

UNIT 4

Political Patterns and Processes

Chapter 8 *Political Processes and Power*

Chapter 9 *Political Boundaries and Forms of Governance*

Chapter 10 *Challenges in the Modern State*

Unit Overview

Today's political map consists mostly of independent states in which all territory is connected, and most people share a language and other cultural traits. This was not true in the past. Many states were sprawling, diverse empires, such as the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East or the British Empire that included people of many cultures. At the same time, many cultural groups were divided into several states, such as the hundreds of small German states in central Europe or the various groups of nomads in central Asia.

Political Power Over a Territory

A government demonstrates its power over a geographic area by enforcing laws that govern individual behavior and affect how resources are used. Boundaries separate territories at various scales, from those that divide the world into countries to those that determine where students attend school.

Political power can be divided in several ways. In a country, it can be centralized in one national government or divided between the national government and local governments. In the United States, local power can be centralized under regional or county governments or divided into a patchwork of cities, school districts, and other types of districts.

Challenges for States

Independent states face challenges from globalization. Transnational corporations, international organizations, and global environmental problems make the boundaries around a state less important than in the past. States also face challenges from within. Regions with distinctive cultural groups, such as Quebec and Nunavut in Canada, have successfully argued for more autonomy.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

1. The political organization of space results from historical and current processes, events, and ideas. (PSO-4)
2. Political boundaries and divisions of governance, between states and within them, reflect balances of power that have been negotiated or imposed. (IMP-4)
3. Political, economic, cultural, or technological changes can challenge state sovereignty. (SPS-4)

Source: AP® Human Geography Course and Exam Description. Effective Fall 2020. (College Board).

CHAPTER 8

Political Processes and Power

Topics 4.1–4.3

Topic 4.1 Introduction to Political Geography

Learning Objective: For world political maps:

- Define the different types of political entities.
- Identify a contemporary example of political entities. (PSO-4.A)

Topic 4.2 Political Processes

Learning Objective: Explain the processes that have shaped contemporary political geography. (PSO-4.B)

Topic 4.3 Political Power and Territoriality

Learning Objective: Describe the concepts of political power and territoriality as used by geographers. (PSO-4.C)

[Soviet] General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

—President Ronald Reagan, speech, 1987



Source: David Palmer

The Berlin Wall has mostly been torn down after the unification of East and West Germany in 1989. Parts of the wall have been preserved to express messages of unification and remembrance. (See Topic 4.2 for how political processes shape boundaries.)

Introduction to Political Geography

Essential Question: What are the different types of political entities, with current examples, on a world map?

Empires and kingdoms were common in most of the world for the past 2,000 years. However, global forces, wars, and changing ideas about political power, economics, and self-rule have reshaped the world map over the last few centuries.

The Structure of the Contemporary Political Map

People often use the words *country*, *state*, and *nation* to mean the same thing. But they have different meanings. *Country* is the most general term. It is often used to describe any political entity that is independent from the control of any other entity. *State* and *nation* have more precise meanings.

Independent States as Building Blocks

Political units exist at various scales. In the United States, for example, a person resides in several political units at once: maybe a town or city, a county, a state, and finally, in the country as a whole. The term *state* can be confusing because it can be used in two different ways. In this example, it refers to one of the 50 states that make up the United States. But in international relations, a **state** is the largest political unit, the formal term for a country. To be defined as a state, several criteria must be met:

- has a defined boundary
- contains a permanent population
- maintains sovereignty (defined below) over its domestic and international affairs
- is recognized by other states

The United States recognizes 195 states based on these criteria, but the number can vary depending on which government or international organization makes the list. These four requirements are easily defined, but in the geopolitical arena, they can be difficult to recognize.

Understanding Sovereignty The power of a political unit, or government, to rule over its own affairs is known as **sovereignty**. It is a key principle in understanding how governments function. In order for a political unit to have legitimacy over its domestic and international affairs, it must maintain sovereignty over its own land. In the modern world, a territory must have

defined borders that have been legally established. No political unit can exist or claim sovereignty without a permanent population within its borders. In most cases, the people of a state have lived in a territory for generations, if not centuries. However, most states are multinational, or made up of several ethnicities and nationalities.

The Example of China Consider the complicated relationship between the People's Republic of China and the nearby island of Taiwan (the Republic of China). In 1949, China ended a long civil war. The victorious communist forces led by Mao Zedong established their capital in Beijing. More than 2 million supporters of the losing side, known as nationalists, retreated to Taiwan. China was divided between two governments, one on the mainland and one in Taiwan, and each considered itself China's legitimate ruler. The government on the mainland never gave up its claim on Taiwan, and Taiwan never declared independence.

Today, the government in Beijing rules more than 1.4 billion residents. Taiwan rules about 24 million, but it manages its own affairs and has diplomatic relations with about 20 countries.

China's claim that Taiwan is nothing more than a renegade province is a direct challenge to Taiwan's sovereignty. And since Taiwan is recognized by so few other states, it seems to be an effective challenge. Largely because of China's opposition, Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations (UN), and the case can be made that Taiwan does not fully meet the third and fourth criteria to be recognized as a state listed on the previous page.

