of equality between the sexes. Families tend to be close-knit, though marriage is becoming less common.



THE ECONOMY

Strong engineering and electronics sectors: home of Nokia. Wood, pulp, and paper production.



INSIGHT: Finland has Europe's largest inland waterway system



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Finland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1917

CAPITAL: Helsinki

POPULATION: 5.33 million

TOTAL AREA: 130,127 sq. miles
(337,030 sq. km)

DENSITY: 45 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Finnish*, Swedish*, Sámi

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 89%, other 9%, Orthodox Christian 1%, Roman Catholic 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Finnish 93%, other (including Sámi) 7%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

France



Stretching across western Europe, from the English Channel (la Manche) to the Mediterranean Sea, France was Europe's first modern republic, and is still a leading industrial power.



GEOGRAPHY

Broad plain covers northern half of the country. Tall mountain ranges in the east and southwest, with a mountainous plateau in the center.



CLIMATE

Three main climates: temperate and damp northwest; continental east; and Mediterranean south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Strong French national identity coexists with pronounced regional differences, including local languages. Immigration laws have been tightened since the 1970s, but ethnic minorities growing up in city suburbs feel increasingly alienated. New rules aim to bring more women into politics.



INSIGHT: France is the most popular tourist destination in the world, with over 80 million visitors a year



THE ECONOMY

Chemicals, electronics, heavy engineering, cars, and aircraft typify a strong and diversified export sector. World leader in cosmetics, perfumes, and quality wines. Modernized agriculture.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: French Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 987

CAPITAL: Paris

POPULATION: 62.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 211,208 sq. miles
(547,030 sq. km)

DENSITY: 294 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French*, Provençal, other

RELIGIONS: Catholic 88%, Muslim 8%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Buddhist 1%

ETHNIC MIX: French 90%, North African 6%, German 2%, Breton 1%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed presidential–parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Gabon

Gabon is a former French colony straddling the equator on Africa's west coast. Independent since 1960, it returned to multiparty politics in 1990, after 22 years of one-party rule.



GEOGRAPHY

Low plateaus and mountains lie beyond the coastal strip. Two-thirds of the land is covered by rainforest.



CLIMATE

Hot and tropical, with little distinction between seasons. Cold Benguela current cools the coast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Some 40 different languages are spoken. The Fang, who live mainly in the north, are the largest ethnic group, but have yet to gain control of the government. Oil wealth has led to the growth of an affluent middle class, but one in three people still lives in poverty. Menial jobs are done by immigrant workers. Education follows the French system. With 85% of people living in towns, Gabon is one of Africa's most urbanized countries. The government is encouraging population growth.



THE ECONOMY

Oil accounts for 80% of exports, but reserves are dwindling; not much post-oil planning. High debt problem. Tropical hardwoods and manganese.



INSIGHT: *Libreville was founded as a settlement for freed French slaves in 1849*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Gabonese Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Libreville

POPULATION: 1.47 million

TOTAL AREA: 103,346 sq. miles
(267,667 sq. km)

DENSITY: 15 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Fang, French*, Punu, other

RELIGIONS: Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) 55%, traditional beliefs 40%, other 4%, Muslim 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Fang 26%, Shira-punu 24%, other 24%, foreign 15%, Nzabi-duma 11%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Gambia



Gambia is a riverbank state on the west coast of Africa, almost entirely surrounded by Senegal. It was renowned for its stability until its government was overthrown in a coup in 1994.



GEOGRAPHY

Located on the narrow strip of land bordering the Gambia River. Long, sandy beaches are backed by mangrove swamps along the river. Savanna and tropical forests higher up.



CLIMATE

Subtropical, with wet, humid months July–October, and warm, dry season November–May.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Little tension between various ethnic groups. The largest group, the Mandinka, has traditionally held power. Islam is a strong social influence, though there is no official state religion. A small expatriate community from the UK lives on the coast. Seasonal migrants come from neighboring states to harvest groundnuts each year. Women are very active as traders.

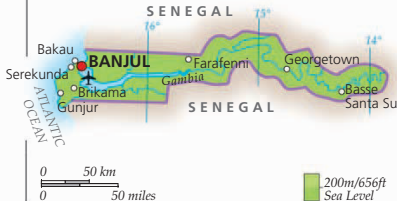


THE ECONOMY

Around 70% of the labor force is involved in agriculture. Groundnuts are the principal crop. Fish stocks are declining. Eco-tourism is promoted, though most visitors come for the beaches. Banjul is one of west Africa's finest deepwater ports: significant re-export trade. Smuggling problems.



INSIGHT: *Overfishing in the waters off Gambia and Senegal, mainly by foreign vessels, is a growing problem*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Gambia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1965

CAPITAL: Banjul

POPULATION: 1.71 million

TOTAL AREA: 4363 sq. miles
(11,300 sq. km)

DENSITY: 442 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Mandinka, Fulani, Wolof, Jola, Soninke, English*

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 90%, Christian 9%, traditional beliefs 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Mandinka 40%, Fulani 19%, Wolof 15%, Jola 11%, Serahuli 9%, other 6%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Dalasi = 100 butut



Georgia

Located on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, Georgia has been torn by civil war and ethnic disputes since achieving independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.



GEOGRAPHY

Kura Valley lies between Caucasus Mountains in the north and Lesser Caucasus range in south. Lowlands along the Black Sea coast.



CLIMATE

Subtropical along the coast, changing to continental extremes at high altitudes. Rainfall is moderate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Paternalistic society, with strong family, cultural, and literary traditions. Georgia was converted to Christianity in 326 CE. Armenians in the south are the poorest group. Civil conflicts in the early 1990s against Abkhaz and Osset separatists displaced 300,000 people. Abkhazia and South Ossetia now effectively operate as separate states, backed up by Russian forces since the 2008 war. Russia opposes Georgian hopes of joining the EU and NATO.



THE ECONOMY

Transit revenues from pipelines taking oil to the West. Long-established and booming wine industry. Political instability. Fast pace of reforms in late 2000s, at cost of high unemployment.



INSIGHT: *Western Georgia was the land of the legendary Golden Fleece of Greek mythology*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Georgia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Tbilisi

POPULATION: 4.26 million

TOTAL AREA: 26,911 sq. miles
(69,700 sq. km)

DENSITY: 158 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Georgian*, Russian, other

RELIGIONS: Georgian Orthodox 65%, Muslim 11%, Russian Orthodox 10%, Armenian Orthodox 8%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Georgian 84%, Armenian 6%, Azeri 6%, Russian 2%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Lari = 100 tetri

Germany



Europe's strongest industrial power and its most populous nation, Germany was divided after military defeat in 1945 into a free-market west and a communist east, but reunified in 1990.



GEOGRAPHY

Central European coastal plains in the north, rising to rolling hills of central region and Alps in far south.



CLIMATE

Damp, temperate in northern and central regions. Continental extremes in mountainous south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Regionalism is strong. The north is mainly Protestant, while the south is staunchly Roman Catholic. Social and economic differences still exist between east and west. Turks are the largest single ethnic minority; many came as guest workers in the 1950s–1970s. Immigration rules now favor skilled workers. Feminism is strong.



INSIGHT: *Germany's rivers and canals carry as much freight as its busy highways*



THE ECONOMY

Major exporter of electronics, heavy engineering, chemicals, and cars. Worst recession for 60 years in 2008–2009. Aging population.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Republic of Germany

DATE OF FORMATION: 1871

CAPITAL: Berlin

POPULATION: 82.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 137,846 sq. miles
(357,021 sq. km)

DENSITY: 609 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: German*, Turkish

RELIGIONS: Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 33%, other 30%, Muslim 3%

ETHNIC MIX: German 92%, other 3%, other European 3%, Turkish 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Ghana

The heartland of the ancient Ashanti kingdom, Ghana in west Africa was once known as the Gold Coast. It has experienced intermittent periods of military rule since independence in 1957.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly low-lying. The west is covered by rainforest. One of the world's largest artificial lakes – Lake Volta – was created by damming the White Volta River.



CLIMATE

Tropical. There are two wet seasons in the south, but the north is drier, and has just one.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Around 75 cultural-linguistic groups. The largest is the Akan, who include the Ashanti and Fanti peoples. Southern peoples are richer and more urban than those of the north. There are few tribal tensions. Family ties are strong. Women play a major role in market trading. The 2000 election saw Ghana's first peaceful handover of power. Poverty levels have been significantly reduced.



THE ECONOMY

World's second-largest cocoa producer. Oil discovered in 2007: on stream in 2011. Hardwood trees such as maple and sapele. Gold mining.



INSIGHT: *Ghana was the first colony in west Africa to gain independence*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Ghana

DATE OF FORMATION: 1957

CAPITAL: Accra

POPULATION: 23.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 92,100 sq. miles
(238,540 sq. km)

DENSITY: 268 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Twi, Fanti, Ewe, Ga, Adangbe, Gurma, Dagomba, English*

RELIGIONS: Christian 69%, Muslim 16%, traditional beliefs 9%, other 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Akan 49%, Mole-Dagbani 17%, Ewe 13%, other 13%, Ga 8%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Cedi = 100 pesewas

Greece



The Balkan state of Greece is bounded on three sides by the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Ionian seas. It has a strong seafaring tradition, with some of the world's richest shipowners.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Mountainous peninsula and over 2000 islands. Large plain along the mainland's Aegean coast.

**CLIMATE**

Mainly Mediterranean, with dry, hot summers. Alpine climate in northern mountain areas.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Postwar industrial development altered the dominance of agriculture and seafaring. The rural exodus to industrial cities has been stemmed but a third of the population now lives in Athens. Age-old culture and Greek Orthodox Church balance social mobility. Civil marriage and divorce became legal only in 1982.



INSIGHT: *The modern Olympics, first held in Athens in 1896, evolved from Olympia's ancient Greek games*

**THE ECONOMY**

One of Europe's leading tourist destinations. World's largest shipping fleet. Fruit, vegetables, olives. Large black economy. Public debt and budget deficit remain high.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Hellenic Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1829

CAPITAL: Athens

POPULATION: 11.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 50,942 sq. miles
(131,940 sq. km)

DENSITY: 221 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Greek*, Turkish, Macedonian, Albanian

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 98%, Muslim 1%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Greek 98%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Grenada

The southernmost of the Windward Islands, Grenada made world headlines in 1983 when the US and Caribbean allies mounted an invasion to sever links with Castro's Cuba.



GEOGRAPHY

Volcanic in origin, with densely forested central mountains. Its territory also includes the islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique.



CLIMATE

Tropical, tempered by trade winds. Hurricanes are a hazard in the July–November wet season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Grenadians are mainly of African origin; their traditions remain strong, especially on Carriacou. Inter-ethnic marriage has reduced tensions between the groups. Extended families, often headed by women, are the norm. Wealth disparities are not marked, but levels of poverty are growing.

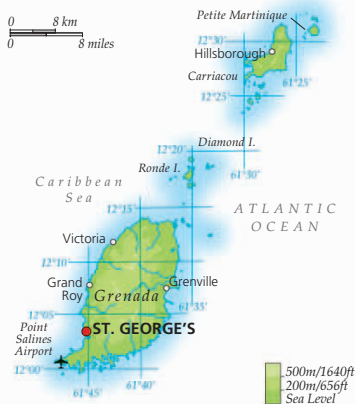


INSIGHT: Known as “the spice island of the Caribbean,” it is the world’s second-largest nutmeg producer



THE ECONOMY

Severe damage from Hurricane Ivan in 2004 to crops and 90% of buildings; reconstruction will take years. Nutmeg, cocoa, bananas, and mace. Smuggling is a serious problem.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Grenada

DATE OF FORMATION: 1974

CAPITAL: St. George's

POPULATION: 103,900

TOTAL AREA: 131 sq. miles
(340 sq. km)

DENSITY: 793 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, English Creole

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 68%,
Anglican 17%, other 15%

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 82%,
Mixed race 13%, East Indian 3%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: East Caribbean dollar =
100 cents

Guatemala



The largest and most populous nation on the Central American isthmus, Guatemala returned to civilian rule in 1986 after 32 years of violent and repressive military rule.



GEOGRAPHY

Narrow Pacific coastal plain. Central highlands with volcanoes. Short coast on the Caribbean Sea. Tropical rainforests in the north.



CLIMATE

Tropical: hot and humid in coastal regions and north. More temperate in central highlands.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Amerindians, concentrated in the highlands, form a majority. Power, wealth, and land are controlled by *ladinos* (Westernized Amerindians and *mestizos*). Catholicism is predominant, mixed with Amerindian beliefs. A third of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Literacy levels are low.



INSIGHT: *Guatemala, which means "land of trees," was the center of the ancient Mayan civilization*



THE ECONOMY

Coffee, sugar, and bananas are top exports. Tourism. Damage from natural disasters. Marked wealth inequalities inhibit domestic market.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Guatemala

DATE OF FORMATION: 1838

CAPITAL: Guatemala City

POPULATION: 14 million

TOTAL AREA: 42,042 sq. miles
(108,890 sq. km)

DENSITY: 335 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Quiché, Mam, Cakchiquel, Kekchí, Spanish*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 65%, Protestant 33%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Amerindian 60%, Mestizo 30%, other 10%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Quetzal = 100 centavos



Guinea

Located on the west coast of Africa, Guinea became the first French colony in Africa to gain independence, in 1958.

The country was under military rule from 1984 to 1995.



GEOGRAPHY

Coastal plains and mangrove swamps in west rise to forested or savanna highlands in the south. Semidesert in the north.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with a wet season April–October. Conakry is especially rainy. Hot, dry *harmattan* wind blows from Sahara during dry season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Peul and Malinké make up most of the population, but rivalries between them have allowed coastal peoples such as the Soussou to dominate politics. Daily life revolves around the extended family. Women acquired influence under Marxist party rule between 1958 and 1984, but the Muslim revival since then has reversed the trend. Private enterprise has created a business class.



THE ECONOMY

Substantial gold, diamond, and especially bauxite reserves. Cash crops: bananas, coffee, pineapples, palm oil. Poor infrastructure. Instability.



INSIGHT: *The colors of Guinea's flag represent the three words of the country's motto: work (red), justice (yellow), and solidarity (green)*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Guinea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1958

CAPITAL: Conakry

POPULATION: 10.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 94,925 sq. miles
(245,857 sq. km)

DENSITY: 106 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Pulaar, Malinké, Soussou, French*

RELIGIONS: Muslim 65%, traditional beliefs 33%, Christian 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Peul 39%, Malinké 23%, other 21%, Soussou 11%, Kissi 6%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Guinea franc = 100 centimes

Guinea-Bissau



Known as Portuguese Guinea while a colony, Guinea-Bissau lies on Africa's west coast. Since 1994, its nascent democracy has been plagued by coups and rebellions.



GEOGRAPHY

Low-lying, apart from savanna highlands in northeast. Rainforests and swamps are found along coastal areas.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with wet season May–November and dry season December–April. Hot, dry *harmattan* desert wind blows during dry season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The largest ethnic group is the Balante, who live in the south. Though only around 1% of the population, the mixed Portuguese–African *mestiços* dominate the top ranks of government and bureaucracy. Most people live and work on small family farms, grouped in self-contained villages. The bulk of the urban population live in Bissau, where they face economic hardship. Narcotics traffickers are taking advantage of the ongoing instability.



THE ECONOMY

Mostly subsistence farming. Lack of sufficiency in rice staple. Main cash crop is cashew nuts. Major cocaine transit route from South America to Europe. Offshore oil as yet untapped. Fisheries and timber potential.



INSIGHT: *In 1974, Guinea-Bissau became the first Portuguese colony to gain independence*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Rep. of Guinea-Bissau

DATE OF FORMATION: 1974

CAPITAL: Bissau

POPULATION: 1.61 million

TOTAL AREA: 13,946 sq. miles
(36,120 sq. km)

DENSITY: 148 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Portuguese Creole, Balante, Fulani, Malinke, Portuguese*

RELIGIONS: Indigenous beliefs 52%, Muslim 40%, Christian 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Balante 30%, other 24%, Fulani 20%, Mandyako 14%, Mandinka 12%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Guyana

On the northeast coast of South America, Guyana is the continent's only English-speaking country. Independent since 1966, it has close ties with the anglophone Caribbean.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly artificial coast, reclaimed by dikes and dams from swamps and tidal marshes. Forests cover 85% of the interior, rising to savanna uplands and mountains.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Coast cooled by sea breezes. Lowlands are hot, wet, and humid. Highlands are a little cooler.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Guyana is a complex multiracial society. Tension exists between the Afro-Guyanese, descended from slaves, and the Indo-Guyanese, descendants of laborers brought over after slavery was abolished. Politics is highly polarized around this split and has often spilled over into violence on the streets. Amerindian subsistence farmers are the poorest people in society and have little representation.



THE ECONOMY

Diverse exports: gold, sugar, fish, bauxite, rice, timber, diamonds. Debt relief granted. Narcotics transit zone.



INSIGHT: *Guyana means "land of many waters," reflecting its dense network of rivers*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Cooperative Republic of Guyana

DATE OF FORMATION: 1966

CAPITAL: Georgetown

POPULATION: 762,500

TOTAL AREA: 83,000 sq. miles
(214,970 sq. km)

DENSITY: 10 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Creole, Hindi, English*

RELIGIONS: Christian 57%, Hindu 33%, Muslim 9%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: East Indian 43%, Black African 30%, other 18%, Amerindian 9%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Guyanese dollar = 100 cents

Haiti



Formerly a French colony, Haiti shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. At independence in 1804, it became the world's first black republic.



GEOGRAPHY

Predominantly mountainous, with forests and fertile plains.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with rain throughout the year. Humid in coastal areas, much cooler in the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Haitians are of African descent. A few have European roots, primarily French. The rigid class structure maintains vast disparities of wealth. The majority of the population live in extreme poverty; Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Americas. A combination of political oppression and a collapsing economy led thousands to seek asylum in the US or the Dominican Republic. Though most are Christians, many Haitians practice Voodoo, which was recognized as an official religion in 2003.



THE ECONOMY

In crisis due to instability, hurricane damage, and corruption. Profiteering from narcotics trade to US. Food shortages. 70% unemployment.



INSIGHT: A slave rebellion headed by Toussaint Louverture in 1791 led to Haiti's independence



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Haiti

DATE OF FORMATION: 1804

CAPITAL: Port-au-Prince

POPULATION: 10 million

TOTAL AREA: 10,714 sq. miles
(27,750 sq. km)

DENSITY: 943 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French Creole*, French

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 80%, Protestant 16%, other 3%, nonreligious 1%; Voodoo is widely practiced

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 95%, Mixed race and European 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Gourde = 100 centimes



Honduras

Straddling the Central American isthmus, Honduras returned to democratic rule in 1984, after a period of military government. Hurricane Mitch devastated the country in 1998.



GEOGRAPHY

Narrow plains along both coasts, with a mountainous interior, cut by river valleys. Tropical forests, swamps, and lagoons in the east.



CLIMATE

Tropical coastal lowlands are hot and humid, with May–October rains. Interior is cooler and drier.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority of the population is *mestizo* (mixed race). An English-speaking *garifuna* (black) community and Miskito Amerindians struggle to preserve their rights to land along the remote Caribbean coast. Women's status remains low. Hurricane Mitch impoverished 85% of the population. Wealth inequalities are large and poverty is at the root of social tension. The army ousted the president in 2009. Violent crime is a major issue.



THE ECONOMY

Garments, coffee, bananas, and shellfish are exported. Remittances account for a fifth of GDP. Debt relief from 2005. Mineral potential. High underemployment and corruption.



INSIGHT: *The Honduran currency is named after a Lenca Indian chief who was the main leader of resistance to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Honduras

DATE OF FORMATION: 1838

CAPITAL: Tegucigalpa

POPULATION: 7.47 million

TOTAL AREA: 43,278 sq. miles
(112,090 sq. km)

DENSITY: 173 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Garifuna, English Creole

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 97%, Protestant 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 90%, Black African 5%, Amerindian 4%, White 1%

GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime

CURRENCY: Lempira = 100 centavos

Hungary



Landlocked in central Europe, Hungary was one of the twin centers of the once-great Habsburg Empire. It lost two-thirds of its historical territory for supporting Germany in World War I.



GEOGRAPHY

Landlocked. Fertile plains in east and northwest; west and north are hilly. The Danube River cuts through the country and the capital.



CLIMATE

Continental, with wet springs, late but very hot summers, and cold, cloudy winters. The transition between seasons tends to be sudden.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Hungary's population shrank in the 1990s. Mostly ethnic Hungarian (Magyar), there are small minorities of Germans, Jews, and neighboring peoples. Roma face particular discrimination. The government is greatly concerned about the fate of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. Hungary joined the EU in 2004. Working hours are longer than in western Europe.



THE ECONOMY

Strong industrial base. Hard-hit in 2007–2008 "global downturn." Currency plummeted, \$25 billion from IMF to avoid meltdown. Tough spending cuts needed to keep on path to join euro.



INSIGHT: *The Hungarian language is Asian in origin and is most closely related to Finnish*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Hungary

DATE OF FORMATION: 1918

CAPITAL: Budapest

POPULATION: 9.99 million

TOTAL AREA: 35,919 sq. miles
(93,030 sq. km)

DENSITY: 280 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hungarian*

RELIGIONS: Catholic 52%, Calvinist 16%, other 15%, nonreligious 14%, Lutheran 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Magyar 94%, other 5%, Roma 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Forint = 100 fillér



Iceland



Europe's westernmost country, Iceland's strategic ocean location straddles the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Its spectacular landscape is largely uninhabited, aside from coastal towns.



GEOGRAPHY

Grassy coastal lowlands, with fjords in the north. Central plateau of cold lava desert, geothermal springs, and glaciers. Around 200 volcanoes, with numerous geysers and solfataras.



CLIMATE

Its location in the middle of the Gulf Stream moderates the climate. Mild winters and brief, cool summers.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Icelanders share a strong national identity, with few foreign residents. Their language has changed little in 700 years, in part due to the country's isolation. There is high social mobility, free health care, and low-cost heating (geothermal and hydropower). Iceland's recent banking collapse and near financial ruin has swung the long-running debate over EU membership in favor of joining.



THE ECONOMY

Once reliant on fish. Aluminum smelting. Tourism. Banks overexposed in 2007–2008 "global downturn." Nation bankrupt, króna depreciated 90%.



INSIGHT: *The word geysir is taken from Geysir (the "gusher") in southwest Iceland*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Iceland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1944

CAPITAL: Reykjavik

POPULATION: 322,700

TOTAL AREA: 39,768 sq. miles
(103,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 8 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Icelandic*

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 93%,
nonreligious 6%,
other (mostly Christian) 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Icelandic 94%, other 5%,
Danish 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Icelandic króna = 100 aurar

India



India is the world's second most populous country and largest democracy. Despite some success in reducing the birth rate, its population will probably overtake China's by 2035.



GEOGRAPHY

Separated from northern Asia by the Himalaya mountain range, India forms a subcontinent. As well as the Himalayas, there are two other main geographical regions, the Indo-Gangetic plain, which lies between the foothills of the Himalayas and the Vindhya Mountains, and the central-southern Deccan plateau. The Ghats are smaller mountain ranges located on the east and west coasts.



CLIMATE

Varies greatly according to latitude, altitude, and season. Most of India has three seasons: hot, wet, and cool. Summer temperatures in the north can reach 104°F (40°C). Monsoon rains normally break in June, petering out in September to October. In the cool season, the weather is mainly dry. The climate in the warmer south is less variable than in the north.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

India's planners, overseeing an economic revolution, see its growing population rather than environmental constraints as the main brake on development. Nationwide awareness campaigns promote birth control but cultural and religious pressures encourage large families. Rural deprivation spurs urban migration, to live in sprawling slums. Almost 70% of people survive on less than \$2 a day. The majority of Indians are Hindu. Various attempts to reform the Hindu caste system, which determines social standing and even marriage, have met with violent opposition. Severe tensions exist between Hindus and the Muslim minority, especially in Kashmir and Gujarat. Smaller ethnic groups exist in the northeast, and many struggle for greater autonomy. Over two million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of India

DATE OF FORMATION: 1947

CAPITAL: New Delhi

POPULATION: 1.2 billion

TOTAL AREA: 1,269,338 sq. miles
(3,287,590 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1044 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hindi*, English*, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, other

RELIGIONS: Hindu 81%, Muslim 13%, Christian 2%, Sikh 2%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

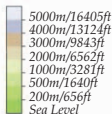
CURRENCY: Indian rupee = 100 paise

THE ECONOMY

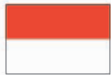
One of Asia's fastest-growing economies. Protectionism has given way to free-market economics. Tea, gems,

textiles exported. High-tech industries, outsourcing center. Success of "Bollywood" films. Cheap labor. Huge market, held back by poverty.

INSIGHT: India's national animal, the tiger, was depicted as early as 4000 years ago by the Mohenjo-Daro civilization



Indonesia



Formerly called the Dutch East Indies, Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, with 18,108 islands scattered across 3000 miles (5000 km). It is the world's fourth most populous nation.



GEOGRAPHY

Indonesia is highly mountainous, with numerous tropical swamps. The land is covered with dense rainforest, especially on New Guinea, where it remains largely unexplored. There are more than 200 volcanoes, many of which are still active. Earthquakes, eruptions, and tsunamis are hazards. The islands of Java, Bali, Lombok, Sumatra, and Borneo were once joined together by dry land, which has since been submerged by rising sea levels. Coastal lowland development distinguishes some of the large islands.



CLIMATE

The climate is predominantly tropical monsoon. Variations relate mainly to differences in latitude and altitude; hilly areas are cooler overall. Rain falls throughout the year, often in thunderstorms, but there is a relatively dry season from June to September.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The basic Melanesian–Malay ethnic division disguises a diverse society. Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, coexists with at least 250 other spoken languages or dialects. Attempts by the Javanese



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Indonesia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1949

CAPITAL: Jakarta

POPULATION: 230 million

TOTAL AREA: 741,096 sq. miles
(1,919,440 sq. km)

DENSITY: 332 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Bahasa Indonesia*, Dutch

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 87%, Christian 9%, Hindu 2%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Javanese 42%, other 31%, Sundanese 15%, coastal Malays 12%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

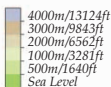
CURRENCY: Rupiah = 100 sen

political elite to suppress local cultures have been vigorously opposed, especially by the Aceh of northern Sumatra, and the Papuans. Religious and interethnic hostility is a problem, with clashes between Christians and Muslims in many areas, and discrimination against ethnic Chinese leading to mob attacks on their businesses. Gender equality is enshrined in law; women are active in public life.

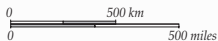


THE ECONOMY

Varied resources, especially natural gas. Cheap and plentiful labor pool. Sizable state-owned sector, and state control of prices of basic goods. Large foreign debt rescheduled. Bureaucracy and corruption damage business confidence. Regional conflicts and terrorist attacks deter tourists and investors. Piracy is rife. The 2004 tsunami, which killed over 130,000 people, devastated northern Sumatra.



INSIGHT: Indonesia has a very youthful population: almost 30% of its people are under 15 years of age



Iran



Since the 1979 Islamic fundamentalist revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the Middle Eastern country of Iran has been the world's largest theocracy.



GEOGRAPHY

High desert plateau with large salt pans in the east. West and north are mountainous. Coastal land bordering Caspian Sea is rainy and forested.



CLIMATE

Desert climate. Hot summers, and bitterly cold winters. Area around the Caspian Sea is more temperate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Many ethnic groups, including Persians, Azaris (ethnically related to Azeris), and Kurds. Militant Shi'a Islamism has dominated since the 1979 revolution. The mullahs' belief that adherence to religious values is more important than economic welfare has resulted in declining living standards. Female emancipation has been reversed. Student-backed demonstrations favoring greater liberalism have been suppressed.



THE ECONOMY

A leading oil producer: 80% of exports. Government restricts contact with the West, blocking acquisition of vital technology. High unemployment and inflation. Sizable black market.



