Political Geography

Field Note   Independence Is Better Than Servitude

I arrived in Ghana just after an assassination attempt on the country's first president, Kwame Nkrumah. As I drove through the capital city of Accra in 1962, I stopped short when I saw a statue of President Nkrumah in the middle of the street. I have seen plenty of statues of leaders in my travels, but this one was unique. Ghanians had dressed their hospital-ridden president in a hospital gown and bandaged his head!

I stopped the car to take a picture (Fig. 8.1), and I read the proclamations on Nkrumah's statue. Written in English, they said, "To me the liberation of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked up with the liberation of Africa" and "We prefer self-government with danger to servitude in tranquility."

Ghana, the first Subsaharan African colony to become independent, gained its independence in 1960. A wave of decolonization swept through Africa in the 1960s (Fig. 8.2)—fueled by the hope that decolonization would bring political and economic independence. But decolonization did not eliminate political and economic problems for Africa. Former colonies became states, reaching political independence under international law; each new country was now sovereign, legally having the ultimate say over what happened within the borders. New political problems arose within the formally independent countries. Each had to deal with a mixture of peoples, cultures, languages, and religions that were grouped within single political units during the colonial period.
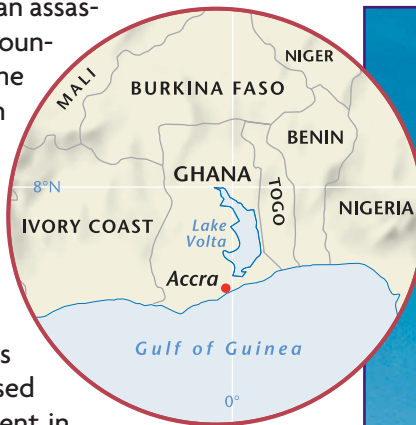

Figure 8.1

Accra, Ghana. Statue of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana.   © H. J. de Blij.

DATES OF INDEPENDENCE

- Independence before 1750
- Independence between 1750 and 1939
- Independence in or after 1940
- Still a territory of another state

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers
0   1000   2000 Miles

Figure 8.2

Dates of Independence for States, throughout the World.   The first major wave of independence movements between 1750 and 1939 occurred mainly in the Americas. The second major wave of independence movements after 1940 occurred mainly in Africa and Asia. South Sudan became the most recently recognized independent state in July 2011, bringing the total number of member states in the United Nations to 193.   *Data from: United Nations, 2011.*

They had to try to adapt colonial social and political structures to the needs of the newly independent states. Economically, the new countries found themselves fully intertwined in the world economy, unable to control fundamental elements of their own economies.

For many of the new African states, Nkrumah's words rang true—independence was better than servitude, even if it meant danger instead of tranquility. Nkrumah, elected in 1960, was overthrown by the military in 1966 and died in exile in 1972.

