

# Political Geography



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In December 2010, an anti-government movement began in Tunisia in North Africa when Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest police harassment and corruption. Tunisian rapper El Général's anthem "Rais Lebled" (see Chapter 4) became a protest song against corrupt dictators. As news of the revolution in Tunisia diffused, Libyans, Egyptians, and Syrians, among others, protested corrupt dictators. As winter turned to the spring of 2011, protests became so widespread and influential that commentators began speaking of the series of uprisings as the Arab Spring.

The uprisings of the Arab Spring had a larger impact on countries with authoritarian dictatorships than countries with absolute monarchies. Many of the monarchies in the Middle East have oil resources that they can use to invest in public resources like infrastructure, education, and hospitals. In 2010, just before the Arab Spring, I visited Oman and Egypt. The differences between how governments were using revenues was stark (**Fig. 8.1**).

Revolutions like the Arab Spring do not have the same impact in each country. In Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, protesters toppled governments. In Oman and other Persian Gulf monarchies, governments stayed in place. Understanding how revolutions develop or fizzle out requires a deeper understanding of context.

In this chapter, we examine how geographers study politics. Political geographers study the spatial assumptions and structures underlying politics, the ways people organize space, and the role territory plays in politics.

**FIGURE 8.1** Cairo, Egypt, (top) and Muscat, Oman (bottom) The Arab Spring is often presented as a backlash against authoritarian governments. But, authoritarian governments run by dictators, including Egypt (top photo), were more prone to protests in the Arab Spring than governments run by absolute monarchies, including Oman (bottom photo).

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### 8.1 Compare and contrast states, nations, and nation-states.

- The Birth of the Modern State Idea
- Nations, States, and Nation-States
- Multistate Nations, Multinational States, and Stateless Nations
- European Colonialism and the Diffusion of the Nation-State Model

### 8.2 Determine how the modern political map evolved.

- Construction of the Capitalist World Economy
- Territory and Political Power in an Unequal World
- Internal Organization of States
- Electoral Geography

### 8.3 Explain the nature and significance of international boundaries.

- Establishing Boundaries Between States

- Types of Boundaries
- Boundary Disputes
- How the Significance of International Borders Is Changing

### 8.4 Explain classical and critical geopolitics.

- Classical Geopolitics
- Influence of Geopoliticians on Politics
- Critical Geopolitics
- Geopolitical World Orders
- Challenges to Traditional Political-Territorial Arrangements

### 8.5 Compare and contrast supranational organizations and states.

- From League of Nations to United Nations
- Regional Supranational Organizations



## 8.1

## Compare and Contrast States, Nations, and Nation-States.

Political geography is the study of the political organization of the world. Political geographers study politically significant spaces at various scales: how they come into being and how they influence what happens. At the global scale, the most influential political spaces are individual countries, officially called states under international law. A **state** is a politically organized territory with a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government. To be a state, a politically organized area must be recognized as one by other states.

The present-day division of the world into states resulted from endless encounters between and among people and places. The political map of states is the most common cartographic representation of our world. That map hangs in the front of our classrooms, appears in our textbooks, and has become so normal looking to us that we begin to think it is natural.

Yet the world map of states is anything but natural. The map represents a way of politically organizing space that is only a few hundred years old. Just as people create places, shaping their landscapes and culture, people make states. States and state boundaries are constructed and refined by people, their ideas and actions, and their interactions.

Territory is central to states. The boundaries of states are the result of efforts to stake out territorial claims—of human **territoriality**. In a book published in 1986, geographer Robert Sack defined human territoriality as “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.” Sack sees human territoriality as a key ingredient in the making of social and political spaces—including states. Human territoriality can take place at different scales, from the home and local to the state and global. The development and global diffusion of states as a way of organizing our world entrenched or institutionalized the idea of territoriality at the scale of the state.

### The Birth of the Modern State Idea

The modern state idea can be traced back to seventeenth century Europe. Europeans were by no means the only ones who behaved territorially. For example, Native American tribes behaved territorially but not necessarily exclusively. Plains tribes shared hunting grounds with neighboring tribes that were friendly, and fought over hunting grounds with neighboring tribes that were unfriendly. Plains tribes also held territory communally, so that individual tribal members did not “own” land. In both Southeast Asia and Africa, state-like political entities existed and were used as a meaningful way to politically organize space. In all of these places, rulers had a say over people, but there was no collective agreement among political units in the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia about how territory would be organized or what rulers could do within their territory.

The emergence of the modern state idea began in western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. In what is now the heart of England, France, and Spain, individual rulers gradually centralized power over former feudal domains. At the same time, increasingly independent cities emerged in northern Italy and at the northwestern edge of the European mainland. There, urban elites became prosperous enough through commerce and trade to free themselves from feudal obligations. Influential scholars and political figures called for a political order rooted in fixed political spaces governed by sovereign rulers. Those calls were inspired by ideas about property rights that developed in ancient Greece and Rome. The new political units helped develop what geographer Stuart Elden has called the modern concept of territory: a system of political units with fixed, distinct boundaries and at least quasi-independent governments.

The larger-scale political-territorial units that developed in western Europe coexisted with a complicated patchwork of state-like entities to the east and south. Political units included the Republic of Venice, Brandenburg, the Papal States of central Italy, the Kingdom of Hungary, and a large number of minor German states—many with poorly defined borders (**Fig. 8.2**). German territories were dragged into a decades-long conflict over religion in the early seventeenth century called the Thirty Years War. With no clear victor and all sides exhausted, they entered into a peace agreement that marks the formal beginning of the modern state system: the **Peace of Westphalia** (1648).

The treaties that were part of this peace put an end to Europe’s internal struggle over how to define political space. The treaties recognized the rights of rulers within defined territories. The language of the treaties laid the foundations for a Europe made up of mutually recognized, exclusive, territorial states that at least claimed to respect one another’s sovereignty. **Sovereignty** refers to a government’s legal right to control its own territory, both politically and militarily. Sovereign states legally have the last say, over what happens in their territories. When the international community recognizes an area as a state, it also recognizes that it is officially sovereign and has the right to defend its **territorial integrity** when threatened by other states.

The rise of the Westphalian state system marked a major change in the relationship between people and territory. In previous eras, *where* a society lived constituted its territory. In the Westphalian system, the territory defined the society. Before Westphalia, French people defined the territory of France. After Westphalia, the territory of France defined who was French. Territory came to be seen as a fixed element of political identification, with states occupying exclusive, non-overlapping territories.

The Peace of Westphalia brought stability to Europe for a time, and it enhanced the power of rulers by giving a base for both colonialism and mercantilism. Through **colonialism**, states took over territories across the world and ruled them





**FIGURE 8.2 European Political Fragmentation in 1648.** At the time the treaty known as the Peace of Westphalia was agreed to in 1648, Europe was divided into a few larger territories and dozens of small principalities. With the treaty, territories and principalities became sovereign states.

for their benefit. Through **mercantilism**, government controlled trade and colonies and protected home industries. Mercantilism and colonialism promoted rivalry and competition among European states.

During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an increasingly wealthy middle class developed in some places through the income generated by mercantilism and colonialism. In some places, ruling class became more isolated and out of touch with their subjects. Both developments were the undoing of absolutism in parts of western Europe. City-based merchants gained money, influence, and prestige, while the power of the monarchy and the nobility were increasingly challenged.

In the late eighteenth century, upheavals began that changed the continent, most notably the French Revolution of 1789. The revolution brought a new era into being in which the foundations for political authority came to be seen as resting with a state's citizenry, not with a hereditary monarch.

## Nations, States, and Nation-States

The popular media and press often use the words *nation*, *state*, and *country* interchangeably. Political geographers use *state* and *country* interchangeably (often preferring *state*),

but they recognize that the word *nation* is distinct. *State* is a legal term in international law, and the international political community agrees a state is a political unit with a defined territory, a people, a government and recognition by other states. **Nation** refers to a group of people with a sense of cultural connection and a shared identity that is attached to a territory, but not necessarily to a state. A nation is a group of people with a shared past and common future who relate to each other and share a political goal. Nations can be groups of people, including the Kurds, the Palestinians, and indigenous peoples, who share a common identity and political goals. Nations can also be constructed by governments who work to create nations out of all of the people living within a state's borders. For example, the government of France may want everyone in France to see themselves as part of the French nation.

A nation is a group of people who see themselves as one based on a sense of shared culture and history. Different types of cultural communities could fit that definition. A nation could be knit together by a common religion, a shared language, or a collective sense of ethnic identity. One of the most widely read scholars on nationalism today, Benedict Anderson, defined the nation as an "**imagined community**." It is imagined because one will never meet all of the people in the nation, and it is a community because individuals see themselves as part of the larger nation.



All nations are ultimately mixtures of different peoples. The French are often considered the classic example of a nation. However, the most French-feeling person in France today came from a melding together of many cultural groups over time: Celts, ancient Romans, Franks, Goths, and many more. If most inhabitants of modern France belong to the French nation, it is because during the formation of the French territorial state, the people came to think of themselves as French—not because the French nation existed as a distinctive group throughout history.

People in a *nation* tend to look to their past and think, “We have been through much together,” and when they look to their future they often think, “Whatever happens, we will go through it together.” It follows, then, that the term is an appropriate one when referring to groups such as the Kurds and Palestinians. But why is the term also used to refer to all peoples living within a given state? After all, rarely does a nation’s geographical extent correspond precisely with state borders, and many countries have multiple nations within their borders. The answer lies in the growing influence of the nation-state idea.

**The Nation-State Idea** In the French Revolution of 1789 the French people overthrew the monarchy, drawing from and invigorating a sense of French national identity. The revolution promoted the idea that the people are the ultimate sovereign—that is, the people, the nation, have the final say over what happens within the state. Each nation, it was argued, should have its own sovereign territory.

The ideal of the nation, the people, being the sovereign led to a growing number of independence movements in Europe that were launched in the name of culturally defined nations. The Age of Nationalism brought unity within some long-established states, such as in France or Portugal. In other cases, nationalism became a rallying cry for creating states out of nations. Italy and Germany were both the product of nineteenth-century unification movements that sought to bring together people who shared historical or cultural similarities. In yet other cases, people who saw themselves as separate nations within states or colonial empires launched successful separatist movements. Ireland, Norway, and Poland all serve as examples of successful separatist movements sparked by nationalism.

The common denominator was the **nation-state** idea—the idea that the map of states should align with the map of nations. The result was the emergence of a modern European political map that was less fragmented than its seventeenth-century counterpart (see Fig. 8.2). Of course, bringing that map of nation-states into being required ignoring complicated ethnocultural distributions, incorporating smaller entities into larger states, and resolving conflicts by force as well as by negotiation. Not all states on the map were comprised of nations. Belgium and Switzerland, for example, have multiple identities tied to the languages spoken within their borders. States promoted nationalist feelings through education (e.g., developing a common curriculum for teaching national history), the use

of national symbols (flags, patriotic songs, and writings), and the staging of political events championing the glories of the nation.

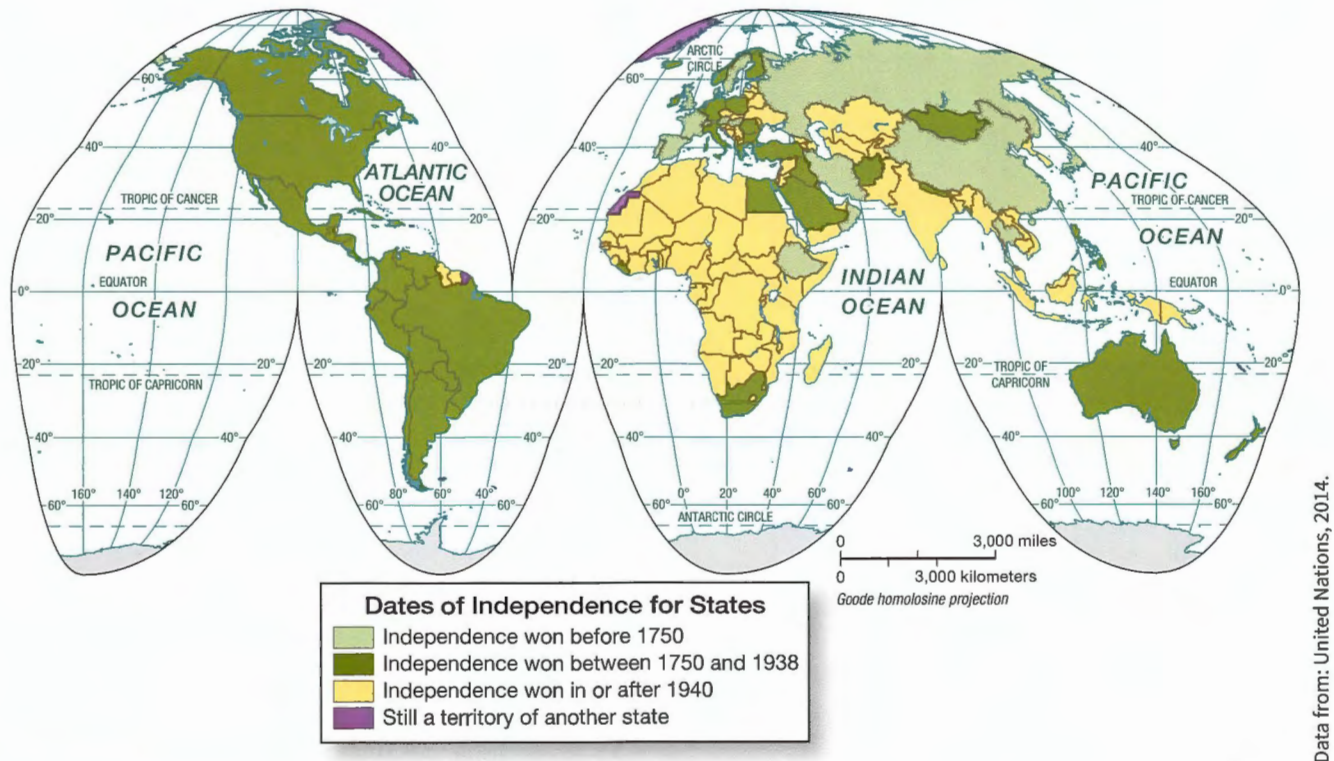
States also encourage people to identify with the dominant national ideal by providing security, infrastructure, and goods and services. Governments support education, health care, a civil service, and a military in the name of preserving the state. Some European states even used the colonization of Africa and Asia in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a way to promote nationalism. People could take pride in their nation’s vast colonial empire. People could identify themselves with their nation, be it French, Dutch, or British, by contrasting themselves with the people in the colonies, whom they defined as mystical or savage. By defining themselves in relation to an “Other,” the state and the people helped identify the supposed “traits” of their nation. In so doing, they reinforced the nation-state idea.

With time the sovereign nation-state was seen as the ultimate form of political-territorial organization for achieving stability. And given that Europe had carved up much of the rest of the world into colonies, the European political-territorial order became the template for the larger global system of states that emerged in the twentieth century (**Fig. 8.3**). No matter how complicated underlying cultural patterns might be in terms of religions, languages, or ethnicities, independence movements were mounted in the name of the people who lived in particular colonies (such as Burma, Indonesia, and Nigeria). And nation-building efforts in longer-standing countries were aimed at forging a sense of common national purpose.

To this day, major players in international relations seek solutions to complex political conflicts by trying to redraw the political map to bring political and national borders into closer correspondence. Faced with the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia or the complex problems of Israel/Palestine, for example, they propose new boundaries around nations, with the goal of making the nation and state fit one another in geographical space. Even when it is all but impossible to draw neat boundaries, alternative approaches are rarely considered (e.g., creating spaces of shared sovereignty). Instead, the European-derived nation-state idea has become so ingrained that few people even stop to think about what it means to treat *nation* and *state* as essentially synonymous terms.

The fundamental problem, of course, is that then the nation-state idea assumes there is, or can be, a world made up of reasonably well-defined, stable nations living together within separate and exclusive territorial states. Yet very few places come even close to fitting this model. Countries such as Iceland, Poland, and Japan come close, but they are the exception, not the rule. Moreover, efforts to create nation-states often lead to conflict and instability. Some states seek to define their nation around one ethnic group at the expense of others, with serious consequences for minority groups. Other states champion a single history and culture that they hope will be seen as a common denominator for all inhabitants, but that some do not embrace. The goal of these efforts is to suppress identities that might challenge a sense of nationalism.





**FIGURE 8.3** **Dates of Independence for States.** States (countries) that became independent before 1938 are largely in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. States that won independence after 1940 are mainly in Africa and Asia.

The world map of nations and the map of states are not the same. Few, if any, countries are nation-states, but the goal of creating nation-states fuels unity through nation-building and division through separatist movements.

## Multistate Nations, Multinational States, and Stateless Nations

Despite the widespread use of the term *nation-state* to describe the territories that appear on a world political map, the underlying reality is much more complicated. Nearly every state contains more than one nation. A nation of people may reside in more than one state, and many nations do not have a state at all (**Fig. 8.4**).

Nearly every state in the world is a **multinational state**, a state with more than one nation inside its borders. Millions of people who were citizens of Yugoslavia never had a Yugoslav national identity but instead identified themselves as Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, or members of other nations or ethnic groups. Yugoslavia was a state that comprised more than one nation, and it eventually collapsed.

When a nation with a state of its own also stretches across borders into other states, the nation is called a **multistate nation**. Political geographer George White studied the states of Romania and Hungary and their overlapping nations (**Fig. 8.5**). As he has noted, the territory of Transylvania is currently in

the middle of the state of Romania, but it has not always been that way. For two centuries, Hungary's borders stretched far enough east to encompass Transylvania. The Transylvanian region today is populated by Romanians and by Hungarians, and places within Transylvania are seen as pivotal to the histories of both Hungary and Romania. In keeping with the nation-state ideal, it is not surprising that both Romania and Hungary have interests in Transylvania, and some Hungarians continue to look upon the region as a territory that was wrongfully taken from them.

