

World Regional Geography

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Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia, from Myanmar (known until 1989 as Burma) in the west of the Philippines in the east, is a fragmented region of peninsulas, island, and seas. East of India and south of China, b\w the bay of Bengal and the South China sea, the large Indochinese peninsula projects southward from the continental mass of Asia

Southeast Asia: From Subsistence Farming to Semiconductors

- Southeast Asia, contributed domesticated plants (including rice), animals (including chickens), and the achievements of civilizations to a wider world. Innovations and accomplishments diffused from several centers, which themselves were influenced by foreign cultures. Indian and Chinese traits have been especially strong in shaping the region's cultural geography.

Area, Population and Environment

- It is about 4000 miles (6400km) from western Myanmar to central New Guinea and 2500 miles (4000km) from northern Myanmar to southern Indonesia. Despite these great distances, the total land area of Southeast Asia is only about 1.7 million square miles (4.4 million sq km), or half the size of the United States (including Alaska). The estimated population of the region was 574 million in 2007, giving it an overall density of 331 people per sq. mile (128/sq.km).

- Southeast Asia has been less populous than India and China throughout history. Only about 10 million people lived in the region in the 1800, and there were no widespread dense populations. Historically, geographic and environmental obstacles probably helped keep population growth low in Southeast Asia. By land, the region is rather isolated, cut off to some extent by the rugged mountains of the northern peninsula of Indochina.

- Violent storms known locally as typhoons (elsewhere called cyclones or hurricanes) strike often particularly in Vietnam and the Philippines. More spectacular environmental difficulties result from the location of part of the region on the Pacific Ring of fire subjecting Indonesia and the Philippines especially to earthquakes, the tsunamis that earthquakes unleash, and volcanic eruptions.

Livelihood Patterns

- Southeast Asia as a whole is among the world's poorer regions, yet some of its countries are rather prosperous. The countries mean per capita GNI PPP of \$5420 in 2007 was about average for the world's less developed countries.
- This region's economic activities span the entire continuum from Stone Age hunting and gathering (in Papua on the island of New Guinea) to slash-and-burn farming one of humankind's earliest agricultural techniques-to the commercial agriculture typical of colonial times and from the export of raw materials like rubber to manufactured goods like clothing, shoes, and computer products. As Southeast Asians see it, their economic future will depend not so much on rubber, coffee, or even oil, of which some countries have abundant supplies, but on high-tech exports like semiconductors and software.

Shifting and Sedentary Agriculture

- Permanent agriculture has been difficult to establish in many parts of this largely mountainous, tropical realm. Much land is used for shifting cultivation, in which a migratory farmer clears and uses fields for a few years and then allows them to revert to secondary growth vegetation while he moves on to clear a new patch. Since an abandoned field needs about 15 years to restore itself to forest that can again be cleared for farming, only a small portion of the land can be cultivated at any one time. this extensive form of land use can support only sparse populations.

Mineral Production and Reserves

- Petroleum is the most important mineral resource in Southeast Asia. Seven of the region's country- Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines-produce oil. Collectively, their proven oil reserves amount to about 1.1 percent of the world total. Their combined output is about 3 percent of world oil production, with Indonesia the leading producer. Indonesia's main oilfields are in Sumatra and Indonesia Borneo (known as Kalimantan).

Myanmar

- Population 50 million
- Myanmar is centered in the basin of the Irrawaddy River and includes surrounding uplands and mountains. The people are supported by mixed subsistence and commercial farming, with millet, rice and cotton the major crops.
- Britain conquered Burma in three wars b/w 1824 and 1885. it became an independent republic outside the British Commonwealth in 1948.

Thailand

- Population 65 million
- Thailand is located in the delta of the Chao Praya River, known to Thais as the Menam (river). Annual floods of the river irrigate the rice that is the most important crop in this Southeast Asian land of relative abundance and progress. Thailand is the world's largest exporter of rice and dominates the niche market in the prized, aromatic and expensive jasmine variety.

Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos

- Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos are the three countries that emerged from the former French colony of Indochina. Vietnam is the largest and most geographically complex, with three main regions. Tonkin, the northern region, consists of the densely populated Red River Delta and surrounding, sparsely inhabited mountains, Annam, the central region, includes the wild Annamite Cordillera and small, densely populated pockets of lowland along its seaward edge; and Cochinchina, the southern region, lies mainly in the delta of the Mekong River and has a high population density.