The story of Ghana and President Nkrumah is a familiar one. After decades of European colonial rule, peoples around the world sought independence; they
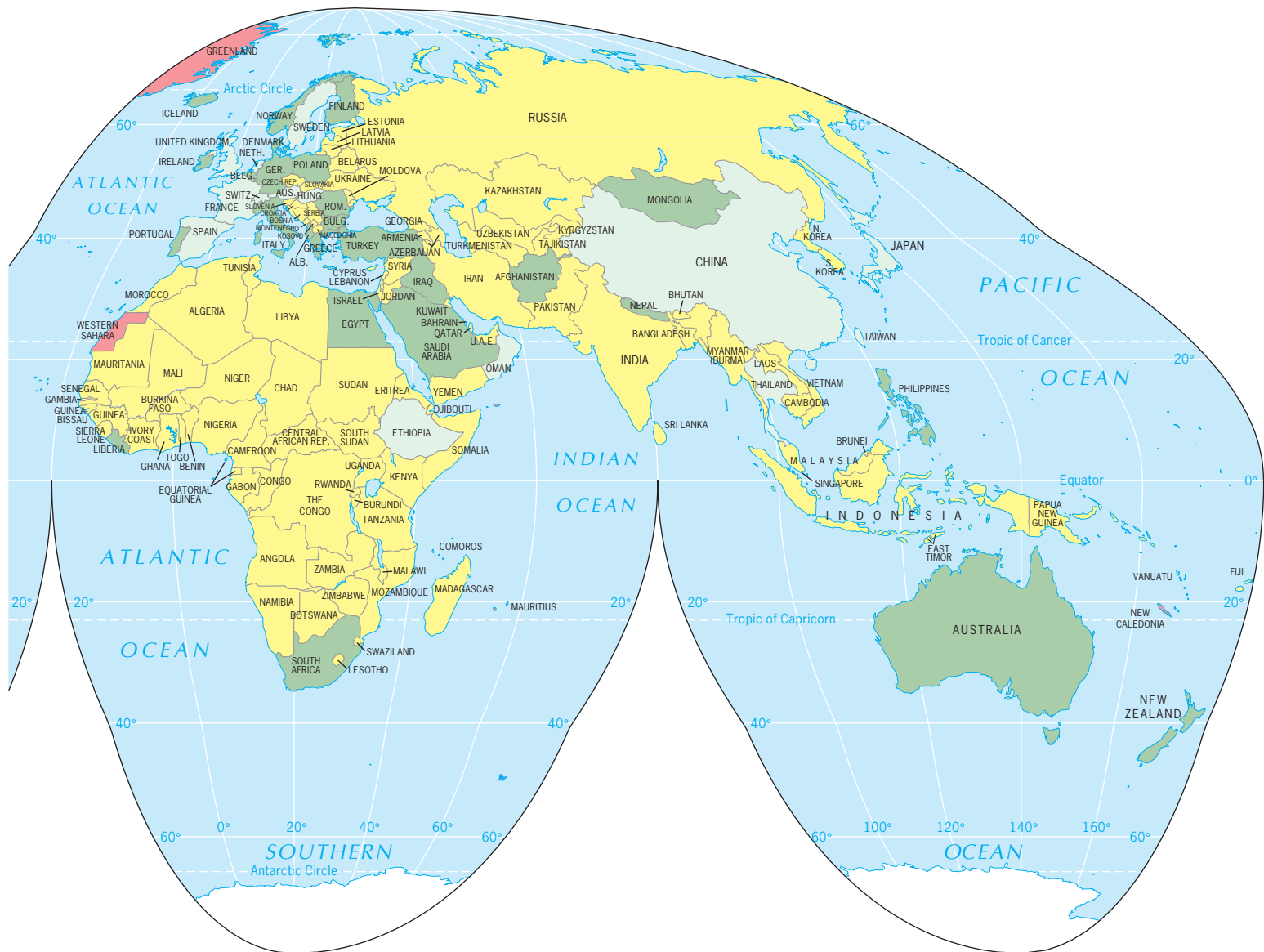
wanted to have their own country, and they wanted to have a voice in what happened in their country. Nkrumah knew the risk was great—danger came with the quick transition and from the inheritance of a political organization that made little sense for Ghana or the people who lived there. European colonialism organized the world as a huge functional region controlled from Europe and designed to serve Europe's economic and political interests. Colonialism also brought the European way of politically organizing space into states to the rest of the world. This system and its lack of fit for most of the world has caused political strife, and yet, peoples still seek to become independent countries.

Political activity is as basic to human culture as language or religion. All individuals, groups, communities, nations, governments, and supranational organizations engage in political activity. Each desires power and influence to achieve personal and public goals. Whether or not we like politics, each of us is caught up in these processes, with effects ranging from the composition of school boards to the conduct of war.

In this chapter, we examine how geographers study politics, the domain of political geography. Like all fields of geography (and the social sciences, more generally), political geographers used to spend a lot of time explaining why the world is the way it is and trying to predict or prescribe the future. Today, political geographers spend much more time trying to understand the spatial assumptions and structures underlying politics, the ways people organize space, the role territory plays in politics, and the problems that result from changing political and territorial circumstances.

Key Questions For Chapter 8

1. How is space politically organized into states and nations?
2. How do states spatially organize their governments?
3. How are boundaries established, and why do boundary disputes occur?
4. How does the study of geopolitics help us understand the world?
5. What are supranational organizations, and what is the future of the state?