White explains how important territory is to a nation: "The control and maintenance of territory is as crucial as the control and maintenance of a national language, religion, or a particular way of life. Indeed, a language, religion or way of life is difficult to maintain without control over territory." In a world in which the nation-state is treated as the ideal, when multiple nations or states claim attachments to the same piece of territory, the potential for conflict is significant.

Another complication that arises from the lack of fit between nations and states is that some nations do not have a state; they are **stateless nations**. The Kurds are a stateless nation. They are a group of 25 to 35 million people living in an area called Kurdistan that covers parts of six states (**Fig. 8.6**). In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, the United Nations established a Kurdish Security Zone north of the 36th parallel in Iraq, and that area continues to have significant autonomy in present-day Iraq.



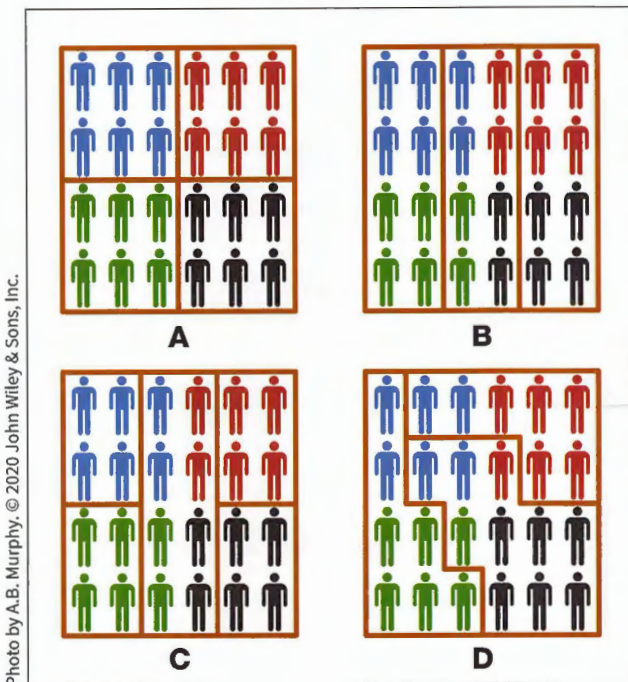


Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**FIGURE 8.4** Nation-States (A), Multinational States (B), Multistate Nations (C), and Stateless Nations (D). In this figure, distinct nations are shown by different colors. In reality, nations are not neatly segregated, as this diagram suggests. But simplifying things is useful when trying to understand the different types of relationships that exist between the pattern of states and the pattern of nations. It is often said that we live in a world of nation-states, but something close to the pattern shown in the upper left (A) is found in very few places. Instead, B, C, and D are the norm.

Kurds in Iraq are joined by Kurds in Syria, Turkey, and Iran. The Kurds in northern Syria played a major role in the fight against ISIS, in the process garnering some international support for a Kurdish state. Kurds form the largest minority in Turkey, where Diyarbakir is the unofficial Kurdish capital of Turkey. Relations between the 10 million Kurds in Turkey and the Turkish government in Ankara have been volatile. The Kurds in Iran live in a state that casts itself as the nation-state of the Iranian/Persian people; so, the Iranian government gives little recognition of the rights or political ambitions of Kurds and other national minorities.

## European Colonialism and the Diffusion of the Nation-State Ideal

Europe exported its concepts of state, sovereignty, and the nation-state ideal to much of the rest of the world through two waves of **colonialism** (Fig. 8.7). In the sixteenth century, Spain and Portugal drew from a period of internal political stability to explore and eventually colonize the Americas. Britain, France, and the Netherlands joined the **first wave of colonialism**, which extended from South America through Central America and the Caribbean, North America, and the coasts of Africa. The world economy was based on agriculture, and colonizers established large scale plantation agriculture and the Atlantic slave trade to generate production of crops. Sugar was the most valuable commodity, and Europeans forcibly migrated millions of enslaved Africans to grow, harvest, and process sugar.

Independence movements in the Americas during the late 1700s and early 1800s brought an end to most formal colonialism in Central and South America, but by the late 1880s a second wave of colonialism was well under way. In the

### Guest Field Note Tracing Roots in Transylvania, Romania

#### George White

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To Hungarians, Transylvania is significant because it was an important part of the Hungarian Kingdom for a thousand years. Many of their great leaders were born and buried there, and many of their great churches, colleges, and architectural achievements are located there too. For example, in the city of Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár in Hungarian) is St. Michael's Cathedral, and next to it is the statue of King Matthias, one of Hungary's greatest kings. Romanians have long lived in the territory too, tracing their roots back to the Roman Empire. To Romanian nationalists, the existence of Roman ruins in Transylvania is proof of their Roman ancestry and their right to govern Transylvania because their ancestors lived in Transylvania before those of the Hungarians. When archaeologists found Roman ruins around St. Michael's Cathedral and King Matthias's statue, they immediately began excavating them, which in turn aggravated the ethnic Hungarians. Traveling in Transylvania made me very aware of how important places are to peoples and how contested they can be.



© George White

**FIGURE 8.5** Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

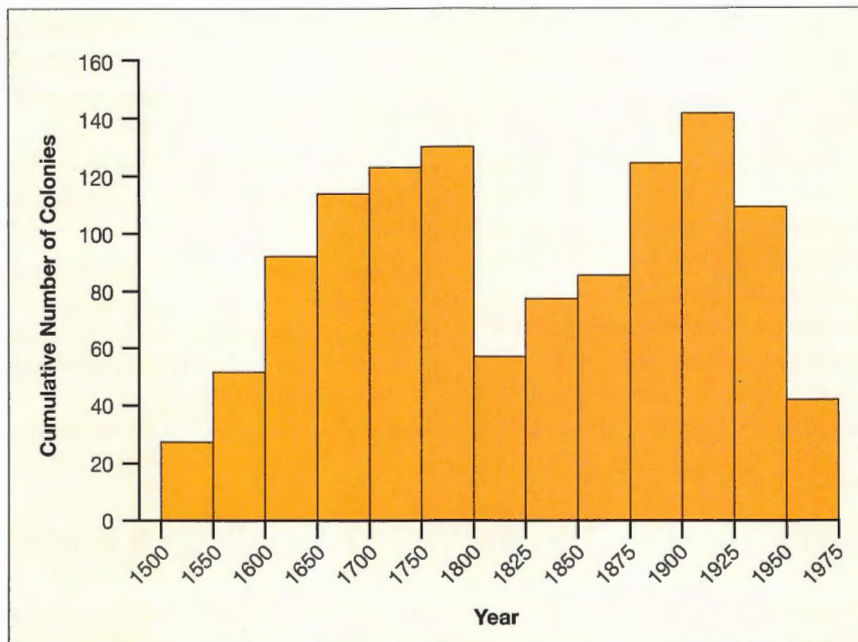




**FIGURE 8.6** Kurdish Region of the Middle East. The Kurdish nation extends across several states in the Middle East, and because the Kurds do not have a state, they are considered a stateless nation.

**second wave of colonialism**, the major colonizers were Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. The colonizing parties met for the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885 and arbitrarily divided Africa into colonies without reference to indigenous cultural patterns and political

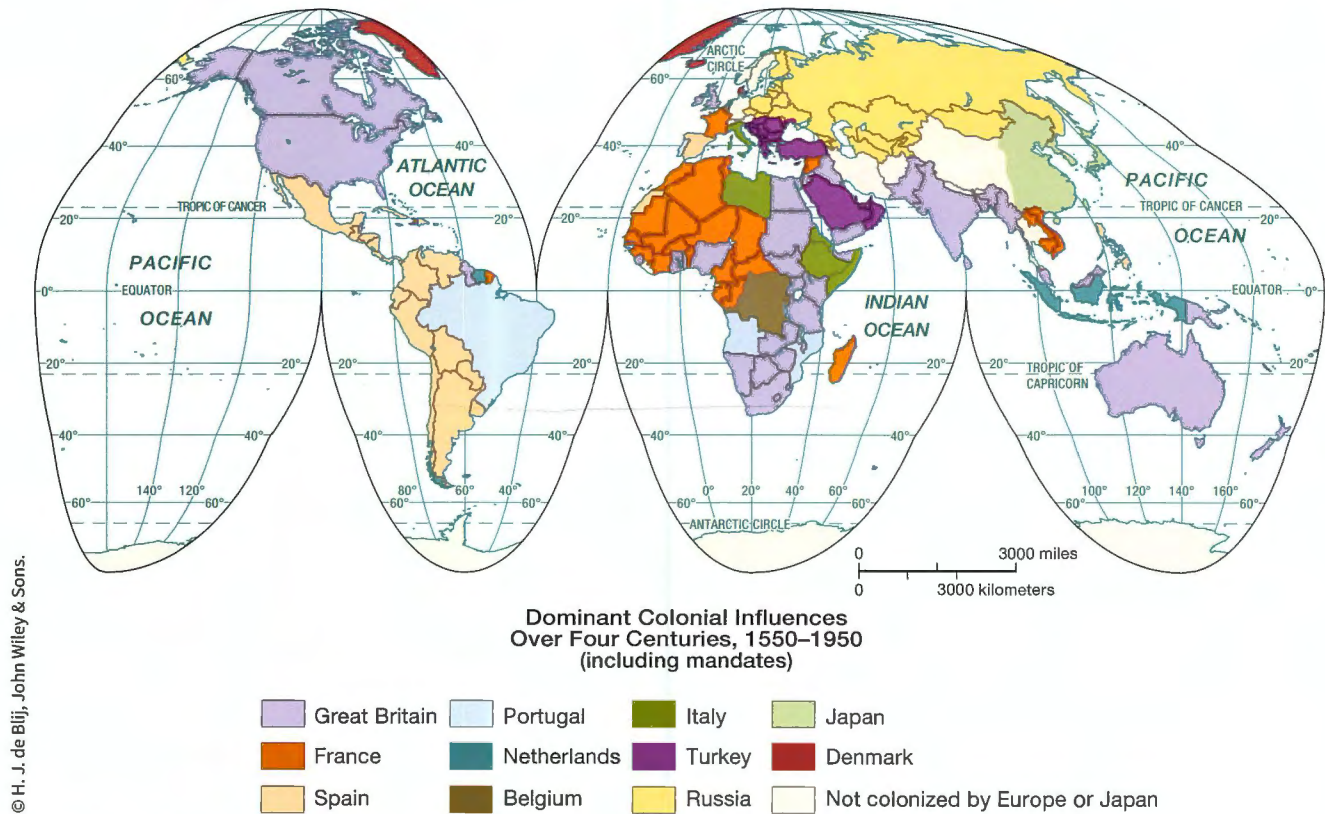
relationships. Driven by motives ranging from economic profit to national pride to the desire to bring Christianity to the rest of the world, colonialism projected European power and diffused a European approach to organizing political space across the world (**Fig. 8.8**).



Adapted from: Peter J. Taylor and Colin Flint, *Political Geography: World Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*, 4th ed. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2000.

**FIGURE 8.7** Two Waves of Colonialism Between 1500 and 1975. Each bar shows the total number of colonies around the world. When the total number drops from one period to the next, for example from 1800 to 1825, the drop reflects the number of colonies that became independent between those two dates.





**FIGURE 8.8** Dominant Colonial Influences, 1550–1950. The map shows the dominant European or Japanese colonial influence in each country over four centuries.

During both waves of colonialism, colonizers often exercised ruthless control over the colonies and organized them for maximum economic exploitation. The ability to install the infrastructure necessary for such efficient profiteering is itself evidence of the structures of power involved. Colonizers organized the flows of raw materials for their own benefit. The tangible evidence of that organization (plantations, ports, mines, and railroads) is present in the cultural landscape to this day.

European colonialism is largely behind us, but Europeans laid the ground rules for the current international state system. Both the borders drawn around colonies and the exploitative economic systems established are still very much with us. Most of the former colonies are now independent states, but their economies are anything but independent. In many cases, raw material flows are as great as they were before the colonial era ended.

Today in Gabon, Africa, for example, the railroad goes from the interior forest, which is logged for plywood, to the major

port and capital city, Libreville. Meanwhile, the second largest city, Port Gentil, is located to the south of Libreville and lacks transportation infrastructure to connect it with other parts of the country. Port Gentil is, however, tied to the global oil economy, with global oil corporations responsible for building much of the city and employing many of its people. The city is designed to extract and export oil. In fact, Port Gentil has no roads that connect it to Libreville.

**TC Thinking Geographically**

Imagine you are the leader of a newly independent **state** at the end of the second wave of colonialism. What can your government do to build a **nation** within your state? What roles do education, government, military, and cultural programs play in building a **nation-state**?

## 8.2 Determine How the Modern Political Map Evolved.

States vary widely in size—from ones that extend across continents to small units that are no larger than cities. Some have extensive resources, while others do not. Some states have long coastlines, and others are landlocked.

Different state territorial characteristics can carry potential advantages and disadvantages; even the shape of a state can influence its potential. Thailand, for example, has struggled at

times to integrate its far southern portion, which is connected to the central part of the state by a long, thin corridor. But it is important not to assume that state power and stability are simply functions of territorial size, resource endowment, or geographic situation. Switzerland is a small, landlocked state with limited resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the largest states in Africa with many valuable resources and



a territory that encompasses much of the water basin of Central Africa's most important river: the Congo. Yet by any measurement, Switzerland is the more globally influential, stable state.

When thinking about the relationship between territory and power, then, it is important not to focus solely on the characteristics of the units making up the world political map. Historical and geographical circumstances matter as well. Chief among these is the global economic order that developed through European colonialism, in which the European states and those areas dominated by European migrants emerged as the major centers of capitalism and political influence. Through colonialism, Europeans extracted wealth from colonies and put colonized peoples in a subservient position (see Fig. 12.2).

Of course, not all Europeans profited equally from colonialism, nor were European powers the only ones trying to expand their influence. Enormous poverty persisted within even the most powerful European states. Moreover, sustaining control over colonies was costly. In the late seventeenth century, the high cost of maintaining the large Spanish colonial empire took such a toll on Spain's economy that it lost control of its colonies in the Americas in the early nineteenth century. But the concentration of wealth that colonialism brought to Europe and to parts of the world dominated by European settlers, including the United States, Canada, and Australia, is at the heart of the highly uneven global distribution of power that continues today.

## Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

Colonialism knit together the economies of widely separated areas, giving birth to a world economy. Wealth is unevenly distributed in the world economy, as can be seen in statistics on per capita gross national income (GNI): Bangladesh's GNI is only \$1470, whereas Norway's GNI is \$75990 (and the divide has increased in recent years). To understand why wealth is distributed unevenly, we cannot simply study each country, its resources, and its production of goods. Rather, we need to understand where countries fit in the larger global political-economic picture.

Think of the magnificent work of nineteenth-century French painter Georges Pierre Seurat, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (Fig. 8.9). The pointillist painting hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. If you stand close enough, you will see Seurat's post-Impressionist method of painting millions of points or dots—single, tiny brush strokes, each a single color. When you step back again, you can see how each dot fits into the picture as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>We give credit to former student Kelsey Lynd, who came up with this metaphor for world-systems theory in a political geography class at the University of Mary Washington in 1999.

In the last few decades, social scientists have sought to understand how each dot, how each country and each locality, fit into the picture of the world. If you focus on a single dot or even each dot one at a time, you miss the whole. Even if you study every single dot and add them together, you still miss the whole. You need to step back and see the whole, as well as the individual dots, studying how one affects the other. This is one of the ways geographers think about scale.

A concern with scale led some political geographers to take note of one sociologist's theory of the world economy and add much to it. Building on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, proponents of **world-systems theory** view the world as much more than the sum total of the world's states. Much like a pointillist painting, world-systems theorists argue that to understand any state, we must also understand its position within the global economy.

Wallerstein's publications number in the hundreds, and the political and economic geography publications tied to world-systems theory number in the thousands. To simplify, there are three basic tenets of world-systems theory:

1. The world economy has one market and a global division of labor.
2. Although the world has multiple states, almost everything takes place within the context of the world economy.
3. The world economy has a three-tier structure (core, semi-periphery, and periphery).

According to Wallerstein, the development of a world economy began with the mercantilist activities of early modern European states. Mercantilism set the stage for the rise of an increasingly far-reaching capitalist economic order that encompassed the globe by 1900. **Capitalism** refers to a system in which individuals, corporations, and states own land and



World History Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

**FIGURE 8.9** Chicago, Illinois. *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, by Georges Pierre Seurat, hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago.



produce goods and services that are exchanged for profit. To generate a profit, producers seek the cheapest production and costs. For example, when labor (including salaries and benefits) became the most expensive component of production costs, corporations sought to move production from North Carolina to Mexico, and then to China and Southeast Asia to take advantage of lower cost labor.

In addition to taking advantage of the world labor supply, producers gain profit by commodifying whatever they can. **Commodification** is the process of placing a price on a good, service, or idea and then buying, selling, and trading that item. Companies create new products, generate new twists on old products, and create demand for the products through marketing. As children, neither of the authors of this book could have imagined buying a bottle of water. Now, the sale of water in bottles is commonplace.

When colonies became independent, gaining the legal status for sovereign states was relatively easy. The United Nations Charter even set up a committee to help colonies do so after World War II. But gaining true economic independence is all but impossible because the economies of the world are tied together, generating intended and unintended consequences that no one place can control.