Types of Political Entities

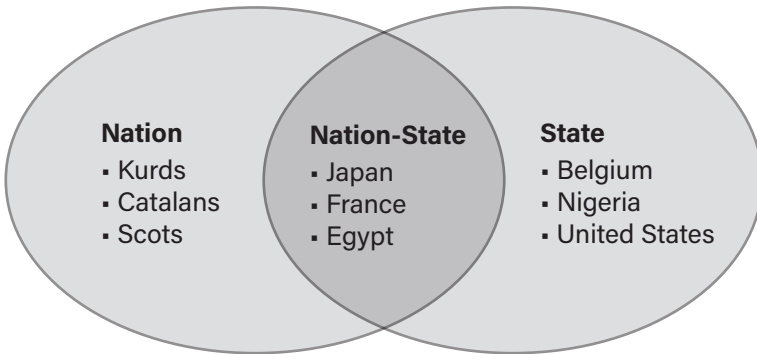
Often the term *nation* is interchangeably used with *country*; however, the terms are not identical. In general, a **nation** is a group of people who have certain things in common:

- a common cultural heritage
- a set of beliefs and values that unify them
- a traditional claim to a particular space as their homeland
- a desire to establish their own state or express self-rule in another way

Depending on how tightly one applies these standards, the number of nations ranges from a few hundred to several thousand. Many political entities combine aspects of nationhood and statehood.

Nation-States A nation of people who fulfill the qualifications of a state form a **nation-state**. Among the best examples of nation-states are Iceland and Japan. Icelanders make up 94 percent of its total population of 360,000. Scandinavian settlers founded Iceland on an island that had no indigenous population. Japanese account for 99 percent of the total population of its 128 million permanent residents. A strong national identity coupled with strict immigration policies have maintained Japan as a nation-state.

DISTINGUISHING NATIONS AND STATES



Multinational States A **multinational state** is a country that contains more than one nation. Most countries in the world today are multinational states that consist of one dominant nation and other smaller ones. The dominant nation controls most of the political power, but the smaller ones can have a significant impact.

Numerous multinational states fit these criteria, including Canada. While the English-language culture dominates, about 25 percent of Canadians speak French primarily. Most live in the province of Quebec. In an effort to prevent Quebec from demanding independence, the national government passed legislation making Canada a bilingual state and gave the province increased local autonomy in government and education.

Similarly, the Canadian government granted more autonomy over local affairs and natural resources to the indigenous nations. As part of this effort, it created the territory of Nunavut in 1999. Nunavut is in the far north of Canada. Over 80 percent of the population consider themselves Inuit, a culturally similar group of indigenous people in the Arctic. South of this region, Canada has designated over 600 indigenous governments and tribes as First Nations. This label has granted these people legal status as designated groups, providing them with certain legal rights and privileges. These privileges usually include hunting and fishing rights, as well as more control over local affairs.

Autonomous Regions A defined area within a state that has a high degree of self-government and freedom from its parent state is sometimes known as an **autonomous region**. States often grant this authority to geographically, ethnically, or culturally distinct areas.

For example, Åland is a group of islands in the Baltic Sea. It is part of Finland but lies near Sweden. Most residents are ethnically Swedish and speak that language. The people of Åland submitted a request to the League of Nations, a body similar to today's United Nations, to join Sweden after World War I ended in 1918. The League ruled that Åland should remain part of Finland, but as a nonmilitarized, largely self-governing entity, which it still is today.

Semiautonomous Regions A state that has a degree of, but not complete self-rule, is a **semiautonomous region**. Straddling the Four Corners region of the United States (where the borders of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico meet) is one of the largest American Indian nations, the Navajo. With more than 300,000 tribal members, they claim exclusive rights to over 27,000 square miles for their reservation, which is a federally recognized territory for Native Americans. Reservations, like the one controlled by the Navajo, possess tribal sovereignty, providing them exclusive rights, such as local self-government, and exemption from some state and federal taxes. However, the United States does not recognize complete sovereignty or independence of the Navajo or other Native American reservations.

Stateless Nations The Navajo are an example of a **stateless nation**, a cultural group that has no independent political entity. Since the world includes more nations than states, many stateless nations exist. Two that have sought to become independent states in recent decades are the Palestinians who live primarily in the Israeli-controlled territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Basques who live near the Spanish-French border.

The largest stateless nation belongs to the Kurdish people. Spread among six states in southwest Asia—Turkey, Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Syria—the Kurds number between 25 million and 30 million people in an area called Kurdistan. As states such as Syria and Iraq became destabilized in the 2000s, ethnic Kurds intensified their push for their own independent country.

THE KURDISTAN REGION



In which countries do the Kurds currently live? Since the Kurds live in numerous countries, what challenges might this create for Kurdish independence?

Multistate Nations A **multistate nation** occurs when a nation has a state of its own but stretches across borders of other states. For example, most Hungarians live in Hungary, but many live in the Transylvania region of Romania. The Korean nation is divided primarily between two states—the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea—North Korea—and the Republic of Korea—South Korea—but with large numbers in China and the United States.

REFLECT ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Essential Question: *What are the different types of political entities, with current examples, on a world map?*

Political Entity	Description of Entity

KEY TERMS

state	autonomous region
sovereignty	semiautonomous region
nation	stateless nation
nation-state	multistate nation
multinational state	

Political Processes

Essential Question: What are the processes that have shaped contemporary political geography?

How many states are there in the world? While there are criteria for defining and describing the different types of states (see Topic 4.1), there is no unifying consensus as to how many countries actually exist. The United Nations officially recognizes 195 member states and has also granted permanent non-member observer status to non-states, such as the Holy See (the political body of the Vatican) and the State of Palestine. Additionally, other territories claim sovereignty but have not achieved full statehood, such as Taiwan (off the coast of China) and Kosovo (claimed by Serbia).

To understand why a seemingly straightforward question about the number of countries in the world is complex, a look at history is needed. The modern world map is a mosaic of borders, states, and nations that have been created and changed throughout history.