INSIGHT: *More than a hundred offenses carry the death penalty*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Islamic Republic of Iran

DATE OF FORMATION: 1502

CAPITAL: Tehran

POPULATION: 74.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 636,293 sq. miles
(1,648,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 117 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Farsi*, Azeri, Luri, Gilaki, Mazanderani, Kurdish, Turkmen, Arabic

RELIGIONS: Shi'a Muslim 93%,

Sunni Muslim 6%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Persian 50%, Azari 24%,

other 10%, Kurd 8%, Lur and Bakhtiari 8%

GOVERNMENT: Islamic theocracy

CURRENCY: Iranian rial = 100 dinars



Iraq



Oil-rich Iraq is situated in the central Middle East. The last 50 years have been dominated by dictatorship, war, and civil strife. A US-led Coalition ousted Saddam Hussein in April 2003.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly desert. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers water fertile regions and create the southern marshland. Mountains along northeast border.



CLIMATE

Southern deserts have hot, dry summers and mild winters. North has dry summers, but winters can be harsh in the mountains. Rainfall is low.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Carved out of remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq is home to Arab Muslims (mainly Shi'a, some Sunni), northern Kurds (who were persecuted under Saddam's regime), and smaller minorities. Since Saddam's removal, sectarian violence has overshadowed the new democratic state. Now that security is improving, Coalition forces are pulling out. After years of war and sanctions, poverty is widespread.



THE ECONOMY

Economy and infrastructure have been destroyed. Given stability and aid for reconstruction, hopes of recovery rest on massive oil reserves.



INSIGHT: *As Mesopotamia, Iraq was the site where the Sumerians established the world's first civilization*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Iraq

DATE OF FORMATION: 1932

CAPITAL: Baghdad

POPULATION: 30.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 168,753 sq. miles
(437,072 sq. km)

DENSITY: 182 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Kurdish,

Turkic languages, Armenian, Assyrian

RELIGIONS: Shi'a Muslim 60%, Sunni Muslim 35%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 80%, Kurdish 15%, Turkmen 3%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: New Iraqi dinar = 1000 fils

Ireland



In the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Britain, the Irish Republic governs about 85% of the island of Ireland, with the remainder (Northern Ireland) being part of the UK.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Low mountain ranges along an irregular coastline surround an inland plain punctuated by lakes, undulating hills, and peat bogs.

**CLIMATE**

The Gulf Stream accounts for the mild and wet climate. Snow is rare, except in the mountains.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Though homogeneous in ethnicity and Roman Catholic by religion, society has undergone a major generational change, liberalizing birth control, divorce, abortion, and general attitudes. Traditionally an emigrant nation, there is now net immigration. The Good Friday peace agreement over Northern Ireland was reached in 1998.



INSIGHT: *About 40% of Irish people can speak Irish Gaelic*

**THE ECONOMY**

Strong growth until 2008, when housing bubble burst and banks faltered. Struggling to cut budget deficit. Skilled workforce. Efficient agriculture, food-processing, and electronics industries.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Ireland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1922

CAPITAL: Dublin

POPULATION: 4.52 million

TOTAL AREA: 27,135 sq. miles
(70,280 sq. km)

DENSITY: 170 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Irish Gaelic*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 88%,
other and nonreligious 9%,
Anglican 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Irish 99%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary
system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Created as a new state in 1948, Israel lies on the eastern Mediterranean. The current phase of the Palestinian intifada (armed struggle) against Israeli occupation began in 2000.



GEOGRAPHY

Coastal plain. Desert in the south. In the east lie the Great Rift Valley and the Dead Sea – the lowest point on the Earth's land surface.



CLIMATE

Summers are hot and dry. Wet season, March–November, is mild.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Large numbers of Jews settled in Palestine before Israel was founded in 1948. After World War II, there was a massive increase in immigration. Sephardi Jews from the Middle East and Mediterranean are now in the majority, but Ashkenazi Jews from central Europe still dominate business and politics. Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho gained limited autonomy in 1994 but their desire, backed by most of the world, for a separate state has led to years of fierce violence.

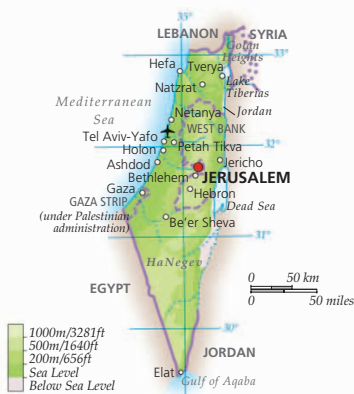


THE ECONOMY

High-tech industries, modern infrastructure and educated workforce, but hampered by conflict and boycotts.



INSIGHT: All Jews worldwide have the right to Israeli citizenship



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: State of Israel

DATE OF FORMATION: 1948

CAPITAL: Jerusalem (unrecognized by UN)

POPULATION: 7.17 million

TOTAL AREA: 8019 sq. miles
(20,770 sq. km)

DENSITY: 913 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hebrew*, Arabic*, Yiddish, German, Russian, Polish, other

RELIGIONS: Jewish 76%, Muslim (mainly Sunni) 16%, other 6%, Christian 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Jewish 76%, other (mostly Arab) 24%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Shekel = 100 agorot

Italy



The Italian peninsula was home to the Roman Empire, one of the greatest ancient civilizations. The south has two famous volcanoes, Vesuvius and Etna.

**GEOGRAPHY**

The Apennines form the backbone of a rugged peninsula, extending from the Alps into the Mediterranean Sea. Alluvial plain in the north.

**CLIMATE**

Mediterranean in the south. Seasonal extremes in the mountains and on the northern alluvial plain.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Ethnically homogeneous, but with a gulf between the prosperous, industrial north and the poorer, agricultural south. Strong regional identities persist, especially on Sicily and Sardinia. Family ties remain strong, though the influence of the Roman Catholic Church has lessened.



INSIGHT: Italy was a collection of dukedoms, monarchies, and city-states before unification in the 1860s

**THE ECONOMY**

World leader in industrial and product design, fashion, textiles. Strong tourism and agriculture sectors. Large public sector debt.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Italian Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1861

CAPITAL: Rome

POPULATION: 59.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 116,305 sq. miles
(301,230 sq. km)

DENSITY: 527 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Italian*, German, French, Rhaeto-Romanic, Sardinian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 85%, other and nonreligious 13%, Muslim 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Italian 94%, other 4%, Sardinian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Jamaica

First colonized by the Spanish and then by the English, the Caribbean island of Jamaica achieved independence in 1962. It remains an influential force in Caribbean politics.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly mountainous, with lush tropical vegetation. Inaccessible limestone area in the northwest. Low, irregular coastal plains are broken by hills and plateaus.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Hot and humid at sea level, with temperate mountain areas. Hurricanes are likely June–November.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Social tensions result from vast disparities in wealth, rather than race. Economic and political life is dominated by a few wealthy, long-established families. Many women hold senior positions in public life. Armed crime, much of it narcotics-related, is a problem. Large areas of Kingston, which have their own patois, are ruled by violent gangs. Jamaican music styles are influential worldwide.

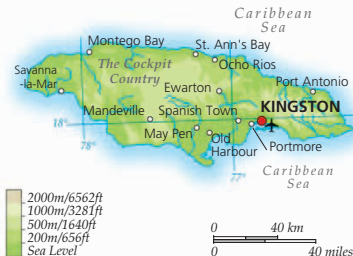


THE ECONOMY

Major bauxite producer, though sector suffering from low world prices. Tourism and light industry. Sugar, bananas, coffee, and rum are exported. Debt burden dominates budget. High underemployment.



INSIGHT: *Jamaica's Rastafarians revere the late emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, as their spiritual leader, and see Africa as their spiritual home*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Jamaica

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Kingston

POPULATION: 2.72 million

TOTAL AREA: 4243 sq. miles

(10,990 sq. km)

DENSITY: 650 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English Creole, English*

RELIGIONS: Protestant 55%,
other and nonreligious 45%

ETHNIC MIX: Black African 92%,
Mulatto 6%, European and Chinese 1%,
East Indian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Jamaican dollar = 100 cents

Japan



Japan is located off the east Asian coast and comprises four principal islands and over 3000 smaller ones. A powerful economy, it has an emperor as ceremonial head of state.



GEOGRAPHY

The terrain is predominantly mountainous, with fertile coastal plains; over two-thirds is woodland. There is no single continuous mountain range; the mountains divide into many small land blocks separated by lowlands and dissected by numerous river valleys. The islands lie on the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are frequent. The Pacific coast is vulnerable to *tsunamis*. There are numerous hot springs.



CLIMATE

Generally temperate–oceanic. Spring is warm and sunny, while summer is hot and humid, with high rainfall. In western Hokkaido and northwest Honshu, winters are very cold, with heavy snowfall. Freak storms and damaging floods in recent years have raised concern over global climate changes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

One of the most racially homogeneous societies in the world. A sense of order and social structure was founded on a strongly ingrained respect for elders and social superiors. In business, this underpinned the now much-diluted “lifetime employer” concept, where company allegiance determined social life as well as career. There is little tradition of generational rebellion, but the youth market is powerful and current fashions focus on teenagers. The education system is highly pressurized. Nongraduates have difficulty reaching management-level jobs, so competition for university places is intense. Long-term jobs for women are now the norm. One of the world’s best healthcare systems and increased longevity have led to an aging population, with one in five people already over 65. The cost of living is high, especially in Tokyo.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Japan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1590

CAPITAL: Tokyo

POPULATION: 127 million

TOTAL AREA: 145,882 sq. miles
(377,835 sq. km)

DENSITY: 875 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Japanese*, Korean, Chinese

RELIGIONS: Shinto and Buddhist 76%, Buddhist 16%, other (including Christian) 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Japanese 99%, other (mainly Korean) 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Yen = 100 sen

THE ECONOMY

World's second-largest economy. Established market leader in high-tech electronic goods and cars. Talent for developing ideas from abroad. Global spread of business – especially to EU, US. Once-revolutionary management and production methods. Long-term research and development. Largest coal importer. Trade surplus causes international tension. Protectionism in domestic economy. Much-needed reform of financial sector has been obstructed by traditional economic power brokers. Significant aid donor.

INSIGHT: *The Japanese are among the world's most avid newspaper readers, with daily sales exceeding 70 million copies*



Jordan



The Kingdom of Jordan lies east of Israel, and borders the Palestinian West Bank. Its relations with its Arab neighbors are troubled by its relatively close ties to the US.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly desert plateaus, with occasional salt pans. Lowest parts lie along the eastern shores of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River.



CLIMATE

Hot, dry summers. Cool, wet winters. Areas below sea level very hot in summer, and warm in winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Jordan is predominantly Muslim with a strong national identity, but its people have Bedouin roots. There is a Christian minority, while Palestinians who have emigrated from Israeli-occupied territory make up a third of the population. Jordan ceded its claim to the West Bank to the aspiring Palestinian state in 1988. The monarchy's power base lies among the rural tribes, which also provide the backbone of the military.

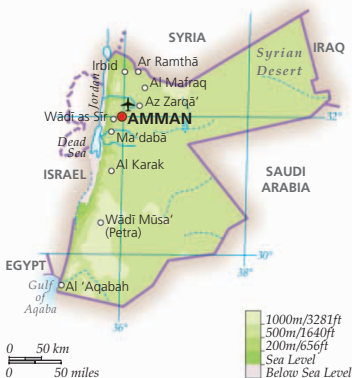


THE ECONOMY

Lack of water. Exports garments, potash, fertilizers, and phosphates. Tourism hit by regional instability.



INSIGHT: *The Nabataean ruins of the ancient city of Petra attract thousands of tourists every year*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1946

CAPITAL: Amman

POPULATION: 6.32 million

TOTAL AREA: 35,637 sq. miles
(92,300 sq. km)

DENSITY: 184 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 92%, other (mostly Christian) 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 98%, Circassian 1%, Armenian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Jordanian dinar = 1000 fils



Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan was the last of the former Soviet republics to declare independence. Foreign investment in the oil and natural gas sector is strengthening its regional power.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly steppe. Volga Delta and Caspian Sea in the west. Central plateau. Inhospitable Altai Mountains in the east. Semidesert in the south.



CLIMATE

Dry continental. Temperature variations between desert south and northern steppes are large. Winters are mildest near the Caspian Sea.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Kazakhstan's ethnic diversity arose mainly from forced settlements there during Soviet times. Since independence, the proportion of ethnic Russians has dropped. Many emigrated, while ethnic Kazakhs arrived from neighboring states. Very few Kazakhs maintain a traditional nomadic lifestyle, but Islam and loyalty to clans remain strong. There are significant disparities of wealth.



THE ECONOMY

Vast mineral resources: natural gas, oil, bismuth, uranium, and cadmium. Oil pipelines to China and Black Sea. Many Western investors. Wheat exported. Sale of farmland only legal since 2003.



INSIGHT: *The Soviet-built Baykonur space center is still an important launch site for international missions*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Kazakhstan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Astana

POPULATION: 15.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 1,049,150 sq. miles
(2,717,300 sq. km)

DENSITY: 15 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kazakh*, Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Uzbek, Uighur, other

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 47%, Orthodox Christian 44%, other 9%

ETHNIC MIX: Kazakh 57%, Russian 27%, other 10%, Ukrainian 3%, Uzbek 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Tenge = 100 tiyn

Kenya



Kenya straddles the equator on Africa's east coast. After nearly 40 years in power, the KANU party was soundly defeated in elections in 2002. Corruption is a serious issue.



GEOGRAPHY

A central plateau is divided by the Great Rift Valley. North of the equator is mainly semidesert. To the east lies a fertile coastal belt.



CLIMATE

The coast and the Great Rift Valley are hot and humid. The plateau interior is temperate. The northeastern desert is hot and dry. Rain usually falls April–May and October–November.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

70 ethnic groups share about 40 languages. Strong clan and family links in rural areas are being weakened by urban migration. Poverty, severe drought, and years of high population growth exacerbate ethnic tensions.



INSIGHT: Kenya has more than 50 game reserves, national parks, and marine reservations



THE ECONOMY

Tourism: image damaged by 2008 post-election violence. Flowers, tea, and coffee are cash crops. Needs food aid. Diversified manufacturing sector. Sizable informal economy.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Kenya

DATE OF FORMATION: 1963

CAPITAL: Nairobi

POPULATION: 39.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 224,961 sq. miles
(582,650 sq. km)

DENSITY: 182 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kiswahili*, English*, other

RELIGIONS: Christian 60%, traditional beliefs 25%, other 9%, Muslim 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Other 42%, Kikuyu 20%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 11%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed presidential–parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Kenya shilling = 100 cents

Kiribati



Situated in the mid-Pacific, the islands adopted the name Kiribati (pronounced “Keer-ee-bus,” a corruption of their former name “Gilberts”) upon independence from Britain in 1979.



GEOGRAPHY

Kiribati consists of three groups of tiny, very low-lying coral atolls scattered across 1,930,000 sq. miles (5 million sq. km) of ocean. Most of the 33 atolls have central lagoons.



CLIMATE

Central islands have a maritime equatorial climate. Those to north and south are tropical, with constant high temperatures. There is little rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Officially I-Kiribati, many local people still refer to themselves as Gilbertese. Almost all are Micronesian, apart from the inhabitants of the island of Banaba, who employed anthropologists to establish their racial distinction. Most people are poor subsistence farmers and many travel abroad to work. The islands are effectively ruled by traditional chiefs.

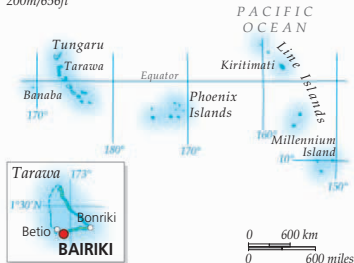


THE ECONOMY

Since exhaustion of Banaba's phosphate deposits in 1980, copra (dried coconut) and fish have become the main exports. Foreign aid and remittances are vital to compensate for Kiribati's isolation and lack of resources.

INSIGHT: *In 1981, the UK paid \$10 million to Banabans for the destruction of their island by mining*

All land under
200m/656ft



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Kiribati

DATE OF FORMATION: 1979

CAPITAL: Bairiki (Tarawa Atoll)

POPULATION: 99,000

TOTAL AREA: 277 sq. miles
(717 sq. km)

DENSITY: 361 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Kiribati

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 53%,
Kiribati Protestant Church 39%,
other 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Micronesian 99%,
other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Nonparty system

CURRENCY: Australian dollar = 100 cents

North Korea



Separated from the democratic South by the world's most heavily defended border, the Stalinist North Korean state has been isolated from the outside world since 1948.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly mountainous, with fertile plains in the southwest.



CLIMATE

Continental. Warm summers and cold winters, especially in the north, where snow is common.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Life is heavily regulated. Cult of personality is more powerful than the state-controlled religions, which include Korea's own Chondogyo. Women are expected to work and to run the home. Children are looked after in state-run crèches. The Korean Worker's Party is the sole party. Its elite have a privileged lifestyle. Globally condemned for its nuclear weapons development, its grip on power perpetuates its pariah status.



INSIGHT: Only the political elite are allowed phones and private cars



THE ECONOMY

Minerals are only resource. Vital aid streams lost with global collapse of communism after 1989. Decades of economic mismanagement have led to chronic food shortages. Lack of fuel. Disproportionate defense budget.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic People's Republic of Korea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1948

CAPITAL: Pyongyang

POPULATION: 23.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 46,540 sq. miles
(120,540 sq. km)

DENSITY: 514 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Korean*, Chinese

RELIGIONS: Government-controlled religions include Chondogyo, Buddhism, and Christianity

ETHNIC MIX: Korean 100%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: N. Korean won = 100 chon



South Korea

South Korea occupies the southern half of the Korean peninsula. Under US sponsorship, it was separated from the communist North in 1948 and is now a capitalist economy.



GEOGRAPHY

Over 80% is mountainous and two-thirds is forested. The flattest and most populous parts lie along the west coast and in the extreme south.



CLIMATE

There are four distinct seasons. Winters are dry, and bitterly cold. Summers are hot and humid.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Inhabited for the last 2000 years by a single ethnic group. The nuclear family is replacing traditional extended households. Since the 1953 armistice, the Koreans have remained technically at war. Reunification is the ultimate goal, but in 2009 the South became less conciliatory and the North retaliated by ending its offer of cooperation.



INSIGHT: *Half of all Koreans are named Kim, Lee, Park, or Choi*



THE ECONOMY

World's biggest shipbuilder. High-tech goods and cars: rising demand from China. Strong regional competition. Aging population.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Korea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1948

CAPITAL: Seoul

POPULATION: 48.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 38,023 sq. miles
(98,480 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1268 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Korean*, Chinese

RELIGIONS: Mahayana Buddhist 47%,
Protestant 38%, Roman Catholic 11%,
Confucianist 3%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Korean 100%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: South Korean won =
100 chon

Kosovo



Once part of the former Yugoslav state, Kosovo seceded from Serbia in 2008. International recognition, mainly from Western countries, is strongly opposed by Serbia and Russia.



GEOGRAPHY

Landlocked and mountainous, with two plains in the east and west.



CLIMATE

Continental, with warm, sunny summers and cold, snowy winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The balance of Albanians to Serbs in Kosovo has changed dramatically over centuries, both groups suffering interethnic violence at various times. Attacks against Albanians in the late 1990s caused a million to flee. After NATO stepped in, many Serbs left: Albanians now form a 92% majority. Most Albanians are Muslim. Serbs dominate three northern provinces, which have threatened to secede.



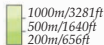
INSIGHT: *The UN administered Kosovo in 1999–2008 after NATO*

intervention to stop Serb ethnic cleansing



THE ECONOMY

One of the two poorest countries in Europe. Aid and remittances cover a large trade deficit. Organized crime: smuggling of fuel, cigarettes, and cement. Uncertain status deters foreign investors. High unemployment. Use of euro has kept inflation low. Lignite deposits. Inefficient agriculture.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Kosovo

DATE OF FORMATION: 2008

CAPITAL: Pristina

POPULATION: 2.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 4212 sq. miles
(10,908 sq. km)

DENSITY: 499 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Albanian*, Serbian*, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Turkish

RELIGIONS: Muslim 92%, Roman Catholic 4%, Orthodox Christian 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Albanian 92%, Serb 4%, Bosniak and Gorani 2%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Kuwait



Kuwait lies at the northwest tip of the Gulf, dwarfed by its neighbors Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. It was a British protectorate until 1961, when full independence was granted.



GEOGRAPHY

Terrain is low-lying desert. The lowest land is in the north. Cultivation is only possible along the coast.



CLIMATE

Summers are very hot and dry. Winters are cooler, with some rain and occasional frost at night.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Oil-rich monarchy, ruled by the al-Sabah family. It is a conservative Sunni Muslim society, but women are relatively free. Nonetheless, a 1999 decree giving women the vote was blocked for six years in parliament by Islamic traditionalists. Immigrant workers, from other Arab states, India, and Pakistan, now outnumber native citizens. US-led forces rescued Kuwait after the 1990 Iraq invasion, and later used it as a launchpad for the 2003 invasion to oust Saddam Hussein.



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas dominate the economy. Skilled workforce, raw materials, and food are imported. High standard of living. Financial services: stock market lost 40% of value in 2008.



INSIGHT: During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq deliberately set fire to 800 of Kuwait's 950 oil wells



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: State of Kuwait

DATE OF FORMATION: 1961

CAPITAL: Kuwait City

POPULATION: 2.99 million

TOTAL AREA: 6880 sq. miles
(17,820 sq. km)

DENSITY: 434 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, English

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 45%, Shi'a Muslim 40%, Christian, Hindu, and other 15%

ETHNIC MIX: Kuwaiti 45%, other Arab 35%, South Asian 9%, other 11%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Kuwaiti dinar = 1000 fils

Kyrgyzstan



A small and mountainous landlocked state in central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is one of the least urbanized ex-Soviet republics, and was slow to develop its own sense of cultural identity.



GEOGRAPHY

The mountainous spurs of the Tien Shan range contain glaciers, alpine meadows, forests, and narrow valleys. Semidesert in the west.



CLIMATE

Varies from permanent snow and cold deserts at high altitudes, to hot deserts in low regions.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Ethnic Kyrgyz have only been in the majority since the late 1980s – due to a high birth rate and the emigration of ethnic Russians. Wary of losing skills vital to the economy, the government has attempted to deter Russians from leaving; concessions include making Russian an official language. There are some tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, and a trend toward greater Islamization, particularly in the poorer south.



THE ECONOMY

Mainly still under state control; corruption issues. Agriculture employs half of the labor force. Cotton, wool, meat, and tobacco exports. Mercury, gold, and antimony are mined. Great potential for hydroelectric power.

INSIGHT: *Kyrgyz folklore is based around the 1000-year-old poem, Manas, which takes a week to recite*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kyrgyz Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Bishkek

POPULATION: 5.48 million

TOTAL AREA: 76,641 sq. miles
(198,500 sq. km)

DENSITY: 72 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kyrgyz*, Russian*, other

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 70%,
Orthodox Christian 30%

ETHNIC MIX: Kyrgyz 65%, Uzbek 14%,
Russian 13%, other 6%, Dungan 1%,
Ukrainian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Som = 100 tyiyn



A French colony prior to 1953, Laos lies landlocked in southeast Asia. Heavily bombed during the Vietnam War, it fell in 1975 to communist insurgents, whose regime remains in power.



GEOGRAPHY

Largely forested mountains, broadening in the north to a plateau. Lowlands along the Mekong Valley.



CLIMATE

Monsoon rains September–May. The rest of the year is hot and dry.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

There are over 60 ethnic groups. Lowland Laotians (Lao Loum) live along the Mekong River and are rice farmers. Upland and highland Laotians (Lao Theung and Lao Soung) traditionally employ environmentally damaging slash-and-burn farming, and grow illegal cash crops (notably opium). Government efforts to reform these practices are resisted.



INSIGHT: *Three small Laotian kingdoms were unified under French control in 1899*



THE ECONOMY

One of world's least developed nations. Poor infrastructure. Gold, copper, electricity, timber, garments, and coffee are exported. Levels of foreign investment are rising.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Lao People's Democratic Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1953

CAPITAL: Vientiane

POPULATION: 6.32 million

TOTAL AREA: 91,428 sq. miles (236,800 sq. km)

DENSITY: 71 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Lao*, Mon-Khmer, other

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 85%, other (including animist) 15%

ETHNIC MIX: Lao Loum 66%, Lao Theung 30%, Lao Soung 2%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: New kip = 100 at

Latvia



Latvia lies on the east coast of the Baltic Sea. Like its Baltic neighbors, it regained independence from Moscow in 1991, and joined the EU and NATO in 2004.



GEOGRAPHY

A flat coastal plain which is deeply indented by the Gulf of Riga. Poor drainage creates many bogs and swamps in the forested interior.



CLIMATE

Temperate, with warm summers and cold winters. There is steady rainfall throughout the year.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Latvians make up just over half of the population and are mostly Lutheran. They have been officially favored by the state since 1991 over the largely Orthodox Christian Russian minority. Latvian was declared the only official language in 2000 and has been used exclusively in schools since 2004. This discrimination has strained relations with neighboring Russia. Women enjoy full equality. The divorce rate is high.



THE ECONOMY

Services sector now accounts for over 70% of GDP. EU's fastest-growing economy in 2004–2006. High inflation has delayed prospect of joining euro. Global credit crunch brought Latvia to verge of bankruptcy in 2008: banks were bailed out and severe recession followed.



INSIGHT: Ethnic Latvians are outnumbered by Russians in Riga



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Latvia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Riga

POPULATION: 2.25 million

TOTAL AREA: 24,938 sq. miles
(64,589 sq. km)

DENSITY: 90 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Latvian*, Russian

RELIGIONS: Lutheran 55%, Catholic 24%, other 12%, Orthodox Christian 9%

ETHNIC MIX: Latvian 59%, Russian 29%, Belarussian 4%, Ukrainian 3%, Polish 3%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Lats = 100 santimi



Lebanon



Once a vibrant cultural hotspot, Lebanon suffered badly from years of civil war and occupation until a 1989 peace deal. Reconstruction was reversed by Israeli bombardment in 2006.



GEOGRAPHY

Behind a narrow Mediterranean coastal plain, two parallel mountain ranges run the length of the country, separated by the fertile Beqaa Valley.



CLIMATE

Winters are mild and summers are hot, with high coastal humidity. Snow falls on high ground in winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Politics has long been dominated by divisions between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and the traditional ruling Maronite Christians. Power-sharing ended 14 years of civil war in 1989. Syria acted as power broker until made to withdraw in 2005. Israel attacked in 2006 in a botched bid to crush Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants. A huge gulf exists between the poor and a small, immensely rich elite. Lebanon hosts 420,000 Palestinian refugees.



THE ECONOMY

Much infrastructure destroyed. Instability undermines Beirut's role as regional financial center. Wine and fruit production. High public debt.



INSIGHT: *The Cedar of Lebanon has been the nation's symbol for more than 2000 years*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Lebanon

DATE OF FORMATION: 1941

CAPITAL: Beirut

POPULATION: 4.22 million

TOTAL AREA: 4015 sq. miles
(10,400 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1069 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, French,
Armenian, Assyrian

RELIGIONS: Muslim 70%,
Christian 30%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 94%, Armenian 4%,
other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Lebanese pound = 100 piastres

Lesotho



The landlocked Kingdom of Lesotho is entirely surrounded by – and economically dependent on – South Africa, which even sent in troops to restore calm after rioting in 1998.



GEOGRAPHY

A high mountainous plateau, cut by valleys and ravines. The Maluti Range runs through the center. The Drakensberg Range lies to the east.



CLIMATE

Temperate. Summers are hot with torrential rain storms. Snow is frequent in the mountains in winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The overwhelming majority of people are Sotho, though there are some South Asians, Europeans, and Chinese. A strong sense of national identity has tended to minimize ethnic tensions. Many men work as migrant laborers in South Africa, leaving women to run households.