Cambodia and Laos

- Cambodia and Laos occupy interior areas except for Cambodia's short coast on the Gulf of Thailand. They are very different countries physically, and a particular culture dominates each. Cambodia is mostly plains along and to the west of the lower Mekong River, with mountain fringes to the northeast and southwest.
- Laos is mountainous, sparsely populated with just 6 million people, and landlocked. It has 68 ethnic groups, the largest of which is the ethnic Lao, who are linguistically and culturally related to the Thais and whose dominant religion is Buddhism.

Malaysia and Singapore

- The small island of Singapore sits just off the southern tip of the mountainous Malay Peninsula. It lies at the eastern end of the strait of Malacca, the major passageway for sea traffic b/w the Indian Ocean and the South China sea. Singapore is the world's second largest port(after Shanghai) in tonnage of goods shipped.

Indonesia and Timor-Leste

- Indonesia is by far the largest and most populous country of the region (population 231 million) and is the fourth most populous country on earth (after China, India and United States). Stretching across 3000 miles(4800km), its 13600 islands comprise a land area about three times the size of Texas.
- Java's extreme population density also has cultural and historical roots in the concentration of Dutch colonial activities there.

The Philippines

- The Philippines archipelago includes over 7000 generally mountainous islands. Two largest islands, Luzon and Mindanao, make up two-thirds of the total area. The Philippine economy has expanded considerably since independence. Until the 1970s, the most striking growth was in agricultural exports such as coconut products, sugar bananas and pineapples and in copper and other metal exports. More recently, there has been growth in manufacturing and food production. Labor-intensive manufacturing, such as that of electronic devices and clothing, now accounts for about 80 percent of all exports.

A Geographic Profile of Monsoon Asia

- Monsoon Asia is a great triangle that runs from Pakistan in the west to Japan in the northeast and the island of New Guinea in the southeast. In this land area of less than 8 million square miles (20761000 sq. km) about twice the size of the United States or less than one quarter of the earth's landmass – lives more than half of the world's population. The cultural makeup of these 3.6 billion people is as diverse and expressive as the physical environments they inhabit.

Area and Population

- Monsoon Asia encompasses the following sub regions:
- East Asia, which includes Japan, North and South Korea, China, Mongolia, Taiwan, and many near-shore islands.
- South Asia, which includes Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the mountain nations of Bhutan and Nepal, and the island country of the Maldives.
- Southeast Asia, which includes both the peninsula jutting out from the southeast corner of the Asian continent, on which are located Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Singapore, and the island world that rings this peninsula, which includes the countries of Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, and Timor-Leste.

Demographic Heavyweights of Monsoon Asia

- Perhaps the most critical fact of Monsoon Asia's geography is that this region is home to about 54 percent of the world's population. Two countries alone, India and China, together have 2.4 billion people, or 37 percent of the world total. Their extraordinary demographic weight reflects thousands of years of human occupation of productive agricultural landscapes, combined with 20th –century advances in health technology that reduce death rates.

Population Growth Patterns

- It is not possible to generalize about population growth in Monsoon Asia. Growth rates range from 0 percent per year in Japan to a very high 3.3 percent per year in Timor-Leste. The region does reflect the general worldwide trends of poorer countries having higher growth rates and wealthier countries having lower growth rates. The region is demographically and otherwise recognizable as one of mainly less developed countries with some very noticeable exceptions.

Physical Geography and Human Adaptation

- Monsoon Asia's physical geography may be described broadly as consisting of three concentric arcs, or crescents, of land: an inner western arc of high mountains, plateaus, and basins; a middle arc of lower mountains, hill lands, river plains, and basins; and an outer eastern arc of islands and seas.
- The inner arc includes the world's highest mountain ranges, interspersed with plateaus and basins. In the south, the great wall of the Himalaya, Karakorm and Hindu kush Mountains overlooks the north of the Indian subcontinent.

- The middle arc, b/w the western inner highland and the sea, is occupied by river floodplains and deltas bordered and separated by hills and low mountains. The major features of this area are the immense alluvial plain of northern India, built up through ages of meandering and deposition by the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers; the hilly uplands of peninsular India.
- The outer arc is an offshore fringe of thousands of islands, mostly grouped in great archipelagoes (clusters of islands) bordering the main land.