Evolution of the Contemporary Political Map

Today's world map includes nations without states, nations in multiple states, and states containing multiple nations. This mixture of situations reflects the distribution of cultures and the evolution of politics, economics, and warfare over the last 600 years.

The Modern Nation-State Concept

For most of European history, no relation existed between the language people spoke and the state to which they belonged. For example, most people who paid allegiance to the king of France in the 1500s did not speak French. Rather, they spoke a regional language. And people who spoke various forms of Italian in the 1600s did not assume that they should all be part of the same state. By the 1700s, the idea that people should live in nation-states had caught hold in some areas, beginning in France and England. However, the map of Europe was still a patchwork of tiny states and a few large multiethnic empires—Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, etc.

The 1800s saw an explosion of nationalism in Europe. On one hand, groups rebelled against being part of large empires that were controlled by another culture. On the other hand, divided groups wanted to consolidate into unified countries. Between 1858 and 1871, eight separate states in southern Europe combine to form the modern country of Italy.

THE EIGHT INDEPENDENT ITALIAN STATES IN 1858



Forces Unifying and Breaking Apart Countries

One definition of **nationalism** is a nation's desire to create and maintain a state of its own. Since nationalism unifies people, it is an example of a **centripetal force**, one that helps to unify people within a country. There are other centripetal forces that unite people:

- a shared religion—Roman Catholicism unites Mexicans
- external threats—Estonians are united by fear of Russia
- a common language—Japanese share the same language

A counter to centripetal forces would be a **centrifugal force**. This is a force that tends to divide people, break states apart, or even prevent states from forming. For example, religion and language divide the people of Belgium. Most people in the north speak a Dutch language called Flemish and are historically Protestants, while people in the southern regions of Belgium speak French and tend to be Roman Catholics. The capital region of Brussels is officially bilingual in an attempt to foster centripetal forces that unify the people of both regions.

Imperialism and Colonialism

Imperialism and colonialism are related ideas, but they are not the same. **Imperialism** is a broader concept that includes a variety of ways of influencing another country or group of people by direct conquest, economic control, or cultural dominance. **Colonialism** is a particular type of imperialism in which people move into and settle on the land of another country. Examples of

imperialism and colonialism can be found throughout history and all over the world, but modern European imperialism and colonialism are relevant to the current political map because the boundaries of most countries were created by these forces. European imperialism occurred in two distinct waves.

Early Colonialism The first wave of European colonialism was led by Spain and Portugal, and then by France and Britain. These countries established large empires in the Americas, and they were motivated by “God, gold, and glory.” They wanted:

- religious influence by spreading their form of Christianity
- economic wealth from exploiting land, labor, and capital to enrich the home country
- political power by expanding their influence throughout the world

The European powers justified their conquests through the legal concept of *terra nullius*, a Latin phrase meaning “land belonging to no one.” According to this concept, they could legitimately seize “uncivilized land.” The result was the dispossession of indigenous people and the impact of this is still being redressed throughout parts of the world today.

Wars among empires influenced colonial claims. In the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), known in North America as the French and Indian War, the British won control of Canada from France. However, the strain of paying for the war led to conflicts between Britain and its colonies, soon resulting in the American Revolution. U.S. independence then inspired similar movements in other colonies. By 1833, most of Latin America was free from European rule, and nationalism was spreading through the region.

Later Colonialism During the 19th century, the influence of Spanish and Portuguese empires declined, which allowed other European countries to launch a second wave of colonization. The competition to claim resources (to feed factories) and new markets (to sell goods) resulted in Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Germany seizing control of lands in Africa and Asia.

In 1884 and 1885, representatives from the major empires of Europe met in the German capital of Berlin to lay out claims made on the continent of Africa. The **Berlin Conference** (see Topic 4.5), sometimes known as the Congo Conference, used these claims to form state boundaries in Africa. These boundaries showed little regard to the existing ethno-linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries. As a result, one colony might include a patchwork of rival cultural groups, and another cultural group might be divided among multiple colonies.

The modern country of Nigeria has several major languages and more than 500 individual languages are spoken within its borders. Hausa is widely spoken in the Muslim-dominated regions of the north, while Igbo and Yoruba are regionally spoken farther south where Christianity mixes with traditional religions. As a former British colony, Nigeria’s official language is English, which acts a centripetal force for such a diverse population.

Geopolitical Forces Influencing Today's Map

While the European colonies in Africa and Asia did not last long, their legacy was strong. It can be seen in contemporary maps and the links among countries.

Modern Colonial Independence Movements

Colonists, inspired by nationalism, resisted the rule of Europeans, sometimes with violence. People in these European colonies wanted several types of influence:

- economic control over natural resources such as petroleum and precious metals
- political power through free elections
- social changes such as racial equality and religious freedom

However, subject people in colonies wanted **self-determination**, the right to choose their own sovereign government without external influence. With the support of the United Nations, created in 1945, they were slowly successful. Within a century of the Berlin Conference, all European colonial territories had won independence. This process is known as **decolonization**, the undoing of colonization, in which indigenous people reclaim sovereignty over their territory.

While many former colonies gained political independence, they remained in a state of economic dependence. A new form of colonization, *neocolonialism* (see Topic 4.3), emerged in which control over developing countries was exerted through indirect means, whether economic, political, or even cultural power.