Lastly, world-systems theorists see the world economy as a three-tiered structure comprising a core, a periphery, and a semiperiphery, based on how goods are produced. **Core** production methods include higher levels of education, higher salaries, and more technology—processes that generate wealth in the world economy. **Periphery** production methods incorporate lower levels of education, lower salaries, and less

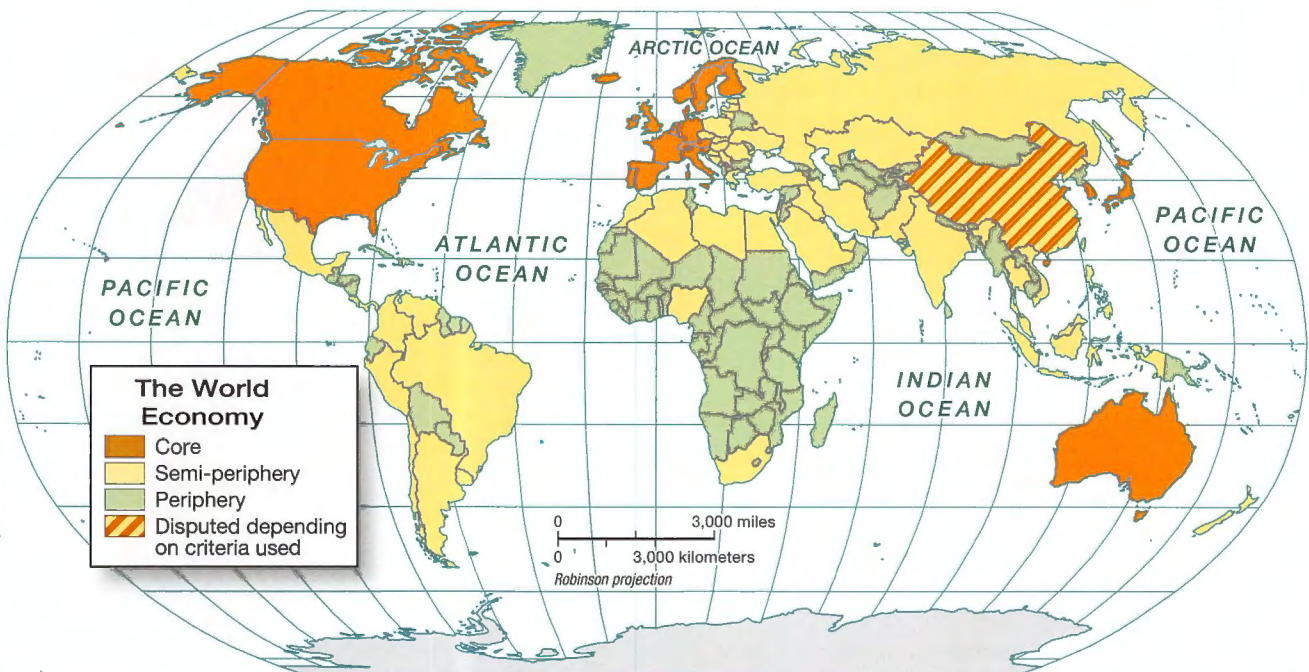
sophisticated technology—processes associated with a more marginal position in the world economy. But core and periphery do not exist independently of one another. Instead, their socioeconomic characteristics are shaped by their relationship to one another.

**Figure 8.10** presents one way of dividing up the world in world-systems terms. The map designates some states as part of the **semiperiphery**—places where core and periphery processes are both occurring. The semiperiphery acts as a buffer between the core and periphery, preventing the polarization of the world into two extremes.

Political geographers, economic geographers, and other academics continue to debate world-systems theory. Detractors argue that it overemphasizes economic factors and does not fully account for how places move from one category to another. Nonetheless, Wallerstein's work has encouraged many to see the world political map as a system of interlinked parts that need to be understood in relation to one another and as a whole. Since the impact of world-systems theory has been considerable, geographers now often refer to the kinds of core–periphery distinctions suggested by world-systems theory.

Most obviously, world-systems theory helps explain how colonial powers were able to amass and sustain great concentrations of wealth. During the first wave of colonialism, colonizers extracted goods from the Americas and the Caribbean and exploited Africa for slave labor, amassing wealth through sugar, coffee, fruit, and cotton production. During that same period, Russia expanded over land rather than overseas, profiting from the seizure of territory and the subjugation of indigenous

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**FIGURE 8.10 The World Economy.** One representation of core, periphery, and semiperiphery places. North America, Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Australia in the core. China leans toward core in some ways and semi-periphery in others.



peoples. The United States did the same in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During the second wave of colonialism, which happened after the Industrial Revolution, colonizers set their sights on industrial labor, raw materials, and large-scale agricultural plantations. Their reach expanded inward in Africa, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, creating an increasingly globalized world economy. Even countries such as China and Iran that were never formally colonized could not escape and were forced into signing unequal treaties giving concessions to European powers. And then Japan, inspired by the European example, developed its own colonial empire, ultimately controlling Korea and other parts of East and Southeast Asia as well as many Pacific islands until its defeat in World War II.

The result was a global system of structures of power characterized by extraordinary inequalities between core and periphery. Not all core countries in the world today were colonial powers, however. Countries such as Switzerland, Singapore, and Australia have substantial global influence even though they were never classic colonial powers. Their influence is tied either to their relationship with traditional colonial powers or their ability to tap into a global economy dominated by the core. They gained their core positions through access to networks of production, consumption, and exchange in the wealthiest parts of the world and through their ability to take advantage of that access.

## Territory and Political Power in an Unequal World

Political power is not simply a function of sovereignty. Each state is theoretically sovereign, but not all states have the same ability to influence others or achieve their political goals. Economic power and political power are not necessarily one and the same, but economic power can bring political power. Having wealth helps leaders amass political power. For instance, a higher income country can establish a powerful military. But political influence is not simply a function of hard (military) power; it is also diplomatic. A country's economic might can aid its diplomatic efforts, which gives it greater political power.

World-systems theory helps us understand how colonizing powers politically reorganized the world. When colonialism ended in Africa and Asia, the newly independent states continued to follow the European model of politically organizing into states. The arbitrarily drawn colonial borders of Africa, dating from the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, became the boundaries of the newly independent states. On the map, former colonies became new states and colonial administrative borders transformed into international boundaries. In most cases, colonial administrative towns became capitals. The greatest political challenge facing the states of Africa since independence has been building stable states out of incredibly diverse (sometimes antagonistic) peoples.

## Internal Organization of States

Territory's influence on power is not solely a function of a state's position in the world economy. How states organize the territory within their boundaries matters as well. In the 1950s, political geographer Richard Hartshorne described the forces within a state that encourage unity as **centripetal** and the forces that divide them as **centrifugal**. Whether a state thrives, according to Hartshorne, depends on the balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Many political geographers have debated Hartshorne's theory, and most have concluded that we cannot select a given circumstance and simply define it as centrifugal or centripetal. A war with an outside power can pull a state together for a short time and then divide the state over the long term. Timing, scale, interaction, and perspective factor into unification and division at any given point, as does a state's position in the world economy. Whatever their circumstances, governments attempt to unify states by structuring themselves to encourage buy-in across the territory, by defining and defending boundaries, and by exerting control over all of the territory within those boundaries.

Focusing attention on how different governments have tried to unify peoples and territories within their domains reminds us of how important geography is. Governance does not take place in a vacuum. The particular spatial strategies pursued by governments interact with the characteristics of places to solve or worsen problems.

**Unitary and Federal States** Until the mid-twentieth century, most states were highly centralized, with the capital city serving as the focus of power. Few states sought to accommodate minorities (such as Bretons in France or Basques in Spain) or outlying regions where identification with the state was weaker. Political geographers call these highly centralized states **unitary** states. Their administrative framework is designed to ensure the central government's authority over all parts of the state. The French government divided the state into more than 90 départements, but their representatives came to Paris not just to express regional concerns but also to implement central government decisions back home.

One way of governing a state with significant ethnocultural differences is to construct a federal system. This divides the territory into regions, substates, provinces, or cantons that exercise significant control over their own affairs. In a strong **federal** system, the regions or states have substantial authority over such matters as education, land use, and infrastructure planning. In the United States, for example, there are significant differences from state to state in the approach to such matters as penalties for crimes, property taxes, access to alcohol (**Fig. 8.11**), and the right to carry concealed weapons.

Giving control over certain policy areas (especially cultural policies) to smaller-scale governments is one strategy for keeping the state as a whole together. Federalism



## Guest Field Note Reading the Signs on Interstate 40 Near Blackwell, Arkansas

**Paul T. Gray, Jr.**  
Russellville High School

In most states in the United States, a “dry county” might cause one to think of a place where there is very little rain. But in the South, there are many dry counties—counties with laws forbidding the sale of packaged alcohol. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, keeping counties dry was much easier than it is today. A hundred years ago, it took up to a day to travel to the next town or city on very poor roads. Today, with cars traveling 70 mph on an interstate, the same trip takes a matter of minutes. Why would counties continue to ban alcohol sales today? Many of the reasons are cultural. Of the Arkansas residents who attend church, most are Baptists or other Protestant denominations. Many of these churches prohibit consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Arkansas legislature supports dry counties by requiring counties that want to sell packaged liquor to get 38 percent of the voters in the last election to sign a petition. It only takes 10 percent of that voter pool to get any other issue on the ballot. Today, however, many dry counties in Arkansas are known as “damp.” Damp counties are those where restaurants, country clubs, and social organizations can apply and receive a license to serve alcohol by the drink. This arrangement seems



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**FIGURE 8.11** Blackwell, Arkansas.

counterintuitive to the idea of a dry county. But business and economic development authorities want damp counties to encourage investment and growth in the local economy.

functions differently depending on the context, however. In Nigeria, each of the 36 states chooses its own judicial system. In the Muslim north, 12 states have Shari’a laws (legal systems based on traditional Islamic laws), whereas in the Christian and animist south, Shari’a law plays no role (**Fig. 8.12**). Shari’a law in the northern states of Nigeria is only applied to Muslims, not to Christians and animists. The move to Shari’a law in the north came at the same time as democracy swept Nigeria in 2000. Nigerians in the north hoped that stricter laws would help root out corruption among politicians, although they have failed to do so. Supporters of the

Shari’a tradition also cite the need to curb rampant crime, prostitution, and gambling.

Some northerners seek to expand Shari’a law to other states. That idea is a motivating force for the Islamic fundamentalist group Boko Haram, which uses violence in an effort to overthrow the existing government and bring into being an Islamic state. The movement has used bombings, assassinations, and abductions to advance its agenda. The Nigerian government has declared a state of emergency in the country’s northeast and has devoted significant resources to fighting the militant group, but with limited success. Many

Nigerians, in the north as well as the south, oppose Boko Haram’s tactics, but chronic poverty, widespread corruption, and north-south tensions play into the organization’s hands.

Federalism accommodates regional interests by vesting primary power in substate units over all matters except those explicitly given to the central government. The Australian geographer K. W. Robinson described a federation as “the most geographically expressive of all political systems, based as it is on the existence and accommodation of regional differences... federation does not create unity out of diversity; rather, it enables the two to coexist.”

Choosing a federal system does not always quell nationalist sentiment. After all, the multinational states of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia fell apart, despite their federalist systems, and the future of states such as Belgium and Iraq is in some doubt.



Source: Data from Legit, Shari'a law in Nigerian constitution.

**FIGURE 8.12** States in Nigeria with Shari’a Law Only Muslims in the northern states of Nigeria are subject to Shari’a law.



**Devolution** Devolution is the transfer of power “downwards” from the central government to regional governments within a state. Sometimes devolution happens when a constitution is revised to establish a federal system that recognizes the status of the regional governments, as Spain has done. In other places, governments devolve power without altering constitutions. A parliamentary body in the United Kingdom, the Northern Ireland Assembly, was the product of devolution. Devolutionary forces can emerge in all kinds of states, old and young, large and small. These forces arise from several sources of internal division: ethnocultural, economic, and territorial.

Many of Europe’s devolutionary pressures are the result of groups within states seeing themselves as ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct from the majority, and identifying as a nation (Fig. 8.13). In some cases, state governments keep these pressures under control devolving power to the regions. The goal of devolving power to nationalist regions led the United Kingdom in 1997 to grant Scotland the right to establish its own parliament, a body that had last met in 1707. The 129 members of the modern Scottish Parliament swear allegiance to the Queen of England, but they dictate how a variety of issues in Scotland are handled today, including education, health, housing, and police. Devolution was



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**FIGURE 8.13 Europe: Foci of Devolutionary Pressures, 2019.** Devolutionary movements in Europe are found where a nation with a shared history has the political goal of greater autonomy, unification with the rest of their nation, or independence.



not enough to head off a referendum on independence in September 2014 (ultimately unsuccessful), but devolution makes it more difficult for the champions of independence to argue that independence is the only way that Scotland can gain control over its own affairs. Parliaments were also established in Wales and Northern Ireland in the late 1990s, but their powers are more limited.

In two eastern European cases, devolutionary pressure has led to the disintegration of states: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Division in Yugoslavia led to a civil war that

tore the country apart in the early 1990s. In Czechoslovakia, disintegration occurred without significant violence: Czechs and Slovaks agreed to divide their country, creating a new international boundary in 1992. As **Figure 8.14** shows, however, one of the two new states, Slovakia, is not homogeneous. About 11 percent of Slovaks are Hungarian, and that minority is concentrated along the border between Slovakia and Hungary. The Hungarian minority, concerned about linguistic and cultural discrimination, has at times demanded greater autonomy to protect its heritage.



**FIGURE 8.14 Ethnicities in Eastern Europe.** The ethnic groups in this map are largely based on language. The presence of Russians in Ukraine, Belarus, and Latvia is a result of the policy of Russification, where Russians were moved throughout the region to help spread the Russian culture and establish a Soviet national identity based on Russian culture. The central part of Romania, where there is a concentration of Hungarians, is Transylvania, a land important to both Hungarians and Romanians.



Elsewhere, devolutionary pressures associated with ethnocultural differences have produced devastating wars. Sri Lanka (South Asia) is a prime example, where conflict raged from the 1980s to 2009 between the Sinhalese (Buddhist) majority and the Tamil (Hindu) minority, which sought an independent state. The Sinhalese ultimately prevailed, but at an incredible cost in human life.

Devolutionary forces based on ethnocultural claims are gaining ground in places that have long looked stable from the outside. The central government of China has pragmatically, and often relatively successfully, integrated 56 ethnic nations into the state of China. China has acknowledged the precarious place of the minority nations within the larger Han-dominated state by extending rights to minorities, including the right to have two children during the period when the one-child policy was in effect.

Some nations within China continue to challenge the state, however. In China's far west, Tibetan and Uyghur separatist movements have become more visible, but the Chinese government's firm control on its territory has increased over time. Through heavy policing, the encouragement of in-migration by Han Chinese, and economic incentives, the Chinese have sought to suppress these movements. They nonetheless persist, and China's increasingly extreme measures against them have spurred reactions among locals and attracted growing international attention.

Regional economic inequalities often play a role in the development of devolutionary movements. In Catalonia, a region of Spain with a large population that sees itself as ethnoculturally distinct, the Catalan language is different from Spanish, and much of the region's historical development differed from that of the rest of Spain. Catalonia constitutes 8 percent of Spain's territory and just 16 percent of its population, yet it produces some 35 percent of all Spanish exports by value and 54 percent of its high-tech exports. What is more, nearly 70 percent of all Spanish exports pass through the region (**Fig. 8.15**). Pro-independence groups in Catalonia held a referendum in October 2017 seeking a vote for independence. The vote passed, but the Spanish central government did not endorse either the referendum or the result (many did not vote). Instead, the government dissolved the Catalan parliament and charged leaders of the separatist movement with a host of crimes, from misappropriation of funds to rebellion. For now, Catalonia remains part of Spain, but the devolutionary forces continue to frustrate efforts of the central government to maintain the territorial integrity of Spain.

Economic forces have also played into devolutionary pressures in Italy. Demands for autonomy for Sardinia are rooted in the island's economic circumstances, with accusations of neglect by the government in Rome high on the list of grievances. Italy also faces serious devolutionary pressures on its mainland peninsula because of north-south differences. The Mezzogiorno region lies to the south, below the Ancona Line (an imaginary border extending from Rome to the Adriatic coast at Ancona). The higher income north

contrasts with the lower income south. Despite the large subsidies granted to the Mezzogiorno, the development gap between the north, part of the European core, and the south, part of the European periphery, has been widening. Some Italian politicians have exploited widespread impatience with the situation by forming organizations to promote northern interests, including devolution. One of these organizations, the Northern League, has raised the prospect of an independent state called Padania in the northern part of Italy centered on the Po River. After a surge of enthusiasm, the Padania campaign faltered, but it pushed the Italian government to focus more attention on regional inequalities.

Brazil also exemplifies the interconnections between devolutionary movements and economics. As in northern Italy, a separatist movement emerged in the 1990s in a better-off



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**FIGURE 8.15** **Barcelona, Spain.** Barcelona's long-standing economic and political significance is indelibly imprinted in the urban landscape. Once the heart of a far-flung Mediterranean empire, Barcelona went on to become a center of commerce and banking as the Iberian Peninsula industrialized. In the process, the city became a center of architectural innovation where major streets are lined with impressive buildings—many with intricate stone façades.



### Author Field Note Waving the Flag for Devolution in Honolulu, Hawai'i

"As I drove along a main road through a Honolulu suburb, I noticed that numerous houses had the Hawai'i state flag flying upside down. I knocked on the door of this house and asked the homeowner why he was treating the state flag this way. He invited me in and we talked for more than an hour. 'This is 1993,' he said, 'and we native Hawai'ians are letting the state government and the country know that we haven't forgotten the annexation by the United States of our kingdom. I don't accept it, and we want our territory to plant our flag and keep the traditions alive. Why don't you drive past the royal palace, and you'll see that we mean it.' He was right. The Iolani Palace, where the Hawai'ians' last monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, reigned until she was deposed by a group of American businessmen in 1893, was draped in black for all of Honolulu to see. Here was devolutionary stress on American soil."