INSIGHT: *Lesotho has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa – but one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS too*



THE ECONOMY

Dependent on South Africa. Water and energy exported from new Highlands Water Scheme. Subsistence farming. Garment exports struggle to compete. HIV/AIDS is depleting workforce.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Lesotho

DATE OF FORMATION: 1966

CAPITAL: Maseru

POPULATION: 2.07 million

TOTAL AREA: 11,720 sq. miles
(30,355 sq. km)

DENSITY: 176 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Sesotho*, isiZulu

RELIGIONS: Christian 90%,
traditional beliefs 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Sotho 97%, European
and Asian 3%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Loti = 100 lisente

Liberia



Liberia, on Africa's Atlantic coast, was founded as a republic of freed slaves. A brutal coup in 1980 and years of civil war have left gang violence and looting widespread.



GEOGRAPHY

A coastline of beaches and mangrove swamps rises to forested plateaus and highlands inland.



CLIMATE

High temperatures. There is only one wet season, from May to October, except in the extreme southeast.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The key social distinction used to be between Americo-Liberians – descendants of freed slaves – and the indigenous tribal peoples. However, political assimilation and intermarriage have eased tensions. Intertribal tension is now a much more serious problem, fueling the civil war which ravaged the country from 1990 to 2003.



INSIGHT: Liberia is named after the people liberated from slavery who arrived from the US in the 1800s



THE ECONOMY

War caused economic collapse. Rubber is key export. Bans now lifted on timber and diamond exports. Revenue from merchant shipping licenses. Debt burden. Income well below prewar levels. Vast iron ore reserves.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Liberia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1847

CAPITAL: Monrovia

POPULATION: 3.96 million

TOTAL AREA: 43,000 sq. miles
(111,370 sq. km)

DENSITY: 106 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kpelle, Vai, Bassa, Kru, Grebo, Kissi, Gola, Loma, English*

RELIGIONS: Christian 68%, traditional beliefs 18%, Muslim 14%

ETHNIC MIX: Indigenous tribes (16 main groups) 95%, Americo-Liberians 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Liberian dollar = 100 cents

Libya



Situated on north Africa's Mediterranean coast, Libya was declared a revolutionary state in 1969 by Colonel Gaddafi, who promotes Islam, African unity, and a communal lifestyle.



GEOGRAPHY

Apart from the coastal strip and a mountain range in the south, Libya is desert or semidesert. Natural oases provide the agricultural land.



CLIMATE

Hot and arid. The coastal area has a temperate climate, with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Libyans are of Arab and Berber origin. Once a nation of nomads and livestock herders, it is almost 80% urban. Revolution wiped out private enterprise and the middle classes. Jews and European settlers were banished. Years of political marginalization and sanctions ended after Libya offered compensation for terrorist bombings. The voluntary ending of its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program was also welcomed by the West.

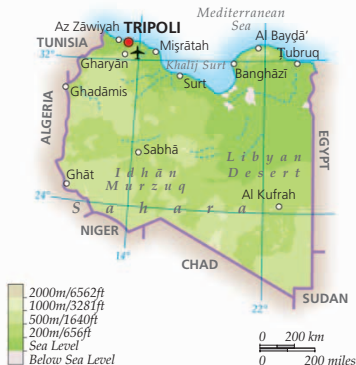


THE ECONOMY

Oil is key export. Dates, olives, and fruit grow in oases, but most food is imported. Corruption and mismanagement. High inflation.



INSIGHT: 90% of Libya is still desert, despite grand irrigation projects



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahariyah

DATE OF FORMATION: 1951

CAPITAL: Tripoli

POPULATION: 6.42 million

TOTAL AREA: 679,358 sq. miles (1,759,540 sq. km)

DENSITY: 9 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Tuareg

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 97%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab and Berber 95%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Libyan dinar = 1000 dirhams



Liechtenstein

Perched in the Alps between Switzerland and Austria, the state of Liechtenstein became an independent principality of the Holy Roman Empire in 1719. It has close links with Switzerland.



GEOGRAPHY

The upper Rhine Valley covers the western third of the country. The mountains and narrow valleys of the eastern Alps make up the remainder.



CLIMATE

Warm, dry summers. Winters are cold, with heavy snow in the mountains from December to March.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Principality's role as a financial center accounts for its many foreign residents (a third of the population). Half of the workforce are cross-border commuters. Living standards are high, with few social tensions. Linked by a customs union since 1924, Switzerland handles Liechtenstein's foreign affairs and defense issues.

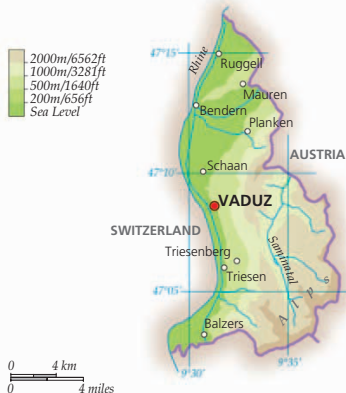


INSIGHT: *Women in Liechtenstein obtained the vote only in 1984*



THE ECONOMY

Banking secrecy (now modified) and low taxes help attract foreign investment. Anti-money-laundering rules are recent. Diversified exports include precision instruments, dental products, and chemicals.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Principality of Liechtenstein

DATE OF FORMATION: 1719

CAPITAL: Vaduz

POPULATION: 35,000

TOTAL AREA: 62 sq. miles
(160 sq. km)

DENSITY: 565 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: German*, Italian, Alemannish dialect

RELIGIONS: Catholic 81%, other 19%

ETHNIC MIX: Liechtensteiner 66%, other 18%, Swiss 10%, Austrian 6%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Swiss franc = 100 centimes

Lithuania



Lying on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, Lithuania is the largest of the Baltic states. The first Soviet republic to declare independence from Moscow in 1991, it joined the EU in 2004.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly flat with moors, bogs, and an intensively farmed central lowland. Numerous lakes and forested sandy ridges in the east.



CLIMATE

Coastal location moderates continental extremes. Cold winters, cool summers, and steady rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Homogeneous population, with Lithuanians forming a large majority. Only 4000 Jews, known as Litvaks, remain in Lithuania. Strong Roman Catholic tradition and historic links with Poland. There are better relations among ethnic groups than in other Baltic states and interethnic marriages are fairly common. However, ethnic Russians and Poles see a threat from "Lithuanianization." A large income gap has grown since independence.



THE ECONOMY

High-tech and heavy industries: engineering, shipbuilding, and food processing. Litas pegged to euro. High inflation has delayed euro's adoption. Recession in 2009 after strong growth.



INSIGHT: *The "amber coast" of Lithuania produces most of the world's amber – fossilized resin*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Lithuania

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Vilnius

POPULATION: 3.29 million

TOTAL AREA: 25,174 sq. miles
(65,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 131 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Lithuanian*, Russian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 83%,
other 12%, Protestant 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Lithuanian 85%,
Polish 6%, Russian 5%, other 3%,
Belarussian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Litas = 100 centu



Luxembourg



Part of the plateau of the Ardennes in western Europe, Luxembourg is one of Europe's richest states. A tax haven and banking center, it is also home to key EU institutions.



GEOGRAPHY

Dense Ardennes forests in the north, with a low, open plateau to the south. Undulating terrain throughout.



CLIMATE

The climate is moist, with warm summers and mild winters. Snow is common only in the Ardennes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Ethnic tensions are rare, despite a large proportion of foreigners (over a third of residents). Integration has been straightforward; most are fellow western Europeans and Catholics, mainly from Italy and Portugal. Low unemployment and high salaries promote stability. Divorce rates are rising and marriage is becoming less common.



INSIGHT: Luxembourg's capital is home to around 2000 investment funds and over 150 banks



THE ECONOMY

Traditional industries such as steelmaking have given way to the banking and service sectors. Low taxes and banking secrecy laws attract foreign investors.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

DATE OF FORMATION: 1867

CAPITAL: Luxembourg-Ville

POPULATION: 486,200

TOTAL AREA: 998 sq. miles (2586 sq. km)

DENSITY: 487 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Luxembourgish*, German*, French*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 97%, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Luxembourger 62%, foreign residents 38%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Macedonia



Landlocked Macedonia was hit hard by the sanctions placed on its northern trading partners in the mid-1990s, and by violent conflict with ethnic Albanians in 2001.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly mountainous or hilly, with deep river basins in the center. Plains in the northeast and southwest.



CLIMATE

Continental climate with wet springs and dry autumns. Heavy snowfalls in northern mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Slav Macedonians are mostly Orthodox Christians, with some Muslims. Officially, Muslim Albanians account for 25% of the population, but they claim to number a third. In 2001 Albanian militants fought a bitter war against the government. A peace deal promised greater equality. A major stumbling block to EU and NATO accession is Greece's objection to the name Macedonia, in order to prevent any possibility of claims to historic "Macedonian" lands in north Greece.



THE ECONOMY

Steel, minerals, clothing, shoes, and tobacco exported. Slow transition to market economy. Organized crime and large gray economy. Investment boosted by EU candidate status.



INSIGHT: *Ohrid is the deepest lake in Europe at 964 ft (294 m)*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Macedonia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Skopje

POPULATION: 2.04 million

TOTAL AREA: 9781 sq. miles
(25,333 sq. km)

DENSITY: 206 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Macedonian*, Albanian*

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 59%,
Muslim 26%, other 11%, Catholic 4%

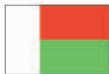
ETHNIC MIX: Macedonian 64%, Albanian 25%,
other 5%, Turkish 4%, Serb 2%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed
presidential-parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Macedonian denar = 100 deni



Madagascar



Lying off east Africa in the Indian Ocean, the former French colony of Madagascar is the world's fourth-largest island. Power struggles erupted onto the streets in 2002 and 2009.



GEOGRAPHY

More than two-thirds of the country forms a savanna-covered plateau, which drops in the east through rainforests to the coast.



CLIMATE

Tropical and often hit by cyclones. Monsoons affect the east coast. The southwest is much drier.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

People are Malay-Indonesian in origin, intermixed with later migrants from the African mainland. The main ethnic division is between the Merina of the central plateau and the poorer *côtier* (coastal) peoples. The Merina were the country's historic rulers, and remain the social elite.



INSIGHT: 80% of Madagascar's plants and many of its animal species are found nowhere else



THE ECONOMY

Most people are farmers. Cash crops are vanilla, coffee, and cloves. Garments and shrimp also exported. Political crises deter investors.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Madagascar

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Antananarivo

POPULATION: 219.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 226,656 sq. miles
(587,040 sq. km)

DENSITY: 87 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Malagasy*, French*

RELIGIONS: Traditional beliefs 52%,
Christian 41%, Muslim 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Other Malay 46%,
Merina 26%, Betsimisaraka 15%, Betsileo 12%,
other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Ariary = 5 iraimbilanja

Malawi



A former colony of the UK, Malawi lies landlocked in southeast Africa, following the Great Rift Valley. Its name means “the land where the sun is reflected in the water like fire.”



GEOGRAPHY

Lake Nyasa takes up one-fifth of the landscape. Highlands lie west of the lake. Much of the land is covered by forests and savanna.



CLIMATE

Mainly subtropical. The south is hot and humid. Highlands are cooler.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Malawians share a common Bantu origin. Ethnicity has not been exploited for political ends as has happened in neighboring states. Four out of five people live in poverty. The election in 1994 of a member of the Muslim minority as president signaled the failure of previous attempts to enforce Protestant dominance.



INSIGHT: Lake Nyasa is 353 miles

(568 km) in length and contains at least 500 species of fish



THE ECONOMY

Mainly subsistence farming. Tobacco accounts for 60% of export earnings. Tea and sugar are grown. Drought and corruption are problems.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Malawi

DATE OF FORMATION: 1964

CAPITAL: Lilongwe

POPULATION: 15.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 45,745 sq. miles
(118,480 sq. km)

DENSITY: 420 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Chewa, Lomwe, Yao, Ngoni, English*

RELIGIONS: Protestant 55%, Muslim 20%, Catholic 20%, traditional beliefs 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Bantu 99%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Malawi kwacha

= 100 tambala



Malaysia



Malaysia stretches 1240 miles (2000 km) across southeast Asia from the Malay peninsula to Sabah in eastern Borneo. Federated in 1963, it included Singapore for two years.



GEOGRAPHY

The Malay Peninsula has central mountains, an eastern coastal belt, and fertile western plains. Swampy coastal plains rise to mountains on Borneo.



CLIMATE

Warm equatorial. Rainfall always heavy, but with distinct rainy seasons.



INSIGHT: *Malaysia is southeast Asia's major tourist destination, with over 20 million visitors a year*



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The key distinction is between Malays (Bumiputras, literally “sons of the soil”) and the Chinese, who traditionally controlled most economic activity. Since the 1970s, Malays have been favored for education and jobs, in order to address this imbalance.



THE ECONOMY

Successful industrial base include manufacturing and heavy industry. Tourism is a major earner. Leading producer of palm oil, tin, and tropical hardwoods.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federation of Malaysia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1963

CAPITAL: Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya

POPULATION: 27.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 127,316 sq. miles
(329,750 sq. km)

DENSITY: 217 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bahasa Malaysia*, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, English

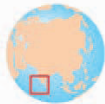
RELIGIONS: Muslim 53%, Buddhist 19%, Chinese faiths 12%, other 9%, Christian 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Malay 50%, Chinese 25%, indigenous tribes 11%, other 14%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Ringgit = 100 sen

Maldives



Set in the Indian Ocean, southwest of Sri Lanka, the Maldives is an archipelago of 1191 small coral islands, or atolls. 200 are inhabited. The word atoll comes from the Dhivehi word “atolu.”



GEOGRAPHY

Consists of low-lying islands and coral atolls. The larger ones are covered in lush, tropical vegetation.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Rain falls throughout the year, but is heaviest June–November, during the monsoon. Violent storms occasionally hit the northern islands.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Maldivians, who are all Sunni Muslim, are descended from Sinhalese, Dravidian, Arab, and black ancestors. About 25% of the population live on Male'. Tourism has grown on separate resort islands away from residents. Politics has been controlled by a small group of influential families. However, a young elite pushed for reform: parties were legalized in 2005, and the presidential election in 2008 brought in a new regime.



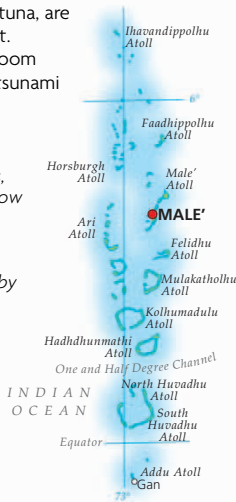
THE ECONOMY

The fluctuating tourist industry is the economic mainstay. Fish, especially tuna, are the main export. Construction boom to repair 2004 tsunami damage.



INSIGHT:

The islands, which all lie below 4 ft (1.2 m), are threatened by rising sea levels, brought about by global warming and climatic changes



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Maldives

DATE OF FORMATION: 1965

CAPITAL: Male'

POPULATION: 309,400

TOTAL AREA: 116 sq. miles
(300 sq. km)

DENSITY: 2667 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Dhivehi* (Maldivian), Sinhala, Tamil, Arabic

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 100%

ETHNIC MIX: All Maldivians are of Arab–Sinhalese–Malay descent

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Rufiyaa

= 100 laari



A former French colony, Mali is landlocked in the heart of west Africa. The 1991 coup ended the 23-year dictatorship of Moussa Traoré and ushered in multiparty elections from 1992.

**GEOGRAPHY**

The northern half of the country lies in the Sahara. The inland delta of the Niger River flows through a grassy savanna region in the south.

**CLIMATE**

In the south, intensely hot, dry weather precedes the westerly rains. The north is almost rainless.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Most people live in the southern savanna region. The Bambara tribe are culturally and politically dominant. A few nomadic Fulani and Tuareg herders travel the northern plains. There is tension between the peoples of the south and Tuareg in the north. Malian women have little status.



INSIGHT: *Tombouctou (Timbuktu)* was the center of the 14th-century

Malinké trading empire

**THE ECONOMY**

Widespread poverty. Most people are farmers, herders, or river fishermen. Less than 2% of land can be cultivated. High-quality cotton, gold, and livestock account for 80% of exports. Vulnerable to drought.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Mali

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Bamako

POPULATION: 13 million

TOTAL AREA: 478,764 sq. miles
(1,240,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 28 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bambara, Fulani, Senufo, Soninke, French*

RELIGIONS: Muslim 80%, traditional beliefs 18%, Christian 1%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Bambara 32%, other 33%, Fulani 14%, Senufu 12%, Soninka 9%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Malta



The densely populated Maltese archipelago lies between Africa and Europe. Controlled throughout its history by successive colonial powers, it gained independence from the UK in 1964.



GEOGRAPHY

The main island of Malta has low hills and a ragged coastline with numerous harbors, bays, sandy beaches, and rocky coves. The island of Gozo is more densely vegetated.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean climate. There are many hours of sunshine all year round, with very little rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Over the centuries, the Maltese have been subject to Arab, Sicilian, Spanish, French, and British influences. Today, the population is socially conservative and devoutly Roman Catholic – on a percentage basis, risen more so than virtually any other nation. Unemployment is high, particularly for women. Divorce is banned. Illegal migration from Africa has increased since Malta joined the EU in 2004.

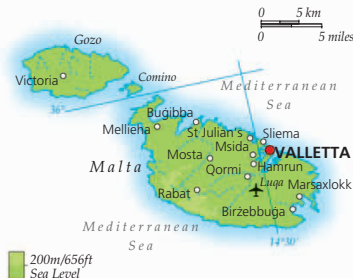


THE ECONOMY

Tourism provides 30% of GDP. Joined eurozone in 2008. Developing offshore banking, high-tech industry. Semiconductors exported. Most goods have to be imported.



INSIGHT: *The Maltese language has Phoenician origins but features Arabic etymology and intonation*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Malta

DATE OF FORMATION: 1964

CAPITAL: Valletta

POPULATION: 408,700

TOTAL AREA: 122 sq. miles
(316 sq. km)

DENSITY: 3296 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Maltese*, English*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 98%, other and nonreligious 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Maltese 96%, other 4%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Marshall Islands



Under US rule as part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands until independence in 1986, the Marshall Islands comprises a group of 34 widely scattered atolls.



GEOGRAPHY

Narrow coral rings with sandy beaches enclosing lagoons. Those in the south have thicker vegetation. Kwajalein is the world's largest atoll.



CLIMATE

Tropical oceanic, cooled year round by northeast trade winds.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Majuro, the capital city and commercial center, is home to almost half the population. Tensions are high due to poor living conditions. Life on the outlying islands is still traditional, based around subsistence agriculture and fishing. Society is matrilineal, with land and titles handed down through the mother's clan.

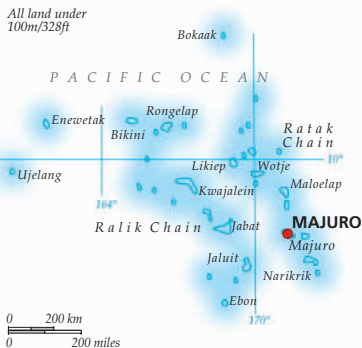


INSIGHT: In 1954, Bikini Atoll was the site for the testing of the largest US H-bomb – the 18–22 megaton Bravo



THE ECONOMY

Almost totally dependent on US aid and the rent paid by the US for its missile base on Kwajalein Atoll. High unemployment. Revenue from licenses to fish in Marshallese waters for tuna. Copra and coconut oil are the only significant agricultural exports.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Marshall Islands

DATE OF FORMATION: 1986

CAPITAL: Majuro

POPULATION: 54,100

TOTAL AREA: 70 sq. miles (181 sq. km)

DENSITY: 733 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Marshallese*, English*, Japanese, German

RELIGIONS: Protestant 90%, Roman Catholic 8%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Micronesian 97%, other 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents

Mauritania



Two-thirds of Mauritania's territory is desert – the only productive land is that drained by the Senegal River. The country has taken a strongly Arab direction since 1964.



GEOGRAPHY

The Sahara, barren except for some scattered oases, covers the north. Savanna lands lie to the south.



CLIMATE

The climate is generally hot and dry, aggravated by the dusty *harmattan* wind. Summer rain in the south, virtually none in the north.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority Maures control political and economic life. Family solidarity among nomadic peoples is particularly strong. Ethnic tension centers on the oppression of the sizable black minority by Maures. Tens of thousands of blacks are estimated to be in illegal slavery.

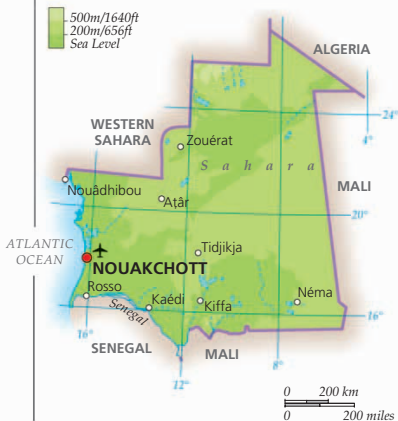


INSIGHT: Slavery officially became illegal in Mauritania in 1980, but *de facto* slavery still persists



THE ECONOMY

Agriculture and herding. Iron, copper, and gold mining. World's largest gypsum deposits. Offshore oil from 2006. Rich fishing grounds.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Islamic Republic of Mauritania

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Nouakchott

POPULATION: 3.29 million

TOTAL AREA: 397,953 sq. miles
(1,030,700 sq. km)

DENSITY: 8 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hassaniyah Arabic*, Wolof, French

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 100%

ETHNIC MIX: Maure 81%, Wolof 7%, Tukolor 5%, other 4%, Soninka 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Ouguiya = 5 khoums



Mauritius

The islands that make up Mauritius lie in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. They have enjoyed considerable economic success following recent industrial diversification and expansion.



GEOGRAPHY

The volcanic main island of Mauritius is ringed by coral reefs, and rises from the coast to a fertile central plateau. The outer islands – Rodriguez, the Agalega Islands, and the Cargados Carajos Shoals – lie some 300 miles (500 km) to the north.



CLIMATE

Warm and humid. Tropical storms are frequent December–March, the hottest and wettest months.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most people are descendants of laborers brought over from India in the 19th century. A small minority of French descent form the wealthiest group. Creoles (descendants of African slaves) complain of discrimination. Literacy is high. Health care is free. Criminal offenses are usually traffic-related; little crime on outer islands.



THE ECONOMY

Clothing manufacture, tourism, and sugar. Loss of preferential trade terms for sugar and textiles. Offshore financial center. New outsourcing and ICT industries. Most food is imported.

INSIGHT: *The islands form part of the Mascarene Archipelago – once a land bridge between Asia and Africa*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Mauritius

DATE OF FORMATION: 1968

CAPITAL: Port Louis

POPULATION: 1.29 million

TOTAL AREA: 718 sq. miles (1860 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1794 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French Creole, Hindi, Urdu,

Tamil, Chinese, English*, French

RELIGIONS: Hindu 52%, Catholic 26%, Muslim 17%, other 3%, Protestant 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Indo-Mauritian 68%, Creole 27%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Mauritian rupee = 100 cents

Mexico



Mexico stretches from the US border southward into the ancient Aztec and Mayan heartlands. Independence from Spain came in 1836. One in five Mexicans lives in the sprawling capital.



GEOGRAPHY

Coastal plains along the Pacific and Atlantic seabords rise to a high arid central plateau. To the east and west are the Sierra Madre mountain ranges. Limestone lowlands form the projecting Yucatan peninsula.



CLIMATE

The plateau and high mountains are warm for much of the year. Pacific coast is tropical: storms occur mostly March–December. Northwest is dry.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Mexicans are *mestizos* of Spanish–Amerindian descent. Rural Amerindians are largely segregated from Hispanic society and most live in poverty, though the state promotes their culture. The Zapatista movement backs indigenous rights. Few women in male-dominated politics and business. Narcotics-related violent crime is rising.



THE ECONOMY

One of the world's largest oil producers. Corn, fruit, vegetables, sugar are cash crops. NAFTA has boosted exports, but exposes farmers to subsidized US competition. Huge wealth disparity. Swine flu crippled economy in 2009.



INSIGHT: *More people cross the US–Mexican border each year – illegally or legally – than any other border in the world*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: United Mexican States

DATE OF FORMATION: 1836

CAPITAL: Mexico City

POPULATION: 110 million

TOTAL AREA: 761,602 sq. miles
(1,972,550 sq. km)

DENSITY: 149 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Nahuatl, Mayan,

Zapotec, Mixtec, Otomi, Totonac, other

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 88%, other 7%,
Protestant 5%

ETHNIC MIX: *Mestizo* 60%, Amerindian 30%,
European 9%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Mexican peso = 100 centavos



Micronesia



The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), situated in the western Pacific, comprise 607 islands and atolls grouped into four main island states: Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap.



GEOGRAPHY

Mixture of high volcanic islands with forested interiors, and low-lying coral atolls. Some of the islands have coastal mangrove swamps.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with high humidity. There is very heavy rainfall outside the January–March dry season.



INSIGHT: *Chuuk's lagoon contains the sunken wrecks of over 100 Japanese ships and 270 planes from World War II*



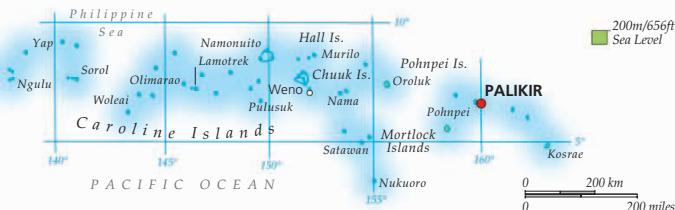
PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Micronesians are physically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. Melanesians live on Yap, Polynesians in Pohnpei. The supply of electricity and running water is limited. Society is based on matrilineal clans.



THE ECONOMY

Dependent on US aid. Fishing licenses are a key source of foreign revenue. Tourism, fishing, betel nuts, copra are economic mainstays. Trust fund created to reduce aid reliance.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federated States of Micronesia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1986

CAPITAL: Palikir (Pohnpei Island)

POPULATION: 110,700

TOTAL AREA: 271 sq. miles (702 sq. km)

DENSITY: 408 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Trukese, Pohnpeian, Kosraean, Yapese, English*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 48%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Chuukese 49%, Pohnpeian 24%, other 19%, Kosraean 6%, Asian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Nonparty system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents

Moldova



The most densely populated of the former Soviet republics, Moldova has strong ethnic, linguistic, and cultural links with Romania, but relations with Russia remain paramount.



GEOGRAPHY

Steppes and hilly plains are drained by the Dniester and Prut rivers.



CLIMATE

Warm summers and relatively mild winters. Moderate rainfall is evenly spread throughout the year.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

A shared heritage with Romania defines national identity, though in 1994 Moldovans voted against possible reunification with Romania. Most of the population is engaged in intensive agriculture. Transnistria is a breakaway state along the east bank of the Dniester, home to a largely ethnic Slav population. The Gagauz, in the south, have accepted autonomy.



INSIGHT: *Vast underground wine vaults contain entire "streets" of bottles built into rock quarries*



THE ECONOMY

One of the two poorest countries in Europe. Mainly agricultural: produces wine, tobacco, fruit. Food processing and textiles. Depends on Russia for raw materials, fuel, exports. Instability.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Moldova

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Chisinau

POPULATION: 3.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 13,067 sq. miles
(33,843 sq. km)

DENSITY: 277 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Moldovan*, Ukrainian, Russian

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 98%, Jewish 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Moldovan 64%, Ukrainian 14%, Russian 13%, Gagauz 4%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Moldovan leu = 100 bani



Monaco



Monaco is a tiny principality on the Côte d'Azur. Its destiny changed radically when the casino was opened in 1863. Today, it promotes its image as an upmarket, glamorous destination.



GEOGRAPHY

A rocky promontory overlooking a narrow coastal strip that has been enlarged through land reclamation.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean. Summers are hot and dry; days with 12 hours of sunshine are not uncommon. Winters are mild and sunny.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Less than 20% of residents are Monégasques. Around a third are French, the rest Italian, American, British, Belgian, and many others. Nationals enjoy considerable privileges, including housing subsidies to protect them from Monaco's high property prices, and the right of first refusal before a job can be offered to a foreigner. Women have equal status, but only acquired the vote in 1962.