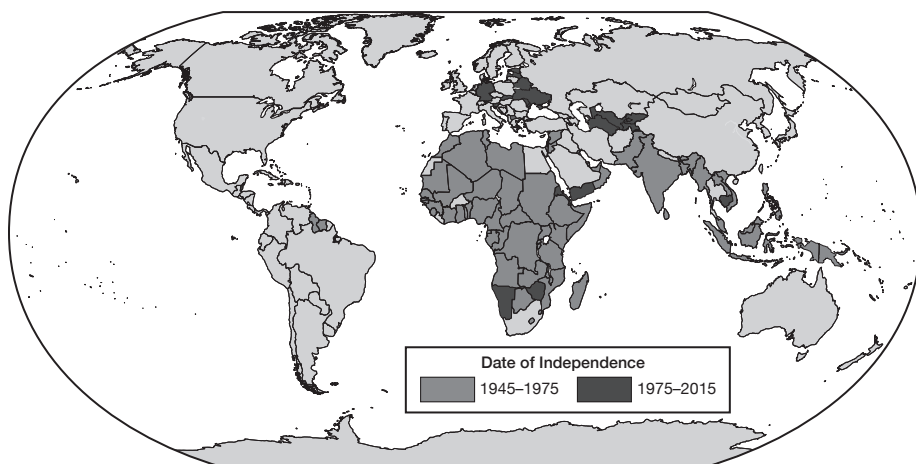
Civil Wars in the Developing World

From 1960 through 1970, 32 colonial territories in Africa gained independence. However, since independence was won by colonies rather than by cultural groups, the boundaries imposed by Europe remained in the newly independent states. As a result, cultural boundaries and political boundaries often did not match. Cultural conflicts within countries led to many civil wars. Then, because cultural groups spanned political borders, conflicts in one country often spilled over into other countries.

Among the worst of these wars was in Rwanda in 1994, which led to **genocide**, organized mass killing, in which people are targeted because of their race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. Before colonization by Belgium, two rival ethnic groups, the Hutu and Tutsi, had competed for control of territory and resources. In 1961, Rwanda won independence. The Hutu majority won elections to govern the country, but the rivalry with the Tutsi continued. In April 1994, the Rwandan president, a Hutu, died when his plane was shot down. Although no one knew then who was responsible, Hutus exacted revenge by killing Tutsis and moderate Hutus on a vast scale. Within just a few months, more than 800,000 Rwandans were killed and nearly 2 million migrated as refugees to neighboring countries.

This pattern of independence followed by civil wars and regional conflicts is nothing new to the political landscape. Serious problems result when national and ethnic rivals are forced to share political space because of boundaries drawn by outside powers. And in many cases, one ethnicity may be spread over several states, so a conflict in one state quickly escalates into a regional one. Today, many of the geopolitical “hotspots” in Africa and the Middle East are difficult to solve because of borders established long ago.

THE SPREAD OF INDEPENDENCE, 1945 TO 2015



Identify three regions where numerous countries gained independence from 1945 to 1975 and from 1975 to 2015.

The Cold War and Devolution

The **Cold War** was a period of diplomatic, political, and military rivalry between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union), a confederation of 15 republics, including Russia. It started at the end of World War II (1945), continued through the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989), and ended with the breakup of the Soviet Union (1991).

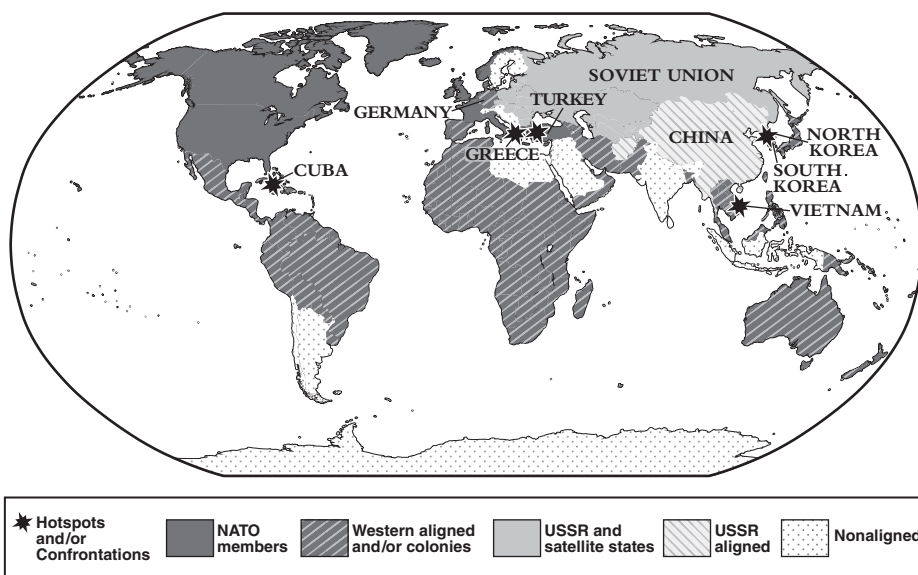
Although the United States and the Soviet Union did not fight a direct war against each other, they fought several proxy wars—by providing military and financial support to the countries involved—in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. For the United States, the largest of these conflicts were in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. The superpowers wanted to extend their spheres of influence, or the areas over which they had some degree of control. This meant winning allies in other countries and thwarting their rival from doing the same. The American-Soviet contest often influenced the newly independent states emerging out of colonialism.

After World War II, the frontline for the Cold War was Europe, where a tenuous peace divided the continent between East and West. Eastern European countries were liberated from Nazi Germany and later occupied by the Soviet army, became Soviet **satellite states**, or a state dominated by another politically

and economically. Attempts by Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to break away from Soviet domination were put down with overwhelming force.

Germany's status was complicated. Its territory and its capital city (Berlin) were split between the democratic and capitalist-friendly West Germany and West Berlin and the Communist Soviet Union-dominated East Germany and East Berlin. In 1961, to prevent people from defecting from the Soviet sphere of influence, the Berlin Wall was constructed by East Germany, physically demarcating and ideologically representing the deep divide between the two worlds.

