

Geographical Features: The Realm's Northern Land Boundary

- Longest land border between realms
- Cross-border interaction:
 - Cross-cultural influence between United States and Mexico
 - **NAFTA**, The North American Free Trade Agreement:
 - Change in economic and urban geographies of the border zone
 - **Maquiladoras**, or assembly factories, are often located as close to the border as possible
 - Brought increased regional inequality and vulnerability to North American economic climate

Geographical Features: A Troubled Border Zone

- Main challenges:
 - Illegal immigrants pulled by hope for a better life and economic opportunity
 - Drug smuggling and NAFTA
- Ciudad Juárez and El Paso
 - Both form a single urban area divided by the border
 - New fence construction abandoned
 - Drug smuggling by the impoverished or corrupt
 - Drug violence



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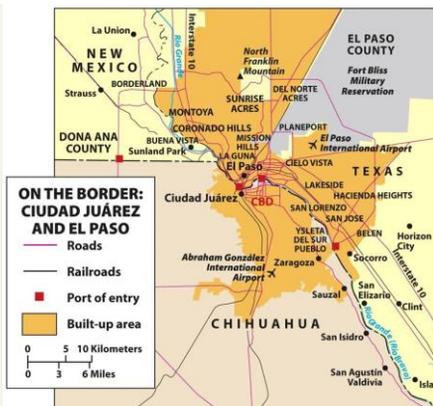


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Physical Geography: A Land Bridge

- Panama's *isthmus*
 - Narrow 65 km (40 mi) strip of land that bends to an east-west orientation
 - **Land bridge** that links two continents
 - Crucial role in diffusion of animals and humans across the planet



Concept Caching:
Panama Canal

© Cultural Engine, J. Polak

Physical Geography: Island Chains

- Approximately 7000 islands in the Caribbean
- A large **archipelago** or island chain, including:
 - *Greater Antilles*: the four larger islands
 - *Lesser Antilles*: remaining smaller islands
 - The crests and tops of ocean floor mountain chains that formed out of tectonic plate collisions



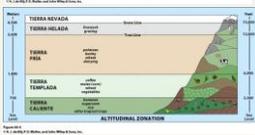
Physical Geography: Dangerous Landscapes

- Tectonic hazards: Volcanoes and earthquakes
 - Ex.: 2010 Haiti earthquake
- Extreme weather: Hurricanes
 - Key conditions: warm ocean water that evaporates into rapidly rising moist air
 - Season lasts June to December, with peak in August and September
 - Generated from the coast of West Africa and carried by the trade winds
 - **"Hurricane Alley"**: the westward pathway across the Caribbean Basin

Physical Geography

Map Analysis Activity: Portraying altitudinal zonation

1. What visual coding unites the physical map and the diagram of altitudinal zonation?
2. Use the coding and the diagram's list of crops, identify which areas might be best suited to produce certain crops.



Physical Geography: Tropical Deforestation

❑ Tropical deforestation

- ❑ Clearing and destruction of forests for settlement and economic opportunity
- ❑ Relates to systemic problems in disadvantaged countries
 - Pasture
 - Logging
 - Subsistence living



Concept Caching: Boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic
 - Contributes to soil erosion and flooding

Cultural Geography: Mesoamerican Legacy

- ❑ Mesoamerican **culture hearth** as a source for ideas, population expansion, and cultural progress:
 - ❑ Hearth extended from present-day Mexico City to Nicaragua.
 - ❑ Unified a large, environmentally diverse area:
 - In the low-lying tropical plains and Guatemalan highlands, the Maya Civilization arose over 3000 years ago.
 - In Central Mexico's high plateau, the Aztecs centered on the largest city ever in pre-Columbian times.

Cultural Geography: *The Lowland Maya*

- World's only major culture hearth in a lowland tropics area
- Civilization of city-states:
 - Dynastic rule alongside a religious hierarchy
 - Population of 2–3 million
 - Maya languages still in use
- Cultural achievements:
 - Agriculture and animal domestication



© Colin Poylson

- Concept Caching:**
Mayan ruins in Cozumel Island, Mexico
- Basic industry and trade
 - Intellectual pursuits in art and science

Cultural Geography: *The Highland Aztecs*

- Intermontane highland zone: the *Valley of Mexico*
- Aztec state:
 - First true urban center of Western Hemisphere: Teotihuacán
 - Territorial expansion driven by need to extract taxes and tribute from other groups



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- Concept Caching:**
Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán
- Cultural achievements:
 - Irrigation and terracing
 - Agricultural domestication of a variety of crops