Climate and Vegetation

- Monsoon Asia is characterized generally by a warm, well-watered climate, but there are nine distinct types of climate in the region: tropical rain forest, tropical savanna, humid subtropical, warm humid continental, cold humid continental, desert, steppe, sub arctic, and undifferentiated highland. These are generally associated with predictable patterns of vegetation, which have been heavily modified by millennia of human use.

The Monsoons

- The monsoons are the prevailing sea-to-land and land-to-sea winds that are the dominant climatic concern for people living in this world region. They play a significant role in both wet and dry environments and are especially influential in the coastal plains and lowlands of South Asia, the peninsula and islands of Southeast Asia, and the eastern China.

Cultural and Historical Geographies

- Monsoon Asia has been home to some of the most important cultural developments of humankind in landscape transformation, settlement patterns, religion, art, and political systems. From Korea came the first movable printing type. From China gunpowder, paper, and silk. From India came the great faiths of Hinduism and Buddhism. Handmade textiles, artwares, bone and leather and paper products, and precious metals and gems have flowed from Asia into global trade for millennia.

Economic Geography

- Despite any stereotypes that might linger in the West, Monsoon Asia is not a quaint, old-timey backwater-especially in economic terms. It is a dynamic region with some of the world's strongest and fastest-growing economies. The world's second-and fourth-largest economies are there: Japan and China respectively. The economies of China and India are surging, with both goods and services inundating the global economic system. Their clout, their accomplishments, and their ambitions are enormous.

Geopolitical Issues

- In the Middle East and North Africa and in Russia and Near Abroad, principal geopolitical concerns focus on the production and distribution of energy resources. In Monsoon Asia, by contrast, some of the most serious geopolitical issues are prospects for what may be done with weapons created from a particular energy source: nuclear energy. There are also concerns about traditional fossil fuels, Islamist terrorism, and the security of shipping lanes.

Complex and Populous South Asia

- A triangular peninsula thrusts southward 1000 miles (1600km) from the Asian landmass, splitting the northern Indian Ocean into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea. The peninsula is bordered on the north by the alluvial plain of the Indus and Ganges Rivers, and north of these rise the highest mountains on earth. The entire unit- peninsula, plain, and fringing mountains- is known as the Indian subcontinent. It contains the five countries of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan in an area about half the size of the 48 conterminous United States.

Sub-region of South Asia.

- Off the southern tip of India, across the narrow Palk Strait, lies the island nation of Sri Lanka, which shares many physical and cultural traits with the subcontinent. Farther to the southwest is the Maldives, a country of some 1100 small, low-lying islands. These seven countries make the sub-region of South Asia.

The Cultural Foundation

- An enormous range of ethnic groups, social hierarchies, languages, and religions can be found among regions of South Asia and even within a single settlement. The sub-continent is the most culturally complex area of its size on earth, and its civilizations have roots deep in antiquity. The Indian subcontinent is one of the world's culture hearths. After 3000 B.C.E., some of the world's earliest cities developed on the banks of the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. The peoples of the Harappan civilization were probably the ancestors of the Dravidians, represented today mainly by the Tamils of southern India.

Natural Regions and Resources

- Physical conditions are very important in the lives of the rural majorities of South Asia. People,s well-being depends largely on local agricultural resources, and industrialization is based mainly on other locally available natural resources. Fortunately, South Asia has some generous endowments of natural resources and a huge and talented labor force to work with them.

The Plains of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

- Just inside the outer mountain wall lies the subcontinent's northern plain. This large alluvial expanse contains the core areas of the three major countries. In the west, the plain area is split b/w Pakistan and India. The Indus river and its tributaries and distributaries cross the portion lying in Pakistan and water this country's two most populous provinces, Punjab and Sind, and its major cities of Karachi and Lahore. The climate of the western plains is desert and steppe; the dry region straddling the two countries is known as the Thar Desert, or the Great Indian Desert. Irrigation water from the rivers sustains highly productive agriculture and millions of people here.

Peninsular India

- The southern peninsular portion of the subcontinent, which is entirely within India, consists mainly of a large volcanic plateau called the Deccan. It is generally low, less than 2000 feet above sea level. Its rivers run in valleys cut well below the plateau surface. This topographic problem, together with the rivers' seasonal flow pattern, makes it difficult to use their waters for irrigation of the upland surface without large inputs of capital and technology. Hills and mountains outline the edges of the Deccan. In the north, belts of hills separate the plateau from the northern plain.