– H. J. de Blij



FIGURE 8.16 Honolulu, Hawai'i.

region in the south that includes the three southernmost states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Parana. Southerners complained that the government was mispending their tax money on assistance to Amazonia in northern and interior Brazil. The southerners found a leader, manufactured a flag, and demanded independence for their Republic of the Pampas. The Brazilian government outlawed the separatists' political party, but the economic differences between north and south continue, and devolution pressures will certainly arise again.

Devolutionary events have at least one feature in common: They most often occur on the margins of states. Most of the devolution-affected areas shown in Figure 8.13 are on a coast or on a border. Distance, remoteness, and marginal location frequently strengthen devolutionary tendencies. The regions most likely to seek devolution are those far from the national capital. Many are separated from the center of power and adjoin neighbors that may support separatist objectives.

Many islands are subject to devolutionary processes: Corsica (France), Sardinia (Italy), Taiwan (China), Hong Kong (China), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Jolo (Philippines), Puerto Rico (United States), Mayotte (Comoros), and East Timor (Indonesia) are notable examples. Some of these islands became independent states. Not surprisingly, the United States faces its most serious devolutionary pressures on the islands of Hawai'i (Fig. 8.16). The year 1993 marked the hundred-year anniversary of the United States' annexation of Hawai'i. In that year, a vocal minority of native Hawai'ians and their sympathizers demanded the return of rights lost during the "occupation." These demands included the right to reestablish an independent state called Hawai'i (before its annexation Hawai'i was a Polynesian kingdom) on several of the smaller islands. Their hope is that ultimately the island of Kauai, or at least a significant part of that island, which is considered ancestral land, will become a component of the

independent Hawai'ian state. At present, the native Hawai'ian separatists do not have the numbers, resources, or influence to achieve their aims. The potential for some form of separation between Hawai'i and the mainland United States does, however, exist.

## Electoral Geography

Another important aspect of the internal political geography of states is the division of state territory into electoral districts. Electoral geographers examine how and where these electoral districts emerge and then consider how the voting patterns in particular elections reflect and influence social and political affairs. Various countries use different voting systems to elect their governments, with impacts on who is represented and who is not. For example, in the 1994 South African election, government leaders introduced a system of majority rule while awarding some power to each of nine newly formed regions. The overall effect was to protect, to some extent, the rights of minorities in those regions.

The geographic study of voting behavior is especially interesting because it helps us assess whether people's voting tendencies are influenced by their geographic situation. Maps of voting patterns often produce surprises that can be explained by other maps, and geographic information systems (GIS) have raised districting analysis to new levels. Political geographers study church affiliation, income level, ethnic background, education attainment, and numerous other social and economic factors to learn why voters in a certain region might vote the way they do.

Electoral geographers can have the most influence in the drawing of electoral districts. In a **democracy** where representatives are elected by district, the spatial organization of electoral districts determines whose voice is heard in a given place.



For example, the United States Constitution establishes a system of territorial representation. In the Senate, each major territorial unit (state) gets two representatives. The 435 members of the House of Representatives are elected from territorially defined districts that have similar-sized populations.

The Constitution requires a Census every 10 years in order to reapportion the House of Representatives. **Reapportionment** is the process by which districts are changed according to population shifts. For example, after the 2010 Census, several states in the so-called Rust Belt, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan, lost representatives as a result of population decline (each district is supposed to encompass approximately the same number of people). Because of the same Census, the Sun Belt states of Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, along with the southwestern states of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah (all of which gained population), gained representatives.

In the United States, once reapportionment numbers are established, individual states go through the process of territorial redistricting, with each state following its own rules. The criteria involved in territorial redistricting are numerous, but the most important is equal representation. To achieve that end, districts are supposed to have approximately the same populations. In addition, the Supreme Court has established a preference for compact, contiguous districts that keep political units (such as counties) intact. Finally, the courts have repeatedly called for representational equality of racial and linguistic groups.

Even after the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, minorities were denied voting rights in some places. County registrars would close their doors when African Americans came to register to vote, and intimidation kept many away from voting. Even where minorities were allowed to register and vote, it was nearly impossible for the election of a minority to occur. The parties drawing the voting districts or choosing the electoral system purposefully chose systems to disadvantage minorities. For example, if a government has to draw 10 districts in a state that is 60 percent white, 30 percent African American, and 10 percent Hispanic, it can easily weaken the impact of minority voters by **splitting** them among multiple districts, ensuring that the white population holds the majority in each district.

In 1982, the United States Congress amended the 1965 Voting Rights Act by outlawing districts that result in weakened minority voting power. In a series of decisions, the courts interpreted this amendment to mean that states needed to redistrict in a way that would ensure minority representation. This criterion was used in the redistricting that followed the 1990 Census. As a result, states increased the number of **majority-minority districts** in the House of Representatives from 27 to 52. Majority-minority districts are packed districts in which a majority of the population is from the minority. In the hypothetical state described before, a redistricting following this criterion could have the goal of creating at least three majority-minority districts and a fourth where minorities had a sizable enough population to influence the outcome of the election.

Ideally, majority-minority districts would be compact and contiguous and follow existing political units. Political geographers Jonathan Leib and Gerald Webster have researched the court cases that have resulted from trying to balance these often-conflicting criteria. To include minorities who do not live compactly and contiguously, states have drawn bizarrely shaped districts. These sometimes connect minority populations with meandering corridors or follow major highways to connect urban areas that have large minority populations (**Fig. 8.17**).

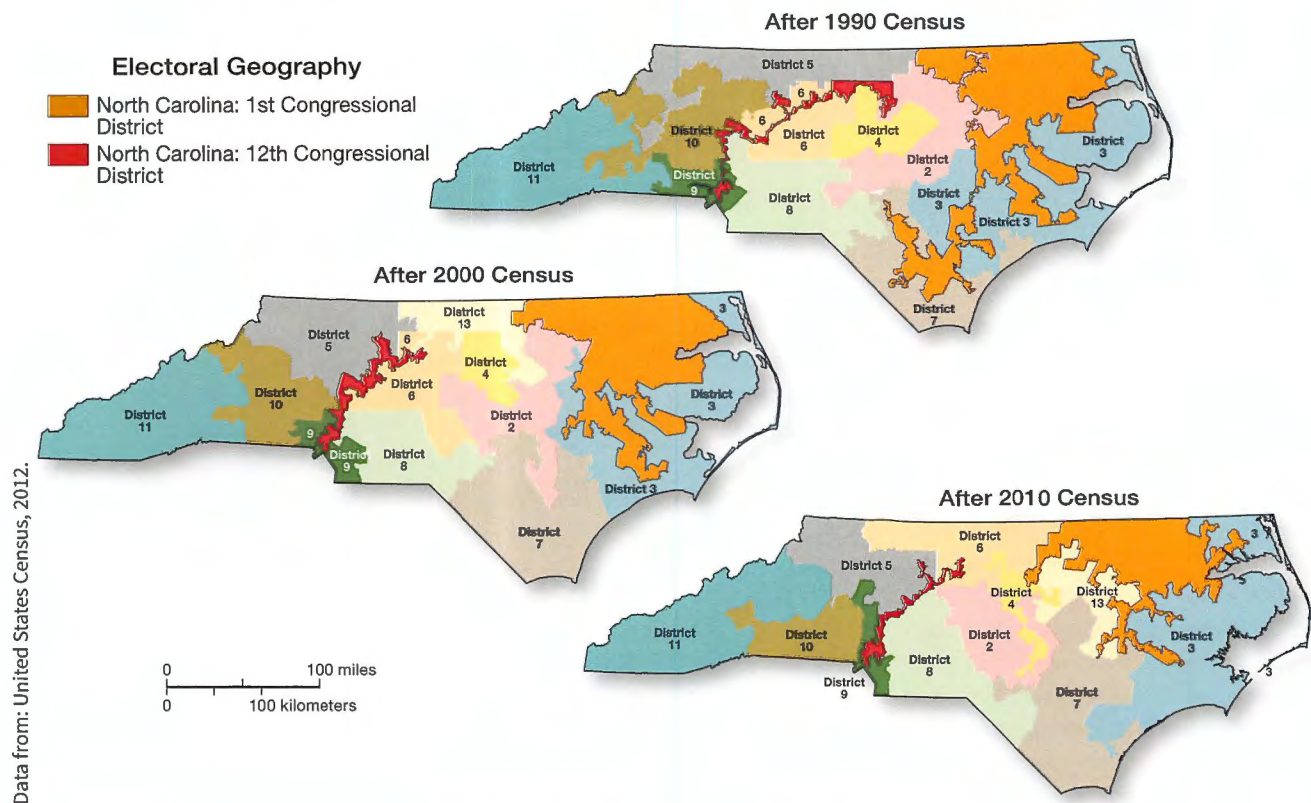
Strange-looking districts constructed to attain certain political ends are nothing new in American politics. In 1812, Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts signed into law a district designed to give an advantage to his party—a district that looked so odd to artist Gilbert Stuart that he drew it with a head, wings, and claws. Stuart called it the “salamander district,” but a colleague immortalized it by naming it a gerrymander (after the governor). Ever since, the term **gerrymandering** has been used to describe “redistricting for advantage.” Many of the districts now on the United States electoral map may be seen as gerrymanders. However, some provide representation to minorities who, without it, would not be represented as effectively in the House of Representatives. Despite this well-intentioned goal, others argue that the packing of minorities into majority-minority districts simply concentrates minority votes, creating a countrywide government that is less responsive to minority concerns.

The larger point is that the spatial organization of voting districts is a fundamentally geographical phenomenon, and it can have profound impacts on who is represented and who is not—as well as on peoples’ sense of fairness. Recognition of these issues grew after the highly partisan approach to redistricting took place in some states after the 2010 Census. In states ranging from North Carolina to Texas, state legislatures drew new electoral district maps that clearly favored the party in power (the Republicans in those two places). This led to a number of legal challenges (a few extreme examples were struck down by the courts) and a growing movement to place the redistricting process in the hands of independent, nonpartisan bodies. The map of electoral districts can greatly influence political outcomes, and so the drawing of electoral districts will almost certainly be a continuing source of tension.

### TC Thinking Geographically

Choose an example of a devolutionary movement. Look at the territory claimed by the movement and find evidence of how it serves as a functional **region** currently. Study the culture of the people in the territory and determine how their group **identity** is formed and how it is different from others’. Finally, thinking at the **scale** of the country in which the territory is located, predict what circumstances may lead to this territory seceding and becoming its own state.





**FIGURE 8.17 Electoral Geography.** North Carolina’s congressional districts in 1992, 2002, and 2012. In 1992, North Carolina concentrated minorities into majority-minority districts. In 2002, North Carolina made its districts more compact and explained they were based on criteria other than race, in accordance with Supreme Court decisions during the 1990s. Using the same criteria, North Carolina redistricted again after the 2010 Census, shaping districts that once again prioritized concentrating minorities while trying to achieve compactness and contiguity.

### 8.3 Explain the Nature and Significance of International Boundaries.

The territories of individual states are separated by international boundaries, referred to as borders when crossing them. Boundaries may appear on maps as straight lines, or they may twist and turn to conform to rivers, hills, and valleys. But a **boundary** is more than a line on the ground. The lines are actually markers of a vertical plane that cuts through the rocks below (the subsoil) and the airspace above, dividing one state from another (**Fig. 8.18**). Only where the vertical plane intersects Earth’s surface (on land or at sea) does it form the line we see on the ground.

Many boundaries were established on the world map before the extent or significance of subsoil resources was known. As a result, coal seams and aquifers cross boundaries, and oil and gas reserves are split between states. Europe’s main coal reserves extend from Belgium underneath the Netherlands and on into the Ruhr area of Germany. Soon after mining began in the mid-nineteenth century, these three neighbors began to accuse each other of mining coal that did not lie directly below their own national territories. The underground surveys available at the time were too inaccurate to pinpoint the ownership of each coal seam.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Germany and the Netherlands argued over a gas reserve that lies in the subsoil across their boundary. The Germans claimed that the Dutch were withdrawing so much natural gas that the gas was flowing from beneath German land to the Dutch side of the boundary. They wanted compensation for the gas they felt they lost.

As another example, a major issue between Iraq and Kuwait, which in part led to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, was the oil in the Rumaylah reserve that lies underneath the desert and crosses the border between the two states. The Iraqis asserted that the Kuwaitis were drilling too many wells and draining the reserve too quickly, as well as drilling oblique boreholes to penetrate the vertical plane extending downward along the boundary. At the time the Iraq–Kuwait boundary was established, however, no one knew that this giant oil reserve lay in the subsoil or that it would contribute to an international crisis (**Fig. 8.19**).

Above the ground, too, the interpretation of boundaries as vertical planes has serious implications. A state’s “airspace” is defined by the atmosphere above its land area as marked



by its boundaries. But how high does the airspace extend? Most states insist on controlling the airline traffic over their territories, but states do not yet control the paths of satellite orbits.

## Establishing Boundaries Between States

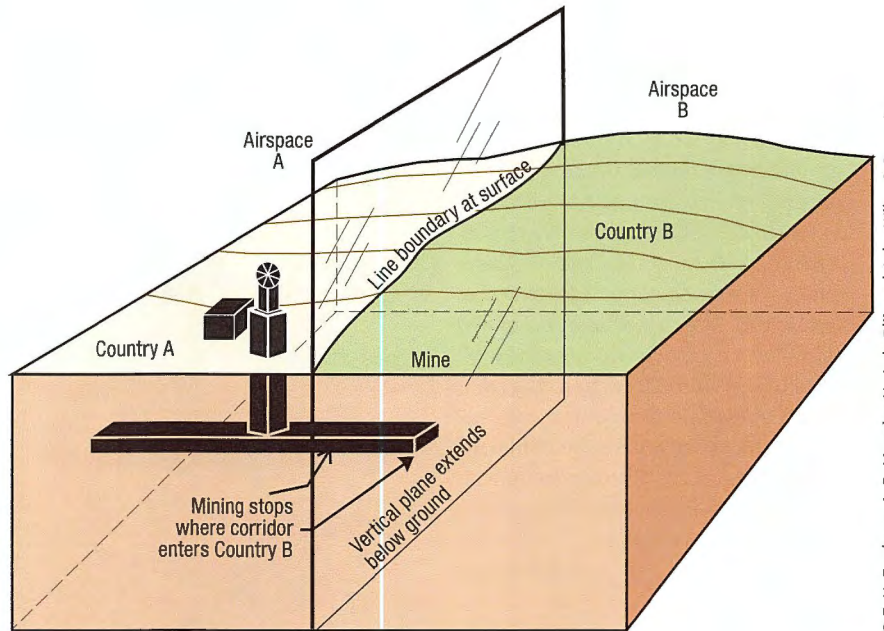
States typically *define* their boundaries in a treaty-like legal document in which actual points in the landscape or points of latitude and longitude are described. Cartographers *delimit* the boundary on maps. If either or both of the states so desire, they can *demarcate* where the boundary exists by using steel posts, concrete pillars, fences, or walls.

By no means are all boundaries on the world map demarcated. Demarcating a lengthy boundary is expensive, and it is hardly worth the effort in high mountains, vast deserts, frigid polar lands, or other places with few permanent settlements. Demarcating boundaries is part of state efforts to determine how the borders will be maintained and which goods and people may cross them. But how a border is administered can change dramatically over time (Fig. 8.20).

## Types of Boundaries

Boundaries come into being in a variety of ways. When boundaries are drawn using grid systems such as latitude and longitude or township and range, they are called **geometric boundaries**. The United States and Canada used a single line of latitude west of the Great Lakes to define their boundary. During the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, colonial powers used arbitrary reference points and drew straight lines to establish the boundaries in much of Africa.

At different times, political geographers and other academics have advocated natural boundaries over geometric boundaries because they are visible as physical geographic features. **Physical-political boundaries** (also called natural-political boundaries) follow an agreed-upon feature in the natural landscape, such as the center point of a river or the crest of a mountain range. The Rio Grande is an important physical-political boundary between the



**FIGURE 8.18** The Vertical Plane of an International Boundary. Boundaries between states divide territory at the surface, below the surface, and in the airspace above the surface.



**FIGURE 8.19** The International Boundary Between Iraq and Kuwait. Kuwait's northern boundary was defined and delimited by a United Nations boundary commission; it was demarcated by a series of concrete pillars 1.24 miles (2 km) apart.



### Author Field Note Stradling the Border between Italy and Slovenia

“Seeing the border between Italy and Slovenia marked by a plaque on the ground reminded me of crossing this border with my family as a teenager. The year was 1973, and after waiting in a long line, we finally reached the place where we showed our passports to the authorities. They asked us many questions and they looked through the luggage in our trunk. Now that Slovenia is part of the European Union and has signed the Schengen Accord eliminating border controls between countries, crossing that same border today is literally like a walk in the park.”

– A. B. Murphy



Photo by A.B. Murphy. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**FIGURE 8.20** Piazza della Transalpina.

United States and Mexico. Another physical-political boundary follows the crest lines of the Pyrenees separating Spain and France. Lakes sometimes serve as boundaries as well; four of the five Great Lakes of North America are boundaries between the United States and Canada, and several of the Great Lakes of East Africa are boundaries between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its eastern neighbors.

Physical features sometimes make convenient political boundaries, but topographic features are not static. Rivers change course, volcanoes erupt, and mountains slowly erode. People perceive physical-political boundaries as stable, but many states have entered into territorial conflicts over borders based on physical features that change over time. Moreover, physical boundaries do not necessarily stop the flow of people or goods across boundaries, leading some states to reinforce physical boundaries with human-built obstacles (e.g., the United States on the Rio Grande). The stability of boundaries has as much or more to do with historical and geographical circumstances than with the character of the boundary itself.