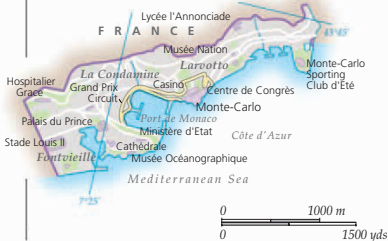


THE ECONOMY

Tourism, gambling, financial services. Banking secrecy laws and tax-haven conditions attract foreign investment. Close links and customs union with France (but not in EU). No resources: depends on imports.



INSIGHT: High-profile social and sporting events attract large crowds each spring, including the Rose Ball, Tennis Open, and Grand Prix



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Principality of Monaco

DATE OF FORMATION: 1861

CAPITAL: Monaco-Ville

POPULATION: 32,000

TOTAL AREA: 0.75 sq. miles
(1.95 sq. km)

DENSITY: 42,667 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: French*, Italian, Monégasque

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 89%,
Protestant 6%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: French 32%, other 29%,
Italian 20%, Monégasque 19%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed monarchical-
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Mongolia



Landlocked between Russia and China, Mongolia is a huge, isolated, and sparsely populated nation. Over two-thirds of the country is part of the Gobi Desert.



GEOGRAPHY

A mountainous steppe plateau in the north, with lakes in the north and west. The desert region of the Gobi dominates the south.



CLIMATE

Continental. Mild summers and long, dry, very cold winters, with heavy snowfall. Temperatures can drop as low as -22°F (-30°C).



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Mongolia was unified by Genghis Khan in 1206 and was later absorbed into Manchu China. A majority of ethnic Mongolians live within China in Inner Mongolia. Tibetan Buddhism dominates. The traditional, nomadic way of life has been eroded as urban migration continues, spurred by ferocious winters, known as *zud*, which can devastate the rural economy.



THE ECONOMY

Rich deposits of oil, coal, copper, uranium, and other minerals remain largely untapped. Cashmere exports. Democracy, from 1990, brought a shift toward a market economy, but also rising poverty. State involvement in mining is an issue. Agriculture uses 40% of workforce, mainly as herders.



INSIGHT: *Horseracing, wrestling, and archery are the national sports*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Mongolia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1924

CAPITAL: Ulan Bator

POPULATION: 2.67 million

TOTAL AREA: 604,247 sq. miles
(1,565,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 4 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Khalkha Mongolian*, other

RELIGIONS: Tibetan Buddhist 96%,
Muslim 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Khalkh 82%, other 9%,
Kazakh 4%, Dorvod 3%, Bayad 2%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed presidential–
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Tugrik (tögrög) = 100 mōngö



Montenegro



Perched on the Adriatic coast, this tiny republic became a separate state in 2006, after 88 years of federation with its neighbors in various forms of the state of Yugoslavia.



GEOGRAPHY

A narrow coastal strip on the Adriatic. Fertile lowland plains around Lake Scutari. Mountainous interior with deep canyons.



CLIMATE

The lowlands have hot, dry summers and mild winters. Heavy snow in winter in the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Montenegrins are Orthodox Christians. They speak a language closely related to Serbian, using the same Cyrillic script. Muslim Albanians, who make up 80% of the population of the southern Ulcinj region, supported independence and are now asking for autonomy.



INSIGHT: *Dark forests once cloaked Montenegro's mountains; its name means "Black Mountain"*



THE ECONOMY

Tourism (along Adriatic) drives growth. Bauxite reserves, aluminum industry. Economy dominated by black market; cigarette smuggling is rife. Return of foreign aid and investment. The 2007 accord with the EU is the first step toward eventual accession.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Montenegro

DATE OF FORMATION: 2006

CAPITAL: Podgorica

POPULATION: 624,200

TOTAL AREA: 5332 sq. miles
(13,812 sq. km)

DENSITY: 117 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Montenegrin*, Serbian, Albanian

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 74%, Muslim 18%, Catholic 4%, other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Montenegrin 43%, Serb 32%, other 12%, Bosniak 8%, Albanian 5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Morocco



Morocco is a former French colony in northwest Africa. Since 1975, it has occupied the territory of Western Sahara, the future of which is yet to be determined by UN-supervised referendum.



GEOGRAPHY

Fertile coastal plain is interrupted in the east by the Rif Mountains. Atlas Mountain ranges to the south. Beyond lies the outer fringe of the Sahara.



CLIMATE

Ranges from temperate and warm in the north, to semiarid in the south. Cooler in the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Around 30% of the population are descendants of original Berber inhabitants of north Africa, and live mainly in mountain villages. The Arab majority inhabits the lowlands. Morocco is unusual among Arab states in granting Jews religious freedom and civil rights. The king is spiritual leader and head of state. Islamists have gained influence in politics. Islamist militancy and the emergence of terrorist cells are of concern.



THE ECONOMY

Major exporter of phosphates. Investment in tourism and agriculture. Fishing. Relations with EU strained over illegal immigrants and cannabis trade.



INSIGHT: *Karuein University in Fès, founded in 859 CE, is the world's oldest existing educational institution*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Morocco

DATE OF FORMATION: 1956

CAPITAL: Rabat

POPULATION: 32 million

TOTAL AREA: 172,316 sq. miles
(446,300 sq. km)

DENSITY: 186 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Tamazight, French

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 99%,
other (mostly Christian) 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 70%, Berber 29%,
European 1%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed monarchical–
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Mor. dirham = 100 centimes



Mozambique



Mozambique lies on the southeast African coast. It was torn apart by a savage and devastating civil war between the Marxist government and a rebel faction between 1977 and 1992.



GEOGRAPHY

Largely a savanna-covered plateau. The coast is fringed by coral reefs and lagoons. The Zambezi River bisects the country.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Temperatures are hottest on the coast. Extremes of rainfall: drought and flood.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Tensions exist between north and south, rather than between ethnic groups. Life is centered on the extended family. Polygamy is fairly common. The country is struggling with the legacy of a war that killed around a million people, and the effects of frequent floods and droughts. Half the population lives in abject poverty.

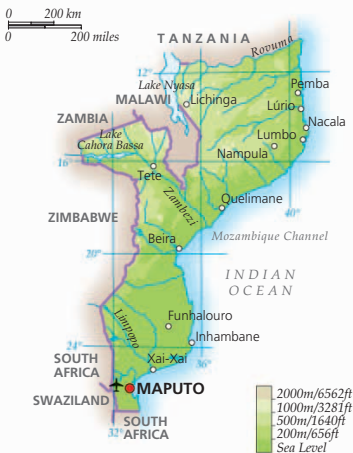


INSIGHT: *Maputo's busy port serves Zimbabwe and South Africa*



THE ECONOMY

Extremely dependent on aid. Mineral potential. Cashew nuts, shrimp, cotton exported. Debt relief.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Rep. of Mozambique

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Maputo

POPULATION: 22.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 309,494 sq. miles
(801,590 sq. km)

DENSITY: 76 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Makua, Xitsonga, Sena, Lomwe, Portuguese*

RELIGIONS: Traditional beliefs 56%,
Christian 30%, Muslim 14%

ETHNIC MIX: Makua Lomwe 47%, Tsonga 23%,
Malawi 12%, Shona 11% other 7%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: New metical = 100 centavos

Myanmar (Burma)



Forming the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in southeast Asia, Myanmar suffers from isolation, political repression, and ethnic conflict.



GEOGRAPHY

The fertile Irrawaddy basin lies at the center. Mountains to the west, Shan plateau to the east. Tropical rainforest covers much of the land.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Hot summers, with high humidity, and warm winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The military, in power since 1962, rules Myanmar with little regard to human rights. Opposition is not tolerated. The National League for Democracy won elections in 1990, but was kept from power. Its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is frequently detained. Minority groups maintain low-level guerrilla activity against the state.

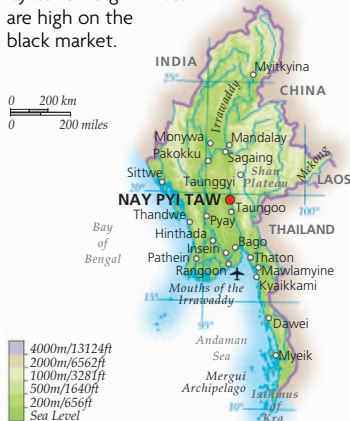


INSIGHT: Myanmar is one of the world's biggest teak exporters, though reserves are diminishing rapidly



THE ECONOMY

Corrupt, mismanaged, subject to sanctions – but gas, teak, and gems are exported. Illicit opium production has fallen. Rice shortages in 2008 after Cyclone Nargis. Prices are high on the black market.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Union of Myanmar

DATE OF FORMATION: 1948

CAPITAL: Nay Pyi Taw

POPULATION: 50 million

TOTAL AREA: 261,969 sq. miles
(678,500 sq. km)

DENSITY: 197 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Burmese*, Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Chin, Yangbye, Kachin, Mon

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 87%, Christian 6%, Muslim 4%, other 2%, Hindu 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Burman 68%, other 13%, Shan 9%, Karen 6%, Rakhine 4%

GOVERNMENT: Military-based regime

CURRENCY: Kyat = 100 pyas



Namibia

Located in southwestern Africa, Namibia gained independence from South Africa in 1990, after 24 years of armed struggle. It regained the territory of Walvis Bay in 1994.



GEOGRAPHY

The Namib Desert stretches along the coastal strip. Inland, a ridge of mountains rises to 8000 ft (2500 m). The Kalahari Desert lies in the east.



CLIMATE

Almost rainless. The coast is usually shrouded in thick fog, unless the hot, dry *berg* wind is blowing.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Ovambo, the main ethnic group, live mainly in the more populous north. Some 100,000 whites, many of German descent, are centered around Windhoek and still control the economy. The minority San and Khoi bushmen are among the oldest human communities in the world. The ban on homosexuality is contentious.



INSIGHT: *The Namib is the Earth's oldest, and one of its driest, deserts*



THE ECONOMY

Varied mineral resources, notably uranium and diamonds. Rich offshore fishing grounds. High unemployment. HIV/AIDS epidemic. One of Africa's most skewed distributions of wealth.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Namibia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1990

CAPITAL: Windhoek

POPULATION: 2.17 million

TOTAL AREA: 318,694 sq. miles
(825,418 sq. km)

DENSITY: 7 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Ovambo, Kavango, English*, Bergdama, German, Afrikaans

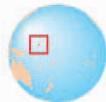
RELIGIONS: Christian 90%, traditional beliefs 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Ovambo 50%, other 25%, Kavango 9%, Damara 8%, Herero 8%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Namibian dollar = 100 cents

Nauru



Nauru lies in the Pacific, northeast of Australia. Phosphate deposits gave its inhabitants huge temporary wealth, but economic mismanagement has left them facing ruin.



GEOGRAPHY

A single low-lying coral atoll, with a fertile coastal belt. Coral cliffs encircle an elevated interior plateau.



CLIMATE

Equatorial, moderated by sea breezes. Occasional long droughts.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Native Nauruans are of mixed Micronesian and Polynesian origin. Most live in simple, traditional houses and spend their money on luxury cars and consumer goods. Welfare and education are free. A diet of imported processed foods has caused widespread obesity and diabetes. Mining was left to imported laborers, mainly from Kiribati, who lived in enclaves of male-only barracks and had few rights. Many young Nauruans leave to seek a better life in Australia or New Zealand.



THE ECONOMY

Phosphate revenues all but dried up. Sale of fishing rights sole resource. State trust fund invested badly overseas. Offshore banking facilities closed after international pressure.



INSIGHT: *Phosphate mining has left 80% of the island uninhabitable*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Nauru

DATE OF FORMATION: 1968

CAPITAL: None

POPULATION: 9800

TOTAL AREA: 8.1 sq. miles
(21 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1210 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Nauruan*, Kiribati, Chinese, Tuvaluan, English

RELIGIONS: Nauruan Congregational Church 60%, Catholic 35%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Nauruan 62%, other Pacific islanders 27%, Asian 8%, European 3%

GOVERNMENT: Nonparty system

CURRENCY: Australian dollar = 100 cents



Nepal



Nepal, lying between India and China on the southern shoulder of the Himalayas, is one of the world's poorest countries. Its agricultural economy is heavily dependent on the monsoon.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly mountainous. The area includes some of the highest mountains in the world, including Mount Everest. Flat, fertile river plains form the south.



CLIMATE

Warm monsoon season from July to October. The rest of the year is dry, sunny, and mild. Winter temperatures in the Himalayas average 14°F (-10°C).



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Tensions are few between the diverse ethnic groups. Buddhist women, including Sherpas, face fewer social restrictions than Hindus. Trafficking of women and child labor are problems. Human rights violations rose during the 1999–2006 Maoist insurgency. The peace deal led to the abolition of the monarchy and Maoist victory in elections, but fractious coalitions mean instability continues.



THE ECONOMY

Agriculture employs 70% of people. Crops include rice and wheat. Tourism and investment affected by instability and Maoist insurgency. Reliant on aid. Hydropower potential.



INSIGHT: *Southern Nepal was the birthplace of Buddha (Prince Siddhartha Gautama) in 563 BCE*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

DATE OF FORMATION: 1769

CAPITAL: Kathmandu

POPULATION: 29.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 54,363 sq. miles (140,800 sq. km)

DENSITY: 555 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Nepali*, Maithili, Bhojpuri

RELIGIONS: Hindu 90%, Buddhist 5%, Muslim 3%, other (incl. Christian) 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Other 57%, Chhetri 16%, Hill Brahman 13%, Tharu 7%, Magar 7%

GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime

CURRENCY: Nepalese rupee = 100 paisa

Netherlands



Astride the delta of five major rivers in northwest Europe, the Netherlands built its historic wealth on maritime trade. Rotterdam is Europe's largest port.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly flat, with 27% of the land below sea level and protected by dunes, dikes, and canals. There are a few low hills in the south and east.



CLIMATE

Mild, rainy winters and cool summers. Gales from the North Sea are common in fall and winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Dutch have a long history of welcoming immigrants from former colonies and refugees seeking asylum. However, lack of integration is now raising fears about the failing asylum system, immigrant crime, and militant Islam. Population is mostly urban and the density is high. The state does not try to impose a particular morality on its citizens. Laws concerning sexuality, narcotics-taking, and euthanasia are among the world's most liberal.



THE ECONOMY

Major trading hub. High-profile multinationals. Diverse industrial base: chemicals, machinery, electronics, and metals. Costly social welfare system.



INSIGHT: In 2002, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize euthanasia



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of the Netherlands

DATE OF FORMATION: 1648

CAPITAL: Amsterdam and The Hague

POPULATION: 16.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 16,033 sq. miles
(41,526 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1267 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Dutch*, Frisian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 36%, other 34%, Protestant 27%, Muslim 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Dutch 82%, other 12%, Surinamese, Turkish, and Moroccan 6%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Lying in the South Pacific, 990 miles (1600 km) southeast of Australia, New Zealand comprises North and South Islands, separated by the Cook Strait, and many smaller islands.



GEOGRAPHY

North Island, noted for hot springs and geysers, has the bulk of the population. South Island is mostly mountainous, with eastern lowlands.



CLIMATE

Generally temperate and damp. The far north is almost subtropical, whereas southern winters are cold.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Maoris were the first settlers, 1200 years ago. Today's majority European population is descended mainly from British migrants who settled after 1840. Maoris' living and education standards are generally lower than average. The government is continuing to negotiate the settlement of Maori land claims.



INSIGHT: *New Zealand women were the first to get the vote (1893)*



THE ECONOMY

Tourism is the biggest foreign-exchange earner. Modern agricultural sector; world's top exporter of dairy products. Hi-tech manufacturing. Open economy. Strong trade links.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: New Zealand

DATE OF FORMATION: 1947

CAPITAL: Wellington

POPULATION: 4.27 million

TOTAL AREA: 103,737 sq. miles
(268,680 sq. km)

DENSITY: 41 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Maori*

RELIGIONS: Anglican 24%, other 22%,
Presbyterian 18%, nonreligious 16%,
Roman Catholic 15%, Methodist 5%

ETHNIC MIX: European 75%, Maori 15%,
other 7%, Samoan 3%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: New Zealand dollar = 100 cents

Nicaragua



Nicaragua lies at the heart of Central America. The Sandinista revolution of 1978 led to 11 years of civil war between the left-wing Sandinistas and the right-wing US-backed Contras.



GEOGRAPHY

Extensive forested plains in the east. Central mountain region with many active volcanoes. The Pacific coastlands are dominated by lakes.



CLIMATE

Tropical. The lowlands are hot all year round. The mountains are cooler. Prone to occasional hurricanes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most of the population is mixed race, and there is a large white elite. The Caribbean regions are home to communities of Miskito Amerindians and blacks, who gained autonomy in 1987. The revolution improved the status of women, but these gains have been undone by rampant poverty.



INSIGHT: Lake Nicaragua is the only freshwater lake in the world to contain marine animals



THE ECONOMY

Textiles, coffee, meat, tobacco are main exports: affected by world price fluctuations. Remittances from abroad. Substantial debt relief has cut debt to 60% of GDP. Corruption.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Nicaragua

DATE OF FORMATION: 1838

CAPITAL: Managua

POPULATION: 5.74 million

TOTAL AREA: 49,998 sq. miles
(129,494 sq. km)

DENSITY: 125 people per sq. mile)

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, English Creole, Miskito

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 80%, Protestant Evangelical 17%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 69%, White 14%, Black 8%, Amerindian 5%, Zambo 4%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Córdoba oro = 100 centavos



Niger



Niger lies in west Africa, upstream from Nigeria on the Niger River. One of the world's poorest states, it was ruled by one-party or military regimes until multipartyism was allowed in 1992.



GEOGRAPHY

The north and northeast regions are part of the Sahara. The Air Mountains in the center rise high above the desert. Savanna lies to the south.



CLIMATE

High temperatures persist for most of the year at around 95°F (35°C). The north is virtually rainless.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Tuareg nomads in the north feel excluded from politics and the benefits of development of their area's uranium resources. An early 1990s rebellion was reignited in 2007. In the south, egalitarianism and a sense of community help to combat economic difficulties. Almost the entire urban population lives in slum conditions. Two-thirds of the population is under 25. Women have limited rights and restricted access to education.



THE ECONOMY

Vast uranium deposits. Frequent droughts and food shortages. Banditry. Expansion of Sahara. Oil potential.



INSIGHT: *The name Niger comes from the Tuareg word n'eghirren, which means "flowing water"*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Niger

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Niamey

POPULATION: 15.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 489,188 sq. miles
(1,267,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 31 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hausa, French*, other

RELIGIONS: Muslim 85%, traditional beliefs 14%, other (incl. Christian) 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Hausa 55%, Djermas and Songhai 21%, Peul 9%, Tuareg 9%, other 6%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes

Nigeria



West Africa's biggest nation, Nigeria is a federation of 36 states and the capital, Abuja. Dominated by military governments since 1966, democracy returned in 1999.



GEOGRAPHY

Coastal area of beaches, swamps, and lagoons gives way to rainforest, and then to savanna on the high plateaus. Semidesert to the north.



CLIMATE

The south is hot, rainy and humid for most of the year. The arid north has one very humid wet season. The Jos Plateau and highlands are cooler.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Some 250 ethnic groups: tensions threaten national unity, with sporadic intercommunal violence. The northern states have introduced *sharia* (Islamic law) for their majority Muslim populations. Women have more economic independence in the south. In the Niger Delta, where 70% of people live on less than a dollar a day, militants are fighting for a share of the benefits of the region's oil wealth.



THE ECONOMY

Overdependent on oil, principal export since 1970s. Mismanagement and corruption. Foreign debt reduced.



INSIGHT: Nigeria is Africa's most populous state – one in every seven Africans is Nigerian



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Republic of Nigeria

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Abuja

POPULATION: 155 million

TOTAL AREA: 356,667 sq. miles
(923,768 sq. km)

DENSITY: 440 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Hausa, English*, Yoruba, Ibo

RELIGIONS: Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, traditional beliefs 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Hausa 21%, Yoruba 21%, Ibo 18%, Fulani 11%, other 29%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Naira = 100 kobo



Norway



The Kingdom of Norway traces the rugged western coast of Scandinavia. Settlements are largely restricted to southern and coastal areas. Vast oil and natural gas revenues bring prosperity.



GEOGRAPHY

The western coast is indented with numerous fjords and features tens of thousands of islands. Mountains and plateaus cover most of the country.



CLIMATE

Mild coastal climate. Inland, the weather is more extreme, with warmer summers and cold, snowy winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Fairly homogeneous; influx of refugees from 1990s Bosnian conflict. Strong family tradition despite high divorce rate. Fair-minded consensus promotes female equality, boosted by the generous childcare provision. Wealth is more evenly distributed than in most developed countries. Voted not to join EU in 1994.



INSIGHT: Near Narvik, mainland Norway is only 4 miles (7 km) wide



THE ECONOMY

Western Europe's top oil and natural gas producer: trust fund saves for post-oil future. Metal, chemical, and engineering industries. Generous aid donor. High cost of living.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Norway

DATE OF FORMATION: 1905

CAPITAL: Oslo

POPULATION: 4.81 million

TOTAL AREA: 125,181 sq. miles
(324,220 sq. km)

DENSITY: 41 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Norwegian* (Bokmål and Nynorsk), Sámi

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 89%, other 10%, Roman Catholic 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Norwegian 93%, other 6%, Sámi 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Norwegian krone = 100 øre

Oman



Oman occupies a strategic position on the Arabian Peninsula, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. It is the least developed Gulf state, despite modest oil exports.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly gravelly desert, with mountains in the north and south. Some narrow fertile coastal strips.



CLIMATE

Blistering heat in the west. Summer temperatures often climb above 113°F (45°C). Southern uplands receive rains June–September.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Urban drift has seen most Omanis move to northern towns. The majority are Ibadi Muslims who follow an appointed leader, the imam. Ibadism is not opposed to freedom for women, and a few women hold positions of authority. Baluchi from Pakistan are the largest group of foreign workers.



INSIGHT: *Until the late 1980s, Oman was closed to all but business or official visitors*



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas account for almost all export revenue. Commercially extractable reserves are limited. Other exports include fish, animals, and dates. Foreigners work in all sectors.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Sultanate of Oman

DATE OF FORMATION: 1951

CAPITAL: Muscat

POPULATION: 2.85 million

TOTAL AREA: 82,031 sq. miles
(212,460 sq. km)

DENSITY: 35 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Baluchi, other

RELIGIONS: Ibadi Muslim 75%, other Muslim and Hindu 25%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 88%, Baluchi 4%, Persian 3%, Indian and Pakistani 3%, African 2%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Omani rial = 1000 baisa



Pakistan



Once a part of British India, Pakistan was created in 1947 in response to demands for an independent Muslim state. In 1971, Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) became a separate state.



GEOGRAPHY

Indus floodplain across east and south. Hindu Kush mountains in north. Semidesert plateau, mountains in west.



CLIMATE

Temperatures can soar to 122°F (50°C) in south and west, and fall to -4°F (-20°C) in the Hindu Kush.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Punjabis dominate government and the army. Tensions with minority groups, exacerbated by the vast gap between rich and poor. Strong family ties permeate politics and business. Relations with India are tense over Kashmir. Islamist taliban insurgency in tribal areas on Afghan border: in 2009, fighting displaced two million.

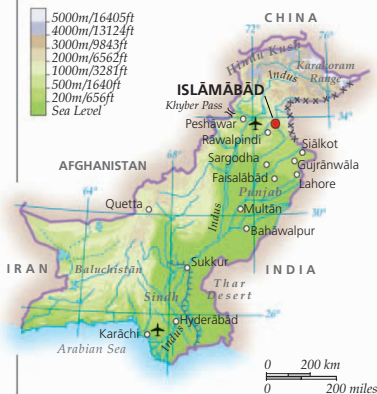


INSIGHT: In 1988, Pakistan elected Benazir Bhutto as the first female prime minister in the Muslim world



THE ECONOMY

Major cotton and rice producer, but unpredictable weather conditions often affect crop. Textiles. Instability. Corruption. Aid to fight terrorism and for earthquake reconstruction.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Islamic Rep. of Pakistan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1947

CAPITAL: Islamabad

POPULATION: 181 million

TOTAL AREA: 310,401 sq. miles
(803,940 sq. km)

DENSITY: 607 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu, Urdu*, Baluchi, Brahui

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 77%, Shi'a Muslim 20%, Hindu 2%, Christian 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Punjabi 56%, Pathan 15%, Sindhi 14%, other 8%, Mohajir 7%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Pakistani rupee = 100 paisa

Palau



The 300-island Palau archipelago (known locally as Belau) lies in the western Pacific Ocean. It achieved independence in 1994, and is gradually reducing its aid dependence.



GEOGRAPHY

Terrain varies from thickly forested mountains to limestone and coral reefs. Babeldaob, the largest island, is volcanic, with many rivers and waterfalls.



CLIMATE

Hot and wet. Little variation in daily and seasonal temperatures. February–April is the dry season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Native Palauans are a mix of the original Southeast Asian migrants and Pacific settlers. A modern influx from Asia has led to tension. 70% of the population lives on the island-city of Koror, prompting the construction of a new capital on Babeldaob. Native culture is preserved on outer islands despite strong influence from the US and Japan. Modekngei is a blend of Christianity and local beliefs.



THE ECONOMY

Tourism and fishing licenses are main earners. Coconuts, taro, and bananas. 15-year US aid plan to 2009.



INSIGHT: Palau's reefs contain 1500 species of fish and 700 types of coral



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Palau

DATE OF FORMATION: 1994

CAPITAL: Melekeok

POPULATION: 20,400

TOTAL AREA: 177 sq. miles
(458 sq. km)

DENSITY: 104 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Palauan*, English*, Japanese, Angaur, Tobi, Sonsorolese

RELIGIONS: Christian 66%, Modekngei 34%

ETHNIC MIX: Palauan 74%, Filipino 16%, other 6%, Chinese and other Asian 4%

GOVERNMENT: Nonparty system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents



Panama

Panama is the southernmost country in Central America. The colossal Panama Canal (which was under US control until 2000) links the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.



GEOGRAPHY

Lowlands along both coasts, with savanna-covered plains and rolling hills. Mountainous interior. Swamps and rainforests in the east.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid, with heavy rainfall in the May–December wet season. Cooler at high altitudes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

A multiethnic society, dominated by people of Spanish origin. Amerindians live in remote areas. The Panama Canal and former US military bases (the last of which closed in 1999) have given society a cosmopolitan outlook, but Catholicism and the extended family remain strong. Crime is high; money-laundering, narcotics trafficking, and corruption are rife.



THE ECONOMY

Colón Free Trade Zone: world's second-largest. Income from the canal (expansion project underway) and merchant ships sailing under flag of Panama. Banana and shrimp exports.



INSIGHT: *The Panama Canal shortens the sea route between the east coast of the US and Japan by 3000 miles (4800 km)*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Panama

DATE OF FORMATION: 1903

CAPITAL: Panama City

POPULATION: 3.45 million

TOTAL AREA: 30,193 sq. miles
(78,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 118 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English Creole, Spanish*, Amerindian and Chibchan languages

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 86%, other 8%, Protestant 6%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 60%, White 14%, Black 12%, Amerindian 8%, other 6%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Balboa = 100 centésimos

Papua New Guinea



A former Australian colony, Papua New Guinea (PNG) occupies the eastern section of the island of New Guinea and several other island groups. Much of the country is isolated.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountainous and forested mainland, with broad, swampy river valleys. 40 active volcanoes in the north. Around 600 outer islands.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid in lowlands, cooling toward highlands, where snow can fall on highest peaks.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Around 800 language groups and even more tribes. The main social distinction is between lowlanders, who have frequent contact with the outside world, and the very isolated, but increasingly threatened, highlanders. Great tensions exist between highland tribes, and vendettas can often last several generations. The island of Bougainville has been granted autonomy and promised an eventual referendum on independence.



THE ECONOMY

Minerals: significant quantities of gold, copper, oil, and natural gas. High government spending almost led to national bankruptcy in 2002.