COLD WAR BLOCS, c. 1960



The Collapse of Communism

In the late 1980s, new leadership in the Soviet Union began to relax its grip over satellite states in Eastern Europe. Finally, in November 1989, citizens of East and West Germany brought down the wall that had long divided the city of Berlin. Within two years, Germany had reunited and former satellite states of Eastern Europe were holding free elections without Soviet influence. Some states experienced a relatively peaceful transition, such as Poland with the Solidarity movement led by Lech Walesa. However, others endured more violence. In Romania, a 1989 revolution resulted in the execution of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife. But change in Europe did not end there.

The Soviet Union began to collapse as well. Under extreme economic duress, and significant social and political division within the Soviet Union, the 15 republics were granted more autonomy and self-rule. This process in which one or more regions are given increased autonomy by the central political unit is known as **devolution**.

FORMER REPUBLICS OF THE SOVIET UNION



Each of the former republics became an independent state. Identify three states that gained independence in Eastern Europe and in Central Asia.

Newly Independent States

After 1990, the political boundaries were once again altered. The collapse of communism and the Soviet Union resulted in the creation of 15 independent states from former Soviet republics, with Russia as the largest. This series of events significantly altered the modern map of Europe and Asia.

Many former *satellite states* made a peaceful transition into the post-communist world. For example, in 1993, Czechoslovakia divided into the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia, predominantly along ethnolinguistic lines. This event has been called the “Velvet Divorce,” since the transition was so smooth.

However, the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 was complicated and violent. Long-standing ethnic tensions erupted. Hundreds of thousands died in clashes between Serbs, Bosnians, and others before a handful of independent countries emerged. Many died because of *ethnic cleansing* (see Topic 4.8), the forced removal of a minority ethnic group from a territory. Geographically, this region was a *shatterbelt* (see Topic 4.5), a place that suffers instability because it is located between two very different and contentious regions.

Changes in the Balance of Power

The collapse of communism and the Soviet Union drastically changed the balance of power in Europe and throughout the world. Some former communist countries of Eastern Europe, as well as some independent states, joined the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—the

Western military alliance, formed in 1949 to oppose Soviet military power in Europe. (See Topic 4.9.) By the early 21st century, the balance of economic, political, and military power tilted toward Western Europe and the United States.

This power shift frightened Russian leaders. They reacted by providing military support to pro-Russian groups. For example, in 2008 a border dispute developed between the Republic of Georgia and Russia over land known as South Ossetia. Involvement of the Russian military led to a five-day war. As a result of this short conflict, Russia asserted its influence and dominance beyond its borders.

Russia also set its sights on Crimea in 2014. The Crimean Peninsula lies on the northern edge of the Black Sea and existed as a *semiautonomous republic* (see Topic 4.1) within the borders of Ukraine after the Soviet Union’s downfall. However, shortly after the Winter Olympic Games in Russia in 2014, Russian troops took over several sites around Crimea. Many countries, including Ukraine, vehemently condemned this annexation as a violation of international law. However, Russia defended this action under the principle of self-determination. Russia claimed part of Crimea, yet a majority of states still regarded the region as an integral part of Ukraine. (See Topic 4.3 for more on the strategic importance of Crimea.)

REFLECT ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Essential Question: *What are the processes that have shaped contemporary political geography?*

Process	Impact on Political Geography

KEY TERMS

nationalism

centripetal force

centrifugal force

imperialism

colonialism

Berlin Conference

self-determination

decolonization

genocide

Cold War

satellite states

devolution

Political Power and Territoriality

Essential Question: What are the concepts of political power and territoriality as used by geographers?

The concepts of power, territoriality, and boundaries are often intertwined and dependent on one another. Economic systems, cultural patterns and processes, and political systems have shaped various theories of how power is distributed on the political landscape. Physical geography and the natural landscape impact the distribution of power within and between political units, as well as the form and function of boundaries. The forms of governance on international, national, regional, and local scales are products of the human and physical landscapes.

Concepts of Political Power and Territoriality

Geopolitics is the study of the effects of geography on politics and relations among states. More than just political power, geopolitics also relates to trade, resource management, and the environment on a global scale. A key concept in geopolitics is **territoriality**, or a willingness by a person or a group of people to defend space they claim. People express their territoriality when they influence others or shape events by asserting control over a space. At the local scale, for example, towns and cities lay claim to municipal districts. At the national scale, states administer and defend their borders, especially those that lie adjacent to neighboring countries. States also extend their territoriality into the oceans and bodies of water within their jurisdictions (see Topic 4.5 for more on the Law of the Sea). However, states maintain sovereignty within their borders through the consent of the people who reside there, in addition to the government's ability to negotiate at the international level.