HOW IS SPACE POLITICALLY ORGANIZED INTO STATES AND NATIONS?

Political geography is the study of the political organization of the world. Political geographers study the spatial manifestations of political processes at various scales: how politically meaningful spaces came into being and how these spaces influence outcomes. At the global scale, we have a world divided into individual countries, which are commonly called states. A **state** is a politically organized territory with a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government. To be a state, an entity must be recognized as such by other states.

The present-day division of the world political map into states is a product of endless accommodations and adjustments within and between human societies. On the conventional political map, a mosaic of colors is used to represent more than 200 countries and territories, a visualization that accentuates the separation of these countries by boundaries (Fig. 8.3). The political map of the world is the world map most of us learn first. We look at it, memorize it, and name the countries and perhaps each country's capital. It hangs in the front of our classrooms, is used to organize maps in our textbooks, and becomes so natural looking to us that *we begin to think it is natural*.

The world map of states is anything but natural. The mosaic of states on the map represents a way of politically organizing space (into states) that is less than 400 years old. Just as people create places, imparting character to space and shaping culture, people make states. States and state boundaries are made, shaped, and refined by people, their actions and their history. Even the idea of dividing the world into territorially defined states is one created and exported by people.

Central to the state are the concepts of **territory** and territoriality. As geographer Stuart Elden has pointed out, the modern concept of territory arose in early modern Europe as a system of political units came into being with fixed, distinct boundaries and at least a quasi-independent government. **Territoriality** is the process by which such units come into being. Territoriality, however, can take place at different scales. In a book published in 1986, geographer Robert Sack defined **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 construction of social and political spaces. He calls for a better understanding of the human organization of the planet through a consideration of how and why certain territorial strategies are pursued at different times and across places.

Today, territoriality is tied to the concept of **sovereignty**. As Sack explained, territorial behavior implies an expression of control over a territory. In international law, the concept of sovereignty is territorially defined.

Sovereignty means having a recognized right to control a territory both politically and militarily. The states of the world have the last say, legally, at least, over their respective territories. When the international community recognizes an entity as a state, it also recognizes the entity as being sovereign within its borders. Under international law, states are sovereign, and they have the right to defend their **territorial integrity** against incursion from other states.

The Modern State Idea

In the 1600s, Europeans were not the only ones who behaved territorially, organized themselves into distinct political units, or claimed sovereignty. Because territoriality manifests itself in different ways, the idea of the state appeared in a variety of forms across world regions 400 or 500 years ago. The role territory played in defining the state and the sovereign varied by region.

In North America, American Indian tribes behaved territorially but not necessarily exclusively. Plains tribes shared hunting grounds with neighboring tribes who were friendly, and they fought over hunting grounds with neighboring tribes who were unfriendly. Territorial boundaries were usually not delineated on the ground. Plains tribes also held territory communally so that individual tribal members did not "own" land. In a political sense, territoriality was most expressed by tribes within the Plains. Similarly, in Southeast Asia and in Africa, state-like political entities also existed. In all of these places, and in Europe before the mid-1600s, rulers held sway over a people, but there was no collective agreement among rulers about how territory would be organized or what rulers could do within their respective domains.

The European state idea deserves particular attention because it most influenced the development of the modern state system. We can see traces of this state idea more than two millennia ago near the southeastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, where distinct kingdoms emerged within discrete territories. Greek philosophy on governance and aspects of Ancient Greece and Rome play parts in the modern state idea. Political geographer Rhys Jones studied state formation in the United Kingdom during the European Middle Ages. He found the first states in Wales were small in size but had the attributes of the modern state. In the late Middle Ages, powerful rulers constructed more sizable states in what are now the United Kingdom, France, and Spain. We cannot trace a clear evolution in the European state idea, but we can see aspects of the modern state in many places and at many points in European history.