INSIGHT: PNG is home to the only known poisonous birds; contact with the feathers of some species of pitohui produces skin blisters



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Independent State of Papua New Guinea

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Port Moresby

POPULATION: 6.73 million

TOTAL AREA: 178,703 sq. miles
(462,840 sq. km)

DENSITY: 39 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Pidgin English, Papuan, English*, Motu, c.800 native languages

RELIGIONS: Protestant 60%, Roman Catholic 37%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Melanesian and mixed 100%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Kina = 100 toea



Paraguay

Landlocked in central South America, and once a Spanish colony, Paraguay's postindependence history has included periods of military rule. Free elections were held in 1993.



GEOGRAPHY

The Paraguay River divides the hilly and forested east from a flat alluvial plain, with marsh and semidesert scrub land in the west.



CLIMATE

Subtropical. The Gran Chaco is generally hotter and drier. All areas experience floods and droughts.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population mainly of mixed Spanish and native Guaraní origin. Most people are bilingual, though in rural areas Guaraní is more widely used. Cattle ranchers populate the Chaco, along with communities of the German-origin Mennonite Church. The army is politically active.



INSIGHT: *The War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870) killed almost 90% of Paraguay's male population*



THE ECONOMY

Agriculture: soybeans are the main export. Electricity exported from massive hydroelectric dams, including Itaipú (world's second-largest, jointly run with Brazil). Large informal economy. Corruption and smuggling.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Paraguay

DATE OF FORMATION: 1811

CAPITAL: Asunción

POPULATION: 6.35 million

TOTAL AREA: 157,046 sq. miles
(406,750 sq. km)

DENSITY: 41 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Guaraní*, Spanish*, German

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant (including Mennonite) 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 91%, other 7%, Amerindian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Guaraní = 100 céntimos

Peru



Once the heart of the Inca Empire, before the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, Peru lies on the Pacific coast of South America, just south of the equator.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Coastal plain rises to Andes Mountains. Uplands, dissected by fertile valleys, lie east of the Andes. Tropical forest in extreme east.

**CLIMATE**

Coast is mainly arid. Middle slopes of the Andes are temperate; higher peaks are snow-covered. East is hot, humid, and very wet.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Though most people are Amerindians or mixed-race *mestizos*, society is dominated by a small group of Spanish descendants. Amerindians, and the small black community, suffer discrimination in towns, but access to information and political power are growing; the first Amerindian president was elected in 2001–2006. Clashes with left-wing militants killed almost 70,000 people between 1980 and 2000.

**THE ECONOMY**

Abundant mineral resources: notably copper and gold. Rich Pacific fish stocks. Illegal cocaine producer.



INSIGHT: *Lake Titicaca is the world's highest navigable lake*

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Peru

DATE OF FORMATION: 1824

CAPITAL: Lima

POPULATION: 29.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 496,223 sq. miles
(1,285,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 59 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Quechua*, Aymara

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Amerindian 50%, *Mestizo* 40%, White 7%, other 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: New sol = 100 céntimos



Philippines



Lying in the western Pacific Ocean, the Philippines is the world's second-largest archipelago, with 7107 islands, of which 4600 are named but only around 1000 inhabited.



GEOGRAPHY

Larger islands are forested and mountainous. Over 20 active volcanoes. Frequent earthquakes.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Warm and humid all year round. Typhoons occur in the rainy season: June–October.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Over 100 ethnic groups, most of which are of Malay origin. The Catholic Church is a dominant cultural force; it opposes family-planning, despite high population growth. The Chinese minority has been established for 400 years. Women play a prominent part in society. High literacy levels. Islamist separatists and communist insurgents undermine stability.

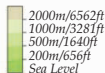


INSIGHT: *Mass "People Power" demonstrations have brought down two presidents, in 1986 and 2001*



THE ECONOMY

Coconuts, bananas, pineapples exported. Growing outsourcing center. Remittances from abroad. Corruption and poor infrastructure limit growth.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Rep. of the Philippines

DATE OF FORMATION: 1946

CAPITAL: Manila

POPULATION: 92 million

TOTAL AREA: 115,830 sq. miles
(300,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 799 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Filipino*, Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, other, including English*

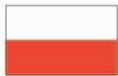
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 83%, Protestant 9%, Muslim 5%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Tagalog 28%, Cebuano 13%, Ilocano 9%, Hiligaynon 8%, other 42%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Philippine peso = 100 centavos

Poland



Located in the heart of Europe, Poland has undergone massive social, economic, and political change since the collapse of communism in 1989. It joined the EU in 2004.



GEOGRAPHY

Lowlands, part of the North European Plain, cover most of the country. The Tatra Mountains run along the southern border.



CLIMATE

Rainfall peaks during the hot summers. Cold winters with snow, especially in mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Ethnic homogeneity masks a number of tensions. Secular liberals criticize the semiofficial status of the Roman Catholic Church, and emerging wealth disparities are resented by those not profiting from the free market. The German minority in the west is growing more assertive.



INSIGHT: *Wild wisent (European bison) live in the Bialowieza Forest straddling the Poland–Belarus border*



THE ECONOMY

Foreign investment reflects the country's large potential market. Rapid privatization. Heavy industries dominate, though services growing. Plans to join euro in 2012.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Poland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1918

CAPITAL: Warsaw

POPULATION: 38.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 120,728 sq. miles
(312,685 sq. km)

DENSITY: 324 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Polish

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 93%, other and nonreligious 5%, Orthodox Christian 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Polish 97%, other 2%, Silesian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Zloty = 100 groszy



Portugal

Portugal, with its long Atlantic coast, lies on the western side of the Iberian Peninsula, which it shares with Spain. It is the most westerly country on the European mainland.



GEOGRAPHY

The Tagus River bisects the country roughly east to west, dividing mountainous north from lower and more undulating south.



CLIMATE

North is cool and moist. South is warmer, with dry, mild winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

A homogeneous and stable society, which is losing some of its conservative traditions. History of immigration from former colonies, and recently from eastern Europe. Urban areas and the south are more socially liberal. The north is more responsive to traditional Roman Catholic values. Family ties remain important.



INSIGHT: Portugal is the world's leading producer of cork, which comes from the bark of the cork oak



THE ECONOMY

Tourism. Vegetables, fruit, wine, cars, and clothing are exported, but agriculture and manufacturing are in decline. Resilient banking sector.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Portugal

DATE OF FORMATION: 1139

CAPITAL: Lisbon

POPULATION: 10.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 35,672 sq. miles
(92,391 sq. km)

DENSITY: 302 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Portuguese

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 97%,
other 2%, Protestant 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Portuguese 98%, African
and other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary
system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Qatar



Projecting from the Arabian Peninsula into the Persian Gulf, Qatar was a founding member of OPEC. One of the region's wealthiest states due to oil and natural gas exports.



GEOGRAPHY

Flat, semiarid desert with dunes and salt pans. Vegetation is limited to small patches of scrub.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid. Temperatures in summer can soar to over 104°F (40°C). Rainfall is rare.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Only one in five residents is native-born; the rest are guest workers from across the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and north Africa. Qataris were once nomadic Bedouins, but since the advent of oil wealth, most now live in Doha and its suburbs, leaving the north dotted with abandoned villages. Women enjoy relative freedom; most wear the veil.



INSIGHT: *There are twice as many men as women in Qatar*



THE ECONOMY

Steady supply of crude oil and huge natural gas reserves, plus related industries. All other raw materials and most foods are imported. Strong GDP growth. Economy is heavily dependent on foreign workforce.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: State of Qatar

DATE OF FORMATION: 1971

CAPITAL: Doha

POPULATION: 1.41 million

TOTAL AREA: 4416 sq. miles
(11,437 sq. km)

DENSITY: 332 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 95%,
other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Qatari 20%, other Arab 20%,
Indian 20%, Nepalese 13%, Filipino 10%,
Pakistani 7%, other 10%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Qatar riyal = 100 dirhams



Romania



Once dominated by Poles, Hungarians, and Ottomans, Romania has been slowly converting to a market economy since the 1989 overthrow of its communist regime. It joined the EU in 2007.



GEOGRAPHY

Carpathian Mountains encircle the Transylvanian plateau. Wide plains to the south and east. Danube River forms southern border.



CLIMATE

Continental. Summers are hot and humid, winters are cold and snowy. Very heavy spring rains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Romanians are ethnically distinct from their Slav and Hungarian (Magyar) neighbors. Hungarians are the largest minority, living mainly in Transylvania. They are protected by the influence of Hungary, unlike the Roma, who suffer from discrimination. The overall population is shrinking.



INSIGHT: In 2001, Romania became the last country in Europe to lift its ban on homosexuality



THE ECONOMY

Polluting, outdated heavy industries and unmechanized agricultural sector. Exports of textiles and metals have led growth in 2000s. Has plans to join euro currency zone in 2015. Privatization continues.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Romania

DATE OF FORMATION: 1878

CAPITAL: Bucharest

POPULATION: 21.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 91,699 sq. miles
(237,500 sq. km)

DENSITY: 239 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Romanian*, Hungarian

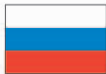
RELIGIONS: Romanian Orthodox 87%, Roman Catholic 5%, Protestant 4%, other 2%, Greek Orthodox 1%, Uniate 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Romanian 89%, Magyar 7%, Roma 2%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Romanian leu

Russian Federation



The Russian Federation was the core of the old Soviet Union, which broke up in 1991. Russia is still the world's largest state. Its diversity is a source of both strength and problems.



GEOGRAPHY

The Ural Mountains divide the European steppes and forests from the tundra and forests of Siberia. South-central deserts and mountains.



CLIMATE

Continental in European Russia. Elsewhere climate ranges from sub-arctic to Mediterranean and hot desert.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Besides the ethnic Russian majority, there are 57 "nationalities" with territorial status, and a further 95 minorities without their own region. Most ethnic republics are in European Russia. The number of Muslims is rising, though the overall population is predicted to fall by 30% in 50 years. Nation-based separatism is brutally suppressed, as in Chechnya. HIV/AIDS is spreading. Healthcare and education are underfunded. Crime is a serious problem.



INSIGHT: *The Trans-Siberian Railroad, which runs 5578 miles (9297 km) from Moscow to Vladivostok, is the longest in the world, passing through eight time zones*

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Russian Federation

DATE OF FORMATION: 1480

CAPITAL: Moscow

POPULATION: 141 million

TOTAL AREA: 6,592,735 sq. miles
(17,075,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 21 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Russian*, other

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 75%,
Muslim 14%, other 11%

ETHNIC MIX: Russian 80%, other 13%,
Tatar 4%, Ukrainian 2%, Chavash 1%

GOVERNMENT: Mixed presidential–
parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Russian rouble = 100 kopeks



THE ECONOMY

Huge natural resources (oil and natural gas, precious metals, timber) account for 80% of exports. Important military, engineering, and scientific base. Wealth disparities and black-market activities have accompanied reforms. Organized crime syndicates own huge

areas of the economy. Widespread tax evasion, corruption. Lingering inefficiencies in industry and agriculture. High oil prices brought strong GDP growth and budget surpluses in 2000s, allowing Russia to repay its Soviet-era debt. Stock market collapse, devaluation of rouble in 2008, then recession in 2009.

Rwanda



Rwanda lies just south of the equator in east central Africa, far from the nearest sea port. Since independence from France in 1962, ethnic tensions have dominated politics.



GEOGRAPHY

A series of plateaus descend from the ridge of volcanic peaks in the west to the Akagera River on the eastern border. The Great Rift Valley also passes through this region.



CLIMATE

Tropical, though tempered by the altitude. Two wet seasons are separated by a dry season, from June to August. Heaviest rain in the west.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

For over 500 years the cattle-owning Tutsi minority were politically dominant over the land-owning Hutu. In 1959, violent revolt led to a reversal of the roles. Ethnic tensions are fierce; in the most recent violence, in 1994, over 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were massacred in an act of state-backed genocide; trials are ongoing. Most people live at subsistence level.



THE ECONOMY

Rwanda is reliant on aid, but (given stability) could become a big coffee and tea producer. Exports tin, coltan, and iron ore. Ecotourism is growing. Possible oil and gas reserves. Landlocked: high transportation costs.



INSIGHT: *Rwanda's parliament in 2008 was the first in the world to have more women members than men*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Rwanda

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Kigali

POPULATION: 10 million

TOTAL AREA: 10,169 sq. miles
(26,338 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1038 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kinyarwanda*, French*, Kiswahili, English*

RELIGIONS: Catholic 56%, traditional beliefs 25%, Muslim 10%, Protestant 9%

ETHNIC MIX: Hutu 90%, Tutsi 9%, other (including Twa) 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Rwanda franc = 100 centimes



St. Kitts & Nevis

A popular Caribbean tourist destination, St. Kitts and Nevis lies in the northern part of the Leeward Island chain. Nevis is the smaller and less developed of the two islands.



GEOGRAPHY

Volcanic in origin, with forested, mountainous interiors. Nevis has hot and cold springs.



CLIMATE

Tropical, tempered by trade winds. Little seasonal variation in temperature. Moderate rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority of the population are descended from former African slaves. There are small numbers of Europeans, and South Asians, and a community of Lebanese. Levels of emigration are high, and overseas remittances are an important source of national income. The government has pledged to retrain sugar workers. Native professionals and civil servants have largely replaced the former expatriate elite. The secessionist movement on Nevis remains an issue.



THE ECONOMY

Successful tourist industry is vulnerable to downturns in US market. Financial services. Once-key sugar industry closed down in 2005.



INSIGHT: *Nevis has been renowned as a spa since the 18th century, and is known as the "Queen of the Caribbean"*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis

DATE OF FORMATION: 1983

CAPITAL: Basseterre

POPULATION: 46,100

TOTAL AREA: 101 sq. miles (261 sq. km)

DENSITY: 332 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, English Creole

RELIGIONS: Anglican 33%, Methodist 29%, other 22%, Moravian 9%, Roman Catholic 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 95%, Mixed race 3%, White 1%, other and Amerindian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: East Caribbean \$ = 100 cents

St. Lucia



St. Lucia is one of the most beautiful of the Caribbean Windward Islands. Ruled by France and the UK at different times in its past, the island retains the character of both.



GEOGRAPHY

Volcanic and mountainous, with some broad fertile valleys. The Pitons, ancient lava cones, rise from the sea on the forested west coast.



CLIMATE

Tropical, moderated by trade winds. May–October wet season brings daily warm showers. Rainfall is highest in the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population is a tension-free mixture of descendants of Africans, Caribs, and Europeans. Family life and the Roman Catholic Church are important to most St. Lucians. In rural areas, women often head the households and run much of the farming. Plantation and hotel owners are the richest group. There is growing local resistance to overdevelopment of the island for tourism.

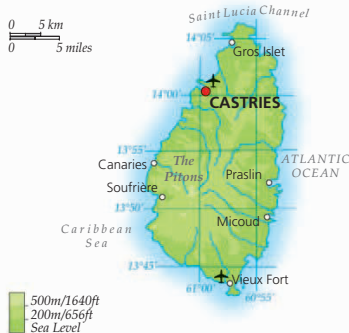


THE ECONOMY

Bananas are still biggest export, but struggling to compete since loss of preferential access to EU market. Successful tourism. Offshore banking.



INSIGHT: *St. Lucia has two Nobel laureates, the most per capita in the world*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Saint Lucia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1979

CAPITAL: Castries

POPULATION: 172,200

TOTAL AREA: 239 sq. miles
(620 sq. km)

DENSITY: 730 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, French Creole

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 90%,
other 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 83%, Mixed race 13%,
Asian 3%, White 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: East Caribbean dollar =
100 cents



St. Vincent & the Grenadines

The islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines form part of the Windward group in the Caribbean. St. Vincent is mostly volcanic, while the Grenadines are flat, mainly bare, coral reefs.



GEOGRAPHY

St. Vincent is mountainous and forested, with one of two active volcanoes in the Caribbean, La Soufrière. The Grenadines are 32 islands and cays, fringed by beaches



CLIMATE

Tropical, with constant trade winds. Hurricanes are likely during July–November wet season.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population is racially diverse; intermarriage has reduced tensions. Society is informal and relaxed, but family life is strongly influenced by the Christian Church. Locals fear that their traditional lifestyle is being threatened by the expanding tourist industry.



INSIGHT: *The islands' precolonial inhabitants, the Carib, named them "Harioun" – home of the blessed*



THE ECONOMY

Dependent on agriculture and tourism. Bananas are the main cash crop. Tourism, targeted at the jet-set and cruise-ship markets, is concentrated on the Grenadines.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

DATE OF FORMATION: 1979

CAPITAL: Kingstown

POPULATION: 109,200

TOTAL AREA: 150 sq. miles (389 sq. km)

DENSITY: 834 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, English Creole

RELIGIONS: Anglican 47%, Methodist 28%, Roman Catholic 13%, other 12%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 77%, Mixed race 16%, other 3%, Carib 3%, Asian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: East Caribbean dollar = 100 cents

Samoa



The Pacific islands of Samoa gained independence from New Zealand in 1962. Four of the nine volcanic islands are inhabited – Apolima, Manono, Savai'i, and Upolu.



GEOGRAPHY

Comprises two large islands and seven smaller ones. The two largest islands have rainforested, mountainous interiors surrounded by coastal lowlands and coral reefs.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with high humidity. Cooler in May–November. Cyclone season is December–March.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Ethnic Samoans are the world's second-largest Polynesian group, after the Maoris. Their way of life is communal and formalized. Extended family groups own 80% of the land. Each family has an elected chief, who looks after its political and social interests. Large-scale migration to the US and New Zealand reflects the country's lack of jobs and the attractions of a Western lifestyle.



THE ECONOMY

Exports fish, coconut products (oil, cream, copra), and nonu fruit. Growth of tourism, offshore banking, and light manufacturing (Japanese car parts). Dependent on aid and expatriate remittances. Rainforests are increasingly exploited for timber.



INSIGHT: Samoa was named for the sacred (sa) chickens (moa) of Lu, son of Tagaloa, the god of creation



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Independent State of Samoa

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Apia

POPULATION: 178,800

TOTAL AREA: 1104 sq. miles
(2860 sq. km)

DENSITY: 164 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Samoan*, English*

RELIGIONS: Christian 99%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Polynesian 90%,
Eurasian (mixed European and
Polynesian) 9%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Tala = 100 sene



San Marino



Perched on the slopes of Monte Titano in the Italian Apennines, San Marino has maintained its independence since the 4th century CE, but Italy effectively controls most of its affairs.



GEOGRAPHY

Distinctive limestone outcrop of Monte Titano dominates wooded hills and pastures near Italy's Adriatic coast.



CLIMATE

High altitude and sea breezes moderate a Mediterranean climate. Hot summers and cool, wet winters.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Territory is divided into nine "castles," or districts. Tightly knit society, with 16 centuries of tradition. Strict immigration rules require 30-year residence before applying for citizenship. Living standards are similar to those in northern Italy. About 20,000 Sammarinesi live abroad, most in Italy.



INSIGHT: Sales of postage stamps and coins contribute around 10% of the national income



THE ECONOMY

Tourism provides over half of GDP. Banking: transparency has improved. Lower tax rates than Italy. Wine, cheese, olive oil, textiles, and ceramics are exported. Also relies on Italian subsidy and infrastructure.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of San Marino

San Marino

DATE OF FORMATION: 1631

CAPITAL: San Marino

POPULATION: 31,400

TOTAL AREA: 23.6 sq. miles

(61 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1308 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Italian

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 93%, other and nonreligious 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Sammarinese 88%, Italian 10%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

São Tomé & Príncipe



A former Portuguese colony, São Tomé and Príncipe comprises two main islands and surrounding islets, off the west coast of Africa. Elections in 1991 ended 15 years of Marxism.



GEOGRAPHY

Islands scattered across the equator. São Tomé and Príncipe are heavily forested and mountainous.



CLIMATE

Hot and humid, but cooled by the Benguela Current. Plentiful rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

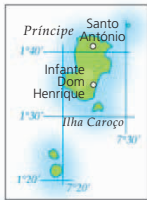
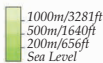
Population is mostly black, though Portuguese culture predominates. Blacks run the political parties. Society is well integrated and free of racial prejudice. Príncipe assumed autonomous status in 1995. There is a growing business class. Extended family offers main form of social security. One of Africa's highest aid-to-population ratios.

INSIGHT: *The population is entirely of immigrant descent: the islands were uninhabited when colonized in 1470*



THE ECONOMY

Cocoa provides 95% of export earnings. Coconuts, pepper, coffee also farmed. Tourism potential. Offshore oil may come onstream in 2012.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: São Tomé

POPULATION: 162,800

TOTAL AREA: 386 sq. miles (1001 sq. km)

DENSITY: 439 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Portuguese Creole, Portuguese*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 84%, other 16%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 90%, Portuguese and Creole 10%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Dobra = 100 céntimos



Saudi Arabia

Occupying most of the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia covers an area the size of western Europe. It is the world's largest oil producer and has a major petrochemicals industry.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly desert or semidesert plateau. Mountain ranges in the west run parallel to the Red Sea and drop steeply to a coastal plain.



CLIMATE

In summer, temperatures often soar above 118°F (48°C), but in winter they may fall below freezing. Rainfall is rare.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Saudis are Sunni Muslims who follow the strictly orthodox Wahhabi interpretation of Islam and embrace sharia (Islamic law) in their daily lives. Women are obliged to wear the veil, cannot hold a driver's license, and have no role in public life. The al-Sa'ud family has had absolute rule since 1932. With the support of the religious establishment, it controls all political life.

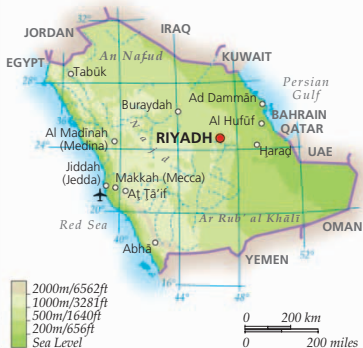


THE ECONOMY

Vast oil and natural gas reserves. A third of workers are foreign. Attractive jobs for young Saudis are scarce, however.



INSIGHT: Three million Muslims a year make the haj (pilgrimage) to the holy city of Mecca. Only practicing Muslims are allowed inside the city



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1932

CAPITALS: Riyadh

POPULATION: 25.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 756,981 sq. miles
(1,960,582 sq. km)

DENSITY: 32 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic

RELIGIONS: (Native population) Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a Muslim 15%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 72%, foreign (mostly S or SE Asian) 20%, Afro-Asian 8%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Saudi riyal = 100 halalat

Senegal



Senegal's capital, Dakar, stands on the westernmost cape of Africa. After independence from France, Senegal became a single-party state, but it has had multiparty elections since 1981.



GEOGRAPHY

Arid semidesert in the north. The south is mainly savanna bushland. Plains in the southeast.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with humid rainy conditions June–October, and a drier season December–May. The coast is cooled by northern trade winds.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Interethnic marriage has reduced ethnic tensions. Groups can be identified regionally. Dakar is a Wolof area, the Senegal River is dominated by the Toucouleur, and the Malinké mostly live in the east. The Diola (Jola) in Casamance have felt politically excluded, prompting a long-running secessionist struggle; a cease-fire has held since 2004. A large diaspora has raised global awareness of Senegalese culture and music.



THE ECONOMY

Good infrastructure, particularly port at Dakar. Fishing (though stocks diminishing). Remittances. Phosphate mining. Groundnuts. Development of tourism. Oil potential off Casamance.



INSIGHT: *Senegal's name derives from the Muslim Zenega Berbers who invaded in the 1300s*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Senegal

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Dakar

POPULATION: 12.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 75,749 sq. miles
(196,190 sq. km)

DENSITY: 169 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Wolof, Serer, Pulaar, Diola, Mandinka, Malinké, Soninké, French*

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 90%, traditional beliefs 5%, Christian 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Wolof 43%, Serer 15%, other 14%, Peul 14%, Toucouleur 9%, Diola 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Serbia



The central and eastern region of what was once Yugoslavia, Serbia was a pariah state until Slobodan Milosevic was ousted in 2000. Montenegro broke away in 2006, and Kosovo in 2008.



GEOGRAPHY

Landlocked since secession of Montenegro. Fertile Danube plain in the north, rolling uplands in the center and southeast. Mountains in southwest.



CLIMATE

Continental in north, with wet springs and warm summers. Colder winters with heavy snow in south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Serbs are Orthodox Christian, and their language uses Cyrillic script. The Catholic Magyars (Hungarians) live mainly in Vojvodina, which has been granted some autonomy. Society was severely shaken in the 1990s by interethnic conflict. EU integration is dependent on Serbia's cooperation in apprehending suspected war criminals.



INSIGHT: *The medieval Serbian Empire reached into northern Greece*



THE ECONOMY

Recovering from sanctions and 1999 NATO bombing: GDP is only just back to pre-1990 level. Reserves of coal, oil. Strong industrial base. Privatization ongoing. Foreign investment growing. Danube is a key transportation link.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Serbia

DATE OF FORMATION: 2006

CAPITAL: Belgrade

POPULATION: 7.75 million

TOTAL AREA: 34,116 sq. miles
(88,361 sq. km)

DENSITY: 259 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Serbian*, Hungarian

RELIGIONS: Orthodox Christian 85%,
other 6%, Roman Catholic 6%,
Muslim 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Serb 83%, other 10%, Magyar 4%,
Bosniak 2%, Roma 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Dinar = 100 para

Seychelles



Formerly a UK colony, the Seychelles comprises 115 islands in the Indian Ocean. After 14 years as a one-party state, multiparty elections were introduced in 1993.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly low-lying coral atolls, but 40, including the largest, Mahé, are mountainous and are the only granitic midocean islands in the world.



CLIMATE

Tropical oceanic climate. Hot and humid. Rainy season December–May.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The islands were uninhabited when French settlers arrived in the 18th century. Today, the population is homogeneous – a result of intermarriage between ethnic groups. Almost 90% of people live on Mahé. Living standards are among Africa's highest. Poverty is rare and the welfare system caters to all.

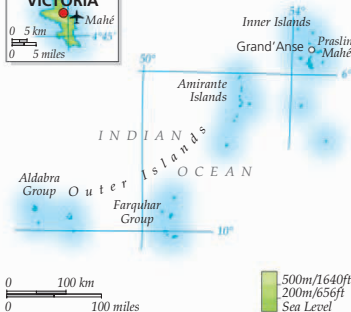
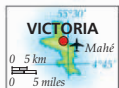


INSIGHT: *The Seychelles' unique species include the coco-de-mer palm, which produces the world's largest seeds*



THE ECONOMY

Tourism is main sector, based on appeal of beaches and exotic wildlife. Tuna is fished and canned for export. Re-export trade. Virtually no mineral resources. All domestic requirements are imported. High debt-servicing burden. Lack of foreign exchange.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Seychelles

DATE OF FORMATION: 1976

CAPITAL: Victoria

POPULATION: 84,600

TOTAL AREA: 176 sq. miles
(455 sq. km)

DENSITY: 813 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Creole*, English*, French*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 90%, Anglican 8%, other (including Muslim) 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Creole 89%, Indian 5%, other 4%, Chinese 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Seychelles rupee = 100 cents



Sierra Leone



The west African state of Sierra Leone achieved independence from the UK in 1961. Today, trying to recover from ten years of devastating civil war, it is one of the world's poorest nations.



GEOGRAPHY

Flat plain, running the length of the coast, stretches inland for 83 miles (133 km). Beyond, forests rise to highlands near neighboring Guinea in the northeast.



CLIMATE

Hot tropical weather, with very high rainfall and humidity. The dusty, northeastern *harmattan* wind blows November–April.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Mende and Temne are the major ethnic groups. Freetown's citizens are largely descended from slaves freed from Britain and the US, resulting in a strongly Anglicized Creole culture in the capital. The countryside is less developed. A brutal civil war broke out in 1991 and was not properly resolved until a 2001 peace agreement. Two million people were displaced during the conflict.



THE ECONOMY

Aid is vital: reconstruction will take years. Diamond exports, though smuggling is rife. Rutile and bauxite also mined. Coffee and cocoa are cash crops, but most farming is subsistence.



