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## **World Geography 2**

### **Chapters 29-30: Response**

**March 22 2024**

Southeast Asia has seen a *lot* of change in the last few decades. The region has seen some staggering economic growth, and a general liberalization of their political systems due to the end of the Cold War, positive incentives from the West, and fear of China. Despite this, the region still struggles with major political instability, corruption, and environmental issues.

Singapore, while not an example that can or should be replicated everywhere, is a good example of *one* way that a country can overcome these issues. The country has a strong economy, low corruption, and a high standard of living. However, the country is also known for its strict laws and lack of political freedom. This is a trade-off that many Singaporeans are willing to make, as they feel that the benefits of living in a safe and prosperous country outweigh the costs of living in a less politically free one. So far, they have avoided the worst parts of totalitarianism, but it's a fine line they walk and being that close to the edge is dangerous. Despite this, they have achieved a lot in a short amount of time, and are a good example of what can be achieved with the right leadership and policies - if only those policies could be a bit more democratic.

Vietnam is another country that has seen a lot of change in the last few decades. Despite still technically a Communist nation, this manifests itself in a one-party system and a lack of political freedom--*huh, it's almost as if communism is more similar to fascism, a fellow socialist ideology, than it is to free-market democracy*--but includes wide-spread capitalist reforms. The country has seen a lot of economic growth, and has a young and growing population. However, the country still struggles with corruption, and the government has been cracking down on dissent continuously. The country is also facing environmental issues, such as deforestation and pollution, which are only getting worse as the country industrializes due largely to corruption among government officials. Despite this, the nation's

economic growth has raised nearly a hundred million people out of poverty, made it a major geostrategic opponent to China, and forged a major player in the region.

The Philippines could be the definition of a "mixed-bag" - the country has seen significant economic growth, specifically in global services, and has a young and fairly large population to draw from. However, the country is also known for its political instability, corruption, and human rights abuses. The country has also seen a rise in authoritarianism, with the former president, Rodrigo Duterte, being openly supportive of extrajudicial killings of drug dealers and users, as well as political opponents. He did lose office in 2022, but the country is still struggling with the aftermath of his rule. He did significant damage to the nation's democratic institutions, as well as their geostrategic alignment with the US, by trying to weasel into China's pocket. Despite this, the country could be a great example of what can be achieved with good geostrategic sense, aligning with the US to form a Japan-Philippines-Vietnam-Indonesia-India-Australia barrier to Chinese expansionism, with the 9-dash line being a major point of contention.

In conclusion, South East Asia is on the rise - unfortunately, that rise includes a lot of strongmen, corruption, and environmental issues as a result of rapid development and the aforementioned corruption. Despite this, the region holds some of the world's fastest economic and population growth, and will be emerging as strong players on the world stage within the next decades.