By the early seventeenth century, states including the Republic of Venice, Brandenburg, the Papal States of central Italy, the Kingdom of Hungary, and several minor German states created a complicated patchwork of political entities, many with poorly defined borders. The emerging political state was accompanied by **mercantilism**, which led to the accumulation of wealth through plunder, colonization, and the protection of home industries and foreign markets. Rivalry and competition intensified in Europe as well as abroad. Powerful royal families struggled for dominance in eastern and southern Europe. Instability was the rule, strife occurred frequently, and repressive governments prevailed.

The event in European history that marks the beginning of the modern state system is the **Peace of Westphalia**, negotiated in 1648 among the princes of the states making up the Holy Roman Empire, as well as a few neighboring states. The treaties that constituted this peace concluded Europe's most destructive internal struggle over religion during the Thirty Years' War. They contained new language recognizing the rights of rulers within defined, demarcated territories. The language of the treaties laid the foundations for a Europe made up of mutually recognized territorial states.

The rise of the Westphalian state system marked a fundamental change in the relationship between people and territory. In previous eras, *where* a society lived constituted its territory; in the Westphalian system it became the *territory* that defined the *society*. Territory is treated as a fixed element of political identification, and states define exclusive, nonoverlapping territories.

Even well after the Peace of Westphalia, absolutist rulers controlled most European states. During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the development of an increasingly wealthy middle class proved to be the undoing of absolutism in parts of western Europe. City-based merchants gained money, influence, and prestige, while the power of the nobility declined. The traditional measure of affluence—land—became less important. The merchants and businessmen demanded political recognition. In the 1780s, a series of upheavals began that changed the sociopolitical face of the continent, most notably the French Revolution of 1789. The revolution, conducted in the name of the French people, ushered in an era in which the foundations for political authority came to be seen as resting with a state's citizenry, not with a hereditary monarch.

Nations

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 the word *nation* is distinct. State is a legal term in international law, and the international political community has some agreement about what this term means. *Nation*, on the other hand, is a culturally defined term, and
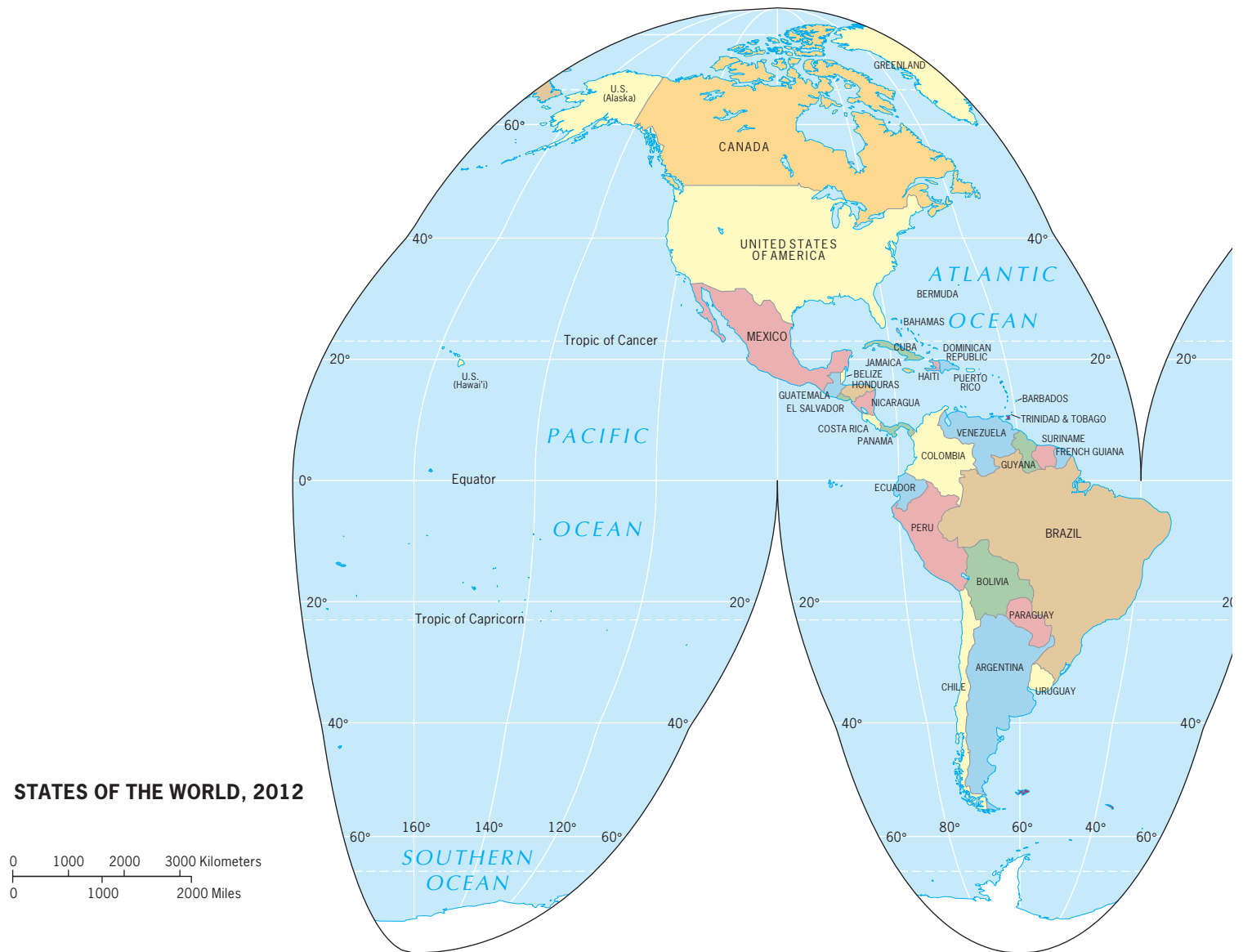
STATES OF THE WORLD, 2012