**Maritime Boundaries** Boundaries do not exist solely on land; for coastal states, they also extend outward into the sea or ocean. Before World War II, there was wide acceptance that states should have sovereign control over a zone extending three nautical miles outward from their coastlines.<sup>2</sup> In the post-World War II era, however, states began demanding larger zones of control—at least over the resources (mostly fish) that lay farther away from their coastline, if not over all activities taking place in those zones.

In the face of growing uncertainty and threats of conflict, the United Nations organized a set of conferences that, by the early 1980s, led to the adoption of a third United Nations

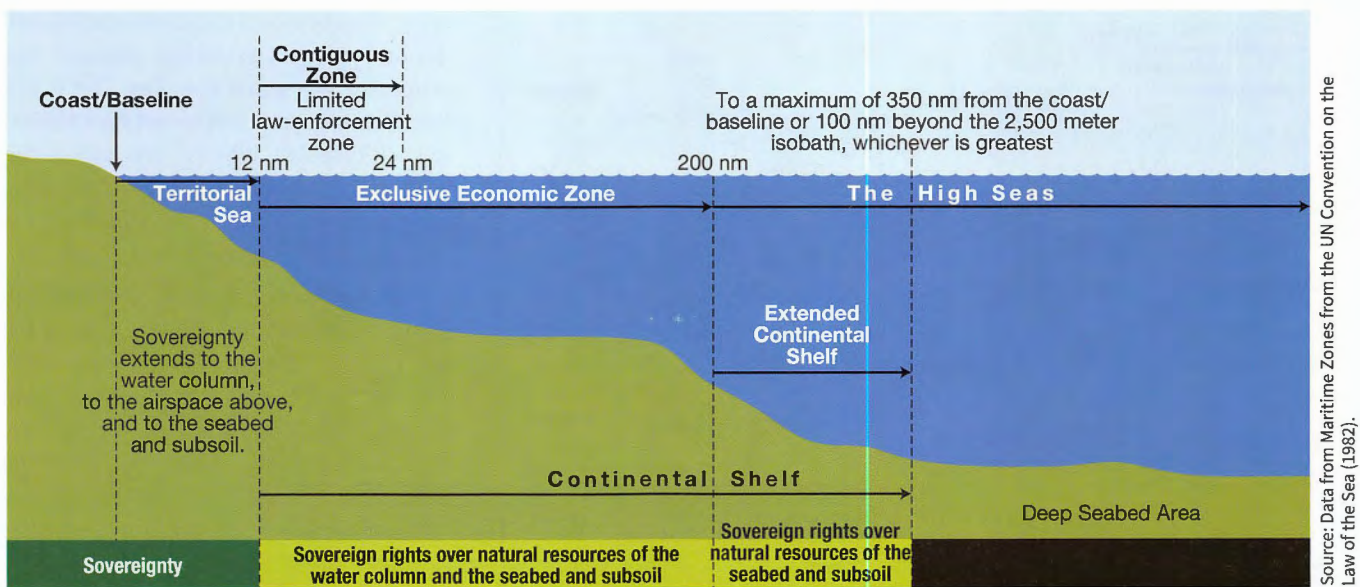
Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) that came into force in 1994. UNCLOS establishes basic principles that are reflected in zones with varying levels of state control (**Fig. 8.21**).

- (1) States have complete sovereign control over *territorial seas* that extend out 12 nautical miles (NM) from their coastlines.
- (2) States have the right to control fiscal transactions, immigration, and sanitation in the *contiguous zone* that extends an additional 12 NM beyond their territorial seas.
- (3) States have control over all resources found in the *exclusive economic zone (EEZ)* that extend out 200 NM from their coastlines.
- (4) States have complete control over resources found in their continental shelves, which are defined by distance instead of by geology.
- (5) *International waters*, which are considered the common heritage of humankind, to be used by all, start at the end of the EEZs and include vast areas of oceans.

Not all countries signed UNCLOS (the United States did not), but its basic principles are widely accepted as part of international law. States often disagree over what counts as a coastline and who owns islands because a state's EEZ starts at the end of its coastline and can also extend around each island. Claiming an EEZ can be quite valuable when there are vast fish resources. States also disagree over maritime boundaries between them, which creates overlapping state claims to territorial seas, contiguous zones, and EEZs. Where any of the zones overlap with the zones of another state or states, UNCLOS calls for boundaries to lie at midpoints between the coastlines of affected states.

The Spratly Islands in the South China Sea are hotly contested. Several countries, including China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei, have EEZs that come together in the middle of the South China Sea, where the Spratly Islands sit. The South China Sea is valuable because it holds 10 percent of the world's fish resources and billions





**FIGURE 8.21 Maritime Zones from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).** The relationship among territorial sea, contiguous zone, and exclusive economic zone are clear on this graphic that marks each of them as well as the continental shelf.

of barrels of oil. Also, much of the world's shipping travels through the South China Sea.

The Spratly Islands are mostly uninhabited, but by claiming the islands, a country can claim the territorial seas, contiguous zones, and EEZs around them, thus creating disputes with the EEZs of the surrounding countries (Fig. 8.22). China claims a large area of the South China Sea based on an historical claim called the nine dash line, which extends from Hainan, China around the Spratly Islands. Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei also claim islands in the Spratlys. China has built up at least seven islands that were under the surface to establish above-surface islands and claimed them. They have also established seaports and airbases on the islands, and have recently installed coastal defense missile systems on the Spratlys.

## Boundary Disputes

Clashes over maritime boundaries are just one example of boundary disputes. A boundary line on a map is the product of complex legal steps that begin with a written description of the boundary. Sometimes that legal description is old and imprecise. Some land boundaries imposed by a stronger power produced a long-standing grievance in a neighboring country. In other cases, the geography of the borderland has changed; the river that marked the boundary changed course, or a portion of it was cut off. Resources lying across a boundary can also lead to conflict. In short, states often argue about both their land and maritime boundaries.

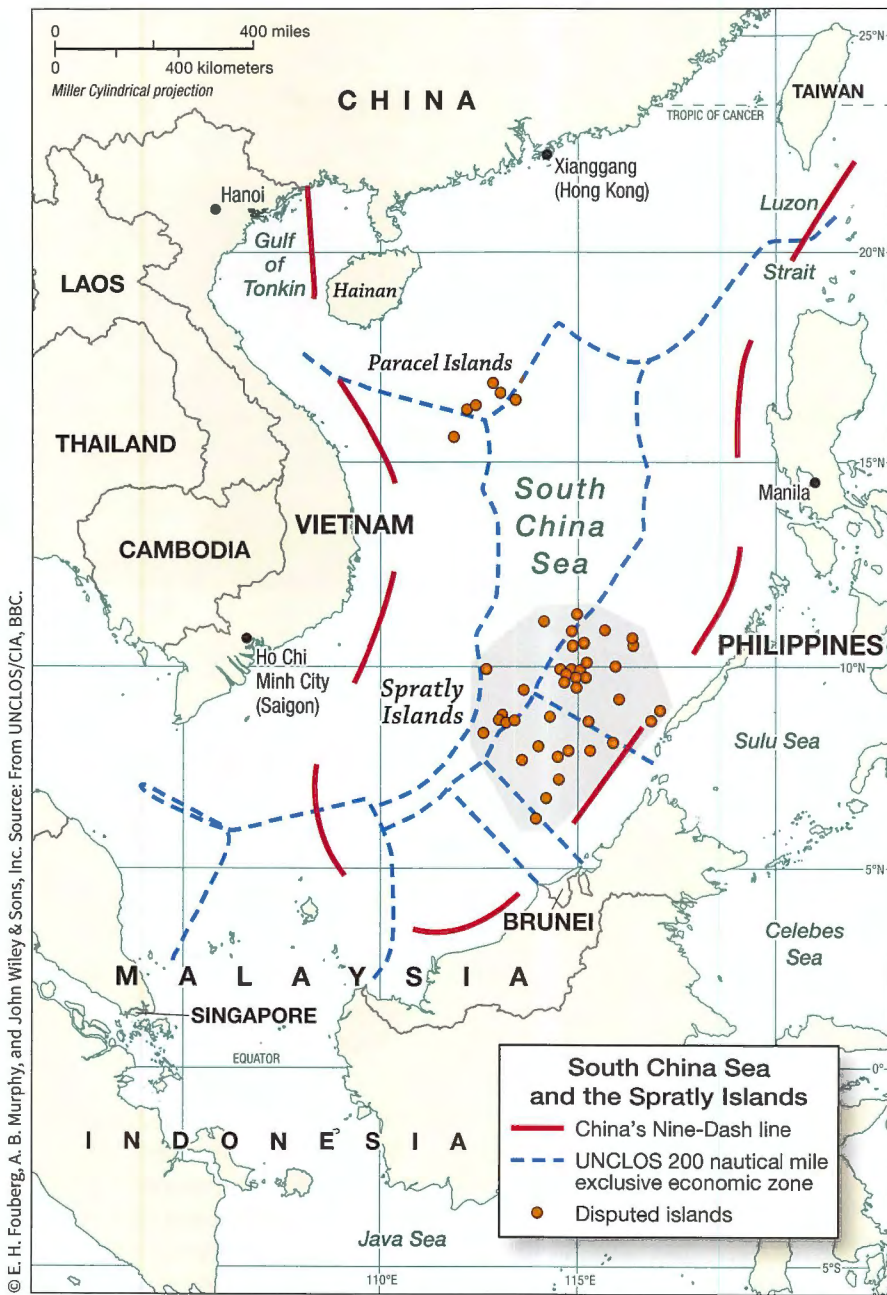
Boundary disputes take four principal forms: definitional, locational, operational, and allocational.

- *Definitional boundary disputes* focus on the legal language of the boundary agreement. A boundary definition

may stipulate that the median line of a river will mark the boundary. That would seem clear enough, but the water levels of rivers vary. If the valley is asymmetrical, the median line will move back and forth between low-water and high-water stages of the stream. This may involve hundreds of meters of movement—not very much, but enough to cause serious argument, especially if there are resources in the river. The solution is to refine the definition to suit both parties.

- *Locational boundary disputes* center on differences over where the boundary should actually be placed. The definition is not in dispute, but its fairness or implementation is contested. Disputes reflect different views over the criteria or process that led to the demarcation, or how much the boundary conforms to specified criteria. In a few instances, locational disputes arise because no definition of the boundary exists at all. That was long the case for the Saudi Arabia–Yemen boundary—an oil-rich boundary area. That boundary was finally demarcated in 2000, but the demarcation was not accepted by all parties and violence persists. Locational boundary disputes are also common in the maritime arena, and with sea levels on the rise, such disputes may well intensify in the face of increasingly dramatic, and contestable, shoreline changes (the baselines from which zones of control are measured).
- *Operational boundary disputes* involve neighboring states that differ over the way their border should function. When two adjoining countries agree on how cross-border migration should be controlled, the border functions satisfactorily. However, if one state wants to limit migration while the other does not, a dispute may arise. Similarly, efforts to prevent smuggling across borders sometimes





**FIGURE 8.22 South China Sea and the Spratly Islands.** The EEZs of several countries meet in the middle of the South China Sea. Countries that claim ownership of the Spratly Islands, including China and Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei, also claim maritime zones around the islands, which then overlap with the EEZs of the countries surrounding the South China Sea. The nine dash line in red on this map is China's claim to the South China Sea.

lead to operational disputes—especially when one state's efforts are not matched (or are possibly even sabotaged) by its neighbor. And in areas where nomadic ways of life still prevail, the movement of people and their livestock across international borders can lead to conflict.

- *Allocational boundary disputes* are the kind of disputes described earlier between the Netherlands and Germany over natural gas or Iraq and Kuwait over oil. Today many such disputes involve international boundaries at sea. Oil reserves under the seafloor below coastal waters

sometimes lie where exact boundary delimitation is subject to debate. Disputes can also arise over water supplies: The Tigris, Nile, Colorado, and other rivers are subject to such disputes. When a river crosses an international boundary, the rights of the upstream and downstream users of the river often come into conflict.

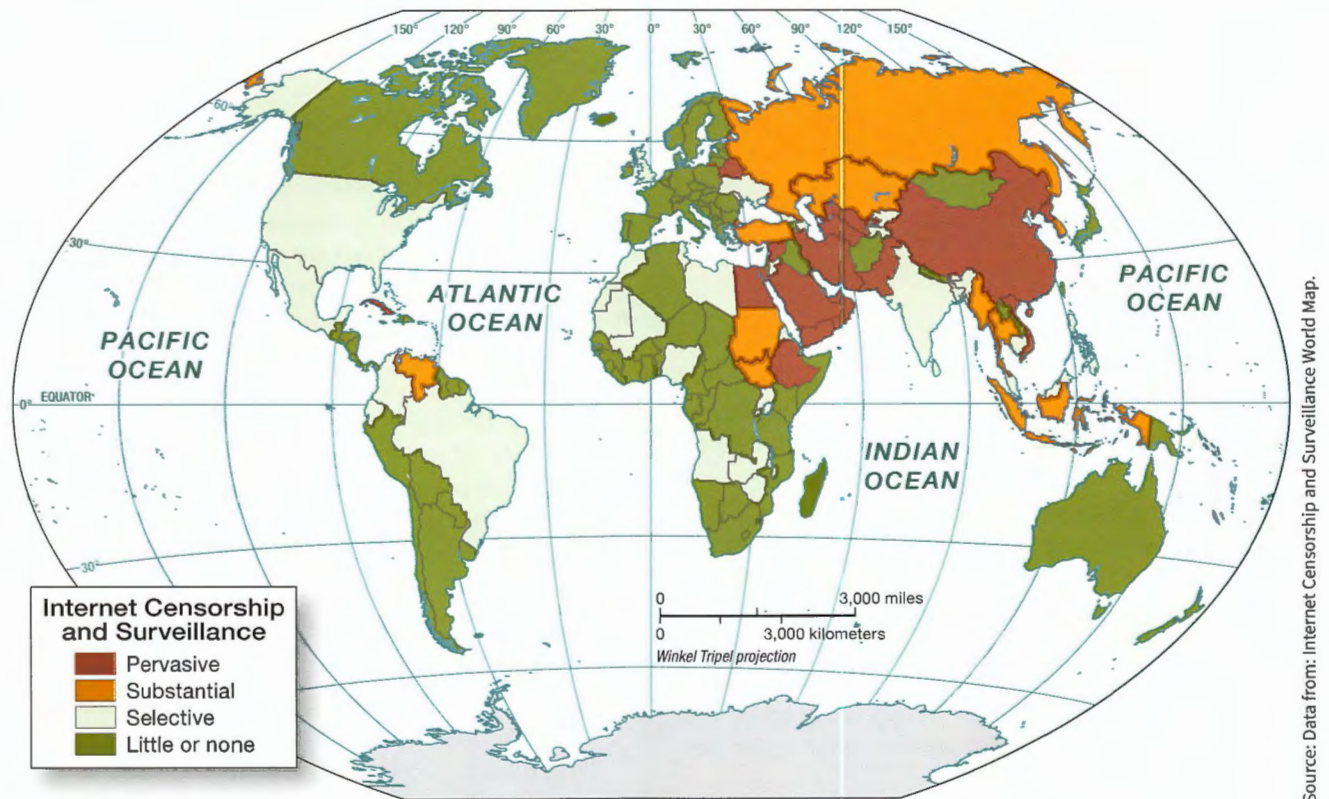
Beyond these categories, some boundary conflicts are simply the product of the raw exercise of brute force by a powerful country. A case in point is the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. Crimea has been part of Ukraine since 1954, when the Soviet Union transferred it from the Russian Republic to the Ukrainian Republic. Crimea's population is predominantly Russian, but for more than half a century, it was universally understood to be part of Ukraine, and Russia had signed agreements guaranteeing Ukraine's territorial integrity. Nonetheless, under the pretext of protecting the Russian population in Crimea, Russia forcibly annexed the territory in 2014. The annexation was condemned as a violation of international law by world leaders around the globe and Russia was suspended from the Group of Eight (G8; now the G7), a powerful inter-governmental political forum. Russia is fully in control of Crimea, but its control is deeply contested not just by Ukraine, but by most other countries—a status reflected in our maps, which show it as contested territory.

## How the Significance of International Borders Is Changing

The world political map is neatly divided into around 200 states separated by clear, distinct lines. The reality is much more complex—and not just because many of these lines are contested. Globalization and the cybercommunication revolution have changed the role of borders. Moreover, the movement of people and goods globally challenges the strength of borders.

States have responded to these pressures in different ways. One response is to build walls or fences and increase policing around borders. But border fortification has also extended far beyond the lines shown on the world political map. For example, the European Union sends ships into the Mediterranean and along the northwest coast of Africa to reduce the flow of undocumented immigrants and illicit goods into Europe. The United





**FIGURE 8.23 Internet Censorship and Surveillance.** The number of countries placing restrictions on Internet access has grown in recent years, but the effectiveness of these restrictions varies widely from country to country.

States' Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) seeks to enforce immigration laws in towns and cities that are located far from the border. ICE was founded after September 11, 2001, and is entirely distinct from the United States Border Patrol.

The previous examples help explain why political geographers no longer focus only on the lines on maps. Instead, they look at the broader range of borders and border activities and study how different border arrangements reflect and shape human geographic patterns, whether they lie along the border or far from it.

In the face of globalization and the cybercommunications revolution, borders are increasingly losing their ability to constrain economic activities and social interactions. This raises fundamental questions, including whether the territorial state will continue to be the basic building block of the political map. The future is uncertain, but concerns about states' loss of control over their territories have led some governments to view borders as important lines of defense, not just against unwanted people and goods, but also against the in-flow of unwanted information and ideas.