Territoriality Connects Culture and Economy

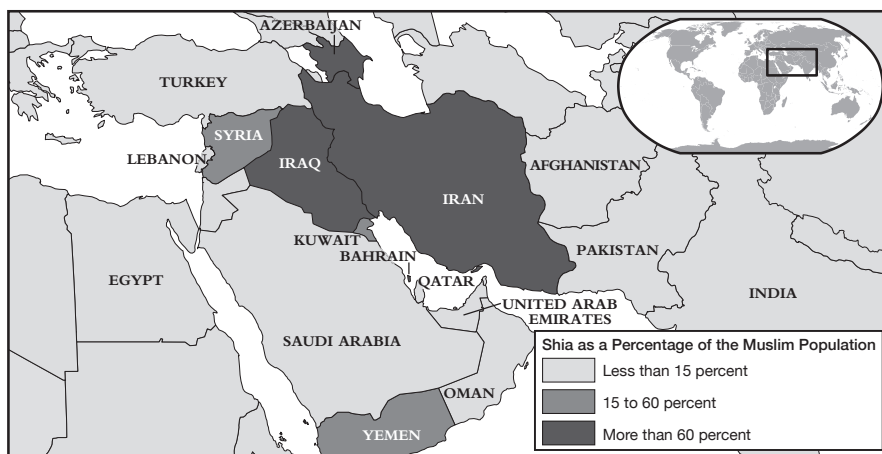
Defining territoriality may be relatively easy, but applying it is complex. Under the influence of cultural forces and economic interests, people often disagree on how to allocate control of territories. Maps that show the boundaries of a state as clear, precise lines might suggest those boundaries are well defined. However, people might hotly disagree over the boundaries, or simply ignore them in reality. Similarly, a state's sovereignty might be well established on paper, but people might not fully accept it.

Religious Conflicts One example of the connection of territoriality to culture is the relationship between Sunni and Shia Muslims. These two

branches of Islam divided on the question of who should succeed Muhammad after his death in 632. They have remained divided ever since, a division that has sometimes contributed to violence.

In recent years, the conflict within Islam has been clearest in the rivalry between Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shia-dominated Iran. Adding to the religious conflict between the countries is an ethnic difference: the Saudis are Arabs and the Iranians are Persians. Not only are these people devoted to their cultures and beliefs, but they also feel attached to the lands where their ancestors lived and where they now inhabit. Each country has tried to expand its power over territory, which has led to tension and instability.

SHIA REGIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Identify countries that have over 15 percent Shia population.

Economic Conflicts Territoriality has always been closely connected to economic issues. In recent years, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, Taiwan, and China have claimed sovereignty over the Spratly Islands—an isolated group of islands in the South China Sea. Tensions run high on the subject in the region. But why are these countries seemingly willing to risk conflict over a group of islands, islets, and reefs? The answers are, in large part, economic:

- Experts believe that significant, but unconfirmed, petroleum reserves exist in the area.
- The region's fishing grounds supply work and food for many throughout the entire region.
- Major international shipping lanes pass through the area.

At times, each of the countries involved (except Brunei) occupied at least part of the island group. China attempted to expand the size of its holdings through dredging and land reclamation—by building up small reefs into full-fledged islands—from which to better push for and enforce its claims of sovereignty.

Neocolonialism

In the aftermath of World War I and accelerating after World War II, worldwide decolonization occurred. (See Topic 4.2.) Exacerbated by high tariffs (taxes on trade) and wartime devastation, as well as economic uncertainty during the Great Depression (1929–1939), the profitability of European colonial possessions was drastically reduced. Scores of new countries gained independence across Asia and Africa. By 1975, virtually all former colonies had achieved self-determination. Gaining political independence was sometimes a long and arduous process, often with violent events involved. For example, bloodshed occurred during India's split from Britain and Algeria's break from France.

Economic Self-Determination Gaining economic independence was equally challenging. Many of these newly independent nations had focused on exporting one or perhaps only a few cash crops or light industrial products when they were colonies. In turn, these nations relied heavily on European manufactured goods, which resulted in the value of their imports being greater than that of their exports.

Additionally, these former colonies were culturally influenced by longstanding European traditions and often manipulated by foreign governments even after achieving independence. Apart from the previous direct control of these territories, in many cases, a new system of colonialism, or **neocolonialism**, emerged. In this system, economic, political, or even cultural control was indirectly exerted over developing countries. For example, transnational corporations based in European countries continued to control the extraction of natural resources through mining and the export of coffee, cacao, bananas, and other crops on plantations in developing countries.

Modern Globalization After World War II and the establishment of the United Nations (UN), trade barriers were dramatically lowered, and a new era of globalization emerged. Many people and companies in the former colonies benefited from increased access to regional and global markets. While the UN and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided food and economic aid for these countries, several European states and the United States offered conditional aid. Many newly independent states had developed powerful central governments that maintained tight controls over domestic businesses and international commerce, which, at times, had a negative effect on economic growth. The United States and countries of Europe offered loans to many of these developing countries, if they reduced regulations and opened up to more free trade.

While some have praised policies like these in helping the new states modernize their economies, others have decried the effect of leading these countries toward dependence and subservience. Despite efforts to maintain territoriality, some less-developed countries (LDCs) have experienced massive debt obligations that have spiraled out of their control and, as a result, have been politically dominated by richer nations. Neocolonialism promotes a similar type of imbalanced relationship found in traditional colonialism.

Choke Points

A **choke point** is a place of physical congestion between wider regions of movement and interaction. Land-based choke points can be natural valleys or bridges. However, the most vital choke points in the world today are predominantly water-based, such as straits and canals. Around 90 percent, or \$8 trillion annually, of all global goods are transported by sea.

Since the onset of the industrial age—beginning in the 18th century—and especially in modern times, power and wealth is increasingly derived from controlling strategic maritime areas of the world. The most densely populated cities and regions reside along coastal areas that are crucial to the global movement and distribution of resources. Geopolitically, countries that claim jurisdiction over these choke points often wield an inordinate amount of international clout and can benefit economically from these locations through fees and taxes, such as tolls, tariffs, and customs duties.

Bab el-Mandeb (“Gate of Tears”) strait is a choke point that connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden north of the Horn of Africa. It is vital to the flow of goods and traffic and has garnered international attention by nations attempting to control the area. The United States has several military bases around the Bab el-Mandeb, including a naval base in Djibouti, which demonstrates the geopolitical and economic importance of locations such as these. Many other countries also possess military bases in strategic areas, and they have gone to great lengths to ensure that shipping and travel can continue unimpeded.