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers

0   1000   2000 Miles

Figure 8.3
States of the World, 2011.   © H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

few people agree on exactly what it means. Some argue that a nation is simply the people within a state's borders; in this case, all people who live in Germany. Yet this approach gives little sense of how politically charged the concept of nation really is.

In keeping with the way the term was originally used, we define **nation** as a group of people who think of themselves as one based on a sense of shared culture and history, and who seek some degree of political-territorial autonomy. This idea encompasses different kinds of culturally defined nations. Nations variously see themselves as sharing a religion, a language, an ethnicity, or a history. How a nation is defined depends on the people who see themselves as part of the nation. One

of the most widely read scholars on nationalism today, Benedict Anderson, defines 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 one nonetheless sees oneself as part of that nation.

All nations are ultimately mixtures of different peoples. The French are often considered to be the classic example of a nation, but the most French-feeling person in France today is the product of a melding together of a wide variety of cultural groups over time, including Celts, Ancient Romans, Franks, Goths, and many more. If the majority of inhabitants of modern France belong to the French nation, it is because, during the formation
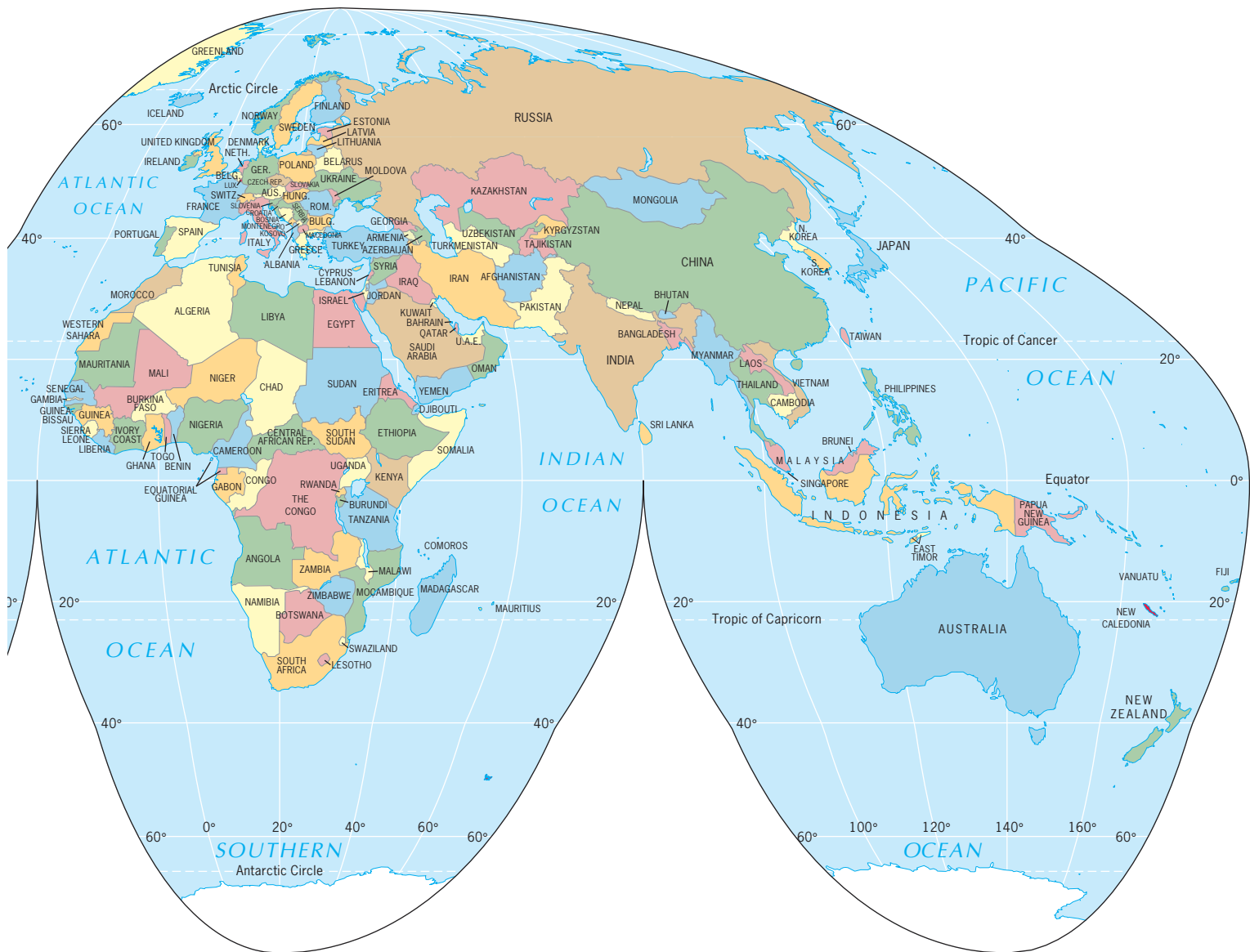
of the French territorial state, the people came to think of themselves as French—not because the French nation existed as a primordial group that has always been distinct.

