Region #5—Sub-Saharan Africa

Cultural

1. Though independent now, many African nations have cultural ties with their former European colonizers in language, religion, and, in certain cases, currency.
2. The average life expectancy in Angola is 38, in Nigeria it is 47, in Liberia 42 and in South Africa it is 49. In contrast, the average life expectancy in Japan is 82, and 78 in the U.S.
3. In 1994, approximately 800,000 Tutsis (an African tribe) were murdered by Hutus (another African tribe) in the country of Rwanda because of ethnic conflict.
4. From 2003-2010, in the Darfur region of Western Sudan government supported African-Arab militias waged a campaign of genocide against the local (non-Arab) population.
5. Scientists believe that modern humans can race their ancestry to the Bushmen, who live around the Kalahari desert in southern Africa.
6. There is great religious diversity on the continent of Africa. The dominant religions are Christianity, Islam and traditional Polytheistic religions. In some countries, religious divisions add to conflict between ethnic groups.

Economic

1. Many African countries are among the poorest in the world. The Per Capita GDP (average yearly income) in Somalia is $150, in Niger it is $400, in Benin it is $800, and in Senegal it is $1,100. By contrast, the Per Capita GDP in the United States is $41,800.
2. Though South Africa is the wealthiest country in Africa (the GDP is $12,200) unemployment is at 30%, and the nation struggles with crime, corruption and poverty.
3. Farming is essential to many African economies. For example, in Angola 80% of the workforce is employed in agriculture.
4. Mining is also a major industry in certain African countries including South Africa, Botswana, and the Ivory Coast. South Africa is the world's leading diamond exporter.
5. Nigeria and Angola are members of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries).
6. Almost 5% of adults in sub-Saharan Africa have HIV (compared to less than 1% worldwide). This is partly due to lack of AIDS education, religious conservatism (no condoms), and many men who have to get jobs far from their families. In addition to the health care costs, the loss of young productive workers has a huge negative impact on many African economies.

Political

1. With the exception of two countries (Ethiopia and Liberia) all of Africa was colonized by European countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
2. African political boundaries were created by European countries during colonialism. Many Africans feel more loyalty towards their tribe than with their European-created country.
3. The political systems in Africa are relatively young, and many countries face problems with government corruption and mismanagement.
4. There have been numerous civil wars on the continent since independence was granted by European countries, often fueled by ethnic/tribal conflict. Abduction of children for rebel armies is a problem in several countries.
5. The United States and Russia (then the Soviet Union) supported rival political groups vying for power in the newly independent countries during the Cold War era, often worsening social and tribal divisions.
6. South Sudan split from the rest of Sudan in 2011 after a decades-long civil war. The government of Sudan, supported by the Arab, Muslim north, was opposed by the mostly non-Arab, non-Muslim southern population.
7. There was government enforced segregation in South Africa until 1994, when the country's first all-race democratic elections were held.