Arguably, the world’s most important choke point is the Strait of Hormuz, lying between the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. Around one-third of the world’s natural gas and around one-quarter of the world’s oil passes through this narrow waterway.

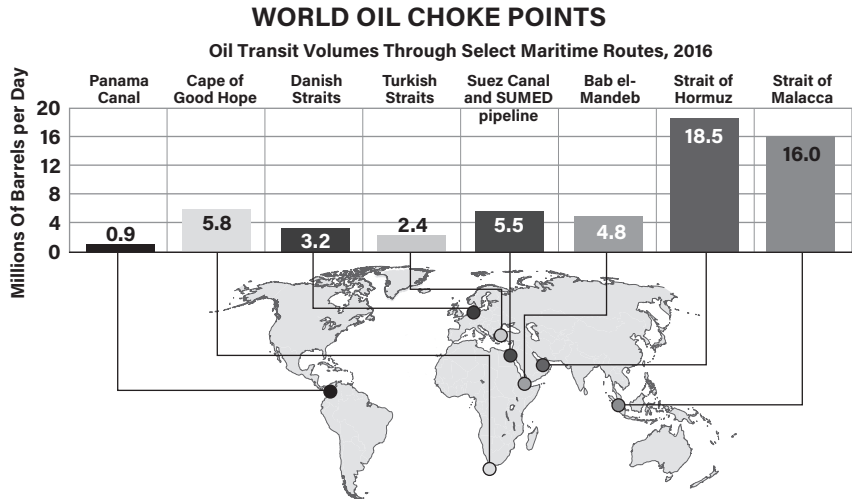
ARABIAN PENINSULA CHOKEPOINTS



Source: eia.gov

Three of the world’s most strategically important choke points, the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, and Bab el-Mandeb are around the Arabian Peninsula. Protecting free and open access to these waterways is vital in maintaining the global flow of goods and people.

At the north end of the Black Sea, Crimea affords Russia even greater proximity to a key choke point, the Turkish Straits. In 2014, Russia claimed Crimea, which had been within the borders of Ukraine since 1992. (See Topic 4.2.) Aside from the demographics, in which around two-thirds of the population is ethnically Russian, Crimea boasts a geographic advantage for Russia. These narrow waterways allow access to the Aegean and Mediterranean seas and, more importantly, increased access for global commerce. Oil and natural gas account for around two-thirds of Russia’s exports and almost one-third of its gross domestic product (GDP). The Crimea enables Russian petrochemical corporations increased accessibility to the Turkish Straits. Despite the protestations of Ukraine, and the bulk of the international community decrying Russia’s actions as illegal, Russia has maintained control of the area.



Source: US Energy Information Administration

Explain the importance of choke points for oil and other globally-traded goods.

REFLECT ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Essential Question: *What are the concepts of political power and territoriality as used by geographers?*

Political Power and Territoriality Concepts	Descriptions

KEY TERMS

geopolitics	neocolonialism
territoriality	choke point



GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES: CENTRIPETAL AND CENTRIFUGAL FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

The United States has been roughly the same size since 1867 when the country purchased Alaska. Since then, the United States has added important islands, including Hawaii and Puerto Rico, but all additions have been small in size. However, there is no guarantee that this stability will continue into the future.

Better Communication and Transportation

One of the forces that might reshape the political map of the United States is technology. Computers, the Internet, and cell phones have increased the connections among people across space. Technology could be a centripetal force. As people communicate more closely across long distances, variations from region to region might diminish. The United States might become a more tightly united country, with less cultural variation than in the past.

After World War II, the United States built an interstate highway system that was designed to connect the country. Many rural communities became more connected to cities as people traveled via highway across the country. Later, jet air travel created faster connections between cities. A negative of air travel was that people flew from city to city, often flying over rural regions, decreasing the connectivity of these areas.

Or the technology could be a centrifugal force. As Americans find people with whom they share interests and values in other places in the country, they could relate more to them than to the neighbors in their community. Place might become less important.

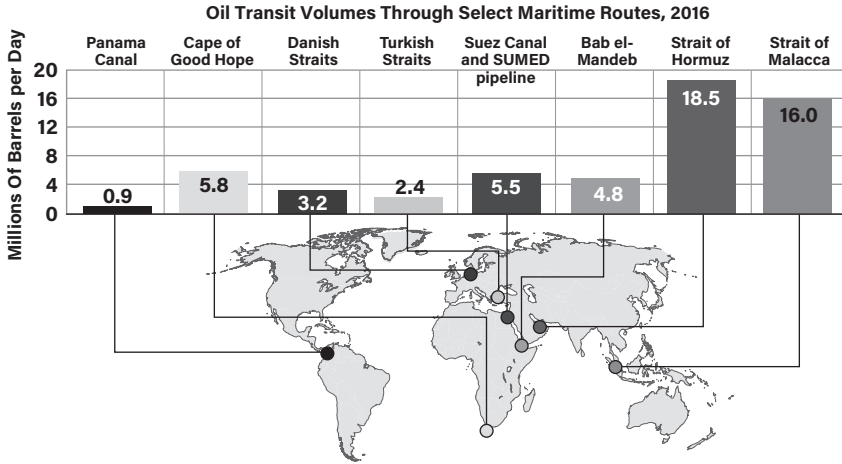
Movement of People

Migrations of people could also have mixed results for American political unity. The migration of people from one region to another could reduce regional variation in politics. For example, in most presidential elections in the past century, states in the Northeast and the Southeast have voted for opposing candidates. Will continued migration from the Northeast to the Southeast change this? Will the two regions become more similar politically, either because the migrants take their voting behavior with them or because the migrants adapt to the behavior of their new neighbors?