Climate and Agricultural Conditions

- Climatic conditions in South Asia range from Himalayan ice to the tropical heat of peninsular India and from some of the world's driest climates to some of the wettest. Climatic and biotic types in the subcontinent include undifferentiated highland climates in the northern mountains; desert and steppe in Pakistan and adjacent India; humid subtropical climate in the northern plains; tropical savanna in the peninsula; and rain forest along the seaward slopes of the Western Ghats and in parts of the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta and the eastern mountains near Myanmar. Most of the region's original vegetation cover is gone, but there are numerous large national parks and protected areas, especially in India, designed to ensure that important remnants will remain.

India : Power, Courage, and Confidence

- Despite its overwhelmingly rural population (72 percent, living in about 600,000 villages), India boasts some of the world's megacities, notably Mumbai and Kolkata. These and many smaller cities are at the heart of India's current economic boom, which is based more on information technology than on old-fashioned heavy industry.
- It is difficult to make generalizations about India in economic or most other matters because there is such a vast continuum of Indian experience.

Social and Political Challenges

- Partition following independence did not solve India's problems. Serious issues have persisted among the country's ethnic and religious groups. Some of the most problematic involve language, nationalism, and caste. Whatever its travails, India is admired for its tireless and record-setting democracy. Every time a national election is held there, it is the largest in human history.

Language and Religion

- India has 17 major languages and more than 22,000 dialects. Many people speak two or even three languages, but overall literacy rates are low (i.e. 61 percent as a whole), and communication is often a problem.
- Hindu nationalism is a serious issue in a country with such large religious minorities. The country is supposed to be secular, but in recent years, Hindu nationalists have heavily influenced its politics.

Pakistan: Faith, Unity, and Discipline

- Pakistan is not the demographic giant that India is, but its 169 million people face many challenges, especially owing to a small resource base relative to the population, a general shortage of industrial output, and local and geopolitical tensions that are destabilizing forces. Unlike India, Pakistan is not a secular country but an Islamic one whose motto is “faith, unity, and discipline”.

Social and Political Challenges

- Pakistan has internal problems centering on religious divisions, mainly b/w the majority Sunni Muslims(77 percent of the country's population) and Shiite Muslims(20 percent). Shiite Muslims opposed the government's efforts in the 1980s to establish an avowedly Sunni Islamic state, and there was violent conflict b/w members of the two sects.

Vulnerable Bangladesh

- Formerly East Pakistan, Bangladesh is about the size of the state of Iowa or the nation of Greece—not an Important Fact Until One Considers that It Is Home To 149 Million People. With its limited resources, people overpopulated Bangladesh is South Asia's third poorest country on a per capita GNI PPP basis, after Bhutan and Nepal. Poverty is so deep that many Bangladeshi see neighboring India as a land of opportunity. About 20 million Bangladeshis are illegal immigrants living mainly in India's West Bengal province.

Nepal and Bhutan: Mountain Kingdoms

- Population 27 million Bhutan 1 million
- Capital Kathmandu capital Thimpu
- Called south Asia's mountain wall. Their land locked locations and difficult topographies have contributed to their slow economic development. Both countries have productive agricultural regions in the "middle ranges" the bands of foothills b/w thw vast lowland of the subcontinent and the towering Himalayan peaks. In Nepal, when the capacity of this productive area was saturated, many poor peasants moved to the lowland region known as the Terai.

Middle East and North Africa

- Modern Struggles in an Ancient Land: conflict b/w Israel and its neighbors has been one of the most persistent and most dangerous problems in global affairs since the end of World War II.
- The Arab-Israeli conflict persists as one of the world's most intractable disputes it has not been resolved in part because the central issues are closely tied to such life-giving resources as land water and to deeply held religio

Sri Lanka: Resplendent and Troubled

- Population 20 million
- Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon, is a tropical island country with affinities to the Indian Subcontinent. Its name conveys its physical beauty: Sri Lanka means “resplendent isle”. The island consists of a coastal plain surrounding a knot of mountains and hill lands. Sri Lanka’s economy is highly commercialized. Three cash crops- rubber, coconuts, and the world-famous Ceylon tea-supply about 11 percent of export earnings. Sri Lanka is nearly self-sufficient in rice production, and with declining rates of population growth, its development prospects are good, particularly if its civil conflict can be ended.