For example, crossing the border from Hong Kong to mainland China does not simply involve showing your passport and paying customs duties on nonexempt goods. On the Hong Kong side of the border, you can access Gmail, read the *New York Times* online, and look at Facebook. As soon as you step into mainland China, however, none of these are available. Of course, some Chinese use virtual private networks to get around Internet

restrictions, but the Chinese government has moved quickly to shut many of these down. And China is not alone. As **Figure 8.23** shows, many countries place restrictions on the Internet, particularly in parts of Asia and the Middle East.

States are also anxious to protect their own ideas and innovations. To do that, they develop and seek to enforce *intellectual property* (IP) laws and try to combat IP theft beyond their borders. They also restrict the export of domestic technologies and research ideas that might compromise national security or give other countries an unfair advantage in an economically competitive sector. These examples remind us that borders are about more than dividing one governmental system from another and restricting the free movement of people and goods. They also influence how information and ideas move around and what people do or do not know about the world around them.

### TC Thinking Geographically

Find a recent news story on the Spratly Islands and explain what China is doing to strengthen their claims to them (see Fig. 8.22). Using Figure 8.21, explain how territorial seas and EEZs operate as functional **regions**. Hypothesize how the **mental maps** of the South China Sea for Chinese, Philippine, and Vietnamese leaders differ and how their varying perceptions of the region may lead to conflict.



## 8.4 Explain Classical and Critical Geopolitics.

Geopolitics is concerned with how geographical circumstances influence international relations and the distribution of power. It focuses on the impact of location, environment, territorial arrangements, and influential geographical ideas on foreign affairs.

### Classical Geopolitics

Classical geopolitics began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a time of heightened state nationalism and interstate competition. Geopoliticians generally fit into one of two camps: the German school or the British/American school. The *German school* sought to explain why and how certain states became powerful. The *British/American school* sought to offer political advice by identifying places and regions that were particularly strategic for maintaining and projecting power. A few geopoliticians tried blending the two schools, but most classical geopoliticians today are in the British/American school. They offer geostrategic perspectives on the world.

**The German School** Why are certain states powerful, and how do states become powerful? The first political geographer who studied these issues was the German professor Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904). Influenced by the writings of Charles Darwin, Ratzel postulated that the state resembles a biological organism whose life cycle extends from birth through maturity and, ultimately, decline and death. To prolong its existence, the state requires nourishment, just as an organism needs food. Such nourishment is provided by acquiring territories that provide adequate space for the members of the state's dominant nation to prosper. Ratzel called this *Lebensraum*—literally life space. If a state is confined within permanent and static boundaries and deprived of overseas domains, Ratzel argued, it can become weak. Territory is thus seen as the state's essential, life-giving force.

Ratzel based his theory on observations of states in the nineteenth century, including the United States. It was so speculative that it might have been forgotten if some of Ratzel's German followers in the 1930s had not resurfaced his abstract writings. These were turned into policy recommendations that ultimately were used to justify Nazi expansionism.

**The British/American School** Not long after the publication of Ratzel's initial ideas, other geographers began looking at the overall organization of power in the world. They began studying the physical geographic map with a view toward determining the locations of the most strategic places on Earth. Prominent among them was the Oxford University geographer Sir Halford J. Mackinder (1861–1947). In 1904 he published an article titled “The Geographical Pivot of History” in the Royal Geographical Society's *Geographical Journal*. That

article became one of the most intensely debated geographic publications of all time.

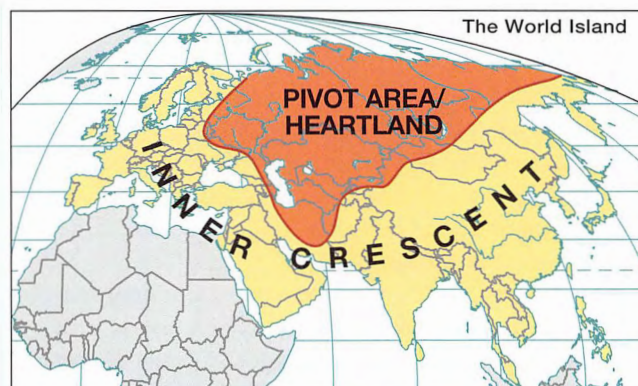
In the nineteenth century, Britain built a global empire through its domination of the seas. To many of Mackinder's contemporaries, the oceans—the paths to colonies and trade—were the key to continued British primacy, but Mackinder disagreed. He concluded that a land-based power, not a sea power, would ultimately rule the world. He assessed the largest and most populous landmass: Eurasia (Europe and Asia together). At the heart of Eurasia lay a hard-to-attack, resource-rich “Pivot Area” extending from eastern Europe to eastern Siberia (Fig. 8.24). Mackinder argued that if this Pivot Area became unified, a great empire could be formed.

Mackinder later renamed his Pivot Area the Heartland. In his book *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919), Mackinder (calling Eurasia “the World Island”) summarized his theory as follows:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island  
Who rules the World Island commands the World

When Mackinder proposed his **heartland theory**, there was little to foretell the rise of a superpower in the heartland. Russia was largely a poor peasant society, having recently lost a war against Japan (1905), and was facing revolution. Eastern Europe was fractured. Germany, not Russia, was gaining power. But when the Soviet Union emerged and Moscow came to control much of eastern Europe by the middle of the twentieth century, the heartland theory attracted renewed attention.

In 1943, Mackinder wrote a final warning expressing concern that the Soviet Union, under Stalin, would seek to control eastern Europe. He offered strategies for keeping the Soviets in check, including resisting the expansion of the Heartland into the Inner Crescent (Fig. 8.22) and creating an alliance around the North Atlantic to join the forces of land and sea powers



**FIGURE 8.24 The Heartland Theory.** The Pivot Area/Heartland, the Inner Crescent/Rimland, and the World Island, following the descriptions of Halford Mackinder.



against the Heartland. His ideas were not embraced by many at the time, but within 10 years of his book's publication, the United States began its containment policy to stop the expansion of the Soviet Union. The United States, Canada, and western Europe formed an alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Even after the Soviet Union collapsed, Mackinder's theories influenced Russian foreign policy circles.

## Influence of Geopoliticians on Politics

Ratzel and Mackinder are only two of many geopoliticians who influenced international relations. Their writings were grounded in history, current events, and physical geography. They sounded logical and influenced many politicians, and in some ways they still do. NATO still exists and has not invited Russia to join the military alliance. Instead, it has extended membership to 28 states since the end of the Cold War, including those that were once part of the Soviet bloc. NATO also has a working partnership with some former republics of the Soviet Union. However, the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea brought NATO's eastward expansion to a halt.

Despite the staying power of classical geopolitical theories, geopolitics declined as a formal area of study after World War II. Because of the influence Ratzel's theory had on another geopolitician, Karl Haushofer, and then on Hitler, the term *geopolitics* acquired a distinctly negative meaning. For decades after World War II, the term was in such disrepute that few political geographers would identify themselves as students of geopolitics, even those studying structures of power. Time, along with more balanced perspectives, has reinstated geopolitics as a significant field of study.

## Critical Geopolitics

Many current students of geopolitics focus on the underlying geographical assumptions and perspectives of international actors. Political geographers Gearoid O'Tuathail and John Agnew refer to those actors (presidents, prime ministers, foreign policy advisors, influential academics, and journalists) as "intellectuals of statecraft." The basic concept is that intellectuals of statecraft construct ideas about geographical circumstances and places that influence and reinforce their political behaviors and policy choices. Those behaviors and choices in turn affect what happens and how most people interpret what happens. Therefore, understanding international relations requires understanding where geopolitical ideas come from (what ideas and assumptions they reflect) and how they influence policies.

In his early writings, O'Tuathail focused on how several American leaders often spatialize politics into a world of "us" and "them." Political leaders and the media can influence how their constituents see places and organize international space in their minds. By drawing on American cultural logic and certain representations of America, O'Tuathail argued

that the shapers of foreign policy have repeatedly divided the world into an "us" that is prodemocracy, independent, self-sufficient, and free, and a "them" that is in some way against all of these things.

During the Cold War, President Ronald Reagan coined the term *Evil Empire* for the Soviet Union and represented the United States as "the shining city on a hill." During subsequent presidencies, terrorism replaced the Soviet Union as the "they." Sounding remarkably similar, Democratic President Bill Clinton and Republican President George W. Bush justified military actions against terrorists by invoking "us-them" arguments that were both about people (terrorists) and places (areas where radical Islam was strong). In 1998, President Clinton justified American military action in Sudan and Afghanistan as a response to terrorist plans by Osama bin Laden by noting that the terrorists "come from diverse places but share a hatred for democracy, a fanatical glorification of violence, and a horrible distortion of their religion, to justify the murder of innocents. They have made the United States their adversary precisely because of what we stand for and what we stand against." Immediately after September 11, President George W. Bush argued that "they [the terrorists] stand against us because we stand in their way." In 2002, President Bush again explained, "I've said in the past that nations are either with us or against us in the war on terror." Statements such as these are rooted in a particular geopolitical perspective on the world—one that divides the globe into opposing camps and competing places.

Critical geopolitics explores the spatial ideas and understandings at the heart of geopolitical perspectives, and political geographers seek to shed light on how these ideas influence policy approaches. One of the most powerful geopolitical ideas since the end of the Cold War in 1989 came from Samuel Huntington (1996), who argued that conflicts will increasingly reflect major religious-civilizational divides. His emphasis on the importance of the "Islamic World" helped to shape responses to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The U.S. government, concerned about al-Qaeda's influence, justified military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan based on the threat of a volatile "Islamic world." That idea was picked up and amplified by countless policy analysts, news commentators, and bloggers.

Critical geopolitics does not simply aim to identify geopolitical ideas, however; it also often critiques them. Commentators began to point out that the "Islamic world" is tremendously diverse, culturally and religiously. In fact, some of the most serious conflicts of recent times have been fought within the Islamic world, not between Muslims and others. Belief in the geopolitical significance of a unified "Islamic world" is not any more rational than belief in a geopolitically unified "Judeo-Christian world"—hardly a given when one considers recent conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, for example. Regardless, if geopolitical ideas are believed, they shape the policies that are pursued, and they become the narratives through which we perceive what happens. Geographers, then, seek to understand the ideological roots and implications of different geopolitical conceptions.



## Geopolitical World Orders

A geopolitical world order describes a general consensus about the geographical character of international relations during a given period. For example, during the Cold War the geopolitical world order was thought to be bipolar: the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact satellites versus the United States and its close allies in western Europe. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the world entered a transition period, again opening up different geopolitical possibilities. Some politicians spoke optimistically about a new geopolitical world order reflecting the forces that connect nations and states, including supranational organizations such as the European Union and the promise of multilateral military action should any state violate international rules of conduct. The risks of nuclear war would diminish, it was hoped, and negotiation would replace confrontation. Then in 1991, when a United Nations coalition drove Iraq out of Kuwait, the framework of a new world order seemed to be taking shape. The Soviet Union, the United States' principal geopolitical rival, endorsed the operation. Arab as well as non-Arab forces helped repel the Iraqi invaders.

Soon, however, uncertainties began to cloud hopes for a mutually cooperative world order. National self-interest still acted as a powerful force. Nations wanted to become states, and the number of United Nations members increased from 159 in 1990 to 184 by 1993 and 193 as of 2011, when South Sudan seceded from Sudan. At the same time, organizations not tied to specific territories posed a new challenge to the territorially defined state.

Moreover, with the United States emerging from the Cold War as the dominant power, some U.S. commentators championed a geopolitical world order based on **unilateralism**, with the United States assuming a position of dominance. They argued that any other course of action would risk global instability. The fact that the U.S. military budget is almost as large as all the military budgets of all other states in the world combined puts it in a position to play a significant international role.

Recent events have brought into question whether military dominance can achieve the ends that unilateralists hope to achieve. The United States' controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003 significantly undermined its influence. A divide developed between the United States and some European countries, and anti-Americanism surged. More recently, trade disputes between the United States and other countries, together with a strong nationalist agenda in the United States, have fueled anti-Americanism in many places. And China's increasing power and influence suggest that the twenty-first century will not be one of unchecked U.S. geopolitical dominance.

China's growing international economic and political significance is no better illustrated than in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—an umbrella term encompassing both its “One Belt, One Road” initiative and its “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” initiative. The BRI is a grand strategy aimed at massive infrastructure development and investment in more than 125 countries, linked together by roads and railroads over land and

by well-developed sea routes (**Fig. 8.25**). The Chinese say the project will bring economic benefits to China and the other countries that are involved. Critics from outside China, however, see it as a push for geopolitical dominance. Whatever the merits of the latter claim, the BRI carries with it greater Chinese influence in the world.

Nuclear weapons further complicate the geopolitical picture, as they give even small states the ability to inflict massive damage on large and distant adversaries. Combined with missile technology, nuclear bombs may be one of the most serious dangers the world faces. Some states publicize their nuclear weapons programs, whereas other nuclear states have never formally acknowledged that they possess nuclear weapons. There's much potential for a hostile state or group to gain the power with which to threaten the world. North Korea's nuclear weapons are viewed with great anxiety, and Iran's nuclear intentions have been seriously questioned. Vigorous international efforts are under way to control the spread of nuclear materials and nuclear technology because of potential threats.

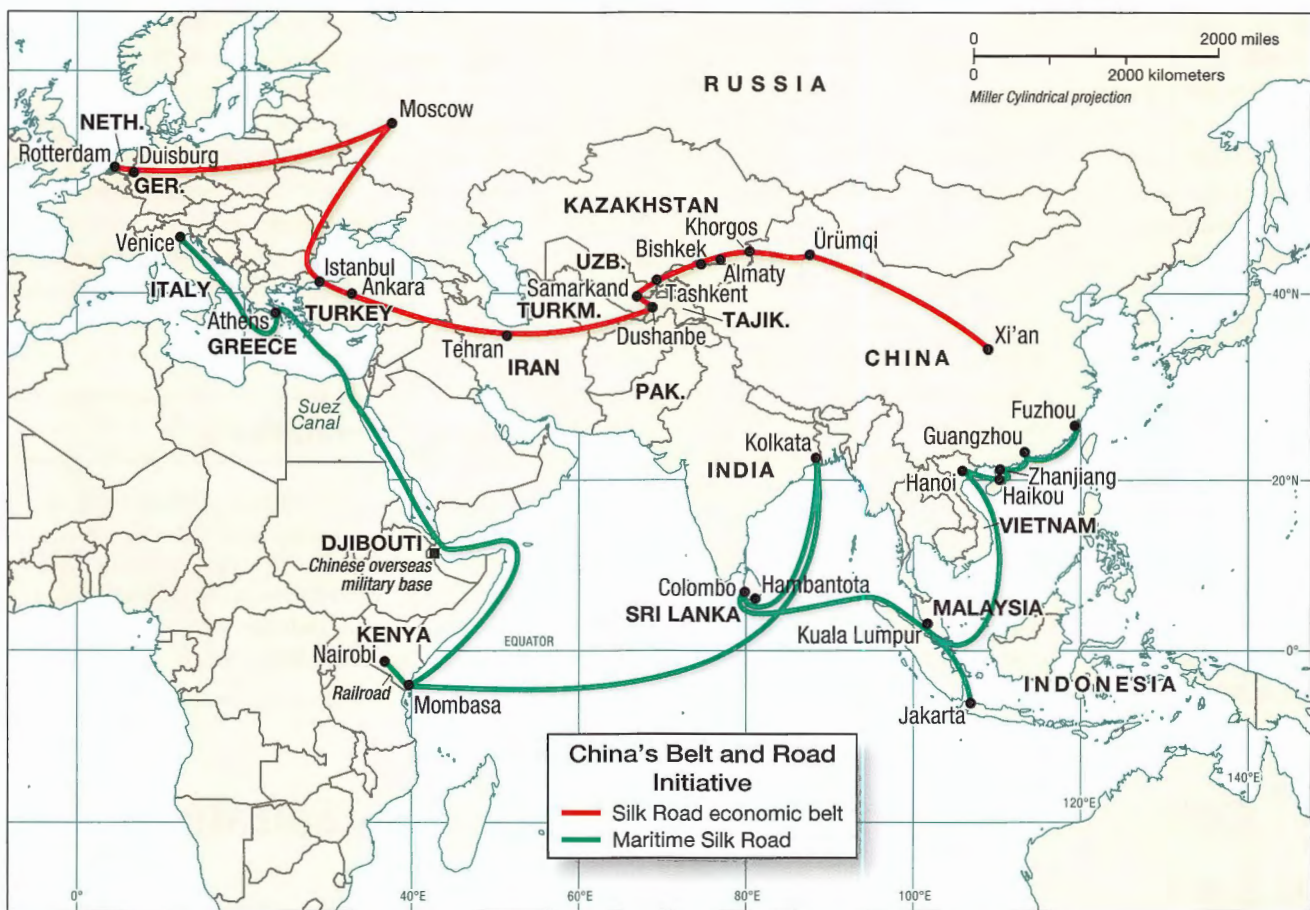
Russia's new assertiveness, first in Georgia in 2008 and then in Ukraine in 2014, raises the possibility of a return to Cold War geopolitical realities. Concerns over that possibility have ramped up in the wake of Russian interference in elections in western Europe and the United States. However, Russia is no longer widely seen as the champion of a political-economic system with broad appeal, and it is a less formidable military power than was the Soviet Union at its height. Hence, many believe that Russia's rift with its Western neighbors will simply be one dimension of a rapidly evolving geopolitical order characterized by several influential powers (including the United States, Germany, China, India, and Russia) seeking to exert influence over regional or global affairs.

## Challenges to Traditional Political-Territorial Arrangements

Many of the geopolitical scenarios already discussed revolve around shifting structures of power among and between states. Yet a variety of developments are challenging the traditional powers of the state. Such challenges raise questions about whether states will continue to be central to twenty-first-century geopolitics. Globalization has fostered many economic and social interconnections that are not tied to states. Moreover, recent decades have seen the rise of increasingly powerful nonstate or extrastate groups with political agendas. These developments point to a **detrterritorialization** trend characterized by structures of power that are less tied to the traditional territorial state.