1. What challenges does the large size of the United States pose for the unity of the country?
2. How can communication technology act as both a centripetal and centrifugal force within a country?
3. What impact could internal migration have on the political landscape of the United States?



THINK AS A GEOGRAPHER: PLACES OF IMPORTANCE



Many choke points have the words “strait” or “canal” as part of their toponyms. This represents a key intersection where human geography meets physical geography. The study of geopolitics helps us better understand the complex relationship between people, places, and power.

Three of the choke points regarding petroleum transit have been discussed already—Bab el-Mandeb, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Turkish Straits.

1. Describe the locations of the choke points using the concepts of countries and regions.
2. Explain the importance of each of the following choke points:
 - A. Panama Canal
 - B. Cape of Good Hope
 - C. Danish Straits
 - D. Suez Canal
 - E. Strait of Malacca

CHAPTER 8 REVIEW:

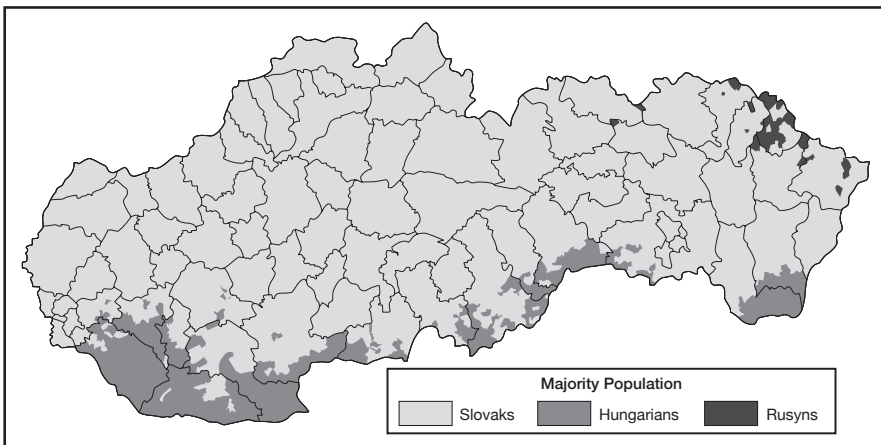
Political Processes and Power

Topics 4.1–4.3

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following is NOT a necessary criterion for a state?
- (A) Sovereignty
 - (B) Defined boundary
 - (C) Common culture and identity
 - (D) Recognition by other states
 - (E) Permanent population

Questions 2 and 3 refer to the map and table about Slovakia.



ETHNIC GROUPS IN SLOVAKIA	
Group	Percentage of the Population
Slovak	81%
Romani	9%
Hungarian	8%
Other	2%

2. Which term best describes Slovakia?
- (A) Stateless nation
 - (B) Multinational state
 - (C) Empire
 - (D) Dependent territory
 - (E) Autonomous region
3. Which of the following best explains why the Romani ethnic group is identified on the chart but does not appear on the map?
- (A) The scale of analysis of the data reflects that the Romani are a large minority group but are not a majority in any region.
 - (B) The map shows only the nodal regions in Slovakia.
 - (C) The friction of distance limits what information can be shown in each type of source.
 - (D) The data in the chart is not reliable because Slovakia is a former satellite state of the USSR.
 - (E) The map uses qualitative data while the chart uses quantitative data, creating an inconsistency between the information.

Question 4 refers to the map below.



4. Countries highlighted in the darker shade in the map above represent most or all of the members which of the following organizations?
- (A) North Atlantic Treaty Organization
 - (B) Warsaw Pact
 - (C) United Nations
 - (D) League of Nations
 - (E) European Union

Questions 5 and 6 refer to the chart below.

ETHNIC GROUPS IN MYANMAR (BURMA)		
Group	Percentage of the Population	Traits
Burmans	68%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spread throughout the center of the country ▪ Speak the dominant language of the country
Shan	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concentrated in eastern region ▪ Speak their own language
Kachin	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concentrated in northeast region ▪ Speak their own language ▪ Desire independence
Other	16%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government recognizes more than 130 ethnic groups ▪ Many desire independence

5. Based on the information in the chart, Myanmar is a
 - (A) nation
 - (B) nation-state
 - (C) multinational state
 - (D) stateless nation
 - (E) multistate nation
6. Based on the information in the chart, the lands of the Kachin can be considered
 - (A) a multistate nation
 - (B) an autonomous region
 - (C) a nation-state
 - (D) a stateless nation
 - (E) a newly independent state
7. Which of the following would describe a positive development for a state that became independent through decolonization?
 - (A) Establishing territoriality by claiming sovereignty over its lands
 - (B) Maintaining economic neocolonial ties with its former mother country
 - (C) Engaging in ethnic cleansing of a minority group within its borders
 - (D) Existing along a shatterbelt between two powerful states
 - (E) Experiencing centrifugal forces due to multiple ethnicities

FREE-RESPONSE QUESTION

1. After 1945 many of the countries in Africa won their independence. Today, independent states are the primary building block of not just Africa but the entire world. Use the map to answer the questions that follow.

AFRICA TODAY



- (A) Identify TWO characteristics of a state.
- (B) Explain the difference between a nation and a state.
- (C) Explain the role that imperialism played in creating the borders of modern Africa.
- (D) Identify a country in Africa that had a civil war after 1945, and explain ONE centrifugal force that caused the conflict. (2 points)
- (E) Define the concept of stateless nation and provide a real-world geographic example.
- (F) Describe ONE example of a multistate nation.