INSIGHT: *The British philanthropist Granville Sharp set up a settlement for freed slaves in Freetown in 1787*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Sierra Leone

DATE OF FORMATION: 1961

CAPITAL: Freetown

POPULATION: 5.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 27,698 sq. miles
(71,740 sq. km)

DENSITY: 206 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Mende, Temne, Krio, English*

RELIGIONS: Muslim 30%, traditional beliefs 30%, other 30%, Christian 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Mende 35%, Temne 32%, other 21%, Limba 8%, Kuranko 4%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Leone = 100 cents

Singapore



Linked to the southernmost tip of the Malay peninsula by a causeway, Singapore was established as a trading settlement in 1819. It is one of Asia's most important commercial centers.



GEOGRAPHY

Little remains of the original vegetation on Singapore Island. The other 54 much smaller islands are little more than swampy jungle.



CLIMATE

Equatorial. Hot and humid, with heavy rainfall all year round.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Dominated by the Chinese, who make up three-quarters of the community. The old English-speaking Straits Chinese and newer Mandarin-speakers are now well integrated. Malays are generally the poorest group. The population is skilled and industrious; there is a significant foreign workforce. Society is highly regulated; official campaigns aim to improve public behavior. Crime is limited and punishment can be severe.



THE ECONOMY

Wealth from success as entrepôt and center of high-tech industries, such as electronics and pharmaceuticals. Leads research in new biotechnologies. All food, energy, and water imported. Worst-ever recession in 2008–2009.



INSIGHT: Chewing gum was banned outright from 1992 to 2004



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Singapore

DATE OF FORMATION: 1965

CAPITAL: Singapore

POPULATION: 4.74 million

TOTAL AREA: 250 sq. miles
(648 sq. km)

DENSITY: 20,072 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Mandarin*, Malay*, Tamil*, English*

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 55%, Taoist 22%, Muslim 16%, Hindu, Christian, Sikh 7%

ETHNIC MIX: Chinese 77%, Malay 14%, Indian 8%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Singapore dollar = 100 cents



Slovakia



Landlocked in central Europe, Slovakia became a separate state in 1993, splitting ex-communist Czechoslovakia in two. It joined the EU in 2004 and the eurozone five years later.



GEOGRAPHY

The Tatra Mountains stretch along the northern border with Poland. Southern lowlands include the fertile Danube plain.



CLIMATE

Continental. Moderately warm summers and steady rainfall. Cold winters with heavy snowfalls.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority Slovaks are the dominant group. The Magyars (Hungarians) seek protection of their language and culture, backed by Hungary. Magyar parties exist in the political mainstream, and on occasion form part of the ruling coalition. Ethnic Czechs have dual citizenship. Roma are unrepresented and face significant discrimination. Rural eastern regions are least developed.



THE ECONOMY

Emphasis on heavy industry, especially cars. Inexpensive workforce. Rising foreign investment. Successful privatizations. Strong growth until 2009 recession. High unemployment.

INSIGHT: From 1526 to 1784 Bratislava, then known as Pozsony, served as the capital of Hungary



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Slovak Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1993

CAPITAL: Bratislava

POPULATION: 5.41 million

TOTAL AREA: 18,859 sq. miles
(48,845 sq. km)

DENSITY: 286 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Slovak*, Hungarian (Magyar), Czech

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 60%, other 22%, Atheist 10%, Protestant 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Slovak 86%, Magyar 10%, Roma 2%, Czech 1%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Slovenia



Lying at the junction of central Europe and the Balkans, Slovenia seceded from socialist Yugoslavia in 1991. In 2004, it became the first former Yugoslav state to join the EU.



GEOGRAPHY

Alpine terrain with hills and mountains. Forests cover almost half the country's area. There is a short coastline on the Adriatic Sea.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean climate on the small coastal strip. The alpine interior has continental extremes.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Long historical association with western Europe, accounts for the "Alpine" rather than "Balkan" outlook of Slovenia's people, despite close similarities to other former Yugoslavs. The absence of sizable Serb or Croat minorities made for a relatively peaceful secession from Yugoslavia. There are small communities of Italians and Magyars (Hungarians) in the southwest and east respectively.



THE ECONOMY

First new EU member to join eurozone (in 2007). Export-oriented, so vulnerable to global economic trends. Competitive manufacturing industry. Sizable state-owned sector remains.



INSIGHT: A wheel found in a marsh in 2003 is claimed to be the world's oldest, pre-dating 3000 BCE



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Slovenia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Ljubljana

POPULATION: 2.02 million

TOTAL AREA: 7820 sq. miles
(20,253 sq. km)

DENSITY: 258 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Slovenian*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 96%,
other 3%, Muslim 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Slovene 83%,
other 12%, Serb 2%, Croat 2%,
Bosniak 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents

Solomon Islands



The Solomons archipelago comprises several hundred coral reef islands scattered in the southwestern Pacific. Most of the population live on the six largest islands.



GEOGRAPHY

The six largest islands are volcanic, mountainous, and thickly forested. Flat coastal plains provide the only cultivable land.



CLIMATE

Northern islands are hot and humid all year round; farther south a cool season develops. November–April wet season brings cyclones.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

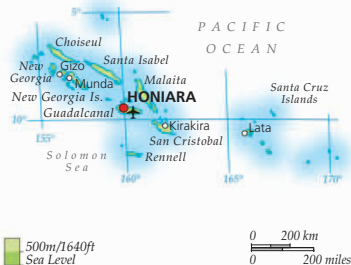
Almost all Solomon Islanders are Melanesian. Tensions are regional; Guadalcanal natives (Isatabu) fought against immigrant Malaitan workers in the 1998–2000 conflict, displacing thousands and ruining the economy. In 2003, Australian-led peacekeepers arrived to try to restore the rule of law. Outlying islands have pressed for autonomy. Animist beliefs exist alongside Christianity.



THE ECONOMY

Subsistence farming and fishing sustain 75% of people. Cash crops are copra and cocoa. Gold deposits. Civil conflict bankrupted the government, closed the main gold mine, and cut trade links. Forests have been depleted.

INSIGHT: *The battle for Japanese-held Guadalcanal was the first major US offensive in the Pacific War during World War II*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Solomon Islands

DATE OF FORMATION: 1978

CAPITAL: Honiara

POPULATION: 523,200

TOTAL AREA: 10,985 sq. miles
(28,450 sq. km)

DENSITY: 48 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Pidgin English, Melanesian Pidgin, c. 120 others

RELIGIONS: Anglican 34%, Catholic 19%, other Protestant 38%, other 9%

ETHNIC MIX: Melanesian 94%, Polynesian 4%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Solomon Is. dollar = 100 cents

Somalia



A semiarid state occupying the Horn of Africa, Somalia was formed from the Italian and British colonies of Somaliland. Conflict has left it without effective government since 1991.



GEOGRAPHY

Highlands in the north, flatter scrub-covered land to the south. Coastal areas are more fertile.



CLIMATE

Very dry, except for the north coast, which is hot and humid. The interior has among the world's highest average annual temperatures.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The clan system forms the basis of all commercial, political, and social life. Most people are ethnic Somali. The minority Bantu are traditionally seen as socially inferior. Since the 1991 coup, Somalia has lacked a strong central authority. Somaliland has declared independence, while Puntland claims autonomy. Islamist militias now control most of the country: some have joined the latest attempt at a transitional government, but fighting continues.

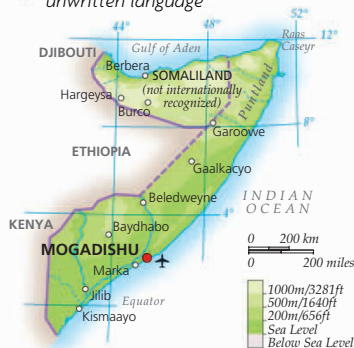


THE ECONOMY

Ongoing war. Every commodity, except arms, is in short supply. Piracy and banditry. Few natural resources. Prone to drought. Somaliland region is more stable, but its trade is hampered by lack of international recognition.



INSIGHT: *Until 1973, Somali was an unwritten language*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Somalia
DATE OF FORMATION: 1960
CAPITAL: Mogadishu
POPULATION: 9.13 million
TOTAL AREA: 246,199 sq. miles (637,657 sq. km)
DENSITY: 38 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Somali*, Arabic*, English, Italian
RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 98%, Christian 2%
ETHNIC MIX: Somali 85%, other 15%
GOVERNMENT: Transitional regime
CURRENCY: Somali shilin = 100 senti



South Africa



After 80 years of white minority rule, South Africa held its first multiracial, multiparty elections in 1994. Victory for the blacks marked the symbolic overturning of long years of apartheid.



GEOGRAPHY

Much of the interior is grassy veld. Desert in the west and far north. Mountains east, south, and west.



CLIMATE

Warm, temperate, and dry. Cape Town has a Mediterranean climate. Semi-arid in the west.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The majority black population now dominates politically, but the minority white community still controls the economy. A small black middle class is growing, but unemployment among blacks remains high. Over five million people are HIV-positive, but the fight against AIDS is hampered by social attitudes. Violent crime is a problem.

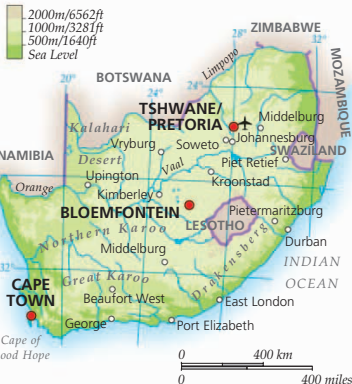


INSIGHT: *Over the last century, South Africa has produced over half of the world's gold*



THE ECONOMY

Africa's largest, most developed economy. Leading mineral producer, notably metals, diamonds, coal. Tourism is also key. Wealth gap has widened: jobs, housing, and better access to basic services are needed to fight poverty.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of South Africa

DATE OF FORMATION: 1934

CAPITAL: Tshwane / Pretoria; Cape Town; Bloemfontein

POPULATION: 50.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 471,008 sq. miles (1,219,912 sq. km)

DENSITY: 106 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, isiZulu*, isiXhosa*, Afrikaans*, 7 other official languages*

RELIGIONS: Christian 68%, animist and traditional beliefs 29%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 79%, White 10%, Mixed race 9%, Asian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Rand = 100 cents

Spain



Lodged between Europe, Africa, the North Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, Spain has occupied a pivotal global position since unification under Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountain ranges in the north, center, and south, with a huge central plateau. Mediterranean lowlands. Verdant valleys in the northwest.



CLIMATE

Maritime in north. Hotter and drier in south. The central plateau has an extreme climate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

A vigorous ethnic regionalism, suppressed under Franco's fascist regime, now flourishes. There are 17 autonomous regions. People remain churchgoing, though Roman Catholic teachings on social issues are often flouted. Spanish women are increasingly emancipated, with strong political representation.



INSIGHT: Over 3000 festivals and feasts take place each year in Spain



THE ECONOMY

Decade of sustained growth, until construction boom ended in 2007, followed by global recession: unemployment soared. Large fishing fleet. Few natural resources. Proximity to Africa makes it a target for would-be economic migrants.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Spain

DATE OF FORMATION: 1492

CAPITAL: Madrid

POPULATION: 44.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 194,896 sq. miles
(504,782 sq. km)

DENSITY: 233 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, Catalan*, Galician*, Basque*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 96%, other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Spanish 72%, Catalan 17%, Galician 6%, other 3%, Basque 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Sri Lanka



The teardrop-shaped island of Sri Lanka is separated from India by the Palk Strait. Ethnic Tamil rebels – the Tamil Tigers – were defeated in 2009, after a brutal 26-year civil war.



GEOGRAPHY

The main island is dominated by rugged central highlands. Fertile northern plains are dissected by rivers. Much of the land is tropical jungle.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with breezes on the coast and cooler air in highlands. Northeast is driest and hottest.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Sinhalese are mostly Buddhist, while Tamils are mostly Hindu. Moors are the Muslim descendants of Arab traders. Tamils were the minority group favored by the British colonists. Majority-Sinhalese power since independence in 1948 fueled tensions, erupting into civil war in 1983. The eventual government victory in 2009 made this the only rebel insurgency ever defeated in modern times.



THE ECONOMY

Garment industry. Remittances. Major tea exporter. Civil war drained government funds, deterred investors and tourists. Tsunami damage in 2004.

INSIGHT: Sri Lanka elected the world's first woman prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in 1960



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

DATE OF FORMATION: 1948

CAPITAL: Colombo

POPULATION: 20.2 million

TOTAL AREA: 25,332 sq. miles
(65,610 sq. km)

DENSITY: 810 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Sinhala*, Tamil*, English

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 69%, Hindu 15%, Muslim 8%, Christian 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Sinhalese 82%, Tamil 9%, Moor 8%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Sri Lanka rupee = 100 cents

Sudan



The largest country in Africa, Sudan has undergone two civil wars between its Arab north and black African south. Darfur in the west now endures a terrible humanitarian crisis.



GEOGRAPHY

Lies within the upper Nile basin. Mostly arid plains, with marshes in the south. Highlands border the Red Sea in the northeast.



CLIMATE

North is hot, arid desert with constant dry winds. Rainy season ranging from two months in the center to eight in the south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Two million people are nomads. Many ethnic groups. Key social divide is between Arabized Muslims in north, and mostly black African, largely Christian or animist peoples in south. Attempts to impose Arab and Islamic values were the root cause of civil war (1955–1972, 1983–2005). Ethnic violence by Arab militias in Darfur since 2003 has killed 300,000 people: huge refugee crisis. Women's rights are restricted.



THE ECONOMY

Oil exports. Cotton, sesame, gum arabic. Violence and drought hamper farming. Millions of people displaced.



INSIGHT: Sudan's Sudd is the world's largest swamp



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of the Sudan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1956

CAPITAL: Khartoum

POPULATION: 42.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 967,493 sq. miles
(2,505,810 sq. km)

DENSITY: 44 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, African languages

RELIGIONS: Muslim 70%, traditional beliefs 20%, Christian 9%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Black 59% (including Beja and Dinka 7%), Arab 40%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Sudanese pound or dinar
= 100 piastres



Suriname

Suriname is a former Dutch colony on the north coast of South America. Democracy was restored in 1991, after almost 11 years of military rule. The Netherlands is still the main supplier of aid.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly covered by tropical rainforest. Coastal plain rises to central plateaus and the Guiana Highlands.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Hot and humid, but cooled by trade winds. High rainfall, especially in the interior.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Dutch brought laborers from South Asia and Java. Independence saw mass emigration: over 300,000 Surinamese live in the Netherlands. Of those left, over 85% live near the coast, the rest in scattered rainforest communities. Indigenous Amerindians only number a few thousand. *Bosnegers* – descended from runaway African slaves – fought the military government in the late 1980s. Under civilian rule, each group has had a political party representing its interests.



THE ECONOMY

Alumina and gold are the key exports. Rice and bananas are main cash crops. Oil production and tourism are growing. Excessive bureaucracy.



INSIGHT: *In a 1667 Anglo-Dutch deal, Holland gained Suriname but lost New Amsterdam (now New York)*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Suriname

DATE OF FORMATION: 1975

CAPITAL: Paramaribo

POPULATION: 519,700

TOTAL AREA: 63,039 sq. miles
(163,270 sq. km)

DENSITY: 8 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Sranan (Creole), Dutch*, Javanese, Sarnami, Hindi, other

RELIGIONS: Christian 48%, Hindu 27%, Muslim 20%, traditional beliefs 5%

ETHNIC MIX: South Asian 27%, other 25%, Creole 18%, Javanese 15%, Black 15%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Surinamese dollar = 100 cents

Swaziland



The tiny southern African kingdom of Swaziland is crippled with HIV/AIDS and economically dependent on South Africa. Vocal demands for multiparty democracy have been ignored.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly high plateaus and mountains. Rolling grasslands and low scrub plains to the east. Pine forests on western border.



CLIMATE

Temperatures rise and rainfall declines as the land descends eastward, from high to low grassy veld.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

One of Africa's most conservative states, though there is pressure from urban-based modernizers. Political system promotes Swazi tradition and is dominated by powerful monarchy. Women face discrimination. Swaziland has world's highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS: chastity is urged to combat its spread.

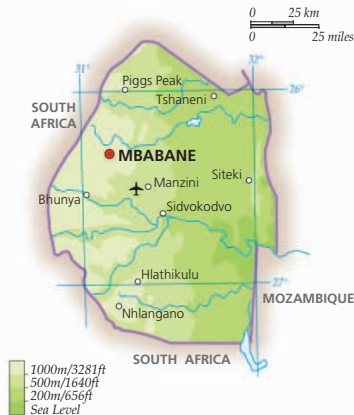


INSIGHT: Polygamy is practiced in Swaziland – when King Sobhuza died in 1982, he left 100 widows



THE ECONOMY

Sugarcane is the main cash crop. Wood pulp and soft drink concentrates are also exported. Loss of workforce to HIV/AIDS, and high cost of health care.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Swaziland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1968

CAPITAL: Mbabane

POPULATION: 1.18 million

TOTAL AREA: 6704 sq. miles
(17,363 sq. km)

DENSITY: 178 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, siSwati*, isiZulu, Xitsonga

RELIGIONS: Christian 60%, traditional beliefs 40%

ETHNIC MIX: Swazi 97%, other 3%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Lilangeni = 100 cents



Sweden



The largest Scandinavian country by both population and area, Sweden has one of the world's most extensive welfare systems and is among the leading proponents of equal rights for women.



GEOGRAPHY

Heavily forested, with many lakes. Northern plateau extends beyond the Arctic Circle. Southern lowlands are widely cultivated.



CLIMATE

Southern coasts warmed by Gulf Stream. Northern areas have more extreme continental climate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The nuclear family forms the basis of society, but the marriage rate is one of the lowest in the world, and cohabitation is now common. The model welfare system is paid for by a high tax burden. Women are well represented at all levels. A minority of 20,000 Sámi lives in the far north. Most industries and the bulk of population are based in and around the southern cities. An EU member since 1995, Sweden has voted not to join the euro.



THE ECONOMY

Companies of global importance, including Volvo, Saab, SFK, Ericsson. Highly developed infrastructure. Up-to-date technology. Skilled workforce.



INSIGHT: Sweden has maintained a position of armed neutrality since 1815



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Sweden

DATE OF FORMATION: 1523

CAPITAL: Stockholm

POPULATION: 9.25 million

TOTAL AREA: 173,731 sq. miles
(449,964 sq. km)

DENSITY: 58 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Swedish*, Finnish, Sámi

RELIGIONS: Evangelical Lutheran 82%, other 13%, Roman Catholic 2%, Muslim 2%, Orthodox Christian 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Swedish 86%, recent immigrant 12%, Finnish and Sámi 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Swedish krona = 100 öre

Switzerland



One of the world's most prosperous countries, Switzerland sits at the center of Europe. It has retained its neutral status through every major European conflict since 1815.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly mountainous, with river valleys. The Alps cover 60% of its area; the Jura in the west cover 10%. Lowlands lie along the east–west axis.



CLIMATE

Most rain falls in the warm summer months. Winters are snowy, but milder and foggy away from the mountains. Avalanches are a problem.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Switzerland is composed of distinct German-Swiss, French-Swiss, and Italian-Swiss linguistic groups. In the east, a 35,000-strong minority speaks Romansch. The country is divided into 26 autonomous cantons (states), each with control over housing and economics. Public referenda are widely used to decide policy. Society is conservative; marriage is common but divorce is above the EU average rate.



THE ECONOMY

Diversified economy relies on services – the banking sector manages over a quarter of the world's offshore private wealth – and specialized industries (engineering, watches, etc).



INSIGHT: *Famed for its neutrality, Switzerland only joined the UN in 2002, and remains outside the EU*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Swiss Confederation

DATE OF FORMATION: 1291

CAPITAL: Bern

POPULATION: 7.57 million

TOTAL AREA: 15,942 sq. miles
(41,290 sq. km)

DENSITY: 493 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: German*, Swiss-German, French*, Italian*, Romansch*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 42%, Protestant 35%, other 19%, Muslim 4%

ETHNIC MIX: German 64%, French 20%, other 9.5%, Italian 6%, Romansch 0.5%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Franc = 100 rappen/centimes



Syria



Stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to the Tigris River, Syria's borders are regarded as an artificial creation of French colonial rule by many Syrians. Foreign relations are turbulent.



GEOGRAPHY

A short stretch of coastal plain is backed by a low range of hills. The Euphrates River cuts through a vast interior desert plateau.



CLIMATE

Mediterranean coastal climate. Inland areas are arid. In winter, snow is common on the mountains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Syrians live within 60 miles (100 km) of the coast. 90% are Muslim, including the politically dominant Shi'a Alawis. In the north and west are groups of Kurds, Armenians, and Turkic-speaking peoples. Some 460,000 Palestinian refugees live in Syria, and over a million Iraqis have fled here since 2003. There is a growing gulf between rich and poor. Human rights are an issue, but women's rights are among the best in the Arab world.



THE ECONOMY

Oil, though production is falling. Natural gas. High defense spending. Large public sector. Agriculture: fruit, cotton, and grain. Under US sanctions.



INSIGHT: *Syria is an ancient land; there are at least 3500 as yet unexcavated archaeological sites*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Syrian Arab Republic

DATE OF FORMATION: 1941

CAPITAL: Damascus

POPULATION: 21.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 71,498 sq. miles
(184,180 sq. km)

DENSITY: 308 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, French, Kurdish, Armenian, Circassian, Assyrian, other

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 74%, other Muslim 16%, Christian 10%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 89%, Kurd 6%, other 3%, Armenian, Turkmen, Circassian 2%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Syrian pound = 100 piastres

Taiwan



The republic of Taiwan (formerly Formosa) is on an island 80 miles (130 km) off the southeast coast of mainland China, which still considers it to be a renegade province.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountain region covers two-thirds of the island. Highly fertile lowlands and coastal plains.



CLIMATE

Tropical monsoon. Hot and humid. Typhoons July–September. Snow falls in mountains in winter.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Most Taiwanese are Han Chinese, descendants of the 1644 migration of the Ming dynasty from the mainland. The modern republic was created in 1949, when the nationalist Kuomintang was expelled from the mainland following Communist victory in the civil war. 100,000 emigrés established themselves as a ruling class. Initial resentment has subsided as a new Taiwan-born generation has taken over the reins of power. The aboriginal minority suffers discrimination.

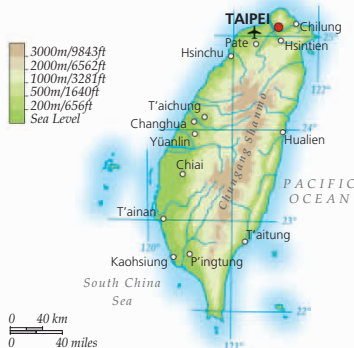


THE ECONOMY

Successful economy of small, adaptable companies. High-tech goods: TVs, computers, and semiconductors. Rising trade, investment with China.



INSIGHT: *Taiwan lost its seat at the UN to Beijing in 1971: both claim to represent “China”*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of China (ROC)

DATE OF FORMATION: 1949

CAPITAL: Taipei

POPULATION: 23 million

TOTAL AREA: 13,892 sq. miles
(35,980 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1844 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Amoy Chinese, Mandarin Chinese*, Hakka Chinese

RELIGIONS: Buddhist, Confucianist, and Taoist 93%, Christian 5%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Indigenous Chinese 84%, mainland Chinese 14%, aboriginal 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Taiwan dollar = 100 cents



Tajikistan

Tajikistan lies landlocked on the western slopes of the Pamirs in central Asia. Soon after the breakup of the USSR in 1991, civil war erupted between ruling communists and Islamists.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly mountainous: bare slopes of the Pamir ranges, with fast-flowing rivers, cover most of the country. Small but fertile Fergana Valley in northwest.



CLIMATE

Continental extremes in the valleys. Bitterly cold winters in the mountains. Rainfall is low.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Unlike the other former Soviet republics of central Asia, Tajikistan is dominated by a people of Persian (Iranian) rather than Turkic origin. The main ethnic conflict is with the Turkic Uzbek minority. Russians are discriminated against; most fled in the 1992–1997 civil war, and standards of living fell dramatically. Islamist militants are active. Two million people work abroad, primarily in Russia.



THE ECONOMY

Mass poverty. Declining cotton revenue. Also exports aluminum. Uranium deposits. Transit route for Afghan opium. Corruption. Needs reforms to attract foreign investment.

INSIGHT: *Carpet-making, an ancient tradition learned from Persia, is still a major source of revenue*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Tajikistan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Dushanbe

POPULATION: 6.95 million

TOTAL AREA: 55,251 sq. miles
(143,100 sq. km)

DENSITY: 126 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Tajik*, Uzbek, Russian

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 80%, other 15%, Shi'a Muslim 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Tajik 80%, Uzbek 15%, other 3%, Kyrgyz 1%, Russian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Somoni = 100 diram

Tanzania



The east African state of Tanzania was formed in 1964 by the union of Tanganyika and the Zanzibar islands. A third of its area is game reserve or national park.



GEOGRAPHY

The mainland is mostly a high plateau lying to the east of the Great Rift Valley. Forested coastal plain. Highlands in the north and south.



CLIMATE

Tropical on the coast and Zanzibar. Semi-arid on central plateau, semitemperate in the highlands. March–May rains.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

99% of people belong to one of 120 small ethnic Bantu groups. Arabs, Asians, and Europeans make up the remaining population. Use of Kiswahili as the lingua franca has eliminated ethnic rivalries. The majority of Tanzanians are subsistence farmers.

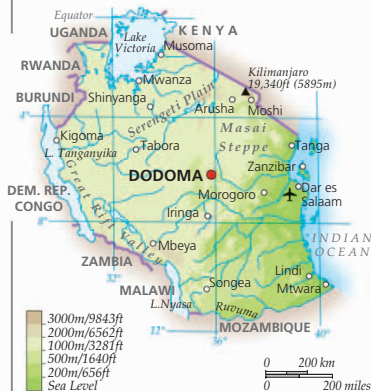


INSIGHT: At 19,340 ft (5895 m), Kilimanjaro in northeast Tanzania is Africa's highest mountain



THE ECONOMY

Heavily reliant on agriculture, including forestry and cattle. Coffee, cotton, tea, cashew nuts, sisal, and cloves are cash crops. Gold, diamonds, and gems are mined. Safari and beach tourism. Debt relief.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: United Republic of Tanzania

DATE OF FORMATION: 1964

CAPITAL: Dodoma

POPULATION: 43.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 364,898 sq. miles (945,087 sq. km)

DENSITY: 128 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Kiswahili*, English*, other
RELIGIONS: Muslim 33%, Christian 33%, traditional beliefs 30%, other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Native African (over 120 tribes) 99%, European, Asian, Arab 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Tanzanian shilling = 100 cents



Thailand



Thailand lies at the heart of mainland southeast Asia. Continuing rapid industrialization has resulted in massive congestion in the capital and a serious depletion of natural resources.



GEOGRAPHY

One-third is low plateau, drained by tributaries of the Mekong River. Central plain is the most fertile area.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Hot, humid March–May; monsoon rains May–October; cooler season November–March.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Buddhism is a national binding force. 600,000 hill tribes-people, with their own languages, live in the north and northeast. The Chinese minority is the most assimilated in the region. Malay Islamists in the undeveloped far south are fighting for secession. Politics has been unstable since the 2006 fall of pro-poor Prime Minister Thaksin.

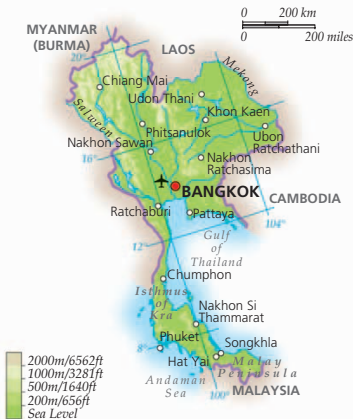


INSIGHT: *Thailand, meaning “land of the free,” is the only SE Asian nation never to have been colonized*



THE ECONOMY

Successful manufacturing. Natural gas reserves. Leading exporter of rice and rubber. Tourism, though sex industry harms image. 2004 tsunami damage.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Thailand

DATE OF FORMATION: 1238

CAPITAL: Bangkok

POPULATION: 67.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 198,455 sq. miles
(514,000 sq. km)

DENSITY: 344 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Thai*, Chinese, Malay, Khmer, Mon, Karen, Miao

RELIGIONS: Buddhist 95%, Muslim 4%, other (including Christian) 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Thai 83%, Chinese 12%, Malay 3%, Khmer and other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Baht = 100 satang

Togo



Togo lies sandwiched between Ghana and Benin in west Africa. General Eyadema ruled from 1967–2005; his son succeeded him. Lomé port is an important entrepôt for regional trade.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Central forested region bounded by savanna lands to the north and south. Mountain range stretches southwest to northeast.