Of course, states continue to provide the territorial foundation from which producers and consumers operate. They still exert considerable regulatory powers. But globalization makes it more difficult for states to control what happens within their borders. States are responding to this situation in a variety of ways, with some giving up traditional areas of governmental





Source: Based on Debate: What China's new Silk Road means for Europe, Geopolitical Intelligence Services.

**FIGURE 8.25 China's Belt and Road Initiative.** The initiative has become a central tenet of China's foreign policy. It has led to a substantial increase in Chinese investment along the routes shown on the map—in some cases spurring economic development, but also raising concerns about China's growing global influence and its geopolitical intentions.

control and others seeking to insulate themselves from the forces of globalization. Even states pursuing the latter strategy must compete with other forces in the international arena.

The state's traditional position is being further challenged by the globalization of social and cultural relations. Networks of interaction are being constructed in ways that do not correspond to the map of states. Scholars and researchers in different countries commonly work together in teams. Increased mobility has brought individuals from far-flung places into much closer contact than before. Paralleling all this change is the spread of popular culture in ways that make national borders virtually meaningless. Ariana Grande is listened to from Iceland to Australia; fashions developed in northern Italy are hot items among Japanese tourists visiting South Korea; Thai restaurants are found in towns and cities across the United States; Russians hurry home to watch the next episode of soap operas made in Mexico; and movies produced in Hollywood are seen on screens from Bangkok to Santiago.

The rise of fundamentalist religious movements with geopolitical goals represents another global phenomenon with potentially significant implications. In Chapter 7, we noted that fundamental religious movements sometimes turn to

violent extremism. Violence by extremists challenges the state—whether undertaken by individuals at the local scale or by widely dispersed groups. A state's effort to combat religious extremism can produce greater unity in the short term, but its inability to defeat extremist attacks may weaken the state in the long term.

Terrorist attacks have been threatened or carried out by religious extremists from a variety of different faiths, but the wave of terrorism that began in the 1980s in the name of Islam has dominated the international scene over the past several decades. The attacks of September 11, 2001, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan that followed, and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) moved terrorism to the geopolitical center stage. Other high-profile terrorist attacks in Madrid, Moscow, Mombasa, Mumbai, and several cities in Sri Lanka have helped to keep it there, as have terrorist attacks against Muslims (e.g., the deadly attack that occurred in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019). Almost daily, newspapers report on terrorist incidents in cities around the world. The University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database tracked some 180,000 terrorist-related bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings from 1970 to 2017.



All of these developments are occurring outside the framework of the map of states. Nonetheless, nationalism continues to be a fundamental social force. Indeed, many states are solidifying control over their territory through **reterritorialization**—initiatives that enhance the power of traditional political-territorial arrangements. For example, in response to concerns over undocumented immigration, some state borders are becoming more heavily fortified, and moving across those borders is becoming more difficult.

Populist appeals to state nationalism are fueling the turn toward reterritorialization. Populist leaders have come to power all over the world based on calls to roll back the forces of globalization and reassert national power. It is hard to know where this will lead. Just over a hundred years ago, a geopolitical order characterized by intense competition among states pursuing strong state-nationalist agendas led to one of the most destructive conflicts the world had seen: World War I. We are not necessarily headed toward something similar today because the world is much more interconnected now. But as state nationalism becomes increasingly entrenched, the potential for conflict rises.

## 8.5

## Compare and Contrast Supranational Organizations and States.

Few countries exist today that are not involved in some **supranational organization**. A supranational organization is an institution created by three or more states to promote cooperation. The twentieth century witnessed the establishment of numerous supranational associations in political, economic, cultural, and military spheres.

Today, states have formed over 60 major supranational organizations (such as NATO and the EU), many of which have subsidiaries that bring the total to more than 100 (**Fig. 8.26**). The more states participate in such multilateral associations, the less likely they are to act alone in pursuit of a self-interest that might put them at odds with other association members. And in most cases, participation in a supranational entity is advantageous to the partners, while being left out can have negative consequences.

### From League of Nations to United Nations

The modern beginnings of the supranational movement can be traced to conferences following World War I. Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States, proposed an international organization that would include all the states of the world (fewer than 75 states existed at that time). That idea took on concrete form with the founding of the League of Nations in 1919. Nevertheless, the United States was among the countries that did not join the organization because isolationists in the U.S.

The tension between deterritorialization and reterritorialization will likely play an important role as the twenty-first century continues to unfold. Given the continuing power of state nationalism, there are few signs that competition among individual states will slow. Yet it is also increasingly clear that the spatial distribution of power is more complex than the traditional map of states would suggest. Analyzing the relationship between traditional territorial structures and new spatial power arrangements will be a challenge for geographers and others for decades to come.

#### TC Thinking Geographically

Examine the map of China's Belt and Road Initiative (Fig. 8.25). Study the **sites** where China is building or investing in ports. Describe the **situation** of these ports relative to China's larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Hypothesize how China is using **development** strategies in the countries where it is investing through the BRI as a larger geopolitical strategy.

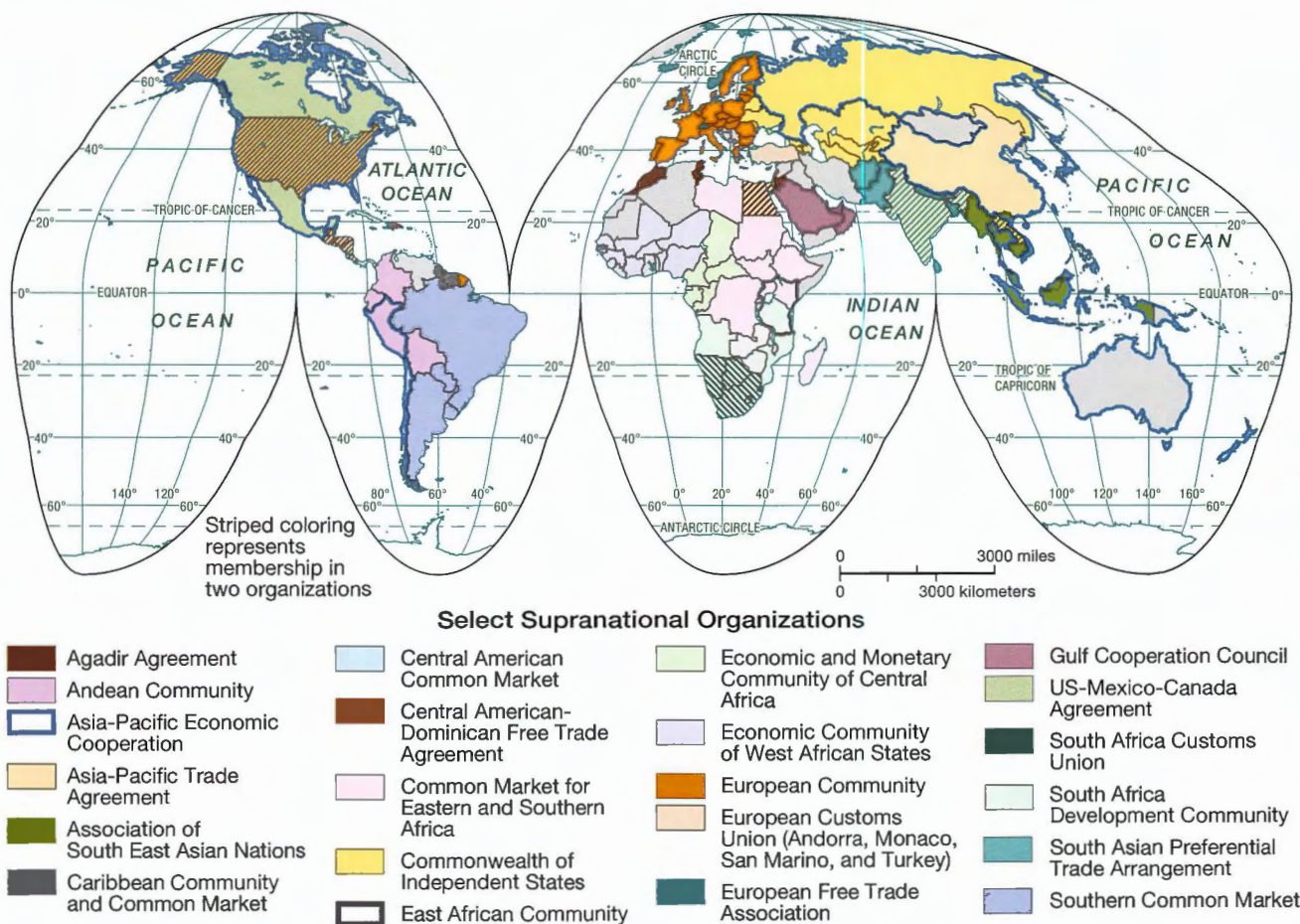
Senate opposed membership. In all, 63 states participated in the League, although the total membership at any single time never reached that number. Costa Rica and Brazil left the League before 1930; Germany departed in 1933, shortly before the Soviet Union joined in 1934. The League later expelled the Soviet Union in 1939 for invading Finland.

The failure of the United States to join dealt the organization a severe blow. In the mid-1930s, the League had a major opportunity when Ethiopia's Haile Selassie appealed for help in the face of an invasion by Italy, a member state until 1937. The League failed to take action and in the chaos leading up to World War II, the organization collapsed.

Even though the League of Nations ceased functioning, it gave rise to other supranational organizations. Between World War I and World War II, many states came together to create the Permanent Court of International Justice, which was charged with adjudicating legal issues between states, such as boundary disputes and fishing rights. The League of Nations also initiated international negotiations on maritime boundaries and related aspects of the law of the sea. The conferences organized by the League laid the groundwork for the final resolution of the extent of territorial seas decades later.

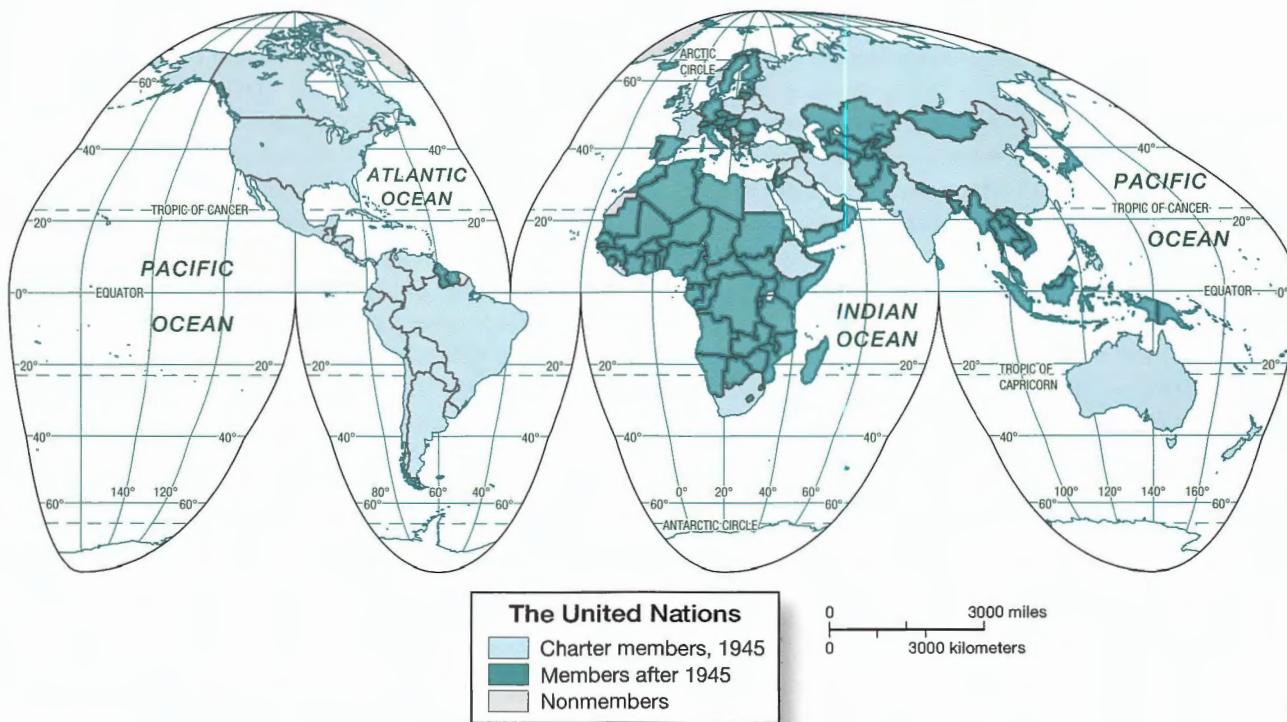
After World War II, a new organization was founded to promote international security and cooperation: the United Nations (UN). Membership in the UN has grown significantly since its inception in 1947 (**Fig. 8.27**). A handful of states still do not belong to the organization, but with the most recent addition in 2011, it now has 193 member states. Additionally,





Data from: Crawford, Jo-Ann and Roberto V. Fiorentino, "Changing Landscape of Regional Trade Agreements," World Trade Organization.

**FIGURE 8.26 Select Supranational Organizations.** States have created more than 100 supranational organizations for purposes of political, economic, or social cooperation. This map shows major supranational organizations centered on trade.



Data from: United Nations.

**FIGURE 8.27 Member States of the United Nations.** The charter members of the United Nations are differentiated from states that joined the United Nations after 1945. A few states are nonmembers of the United Nations.



the organization allows permanent observers, including the nonmember states of Palestine and Vatican City, and several supranational and nongovernmental organizations participate in the UN General Assembly. The UN organization includes numerous less visible but significant subsidiaries, including the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and WHO (World Health Organization). Not all UN members participate in every subsidiary, but many people around the world have benefited from their work.

We can find evidence of the United Nations' work in almost any discussion of global events. UN peacekeeping troops have helped maintain stability in some of the most contentious regions. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees is called upon to aid refugees in countries around the world. UN documents on human rights standards, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, laid the groundwork for countless human rights groups working today.

By participating in the United Nations, states agree to internationally approved standards of behavior. Many states still violate the standards embodied in the United Nations Charter, but such violations can lead to collective action, such as economic sanctions or Security Council–supported military action. The UN's aid, refugee, and peacekeeping efforts in South Africa during the transition away from Apartheid are an example of UN success.

Nonetheless, the organization has its critics. Some point to the composition of its Security Council, which reflects the world of 1950 more than the world of today. All five permanent members of the Council—the victors of World War II: the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union)—wield veto power over Council resolutions and use the veto regularly, often making the UN ineffective during times of crisis. The Syrian civil war showcased Security Council tensions as Russia and China forcefully vetoed resolutions aimed at greater UN involvement to curb violence directed at civilians. Those who seek UN reform say the Permanent Five with their veto power destroy UN credibility and reinforce outdated power arrangements. Other UN critics express concern about power being vested in an organization that is not directly responsible to voters and that provides little room for nonstate interests. Still others note that states with troubled human rights records, such as China and Cuba, sit on the organization's Human Rights Council. For all its weaknesses, however, the United Nations represents the only truly international forum for addressing many significant global problems.

## Regional Supranational Organizations

The League of Nations and the United Nations are global examples of something that is also found at the regional level. States organize supranational organizations at the regional scale to advance economic and political agendas. Examples include the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA, formerly

the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). At the heart of most of these organizations are efforts to reduce tariffs and import restrictions to ease the flow of commerce in different parts of the world. Not all of these alliances are successful, but economic supranationalism is a sign of the times.

Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg undertook the first major modern experiment in regional economic cooperation. The three countries have much in common culturally and complement one another economically. Dutch farm products are sold in Belgian markets, and Belgian industrial goods go to the Netherlands and Luxembourg. During World War II, representatives of the three countries decided to remove tariffs among them and eliminate import licenses and quotas. In 1944, even before the end of the war, the three governments met in London to sign an agreement of cooperation, creating the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) region.

Following World War II, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall proposed that the United States finance a European recovery program. A committee representing 16 western European states plus then-West Germany presented the U.S. Congress with a joint program for economic rehabilitation, which Congress approved. From 1948 to 1952, the United States gave Europe some \$12 billion under the Marshall Plan, the largest foreign aid program in history. This investment revived European national economies and spurred a movement toward European cooperation. That movement was also driven by the rise of an increasingly integrated and potentially threatening Soviet bloc to the east and the desire to create a framework that could help break the historical pattern of European conflict.

**The European Union** From the European states' involvement in the Marshall Plan came the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which gave rise to other cooperative organizations. Soon after Europe established the OEEC, France proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to lift the restrictions and obstacles that impeded the flow of coal, iron ore, and steel among the mainland's six primary producers: France, West Germany, Italy, and the three Benelux countries. The six states entered the ECSC and gradually, through negotiations and agreement, enlarged their sphere of cooperation to include reductions and even eliminations of certain tariffs and a freer flow of labor, capital, and commodities beyond steel. This led, in 1958, to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC).

The success of the EEC induced other countries to apply for membership. Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. The organization became known as the European Community (EC) because it began to address issues beyond economics. By the late 1980s, the EC had 12 members: the three giants (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom); the four southern countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece); and five smaller states (the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Ireland). These 12 members initiated a program of cooperation



and unification that led to the formal establishment of a European Union (EU) in 1992. In the mid-1990s, Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined the EU, bringing the total number of members to 15 (Fig. 8.28).

In the late 1990s, the EU began preparing for the establishment of a single currency—the euro. First, all electronic financial transactions were denominated in euros, and on January 1, 2002, the EU introduced euro coins and notes. Not all EU member states are currently a part of the euro zone, but the euro has emerged as a significant global currency.