Cultural Geography: *Spanish Conquest*

- Arrival of the Spanish:
 - Defeated the Aztecs and enslaved Amerindians
 - Brought disease that wiped out millions
- Spanish modifications to the landscape:
 - Deforestation
 - Introduction of livestock, new crops, and equipment



- Spanish settlement style:
 - Towns for administration and cultural propagation
 - Town layout around a central *plaza* with streets in a grid pattern

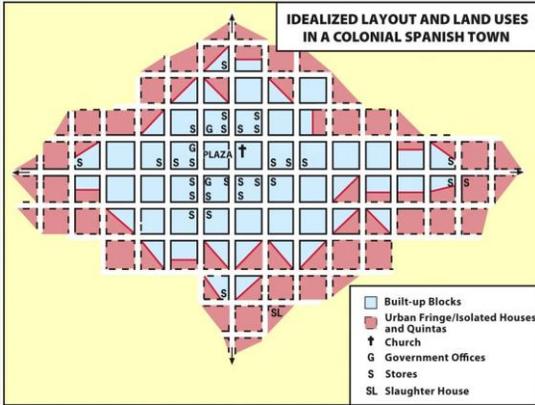


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Cultural Geography: Collision of Cultures

- European Competition:
 - Spain's focus on Panama, Pacific Central America, and Mexico
 - British foothold on mainland
 - Caribbean islands were fought over by Spain, Britain, France, and the Netherlands
 - Later, American presence on mainland



- Culture changed again when Africans were brought in to work on plantations.



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Political and Economic Fragmentation: Independence

- Early nineteenth-century geopolitics:
 - 1820s independence for Mexico and Central America
 - Monroe Doctrine and U.S. sphere of influence:
 - 1898 Spanish-American War
 - Panama Canal construction
 - U.S. banana plantations in Central America
- Caribbean Basin independence
 - Some islands gained independence in 1960s, others later
 - Some not yet independent

Political and Economic Fragmentation: Regional Contrasts

- Mainland-Rimland framework based on the realm's striking social and economic contrasts
- Mainland
 - Euro-Amerindian dominance and *mestizo*, or mixed ancestry persons
 - *Hacienda* system and social prestige
- Rimland
 - Caribbean coast and islands



- Fusion of European and African influences
- *Plantation* land tenure and economy of efficiency

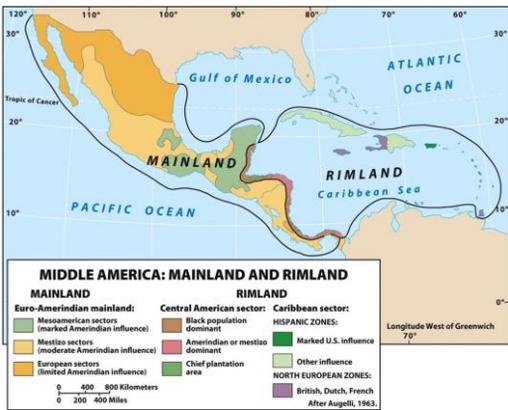


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Political and Economic Fragmentation: *Connections Matter*

- Role of **connectivity** as direct links between locations
- Connections and the correlation to economic development
 - Higher GDP:
 - Mexico's connection with the United States
 - Panama's global canal
 - Lower GDP:
 - Central states of the realm





Political and Economic Fragmentation: *Is Small Beautiful?*

- Realm's considerable number of small countries:
 - Both in terms of territorial and population size
 - Challenges of insularity, remoteness and low connectivity
- **Small-island developing economies**
 - Disadvantages faced by small island-states
 - Limited natural resources and relying on imports
 - Lack of connectivity results in high transport costs
 - Greater expense for government services per capita
 - Local producers lack competitiveness with cheaper imports; causing unemployment

Regional Issue...
The Role of the Tourist Industry in Middle American Economies

IN SUPPORT OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

- ❑ Without tourism, there is no economy.
- ❑ Demand for infrastructure benefits locals, too.
- ❑ Affluent tourists will always come to escape Northern climates.
- ❑ It is a "clean industry."
- ❑ It is educational.

CRITICAL OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

- ❑ Tourism does not constitute a real and fundamental benefit to local economies.
- ❑ Tourism represents inequality and affluent isolation.
- ❑ It debases local peoples and cultures to tourists' tastes.
- ❑ Tourism is still environmentally damaging.

Political and Economic Fragmentation:
The Push for Regional Integration

- ❑ Poor connections among the realm:
 - Many rely on large, outside countries for trade and more
- ❑ Efforts to advance economic integration to foster a functional region:
 - CAFTA, *Central American Free Trade Agreement*
 - CARICOM (Caribbean Community) of 1989
 - Follows the example of the EU
 - Economic change has been slow