**CLIMATE**

Coast hot and humid; drier inland. Rainy season March–July, with heaviest falls in the west.

**PEOPLE & SOCIETY**

Harsh resentment between Ewe in the south and Kabye in the north. Kabye control the military, but the north is less developed than the south. Extended family is important. Tribalism and nepotism are key factors in everyday life. Some ethnic groups, such as the Mina, have matriarchal societies.



INSIGHT: *The “Nana Benz,” the entrepreneurial market-women of Lomé, control Togo’s retail trade*

**THE ECONOMY**

Most people are farmers. Self-sufficient in staple foods. Togo’s main cash crops are coffee and cocoa: cotton has declined. Its phosphate deposits are the most mineral-rich in the world, but easily extractable reserves are depleted and the sector needs investment.

**FACTFILE**

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Togo

DATE OF FORMATION: 1960

CAPITAL: Lomé

POPULATION: 6.62 million

TOTAL AREA: 21,924 sq. miles
(56,785 sq. km)

DENSITY: 315 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Ewe, Kabye, Gurma, French*

RELIGIONS: Traditional beliefs 50%, Christian 35%, Muslim 15%

ETHNIC MIX: Ewe 46%, other African 41%, Kabye 12%, European 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: CFA franc = 100 centimes



Tonga

Tonga is an archipelago of 170 islands in the South Pacific. Only 45 of these islands are inhabited. The king's powers have been challenged: democratic reforms are promised for 2010.



GEOGRAPHY

Easterly islands are generally low and fertile. Those in the west are higher and volcanic in origin.



CLIMATE

Tropical oceanic. Temperatures range between 68°F (20°C) and 86°F (30°C) all year round. Heavy rainfall, especially February–March.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Tonga is the last remaining Polynesian monarchy. All land belongs to the crown, but is administered by nobles who allot it to the common people. Respect for traditional values is high, though younger, Westernized Tongans are starting to question some attitudes. The first elected commoner became prime minister in 2006.

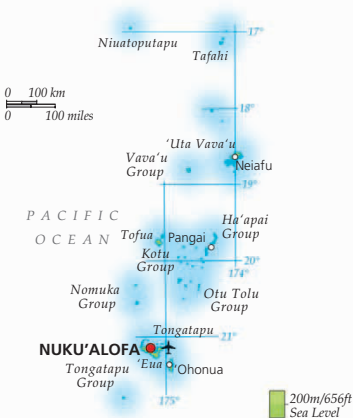


INSIGHT: *Unique in the Pacific, Tonga was never brought under foreign rule*



THE ECONOMY

Squashes and vanilla exported. Remittances. Potential for tourism and fisheries. Capital's business district destroyed in 2006 prodemocracy riots.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Tonga

DATE OF FORMATION: 1970

CAPITAL: Nuku'alofa

POPULATION: 104,000

TOTAL AREA: 289 sq. miles
(748 sq. km)

DENSITY: 374 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Tongan*

RELIGIONS: Free Wesleyan 41%, other 29%, Roman Catholic 16%, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 14%

ETHNIC MIX: Tongan 98%, other 2%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: Pa'anga (Tongan dollar)

= 100 seniti

Trinidad & Tobago



The two islands of the former UK colony of Trinidad and Tobago are the most southerly of the Caribbean Windward Islands, lying just 9 miles (15 km) off the coast of Venezuela.



GEOGRAPHY

Both islands are hilly and wooded. Trinidad has a rugged mountain range in the north, and swamps on its east and west coasts.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with July–December wet season. Escapes the region's hurricanes, which pass to the north.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Trinidad's East Indian community is the Caribbean's largest and holds onto its Muslim and Hindu heritage. There are tensions with the mainly Christian blacks; political parties are divided along race lines. Blacks form the majority on Tobago. High rates of kidnapping and murder are an issue.



INSIGHT: *Trinidad and Tobago is the birthplace of steel bands and Calypso music*



THE ECONOMY

Oil and natural gas: it provides 75% of US imports of liquefied natural gas, but only 12 years of reserves left. Associated industries: second-largest producer of methanol. Tourism on wildlife-rich Tobago.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Port-of-Spain

POPULATION: 1.34 million

TOTAL AREA: 1980 sq. miles (5128 sq. km)

DENSITY: 676 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English Creole, English*, Hindi, French, Spanish

RELIGIONS: Catholic 32%, Hindu 24%, Protestant 28%, other 9%, Muslim 7%

ETHNIC MIX: East Indian 40%, Black 40%, Mixed race 18%, White, Chinese 1%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Trin. & Tob. dollar = 100 cents



Tunisia



Tunisia has traditionally been one of the more liberal Arab states, moving toward a multiparty democracy, but its government is now facing a challenge from Islamic fundamentalists.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountains in the north are surrounded by plains. Vast, low-lying salt pans in the center. To the south lies the Sahara Desert.



CLIMATE

Summer temperatures are high. The north is often wet and windy in winter. Far south is arid.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The population is almost entirely of Arab-Berber descent, with Jewish and Christian minorities. Many still live in extended family groups, in which three or four generations are represented. Women have better rights than in most other Arab countries and make up over 30% of the workforce. Parliamentary and municipal quotas aim to increase their representation in politics. A low birth rate is a result of a long-standing family planning policy.

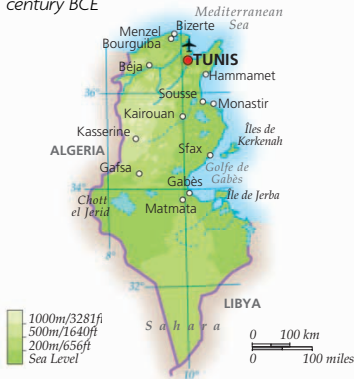


THE ECONOMY

Competitive and diversified. Expanding manufacturing. Exports olives, dates, citrus fruit, phosphates. Tourism. Free trade area with EU.



INSIGHT: Tunisia was the center of trading empires from the 9th century BCE



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Tunisia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1956

CAPITAL: Tunis

POPULATION: 10.3 million

TOTAL AREA: 63,169 sq. miles
(163,610 sq. km)

DENSITY: 171 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, French

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 98%,
Christian 1%, Jewish 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab and Berber 98%, Jewish 1%,
European 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Tunisian dinar =
1000 millimes

Turkey



Lying partly in the region of eastern Thrace in Europe, but mostly in Asia, Turkey's position gives it significant influence in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Middle East.



GEOGRAPHY

Asian Turkey (Anatolia) is dominated by two mountain ranges, separated by a high, semidesert plateau. Coastal regions are fertile.



CLIMATE

Coast has a Mediterranean climate. Interior has cold, snowy winters and hot, dry summers.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Despite racial diversity, Turkey has a strong sense of national identity, and close links with other Turkic states. Kurds, the largest minority, based in the southeast, have waged a violent campaign for greater autonomy intermittently since 1984. Islamist parties are challenging Turkey's cherished identity as a secular state. It has applied to join the EU, though progress will be slow.



THE ECONOMY

Liberalized economy, boosted by self-sufficient agriculture, and textiles, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. Route of Asian oil pipelines to Europe.



INSIGHT: Turkey had two of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the tomb of King Mausolus at Halicarnassus (now Bodrum), and the temple of Artemis at Ephesus



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Turkey

DATE OF FORMATION: 1923

CAPITAL: Ankara

POPULATION: 74.8 million

TOTAL AREA: 301,382 sq. miles
(780,580 sq. km)

DENSITY: 252 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Turkish*, Kurdish, Arabic, Circassian, Armenian, Greek, other

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 99%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Turkish 70%, Kurdish 20%, other 8%, Arab 2%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: New Turkish lira = 100 kuruş



Turkmenistan

Stretching from the Caspian Sea into the central Asian desert, Turkmenistan has had less upheaval than most ex-Soviet states, but President Niyazov was a dictator.



GEOGRAPHY

Low Garagum Desert covers 80% of the country. Mountains on southern border with Iran. Fertile Amu Darya Valley in north.



CLIMATE

Arid desert climate with extreme summer heat, but sub-freezing winter temperatures.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Before Russia annexed the area in 1884, the Turkmen were a largely nomadic tribal people. Today, the tribal unit remains strong, with population clustered around desert oases. Relations with Uzbek and Russian minorities have become tense in recent years due to the "Turkmenization" of government, education, and religion. Political reform since Niyazov's sudden death in 2006 is slowly dismantling the old regime.



THE ECONOMY

State-controlled, though there is some private investment. Natural gas and oil are main resources. Overintensive farming of cotton. Black market.



INSIGHT: *President Niyazov created an elaborate personality cult, styling himself as Turkmenbashi – "head" of all Turkmen*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Turkmenistan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Ashgabat

POPULATION: 5.11 million

TOTAL AREA: 188,455 sq. miles
(488,100 sq. km)

DENSITY: 27 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Turkmen*, Uzbek, Russian, Kazakh, Tatar, other

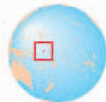
RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 87%, Orthodox Christian 11%, other 2%

ETHNIC MIX: Turkmen 77%, Uzbek 9%, Russian 7%, other 5%, Kazakh 2%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Manat = 100 tenge

Tuvalu



One of the world's smallest, most isolated states, Tuvalu lies in the central Pacific. The nine islands were linked to the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) as a UK colony until independence.



GEOGRAPHY

A series of coral atolls, none more than 15 ft (4.6 m) above sea level. Poor soils restrict vegetation to bush, coconut palms, and breadfruit trees.



CLIMATE

Hot all year round. Heavy annual rainfall. Hurricane season brings many violent storms.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

People are mostly Polynesian. Around half the population lives on Funafuti, where government jobs are based. Life is communal and traditional. Most people live by subsistence farming, digging pits out of the coral to grow crops. Fresh water is precious, due to frequent droughts.

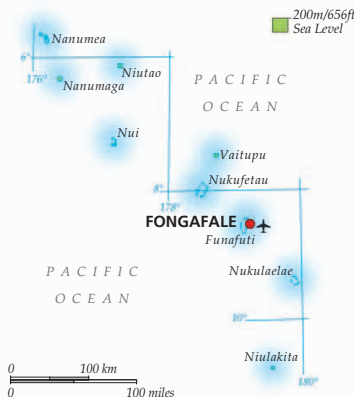


INSIGHT: *Low-lying Tuvalu, like the Maldives, is set to disappear with rising sea levels*



THE ECONOMY

World's smallest economy. Remittances from Tuvaluan seafarers. Sale of fishing licenses. Copra, stamps, and coins exported. Income from trust fund and the lease of .tv Internet suffix.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Tuvalu

DATE OF FORMATION: 1978

CAPITAL: Fongafale, on Funafuti Atoll

POPULATION: 11,100

TOTAL AREA: 10 sq. miles
(26 sq. km)

DENSITY: 1110 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Tuvaluan, Kiribati, English*

RELIGIONS: Church of Tuvalu 97%, Baha'i 1%, Seventh-day Adventist 1%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Polynesian 92%, other 6%, Kiribati 2%

GOVERNMENT: Nonparty system

CURRENCY: Australian dollar and Tuvaluan dollar = 100 cents each



Uganda



Landlocked in east Africa, Uganda has a history of ethnic strife. Under President Museveni, steps have been taken to restore peace and to rebuild the economy and democracy.



GEOGRAPHY

Predominantly a large plateau with the Ruwenzori mountain range and the Great Rift Valley in the west. Lake Victoria lies to the southeast. Vegetation is of savanna type.



CLIMATE

Altitude and the influence of the lakes modify the equatorial climate. Rain falls throughout the year; spring is the wettest period.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The mostly rural population comprises some 13 main ethnic groups. President Museveni has worked hard to break down ethnic animosities, but a noticeable north-south divide persists, with most development in the south. After two decades of brutal conflict with northern rebels, a final peace deal has been mediated but not yet signed; many refugees have returned home.



THE ECONOMY

Resource-rich, but undeveloped and poor. Exports coffee, fish, tea, and flowers. Oil exploration. Hydroelectric power is reducing oil imports. Great potential from mining. Debt relief.



INSIGHT: *Lake Victoria is the world's third-largest lake*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Uganda

DATE OF FORMATION: 1962

CAPITAL: Kampala

POPULATION: 32.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 91,135 sq. miles
(236,040 sq. km)

DENSITY: 425 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Luganda, Nkole, Chiga, Lango, Acholi, Teso, Lugbara, English*

RELIGIONS: Catholic 38%, Protestant 33%, trad. beliefs 13%, Muslim 8%, other 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Baganda 17%, Banyakole 10%, Basoga 9%, Iteso 7%, other 57%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: New Ug. shilling = 100 cents

Ukraine



The former “breadbasket of the Soviet Union,” Ukraine lies on the north coast of the Black Sea. Politics is divided between pro-Russian sentiments and pro-European nationalism.



GEOGRAPHY

Mainly fertile steppes and forests. Carpathian Mountains in west, Crimean chain in south. Pripet Marshes in northwest.



CLIMATE

Mainly continental climate, with distinct seasons. Southern Crimea has Mediterranean climate.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Over 90% of people in the west are Ukrainian, but in cities in the east and south, and in Crimea, Russians form a majority. The government is wary of Crimean separatism. Tatars have been returning there since the Soviet Union's collapse and now comprise around 12% of the local population. Over five million people in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia live in areas “contaminated” by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

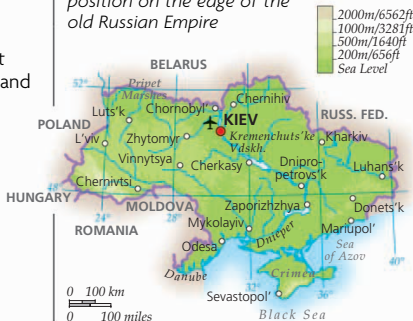


THE ECONOMY

Minerals: 5% of global reserves. Slow reform of land laws, holding back agriculture. Oil/natural gas transit from Russia and the Caspian to Europe: natural gas price disputes with Russia. Political crisis.



INSIGHT: *Ukraine means “on the border,” referring to its position on the edge of the old Russian Empire*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Ukraine

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Kiev

POPULATION: 45.7 million

TOTAL AREA: 223,089 sq. miles
(603,700 sq. km)

DENSITY: 196 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Ukrainian*, Russian, Tatar

RELIGIONS: Christian (mainly Orthodox) 95%, other 5%

ETHNIC MIX: Ukrainian 78%, Russian 17%, other 5%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Hryvna = 100 kopyikas



United Arab Emirates

Bordering the Gulf on the northern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, the seven states of the UAE are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al Qaywayn, Ras al Khaymah, and Fujayrah.



GEOGRAPHY

Mostly flat, semiarid desert with dunes, salt pans, and occasional oases. Cities are watered by extensive irrigation systems.



CLIMATE

Summers are humid, despite minimal rainfall. Sand-laden *shamal* winds blow in winter and spring.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Emirians, who make up just a quarter of the population, are mostly Sunni Muslims of Bedouin descent, and largely city dwellers. In theory, women enjoy equal rights with men. Poverty is rare and there is no income tax. The 1970s oil boom encouraged the immigration of workers, mostly from Asia. Western expatriates are permitted a virtually unrestricted lifestyle. Islamism, however, is a growing force among the young.

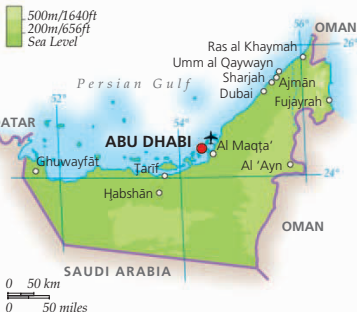


THE ECONOMY

Major oil and natural gas exporter; plentiful reserves. Dynamic Dubai: free trade zone, financial center (but 2008 global downturn caught overextended banks). Water is scarce. Imports most food. Some emirates are less developed.



INSIGHT: *Mina Jabal Ali, in Dubai, is the largest man-made port in the world*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: United Arab Emirates

DATE OF FORMATION: 1971

CAPITAL: Abu Dhabi

POPULATION: 4.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 32,000 sq. miles
(82,880 sq. km)

DENSITY: 142 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*, Farsi, Indian and Pakistani languages, English

RELIGIONS: Muslim (mainly Sunni) 96%, Christian, Hindu, and other 4%

ETHNIC MIX: Asian 60%, Emirian 25%, other Arab 12%, European 3%

GOVERNMENT: Monarchy

CURRENCY: UAE dirham = 100 fils

United Kingdom



Separated from continental Europe by the English Channel, the UK consists of Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland), several smaller islands, and Northern Ireland.



GEOGRAPHY

Rugged uplands dominate the landscape of Scotland, Wales, and northern England. All of the peaks in the United Kingdom over 4000 ft (1219 m) are in highland Scotland. The Pennine mountains, known as the “backbone of England,” run the length of northern England. Lowland England rises into several ranges of rolling hills, and there is an interconnected system of rivers and canals. Over 600 islands, many uninhabited, lie west and north of the Scottish mainland.



CLIMATE

Generally mild, temperate, and highly changeable. Rain is fairly well distributed throughout the year. The west is generally wetter than the east, and the south warmer than the north. Winter snow is common in upland areas.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Scottish and Welsh nations remain recognizably distinct, and the creation of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly has given each country greater political autonomy. The future of devolved government in Northern Ireland remains problematic. People from other ethnic minorities account for 5% of the population; more than half of them were born in the UK. Asians and West Indians in most cities face deprivation and social stress; Asian women can be particularly isolated. In key areas such as policing, multiethnic recruitment has made little progress. Marriage is in decline. Over 40% of all births occur outside marriage, but most of them to cohabiting couples. Single-parent households account for just over a quarter of all families. Income inequality is greater now than in 1884, when records began.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

DATE OF FORMATION: 1707

CAPITAL: London

POPULATION: 61.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 94,525 sq. miles (244,820 sq. km)

DENSITY: 660 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English*, Welsh*, other

RELIGIONS: Anglican 45%, other 39%, Catholic 9%, Presbyterian 4%, Muslim 3%

ETHNIC MIX: English 80%, Scottish 9%, other 5%, Welsh 3%, Northern Irish 3%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

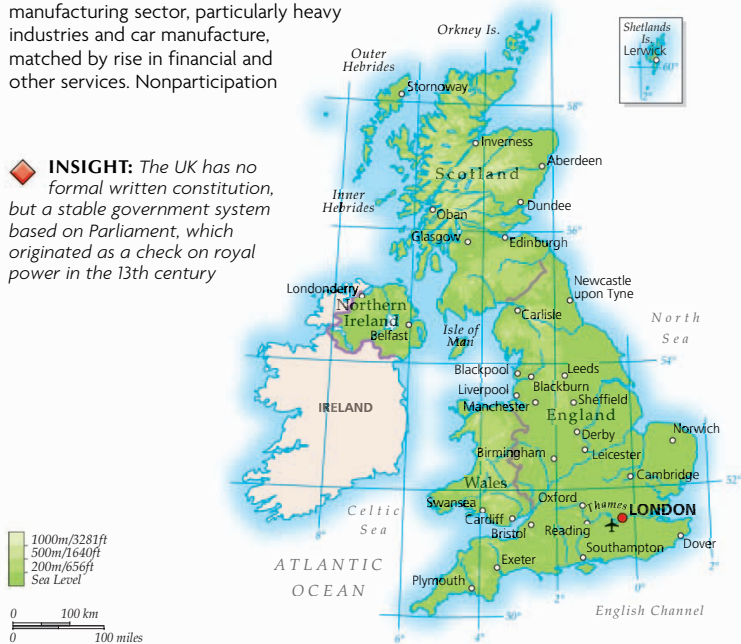
CURRENCY: Pound sterling = 100 pence

\$ THE ECONOMY

World leader in financial services, pharmaceuticals, and defense industries. Strong multinationals. Precision engineering and high-tech industries, including biotechnology and telecommunications. Energy sector based on declining North Sea oil and natural gas reserves. Innovative in computer software development. Flexible working practices. Long-term decline of manufacturing sector, particularly heavy industries and car manufacture, matched by rise in financial and other services. Nonparticipation

INSIGHT: *The UK has no formal written constitution, but a stable government system based on Parliament, which originated as a check on royal power in the 13th century*

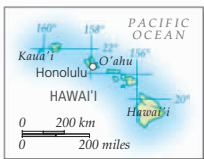
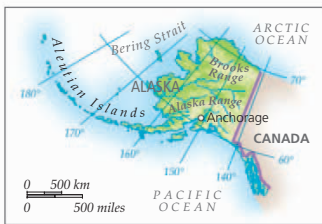
in euro threatens former status as EU's largest recipient of inward investment, and has prompted some major investors to close UK factories. High levels of government, corporate, and consumer debt: institutional vulnerability to 2007–2008 global downturn. Bank bailouts and stimulus packages pushed the government's finances further into the red.



United States of America



Stretching across the most temperate part of North America, and with many natural resources, the US is the world's leading economic power and third-largest country.



GEOGRAPHY

The US has a varied topography. Forested mountains stretch from New England in the far northeast, giving way to lowlands and swamps in the extreme south. The central plains are dominated by the Mississippi–Missouri River system and the Great Lakes on the Canadian border. The Rocky Mountains in the west contain active volcanoes and drop to the coast across the earthquake-prone San Andreas Fault. The southwest is arid desert. Mountainous Alaska is mostly Arctic tundra.



CLIMATE

There are four main climatic zones. The north and east are continental and temperate, with heavy rainfall, warm summers, and cold winters. Florida and the Deep South are tropical and prone to hurricanes. The southwest is arid desert, with searing summer heat and low rainfall. Southern California is Mediterranean, with hot summers and mild winters.

INSIGHT: *The United States of America has the world's oldest constitution. Drafted in 1787, it has operated continuously ever since, albeit with numerous amendments*



United States of America



INSIGHT: *By law, the actual records collected in a United States census must remain confidential for 72 years*



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Although the demographic, economic, and cultural dominance of White Americans is firmly entrenched after over 400 years of settlement, the ethnic balance of the country is shifting. Barack Obama, whose father was African, became the first non-White US president in 2009. The African-American community, originally uprooted by the slave trade, has a strong consciousness. Less well organized socially but more numerous, and faster-growing, the Hispanic community is predicted to number over 25% of the population by 2050. Native Americans, dispossessed in the 19th century, are now among the poorest people. Constitutionally, state and religion are clearly separated. Conservative Christianity, however, is increasingly dominant politically. Living standards are high, but bad diet and insufficient exercise have left over a third of Americans obese.



THE ECONOMY

World's largest economy: well-established engineering and high-tech industries, huge resource base, global spread of US culture. Manufacturing is in decline as jobs are lost to low-wage economies. The combination of tax cuts, to boost consumer spending after the 2001 slowdown, and the rising defense budget for the "war on terror" drove the budget into a record deficit. Oil production was hit badly in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina, causing global price hikes. The "subprime" mortgage lending crisis of 2007 sent global stock markets plummeting. In 2008, Lehman Brothers bank crashed spectacularly, while other giants in the financial sector received huge bailouts. Further tax cuts and billion-dollar spending packages in 2009 attempted to lift the economy back out of recession, but the gaping budget deficit also needs to be brought under control.

FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: United States of America

DATE OF FORMATION: 1776

CAPITAL: Washington, D.C.

POPULATION: 315 million

TOTAL AREA: 3,717,792 sq. miles
(9,626,091 sq. km)

DENSITY: 89 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: English, Spanish, other

RELIGIONS: Protestant 52%, Catholic 25%, other 19%, Muslim 2%, Jewish 2%

ETHNIC MIX: White 62%, Hispanic 13%, African American 13%, other 7%, Asian 4%, Native American 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: US dollar = 100 cents



Uruguay



Situated in southeastern South America, Uruguay returned to civilian government in 1985, after 12 years of military rule.

Most land is used for farming; Uruguay is a major wool exporter.



GEOGRAPHY

Low, rolling grasslands cover 80% of the country. Narrow coastal plain. Alluvial floodplain in southwest. Five rivers flow westward and drain into the Uruguay River.



CLIMATE

Temperate throughout the country. Warm summers, mild winters, and moderate rainfall.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Uruguayans are largely second- or third-generation Italians or Spaniards. Wealth derived from cattle ranching enabled the country to establish the first welfare state in South America. Despite economic decline since the 1950s, a large, if less prosperous, middle class remains. Though a Roman Catholic country, Uruguay is liberal in its attitude to religion and all forms are tolerated.



THE ECONOMY

Exports wool, meat, hides, rice, wood, soy. Rebounded from 1999–2002 economic crisis. Mineral potential.



INSIGHT: *Uruguay's rich pastures are ideal for raising livestock; animal products bring in over 40% of export earnings*



200m/656ft
Sea Level

0 100 km
0 100 miles



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Eastern Republic of Uruguay

DATE OF FORMATION: 1828

CAPITAL: Montevideo

POPULATION: 3.36 million

TOTAL AREA: 68,039 sq. miles
(176,220 sq. km)

DENSITY: 50 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 66%, other 30%,
Jewish 2%, Protestant 2%

ETHNIC MIX: White 90%, Mestizo 6%,
Black 4%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Urug. peso = 100 centésimos

Uzbekistan



Sharing what is left of the Aral Sea with its neighbor, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan lies on the ancient Silk Road between Asia and Europe. It is the most populous central Asian republic.



GEOGRAPHY

Arid and semiarid plains in much of the west. Fertile, irrigated farmland in the east lies below the peaks of the western Pamirs.



CLIMATE

Harsh continental climate. Summers can be extremely hot and dry; winters are cold.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Complex ethnic makeup. Ex-Communists are in firm control, but traditional social patterns based on clan, religion, and region have reemerged. Constitutional measures aim to control the influence of Islam: activities against Islamists have drawn international condemnation. Most people live in the fertile east. Birth rates are high, and the status of women continues to be low.



THE ECONOMY

Highly regulated. Reserves of natural gas, oil, coal, gold (has one of the world's largest gold mines), and other minerals. Cash crop is cotton: requires much irrigation. Grain imports necessary.



INSIGHT: *The Aral Sea has shrunk to just a tenth of its former size, due to diversion of rivers for irrigation*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Uzbekistan

DATE OF FORMATION: 1991

CAPITAL: Tashkent

POPULATION: 27.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 172,741 sq. miles
(447,400 sq. km)

DENSITY: 159 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Uzbek*, Russian, Tajik, Kazakh

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 88%, Orthodox Christian 9%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Uzbek 80%, other 6%, Russian 6%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Som = 100 tiyin



Vanuatu

An archipelago of 82 islands and islets in the South Pacific, Vanuatu was ruled jointly by the UK and France from 1906 until independence in 1980. Politics is democratic but volatile.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountainous and volcanic, with coral beaches and dense rainforest. Cultivated land along the coasts.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Temperatures and rainfall decline from north to south.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Indigenous Melanesians form a majority. Ni-Vanuatu culture is traditional; local social and religious customs are strong, despite centuries of missionary influence. Subsistence farming and fishing are the main activities. 80% of the population lives on the 12 main islands. Women have lower social status than men and payment of bride-price is common.