The Laid-Back, Low-Lying Maldives

- The roughly 1100 islands that make up the Maldives (population 300,000; capital, Male, population 90,000), an independent country paradise. So prized are its palm-blessed and coral-fringed beaches that more than half a million tourists, mainly Europeans, visit the country each year.
- More than 80 percent of this country's very limited land area consists of limestone atolls less than 3 feet above the sea.

Arabs and Jews: The Demographic Dimension

- In addition to issues of land, water, politics, and ideology, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is about sheer numbers of people. Each side has wanted to maximize its numbers to the disadvantage of the other. To realize the Zionist dream of establishing a Jewish state, Jews began immigrating to Palestine around the start of the 20th century.
- Jews made up 11 percent of Palestine's population in 1922, 16 percent in 1931, and 31 percent in 1946, on the eve of Israel's creation.

A Geographical Sketch of Israel

- Israel is much more than a country in a perpetual state of conflict. It is a physically and culturally diverse and vibrant nation with a promising future, especially if relations with its Arab neighbors improve.
- Agricultural development is concentrated in the northern half of the country, with its heavier rainfall and more ample supplies of surface and underground water for irrigation.
- Jerusalem (population 700,000) is the country's capital, but few countries recognize it as such because of the political sensibilities involved.

Jordan: b/w Iraq and Israel

- The economic and political situation of Jordan has always been precarious.
- Throughout his long reign, ending with his death in 1999, the country's king Hussein withstood various crises.
- Jordan is a land of desert and semi desert. The main agricultural areas and settlement centers, including the largest city and capital, Amman are in the northwest.
- Jordan natural resources are limited, and the country has little manufacturing, though it does export textiles.

Egypt: The Gift of the Nile

- Southwest of Israel lies the Arab Republic of Egypt, the most populous Arab country(73million). This ancient land, strategically situated at Africa's northeastern corner b/w the Mediterranean and Red Seas, is utterly dependent on a single river.
- The Nile has created the flood-plain and delta on which more than 95 percent of all Egyptians live.
- The Greek historian and Geographer Herodotus aptly called Egypt "the gift of the Nile".
- Ancient Egyptian civilization was based on a system of basin irrigation, in which the people captured and stored in built-up embankment the floodwaters that spread over the Nile floodplain each September.

Sudan: Bridge b/w the Middle East and Africa

- Egypt is bordered on the south by Africa's largest country, the vast, tropical, and sparsely populated republic of Sudan (population 38.6 million).
- Formerly controlled by Britain and Egypt, Sudan gained its independence in 1956.
- Sudan is overwhelmingly rural. The largest urban district, formed by the capital, Khartoum is located strategically at the junction of the Blue and White Niles.
- About 7 percent of Sudan is cultivated, but agricultural productivity is low.

Libya: Deserts, Oil, and a Reformed Survivor

- Egypt's neighbor to the west, Libya-formerly an Italian colony-became an independent kingdom in 1951.
- In 1969, Libya became a republic after Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi and other army officers led a coup against the monarchy. Some 97 percent of the country's people are Muslim Arabs and Berbers.
- Libya has three major geographic divisions. Tripolitania in the northwest, Cyrenaica in the east, and the Fezzan in the southwest.
- The principal cities are the capital, Tripoli (population 1.9million), in Tripolitania and Benghazi in Cyrenaica.

Northwestern Africa: the Maghreb

- Arabs know the northwestern of Africa as the Maghreb(western land). Most of this area's people are Muslim Arabs.
- The Magherb includes four main political units: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the disputed western Sahara. Morocco is geographically and culturally the closest to Europe; only the Strait of Gibraltar, a mere 11 miles wide, separates it from Spain.
- Most people in the Magherb live in the coastal belt of Mediterranean climate, with its cool-season rains and hot, dry summers.

The Gulf Oil Region

- The Persian Gulf(Arabian Gulf) region has by far the world's largest oil reserves.
- Foreign companies, mainly British and American, originally developed the oil industry in this region.
- Gulf oil is shipped out by a combination of pipelines and ships.
- Growing amounts of gas are exported in liquefied form; Iran and Qatar have the largest reserves of natural gas in the Middle East.