The integration of 10 eastern European and Mediterranean island states into the European Union in 2004, two more in 2007, and one more in 2014 represented a large expansion over a relatively short period. Integration is a difficult process and often requires painful adjustments because of the diversity of the states involved. For example, some general policy must govern the widely varying agricultural policies throughout the EU. Individual states have found these adjustments difficult at times, and the EU has had to devise policies to accommodate regional contrasts and delays in implementation.



**FIGURE 8.28 European Supranationalism.** The European Union started with six countries and expanded over time. Not all countries in Europe are members of the European Union. Switzerland and Norway voted not to join the European Union, and the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Countries in the common currency zone, the Eurozone, are also shown on this map.



The European Union recognizes 24 official languages and offers simultaneous translation among the official languages to any member state that requests it. The EU only produces legislation and policy documents of “major public importance” in all of its official languages; other documents are translated only into the languages relevant to each document.

Translation is just one of the significant expenditures associated with integration. Under the rules of the EU, the richer countries must subsidize (provide financial support to) the poorer ones; therefore, the entry of eastern European states adds to the financial burden on the wealthier western and northern European members. A major economic downturn at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century and associated financial crises in Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal, put the EU under unprecedented pressure. The citizens of wealthier countries such as Germany began to question why they should foot the bill for countries that have not (at least in German eyes) managed their finances responsibly.

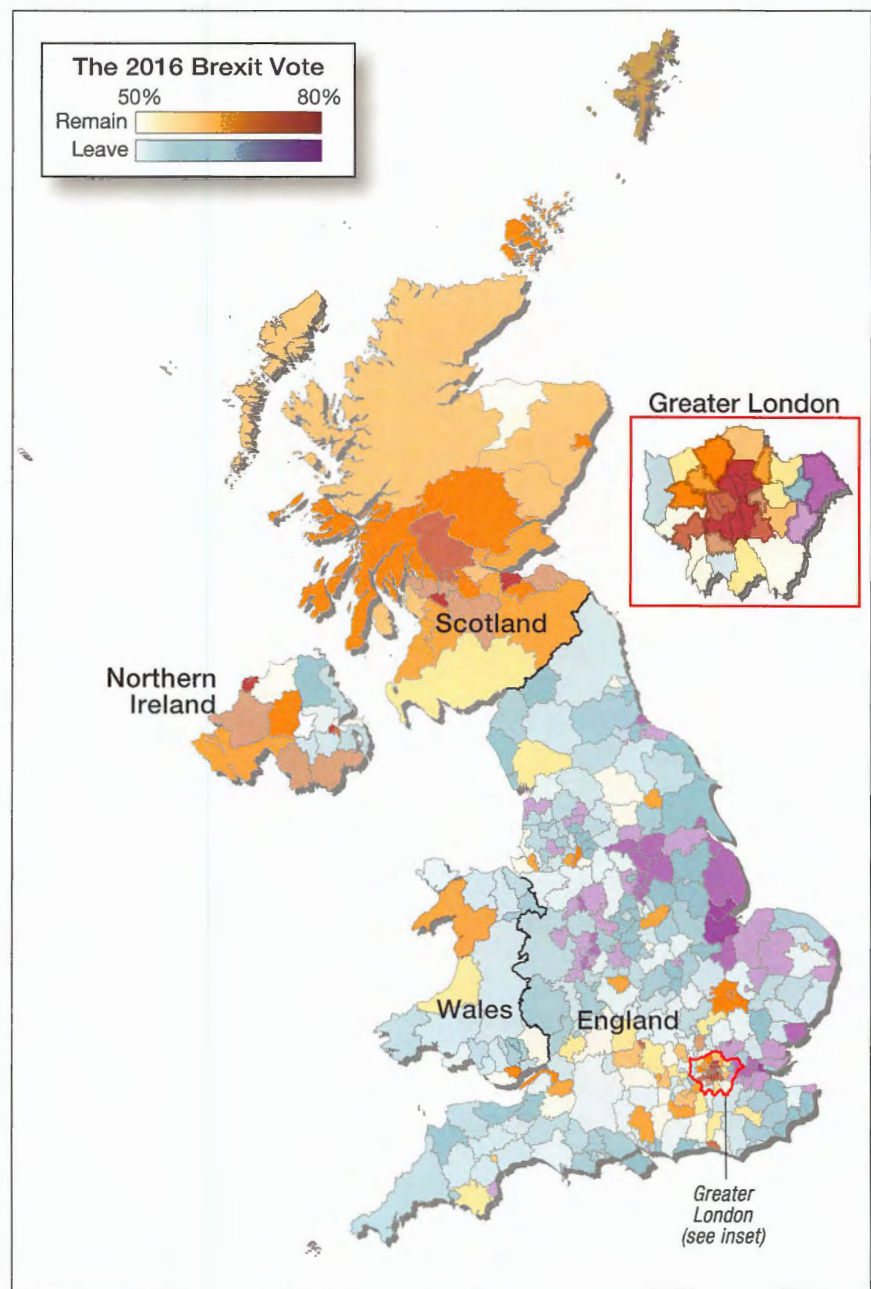
The EU is a patchwork of states with many different ethnic traditions and histories of conflict and competition, and concerns have grown in parts of Europe over losing local control over economic, social, and political matters. Economic success and growing well-being have worked against these concerns, but in the face of difficult economic or social times, divisive forces can, and have, reasserted themselves. Moreover, as the EU has gotten bigger, it has become increasingly difficult for individual states (even powerful ones) to shape its direction. And some citizens in smaller states such as Denmark and Sweden worry about getting lost in the mix. As a result, challenges to the legitimacy of an increasingly powerful EU have grown.

Those challenges came to a head in the United Kingdom in 2016, when a narrow majority of the British public voted in a special referendum in favor of leaving the EU (a process referred to as Brexit—British exit from the EU). The referendum exposed deep divides. Whereas a considerable majority of voters in some economically depressed parts of England voted to leave, most of those living in the London metropolitan area, in Scotland, and in Northern Ireland voted to remain (Fig. 8.29). The “remain” vote was strong enough in Scotland to raise fears that Brexit would reinvigorate calls for independence.

After the referendum, some commentators claimed that the leave campaign

misrepresented the consequences of Brexit, and many voters did not appear to have much understanding of the EU or what it does. Nonetheless, the vote revealed the depth of negative feeling about the EU in parts of the UK, as well as a frustration over where the country was headed due to declining economic circumstances in some areas and concerns about the growing number of immigrants. As such, there are parallels between the Brexit vote and elections that have brought to power populist leaders who have championed state-nationalist agendas.

Once the vote went in favor of leaving the EU, the government of the UK had no choice but to begin the process of working out a deal that would take the UK out of the EU. The



**FIGURE 8.29 The 2016 Brexit Vote.** The vote to leave the EU was strongest in areas in England that have suffered economically in recent decades. The remain vote was strongest in the London metropolitan area, Scotland, and the parts of Northern Ireland that border on the Republic of Ireland.





Photo by E.H. Foulberg. © 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**FIGURE 8.30 Brussels, Belgium.** A woman with a European Union umbrella shops in the flower market in the Grande Place of Brussels. On their website, the European Union states that the number of stars on the flag has no official meaning and that the circle of stars represents “unity, solidarity and harmony among the peoples of Europe.”

difficulties of that process soon became apparent, however, as no approach to handling Brexit was able to gain majority support. Some wanted a complete break with the EU, others thought the referendum was flawed and needed to be redone, and yet others thought it important to retain some kind of customs agreement with the EU. Further complicating matters, in the absence of at least a customs agreement between the UK and the EU, the open status of the border between Northern Ireland (part of the UK) and the Republic of Ireland would be threatened (it would become an external border of the EU)—threatening the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that guaranteed an open border (see Chapter 7). As a result of these complications, the Brexit process dragged on much longer than initially expected, and the full range of consequences of the Brexit vote will not become clear for some years to come.

Brexit is symptomatic of larger challenges the EU is facing in the wake of growing anti-EU populist movements that play on anti-establishment and anti-immigrant sentiments. From the Netherlands to Italy to Hungary, such movements target EU policies facilitating the flow of refugees and workers across borders and promoting regulatory harmonization—arguing that such policies are undermining the ability of states to advance their own interests. Whatever the challenges, the EU is a supranational organization unlike any other. It is not a state, nor is it simply an organization of states. It has taken on a life of

its own—with a multifaceted government structure, three capital cities, and billions of euros flowing through its coffers.

The European Union’s reach extends into foreign relations, domestic affairs, and military policies. Those living in some parts of Europe have come to identify with the EU (Fig. 8.30), and it is almost impossible to imagine two EU countries going to war with one another (a remarkable achievement given the long history of conflict between, for example, France and Germany, which culminated in two world wars during the twentieth century). The EU, then, represents the world’s boldest attempt to move beyond a political order dominated by states, but it is facing serious challenges that remind us of the continuing power of the state as an international actor and focus of identity.

### TC Thinking Geographically

What impact do supranational organizations have on devolutionary movements? Study the Brexit votes of Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales (Fig. 8.29). At what **scales** were each of these voters identifying when they voted on Brexit? What does their Brexit vote say about their **identity** relative to their region, the United Kingdom, and the European Union?



## Summary

### 8.1 Compare and Contrast States, Nations, and Nation-States.

1. The modern state idea can be traced back to the Europe of the 1600s. It called for a world divided into discrete territorial units, each of which has the right to control affairs within its own territory (sovereignty).
2. The term *nation* originally referred to a group with a sense of common culture that seeks control over its own affairs (an ethnocultural nation). The *nation-state* idea is based on the notion that each ethnocultural nation should have its own state. The world political order does not match this idea, however. Instead, we live a world that is primarily made up of *multinational states* (states that encompass more than one ethnocultural nation). There are also many *multistate nations* (ethnocultural nations that span across different states) and *stateless nations* (ethnocultural nations that want a state of their own, but do not have it).
3. The European state idea diffused to much of the rest of the world through two periods of European colonialism. As a result, most state leaders throughout the world embrace the nation-state ideal and claim to represent their nation, even when the states encompass multiple ethnocultural nations.

### 8.2 Determine How the Modern Political Map Evolved.

1. Different state territorial characteristics (e.g., territorial size, resource endowment, geographic situation) can carry potential advantages and disadvantages, but state power and stability are not simply the result of these characteristics. Historical and geographical circumstances often play a more important role—especially a country's role in the world economy.
2. World-systems theory draws attention to the position of states within the world economy. It is based on the idea that the world political map is a system of interlinked parts that need to be understood in relation to one another. Colonizing powers politically reorganized the world, giving rise to a global political-economic order that gives some states (*core* states) great power and leaves other states (*periphery* states) in a weakened position. Between these two are *semiperiphery* states.
3. The internal territorial integrity of states is affected by *centrifugal* forces (forces that tend to pull a state apart) and *centripetal* forces (forces that promote unity). The factors that can have centrifugal or centripetal tendencies include the spatial organization of power within states, the presence or absence of regionally concentrated ethno-national minorities, and in democracies, the geographical configuration of electoral districts. The impacts these factors have on the territorial integrity of states depend on the circumstances present in a given state.

### 8.3 Explain the Nature and Significance of International Boundaries.

1. Boundaries are more than straight lines on the ground; they are vertical planes that extend from deep below Earth's surface to high up in the atmosphere. Boundaries also extend out to sea for

countries with coastlines, allowing them sovereign control for 12 nautical miles beyond their coastline, control over resources in the water column for 200 nautical miles, and control over resources in their continental shelves for up to 200 nautical miles.

2. There are different types of boundaries: geometric boundaries (boundaries drawn using a grid system) and physical-political boundaries (boundaries that follow an agreed-upon feature in the natural landscape).
3. Boundary disputes between countries are common. They reflect disagreements over the definition and location of boundaries and the way boundaries function.
4. Boundaries are changing in the modern world as a result of globalization, increased migration, and technological advances in telecommunications. Nonetheless, many governments are working actively to secure their boundaries.

### 8.4 Explain Classical and Critical Geopolitics.

1. Geopolitics is concerned with how geographical circumstances influence international relations and the distribution of power on Earth's surface. Classic geopolitics began in the late nineteenth century and focused attention on the advantages and disadvantages of controlling different parts of Earth's surface. The ideas of classical geopoliticians such as Halford Mackinder and Friedrich Ratzel ended up having a significant influence on foreign policy during the Cold War era and in Germany during the period when Nazism was on the rise.
2. Geographers interested in geopolitics have increasingly turned their attention to the underlying geographical assumptions and perspectives of international actors—an approach known as critical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics focuses on the ideas and geographical assumptions that shape the political behaviors and policy choices of those who influence statecraft.
3. There are competing ideas about how the world is organized geopolitically today. One of the challenges facing contemporary geopolitical theorists is to understand how the competing forces of *deterritorialization* (the move away from states serving as the primary locus of power) and *reterritorialization* (trends in the opposite direction) affect geopolitical arrangements and understandings.

### 8.5 Compare and Contrast Supranational Organizations and States.

1. Almost all countries today participate in multiple supranational organizations. These range from the United Nations to regional organizations, many of which are focused on promoting economic interaction among member countries.
2. The European Union is the most far-reaching regional supranational organization in the world today. It has brought peace and stability to an area long wracked by conflict, but it is facing serious challenges from those who believe that the transfer of power away from states is undermining the ability of the inhabitants of individual states to control their own affairs. The 2016 vote in the United Kingdom to leave the EU (Brexit) reflected the growing influence of the latter way of thinking.



# Self-Test

## 8.1 Compare and contrast states, nations, and nation-states.

- The Peace of Westphalia (1648) is associated with which of the following principles underlying the modern state system?
  - sovereignty
  - nationalism
  - the nation-state idea
  - colonialism
- Which of the following countries is the best example of a “nation-state” in the original meaning of the term?
  - Switzerland
  - Indonesia
  - Japan
  - Nigeria
- The Kurds today are an example of a:
  - nation-state.
  - multinational state.
  - stateless nation.
  - multistate nation.
- Which of the following statements about European colonialism is accurate?
  - European colonialism took off around 1500, and by 1650 most of the world was colonized.
  - European colonialism took off around 1500 and unfolded in two major waves, one between 1500 and 1800 and another between 1850 and 1950.
  - European colonialism unfolded slowly beginning around 1700 and affected only a few regions until the late nineteenth century.
  - European colonialism began in the early nineteenth century, and by the end of the century most of the world was colonized.

## 8.2 Determine how the modern political map evolved.

- True or False: Territorial size is directly correlated with power (i.e., almost all larger states are more powerful than smaller states).
- World-systems theory draws attention to:
  - the degree of ethnocultural diversity within states.
  - the role that resources play in the power of states.
  - the role that sovereignty plays in protecting state autonomy.
  - the structures of power at play in the international state system.
- The term *devolution* refers to:
  - the decline and fall of a political regime.
  - the transfer of power from one ruler to the next based on hereditary connections.
  - the transfer of power “downwards” from the center to regions within a state.
  - the surrender of sovereign powers to outsiders in exchange for economic benefits.
- Separatist movements are active in each of the following states except:
  - the United Kingdom.
  - Spain.
  - China.
  - Sweden.
- Gerrymandering refers to:
  - the drawing of odd-shaped electoral districts to ensure fairness across ethnic and political affiliation lines.
  - the drawing of odd-shaped electoral districts to favor certain ethnic groups or political parties.
  - the drawing of odd-shaped electoral districts to promote political participation by a broad range of people.
  - the drawing of odd-shaped electoral districts to take into account the impacts of topography on population distributions.

## 8.3 Explain the nature and significance of international boundaries.

- True or False: Boundaries are not just lines on the ground, but vertical planes that descend down into the subsoil and upwards into the air.
- Geometric boundaries are common:
  - in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of boundary drawing by Europeans at the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference.
  - in Southeast Asia as a result of the gradual penetration of European powers into the region.
  - in South America as a result of the need to draw boundaries that correspond to topography.
  - in Europe as a result of the influence of Greek and Roman mathematical ideas on the development of states.
- An exclusive economic zone gives coastal states the right to control the resources in the waters off their coasts up to:
  - 3 nautical miles from their coastlines.
  - 12 nautical miles from their coastlines.
  - 50 nautical miles from their coastlines.
  - 200 nautical miles from their coastlines.
- A dispute over how much water a state has the right to extract from an aquifer that straddles a boundary is known as:
  - a definitional boundary dispute.
  - a locational boundary dispute.
  - an operational boundary dispute.
  - an allocational boundary dispute.

## 8.4 Explain classical and critical geopolitics.

- Which of the following was not a major concern of classical geopolitics?
  - understanding why and how certain states became powerful
  - understanding which parts of Earth’s surface are particularly strategic to control
  - understanding the geographical assumptions underlying foreign policy decisions
  - understanding how physical geography can influence the projection of power



15. Which geopolitical concept or theory was championed by Halford Mackinder?

- a. Heartland
- b. *Lebensraum*
- c. critical geopolitics
- d. Clash of Civilizations

16. Which of the following is an example of deterritorialization?

- a. efforts by ethno-national minorities to have greater representation in state government
- b. governments building border walls to reduce undocumented migration
- c. transnational networks that give corporations powers that are beyond the control of states
- d. populist leaders making impassioned nationalistic pleas

### 8.5 Compare and contrast supranational organizations and states.

17. True or False: Most countries in Europe and North America participate in supranational organizations, but in other parts of the world such participation is not common.

18. Which of the following supranational organizations or agreements has had the greatest impact on the sovereignty of individual member states?

- a. the United Nations
- b. the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- c. the European Union
- d. the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, formerly the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

19. The Brexit vote was a response to:

- a. declining economic circumstances in some parts of Britain.
- b. concerns about the growth in the number of migrants coming to Britain.
- c. worries over Britain's limited ability to influence what was happening in the EU.
- d. concerns that Scotland would leave the UK if Brexit did not happen.