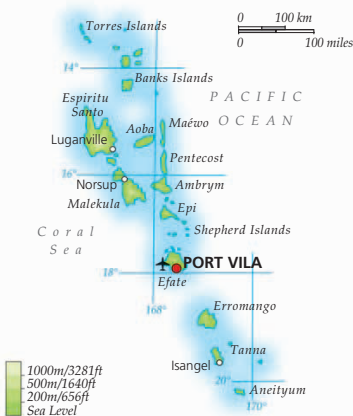


INSIGHT: With 105 indigenous tongues, Vanuatu has the world's highest per capita density of languages



THE ECONOMY

Reliant on aid. Main export is copra; diversifying into beef, timber, kava. Tourism. Offshore banking: rules tightened after international pressure.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Vanuatu

DATE OF FORMATION: 1980

CAPITAL: Port Vila

POPULATION: 239,800

TOTAL AREA: 4710 sq. miles
(12,200 sq. km)

DENSITY: 51 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bislama*, English*, French*

RELIGIONS: Presbyterian 37%, other 25%, Anglican 15%, Roman Catholic 15%, traditional beliefs 8%

ETHNIC MIX: Melanesian 98%, European 1%, other 1%

GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary system

CURRENCY: Vatu = 100 centimes

Vatican City



The Vatican City, or Holy See, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church, is a walled enclave in the Italian city of Rome. It is the world's smallest fully independent state.



GEOGRAPHY

The Vatican's territory includes 10 other buildings in Rome, plus the papal residence. The Vatican Gardens cover half the City's area.



CLIMATE

Mild winters with regular rainfall. Hot, dry summers with occasional thunderstorms.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

The Vatican has about 800 permanent inhabitants, including over 100 lay persons. Thousands of lay staff are also employed. Citizenship can be acquired through long-term residence and holding a position within the City. The reigning pope has supreme legislative and judicial powers, and holds office for life. Though the Vatican City is officially neutral, papal opinion has a great influence on the world's 1.1 billion Roman Catholics.



THE ECONOMY

Investments and voluntary contributions made by Catholics worldwide (known as Peter's Pence) are backed up by tourist revenue and the issue of Vatican stamps and coins.



INSIGHT: *The Vatican City is the spiritual center for one in six of the world's population*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: State of the Vatican City

DATE OF FORMATION: 1929

CAPITAL: Vatican City

POPULATION: 800

TOTAL AREA: 0.17 sq. miles
(0.44 sq. km)

DENSITY: 4706 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Italian*, Latin*

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 100%

ETHNIC MIX: Cardinals are from many nationalities, but Italians form the largest group. The current pope is from Germany.

GOVERNMENT: Papal state

CURRENCY: Euro = 100 cents



Venezuela

Lying on the southern shores of the Caribbean, Venezuela was the first of Spain's colonies to seek independence. Despite large oil reserves, many Venezuelans still live in poverty.



GEOGRAPHY

Andes Mountains and the Maracaibo lowlands in the northwest. Central grassy plains are drained by the Orinoco River system. Forested Guiana Highlands in the southeast.



CLIMATE

Tropical. Hot and humid. Uplands are cooler. Orinoco plains are alternately parched or flooded.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Venezuela is historically a “melting pot,” with immigrants from Europe and all over Latin America. The few indigenous Amerindians live in remote areas. Venezuela has one of the most urbanized societies in the region, with most of its population living in the northern cities. President Chávez’s left-wing rhetoric raises opposition within Venezuela from urban society, and from the US.



THE ECONOMY

Oil accounts for 95% of exports. Reserves of coal, gold, other minerals. Nationalization program is enlarging the inefficient, corruption-prone state sector and deterring foreign investors.



INSIGHT: Venezuela’s Angel Falls is the world’s tallest waterfall, with a total drop of 3210 ft (979 m)



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

DATE OF FORMATION: 1830

CAPITAL: Caracas

POPULATION: 28.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 352,143 sq. miles (912,050 sq. km)

DENSITY: 84 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Spanish*, native languages

RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic 89%, Protestant and other 11%

ETHNIC MIX: Mestizo 69%, White 20%, Black 9%, Amerindian 2%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Bolívar fuerte = 100 céntimos

Vietnam



French rule of Vietnam ended in 1954. Divided at 17°N, the US-backed South fought the Communist North. Reunified after the North's 1975 victory, it is run as a single-party state.



GEOGRAPHY

A heavily forested mountain range separates the northern Red River delta lowlands from the Mekong Delta in the south.



CLIMATE

Cool winters in north; south is tropical, with even temperatures.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Ethnic Vietnamese dominate; the Chinese minority was viewed as a corrupt bourgeoisie by the victorious Communists after the war. Mountain-based minorities (*montagnards*) were also sidelined; tensions persist over the settling of highlands by lowlanders. Women play an active role in society. There is no political or press freedom.



INSIGHT: Intense US bombing and defoliant spraying in the 1962–1975 Vietnam War has scarred the landscape



THE ECONOMY

Liberal economic policy (*doi moi*) from 1986: now one of fastest-growing economies. Major rice exporter. Cheap labor. Strong manufacturing: textiles, electrical goods. Diverse resource base.



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Socialist Republic of Vietnam

DATE OF FORMATION: 1976

CAPITAL: Hanoi

POPULATION: 88.1 million

TOTAL AREA: 127,243 sq. miles (329,560 sq. km)

DENSITY: 701 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Vietnamese*, Chinese, other

RELIGIONS: Nonreligious 81%, Buddhist 9%, Christian 7%, other 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Vietnamese 86%, other 10%, Tay 2%, Thai 2%

GOVERNMENT: One-party state

CURRENCY: Đồng = 10 hao = 100 xu



Yemen



Located in southern Arabia, Yemen was formerly two countries: the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (south and east) and the Yemen Arab Republic (northwest) were united in 1990.



GEOGRAPHY

Mountainous west with a fertile strip along the Red Sea. Arid desert and mountains elsewhere.



CLIMATE

Desert climate, modified by altitude, which affects temperatures by as much as 54°F (30°C).



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Almost entirely of Arab and Bedouin descent, most Yemenis are Sunni Muslims, of the Shafi sect. In rural and northern areas, tribalism and Islamic orthodoxy are strong and most women wear the veil. Tension continues between the south, led by cosmopolitan Aden, and the more conservative north, though political opposition is now primarily from Islamists. Foreigners are subject to sporadic attacks and kidnappings.



THE ECONOMY

Instability deters investment. Considerable oil and natural gas reserves. Agriculture is the largest employer: qat (mild narcotic), coffee, and cotton.



INSIGHT: *Mokha, on the Red Sea, gave its name to the first coffee beans exported to Europe in the 1600s*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Yemen

DATE OF FORMATION: 1990

CAPITAL: Sana

POPULATION: 23.6 million

TOTAL AREA: 203,849 sq. miles
(527,970 sq. km)

DENSITY: 108 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Arabic*

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim 55%,
Shi'a Muslim 42%, Christian, Hindu,
and Jewish 3%

ETHNIC MIX: Arab 99%, Afro-Arab, Indian,
Somali, and European 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Yemeni rial = 100 fils

Zambia



Bordered to the south by the Zambezi River, Zambia lies at the heart of southern Africa. In 1991, it made a peaceful transition from single-party rule to multiparty democracy.



GEOGRAPHY

A high savanna plateau, broken by mountains in northeast. Vegetation mainly trees and scrub.



CLIMATE

Tropical, with three seasons: cool and dry, hot and dry, and wet. Southwest is prone to drought.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

There are more than 70 different ethnic groups, but there are fewer tensions than in many African states. Major groups are the Bemba (in the northeast), Tonga (south), Nyanja (east), and Lozi (west). There are also thousands of refugees, mostly from the DRC and Angola. A National Gender Policy was issued in 2000 to redress inequalities between the sexes. The standard of living has fallen in real terms since independence. One in seven adults is infected with HIV/AIDS.



THE ECONOMY

Copper: output has risen since 2000, when decades of falling global prices ended. New agricultural exports, notably flowers. Debt relief.



INSIGHT: *Spray from Musi-o-Tunya (Victoria Falls) can be seen up to 20 miles (35 km) away*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Zambia

DATE OF FORMATION: 1964

CAPITAL: Lusaka

POPULATION: 12.9 million

TOTAL AREA: 290,584 sq. miles
(752,614 sq. km)

DENSITY: 45 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Bemba, Tonga, Nyanja, Lozi, Lala-bisa, Nsenga, English*

RELIGIONS: Christian 63%, traditional beliefs 36%, Muslim and Hindu 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Bemba 34%, other 27%, Tonga 16%, Nyanja 14%, Lozi 9%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Zamb. kwacha = 100 ngwee



Zimbabwe

Situated in southern Africa, Zimbabwe achieved independence from the UK in 1980. President Robert Mugabe, in power since then, has become increasingly authoritarian.



GEOGRAPHY

High plateaus in center bordered by Zambezi River in the north and Limpopo in the south. Rivers crisscross central area.



CLIMATE

Tropical, though moderated by the high altitude. Wet season November–March. Drought is common in the eastern highlands.



PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Two main ethnic groups: Shona in the north and east, and Ndebele in the south. Shona outnumber Ndebele by four to one. Whites are generally far more affluent than Blacks. Official efforts to redress this imbalance (such as land redistribution) have become increasingly aggressive. The political opposition to Mugabe joined him in a fractious unity government from 2009 in an attempt to rebuild the country.

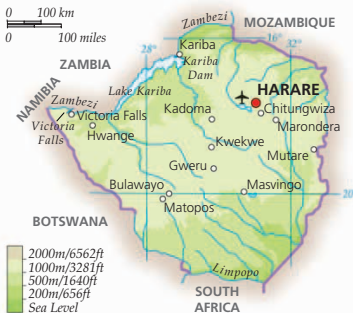


THE ECONOMY

Undermined by mismanagement, corruption, and international isolation. High unemployment. Hyperinflation. Stabilization could cost US\$45 billion.



INSIGHT: *The ruins of the 1000-year-old city of Great Zimbabwe, after which the country is named, are near modern-day Masvingo*



FACTFILE

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Zimbabwe

DATE OF FORMATION: 1980

CAPITAL: Harare

POPULATION: 12.5 million

TOTAL AREA: 150,803 sq. miles (390,580 sq. km)

DENSITY: 84 people per sq. mile

LANGUAGES: Shona, isiNdebele, English*

RELIGIONS: Syncretic 50%, Christian 25%, traditional beliefs 24%, other 1%

ETHNIC MIX: Shona 71%, Ndebele 16%, other African 11%, White 1%, Asian 1%

GOVERNMENT: Presidential system

CURRENCY: Zimbabwe dollar suspended in 2009; US dollar and South African rand legal tender

Overseas territories

Despite the rapid process of global decolonization since World War II, around eight million people in more than 50 territories around the world continue to live under the protection of France, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, the UK, or the USA. These remnants of former colonial empires may have persisted for economic, strategic, or political reasons and are administered by the protecting country in a variety of ways.

AUSTRALIA

Australia's overseas territories have not been an issue since Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975. Consequently there is no overriding policy toward them. Norfolk Island is inhabited by descendants of the HMS *Bounty* mutineers and more recent Australian migrants. Phosphate is mined on Christmas Island.

Ashmore & Cartier Is. *Ref: 124 A3*



STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1931

CAPITAL: Not applicable
POPULATION: None
AREA: 2 sq miles (5.2 sq km)

Christmas Island *Ref: 123 E5*

STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1958
CAPITAL: The Settlement
POPULATION: 1400
AREA: 52 sq miles (135 sq km)

Cocos Islands *Ref: 123 D5*

STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1955
CAPITAL: Not applicable
POPULATION: 574
AREA: 5.5 sq miles (14 sq km)

Coral Sea Islands *Ref: 126 B4*

STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1969
CAPITAL: Not applicable
POPULATION: 8 (Meteorologists)
AREA: 1.2 sq miles (3 sq km)

Heard & McDonald Is. *Ref: 123 C7*

STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1947
CAPITAL: Not applicable
POPULATION: None
AREA: 161 sq miles (417 sq km)

Norfolk Island *Ref: 124 D4*



STATUS: External territory
CLAIMED: 1774
CAPITAL: Kingston

POPULATION: 2100
AREA: 13 sq miles (34 sq km)

DENMARK

The Faeroe Islands have been under Danish administration since Queen Margreth I of Denmark inherited Norway in 1380. The Home Rule Act of 1948 gave the Faeroese control over all their internal affairs. Greenland first came under Danish rule in 1380. Denmark remains responsible for the island's foreign affairs.

Overseas territories

Faeroe Islands *Ref: 65 F5*



STATUS: External territory

CLAIMED: 1380

CAPITAL: Tórshavn

POPULATION: 49,000

AREA: 540 sq miles (1399 sq km)

Greenland *Ref: 64 D3*



STATUS: External territory

CLAIMED: 1380

CAPITAL: Nuuk

POPULATION: 57,500

AREA: 836,109 sq miles (2,166,086 sq km)

FRANCE

France has developed economic ties with its *Territoires d'Outre-Mer*, thereby stressing interdependence over independence. Overseas *départements*, officially part of France, have their own governments. Territorial *collectivités* and overseas *territoires* have varying degrees of autonomy.

Clipperton Island *Ref: 135 F3*

STATUS: Dependency of French Polynesia

CLAIMED: 1935

CAPITAL: Not applicable

POPULATION: None

AREA: 3.4 sq miles (9 sq km)

French Guiana *Ref: 41 H3*

STATUS: Overseas department

CLAIMED: 1817

CAPITAL: Cayenne

POPULATION: 221,500

AREA: 35,135 sq miles (91,000 sq km)

French Polynesia *Ref: 127 H4*

STATUS: Overseas country

CLAIMED: 1843

CAPITAL: Papeete

POPULATION: 264,000

AREA: 1608 sq miles (4165 sq km)

Guadeloupe *Ref: 37 G4*

STATUS: Overseas department

CLAIMED: 1635

CAPITAL: Basse-Terre

POPULATION: 441,000

AREA: 687 sq miles (1780 sq km)

Martinique *Ref: 37 G4*

STATUS: Overseas department

CLAIMED: 1635

CAPITAL: Fort-de-France

POPULATION: 402,000

AREA: 425 sq miles (1100 sq km)

Mayotte *Ref: 61 G2*

STATUS: Territorial collectivity

CLAIMED: 1843

CAPITAL: Mamoudzou

POPULATION: 194,000

AREA: 144 sq miles (374 sq km)

New Caledonia *Ref: 126 D5*

STATUS: Overseas territory

CLAIMED: 1853

CAPITAL: Nouméa

POPULATION: 249,000

AREA: 7347 sq miles (19,100 sq km)

Réunion *Ref: 61 H4*

STATUS: Overseas department

CLAIMED: 1638

CAPITAL: Saint-Denis

POPULATION: 827,000

AREA: 970 sq miles (2500 sq km)

Overseas territories

St Pierre & Miquelon *Ref: 21 G4*

STATUS: Territorial collectivity

CLAIMED: 1604

CAPITAL: Saint-Pierre

POPULATION: 6125

AREA: 93 sq miles (242 sq km)

Wallis & Futuna *Ref: 127 E4*

STATUS: Overseas territory

CLAIMED: 1842

CAPITAL: Mata'Utu

POPULATION: 13,484

AREA: 106 sq miles (274 sq km)

NETHERLANDS

The country's two remaining territories were formerly part of the Dutch West Indies. Both are now self-governing, but the Netherlands remains responsible for their defense.

Aruba *Ref: 37 E5*



STATUS: Autonomous part of the Netherlands
CLAIMED: 1634

CAPITAL: Oranjestad

POPULATION: 103,000

AREA: 75 sq miles (194 sq km)

Netherlands Antilles *Ref: 37 E5*



STATUS: Autonomous part of the Netherlands
CLAIMED: 1816

CAPITAL: Willemstad

POPULATION: 184,000

AREA: 371 sq miles (960 sq km)

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's government has no desire to retain any overseas territories. However, the economic weakness of Tokelau, Niue, and the Cook Islands has forced it to remain responsible for their foreign policy and defense.

Cook Islands *Ref: 127 G4*



STATUS: Associated territory
CLAIMED: 1901

CAPITAL: Avarua

POPULATION: 19,500

AREA: 91 sq miles (235 sq km)



Niue *Ref: 127 F5*
STATUS: Associated territory

CLAIMED: 1901

CAPITAL: Alofi

POPULATION: 1400

AREA: 102 sq miles (264 sq km)

Tokelau *Ref: 127 F3*

STATUS: Dependent territory

CLAIMED: 1926

CAPITAL: Not applicable

POPULATION: 1400

AREA: 4 sq miles (10 sq km)

NORWAY

In 1920, 41 nations signed the Spitsbergen treaty recognizing Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard. There is a NATO base on Jan Mayen. Bouvet Island is a nature reserve.

Overseas territories

Bouvet Island *Ref: 49 D7*

STATUS: Dependency
 CLAIMED: 1928
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 22 sq miles (58 sq km)

Jan Mayen *Ref: 65 F3*

STATUS: Dependency
 CLAIMED: 1929
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: 18 (Meteorologists)
 AREA: 147 sq miles (381 sq km)

Peter I. Island *Ref: 136 A3*

STATUS: Dependency
 CLAIMED: 1931
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 69 sq miles (180 sq km)

Svalbard *Ref: 65 F2*

STATUS: Dependency
 CLAIMED: 1920
 CAPITAL: Longyearbyen
 POPULATION: 2100
 AREA: 24,289 sq miles (62,906 sq km)

UNITED KINGDOM

The UK has the largest number of overseas territories. These are locally governed by a mixture of elected representatives and appointed officials.

Anguilla *Ref: 37 G3*



STATUS: Dependent territory
 CLAIMED: 1650
 CAPITAL: The Valley
 POPULATION: 13,477
 AREA: 37 sq miles (96 sq km)

Ascension Island *Ref: 49 C5*

STATUS: Dependency of St Helena
 CLAIMED: 1673
 CAPITAL: Georgetown
 POPULATION: 940
 AREA: 34 sq miles (88 sq km)

Bermuda *Ref: 17 E6*



STATUS: Crown colony
 CLAIMED: 1612
 CAPITAL: Hamilton
 POPULATION: 67,800
 AREA: 20 sq miles (53 sq km)

British Indian Ocean Territory

Ref: 122 C4



STATUS: Dependent territory
 CLAIMED: 1814
 CAPITAL: Diego Garcia
 POPULATION: 4000
 AREA: 23 sq miles (60 sq km)

British Virgin Is. *Ref: 37 F3*



STATUS: Dependent territory
 CLAIMED: 1672
 CAPITAL: Road Town
 POPULATION: 22,000
 AREA: 59 sq miles (153 sq km)

Cayman Islands *Ref: 36 B3*



STATUS: Dependent territory
 CLAIMED: 1670
 CAPITAL: George Town
 POPULATION: 52,000
 AREA: 100 sq miles (259 sq km)

Falkland Islands *Ref: 47 D7*



STATUS: Dependent territory
 CLAIMED: 1832
 CAPITAL: Stanley
 POPULATION: 3100
 AREA: 4699 sq miles (12,173 sq km)

Overseas territories

Gibraltar *Ref: 74 D5*



STATUS: Crown colony
CLAIMED: 1713
CAPITAL: Gibraltar

POPULATION: 28,800
AREA: 2.5 sq miles (6.5 sq km)

Guernsey *Ref: 71 D8*



STATUS: Crown dependency
CLAIMED: 1066
CAPITAL: St. Peter Port

POPULATION: 65,500
AREA: 25 sq miles (65 sq km)

Isle of Man *Ref: 71 C5*



STATUS: Crown dependency
CLAIMED: 1765
CAPITAL: Douglas

POPULATION: 76,500
AREA: 221 sq miles (572 sq km)

Jersey *Ref: 71 D8*



STATUS: Crown dependency
CLAIMED: 1066
CAPITAL: St. Helier

POPULATION: 91,600
AREA: 45 sq miles (116 sq km)

Montserrat *Ref: 37 G4*



STATUS: Dependent territory
CLAIMED: 1632

CAPITAL: Plymouth (uninhabitable)
POPULATION: 4500
AREA: 40 sq miles (102 sq km)

Pitcairn Islands *Ref: 125 G4*



STATUS: Dependent territory
CLAIMED: 1887
CAPITAL: Adamstown

POPULATION: 45
AREA: 18 sq miles (47 sq km)

Saint Helena *Ref: 49 D5*



STATUS: Dependent territory
CLAIMED: 1673
CAPITAL: Jamestown

POPULATION: 4299
AREA: 47 sq miles (122 sq km)

South Georgia & The Sandwich Islands *Ref: 49 C7*

STATUS: Dependent territory
CLAIMED: 1775
CAPITAL: Not applicable
POPULATION: None
AREA: 1387 sq miles (3592 sq km)

Tristan da Cunha *Ref: 49 D6*

STATUS: Dependency of St. Helena
CLAIMED: 1612
CAPITAL: Edinburgh
POPULATION: 270
AREA: 38 sq miles (98 sq km)

Turks & Caicos Islands *Ref: 37 E2*



STATUS: Dependent territory
CLAIMED: 1766
CAPITAL: Cockburn Town

POPULATION: 36,600
AREA: 166 sq miles (430 sq km)

UNITED STATES

US Commonwealth territories are self-governing incorporated territories that are an integral part of the US. Unincorporated territories have varying degrees of autonomy.

American Samoa *Ref: 127 F4*



STATUS: Unincorporated territory
CLAIMED: 1900

CAPITAL: Pago Pago
POPULATION: 65,600
AREA: 75 sq miles (195 sq km)

Overseas territories

Baker & Howland Islands *Ref: 127 E2*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 CLAIMED: 1856
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 0.5 sq miles (1.4 sq km)

Guam *Ref: 126 B1*



STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1898

CAPITAL: Hagåtña
 POPULATION: 178,000
 AREA: 212 sq miles (549 sq km)

Jarvis Island *Ref: 127 G2*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1856
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 1.7 sq miles (4.5 sq km)

Johnston Atoll *Ref: 125 E1*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1858
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 1 sq mile (2.8 sq km)

Kingman Reef *Ref: 127 F2*

STATUS: Administered territory
 CLAIMED: 1856
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 0.4 sq miles (1 sq km)

Midway Islands *Ref: 134 D2*

STATUS: Administered territory
 CLAIMED: 1867
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 2 sq miles (5.2 sq km)

Navassa Island *Ref: 36 D3*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1856
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 2 sq miles (5.2 sq km)

Northern Mariana Islands *Ref: 124 C1*



STATUS: Commonwealth territory
 CLAIMED: 1947

CAPITAL: Saipan
 POPULATION: 86,600
 AREA: 177 sq miles (457 sq km)

Palmyra Atoll *Ref: 127 G2*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1898
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: None
 AREA: 5 sq miles (12 sq km)

Puerto Rico *Ref: 37 F3*



STATUS: Commonwealth territory
 CLAIMED: 1898

CAPITAL: San Juan
 POPULATION: 4 million
 AREA: 3515 sq miles (9104 sq km)

Virgin Islands *Ref: 37 F3*



STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1917

CAPITAL: Charlotte Amalie
 POPULATION: 108,500
 AREA: 137 sq miles (355 sq km)

Wake Island *Ref: 124 D1*

STATUS: Unincorporated territory
 CLAIMED: 1898
 CAPITAL: Not applicable
 POPULATION: 200
 AREA: 2.5 sq miles (6.5 sq km)

International organizations

This listing provides acronym definitions for the main international organizations concerned with worldwide economics, trade, and defense, plus an indication of membership.

ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ESTABLISHED: 1967

MEMBERS: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

CIS

Commonwealth of Independent States

ESTABLISHED: 1991

MEMBERS: Arm., Az., Belarus, Kaz., Kyrgy., Mold., Russia, Tajik., Turkmen.*, Ukraine*, Uzbek. *Unofficial members

COMM *The Commonwealth of Nations*

ESTABLISHED: 1931; evolved out of the British Empire. Formerly known as the British Commonwealth of Nations.

MEMBERS: 53

EU *European Union*

ESTABLISHED: 1965; formerly known as EEC (European Economic Community) and EC (Economic Community)

MEMBERS: Austria, Belg., Bulg., Cyprus, Czech Rep., Denmark, Est., Fin., Fr., Ger., Greece, Hung., Ireland, Italy, Lat., Lith., Lux., Malta, Neth., Pol., Port., Rom., Slvka., Slvna., Spain, Swed., UK

G8 *Group of 8*

ESTABLISHED: 1994

MEMBERS: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, US

IMF *International Monetary Fund* (UN agency)

ESTABLISHED: 1945

MEMBERS: 186

NAFTA

North American Free Trade Agreement

ESTABLISHED: 1994

MEMBERS: Canada, Mexico, US

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

ESTABLISHED: 1949

MEMBERS: Albania, Belg., Bulg., Canada, Croatia, Czech Rep., Denmark, Est., France, Ger., Greece, Hung., Iceland, Italy, Lat., Lith., Lux., Neth., Norway, Poland, Port., Rom., Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, UK, US

OPEC *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*

ESTABLISHED: 1960

MEMBERS: Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela

UN *United Nations*

ESTABLISHED: 1945

MEMBERS: 192; all nations are represented, except Taiwan. The Vatican City has "observer status" only.

WTO *World Trade Organization*

ESTABLISHED: 1995

MEMBERS: 153

Abbreviations

This glossary provides a comprehensive guide to the abbreviations used in this atlas.

abbrev. abbreviation

Afgh. Afghanistan

Amh. Amharic

anc. ancient

Ar. Arabic

Arm. Armenia/Armenian

Aus. Austria

Aust. Australia

Az. Azerbaijan

Bas. Basque

Bel. Belorussian

Belg. Belgium/Belgian

Bos. & Herz. Bosnia & Herzegovina

Bul. Bulgarian

Bulg. Bulgaria

Bur. Burmese

C Central

C. Cape

Cam. Cambodian

Cast. Castilian

Chin. Chinese

Cord. Cordillera (Sp. mts.)

Cz. Czech

Czech Rep. Czech Republic

D.C. District of Columbia

Dan. Danish

Dominican Rep. Dominican Republic

E East

Emb. Embalse

Eng. English

Eq. Guinea Equatorial Guinea

Est. Estonia/Estonian

Faer. Faeroese

Fin. Finland/Finnish

Flem. Flemish

Fr. France/French

Geo. Georgia

Geor. Georgian

Ger. Germany/German

Gk. Greek

Heb. Hebrew

Hung. Hungary/Hungarian

I. Island

Ind. Indonesia, Indonesian

Is. Islands

It. Italian

Kaz. Kazakhstan/Kazakh

Kep. Kepulauan (Ind. island group)

Kir. Kirghiz

Kor. Korean

Kos. Kosovo

Kurd. Kurdish

Kyrgy. Kyrgyzstan

L. Lake, Lago

Lat. Latvia

Latv. Latvian

Leb. Lebanon

Liech. Liechtenstein

Lith. Lithuania/Lithuanian

Lux. Luxembourg

Mac. Macedonia

Med. Sea Mediterranean Sea

Mon. Montenegro

Mold. Moldova

Mt. Mount/Mountain

Mts. Mountains

N North

N. Korea North Korea

Neth. Netherlands

NW Northwest

NZ New Zealand

P. Pulau (Ind. island)

Peg. Pegunungan (Ind. mountain range)

Per. Persian

Pol. Poland/Polish

Port. Portugal, Portuguese

prev. previously

R. River, Río, Rio

Res. Reservoir

Rom. Romania/Romanian

Rus. Russian

Russ. Fed. Russian Federation

S South

S. Korea South Korea

SA South Africa

SCr. Serbian and Croatian

Serb. Serbia

Slvka. Slovakia

Slvna. Slovenia

Som. Somali

Sp. Spanish

St, St. Saint

Str. Strait

Swed. Swedish

Switz. Switzerland

Tajik. Tajikistan

Th. Thai

Turk. Turkish

Turkm. Turkmen

Turkmen. Turkmenistan

U.A.E. United Arab Emirates

UK United Kingdom

Ukr. Ukrainian

Urug. Uruguayan

US United States of America

Uzb. Uzbek

Uzbek. Uzbekistan

var. variant

Vdkhr. Vodokhranilishche
(Rus. reservoir)

Vdskh. Vodoskhovyshche
(Ukr. reservoir)

Ven. Venezuela

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W. Sahara Western Sahara

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Zielona Góra Poland *Ger.*
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Žilina Slovakia *Hung.* Zsolna,
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Zürich Switzerland *Eng.* Zurich
77 B6

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Zuwārah Libya 53 F2

Zvornik Bosnia & Herzegovina
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Zwedru Liberia 56 D5

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