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." A nation is identified by its own membership; therefore, we cannot simply define a nation as the people within a territory. Indeed, rarely does a nation's extent correspond precisely with a state's borders. Many countries have multiple nations within their borders. For example, in the country of Belgium, two nations, the Flemish and the Walloons, exist within the state borders.

Nation-State

The European idea that the map of *states* should look like the map of *nations* became the aspiration of governing elites around the world. A **nation-state** is a politically organized area in which nation and state occupy the same space. Since few (if any) states are nation-states, the importance of the concept of the nation-state lies primarily in the idea behind it. In the effort to form nation-states, some states have chosen to privilege one ethnic group at the expense of others, and other states have outlined a common history and culture. Either way, the state works to temper identities that might challenge the state's territorial integrity.

The goal of creating nation-states dates to the French Revolution, which sought to replace control by a monarchy or colonizer with an imagined cultural-historical community of French people. The Revolution initially promoted **democracy**, the idea that the people are the ultimate sovereign—that is, the people, the *nation*, have the ultimate say over what happens within the state. Each nation, it was argued, should have its own sovereign territory, and only when that was achieved would true democracy and stability exist.

People began to see the idea of the nation-state as the ultimate form of political-territorial organization, the right expression of sovereignty, and the best route to stability. The key problem associated with the idea of the nation-state is that it assumes the presence of reasonably well-defined, stable nations living contiguously within discrete territories. Very few places in the world come close to satisfying this requirement. Nonetheless, in the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many believed the assumption could be met.

The quest to form nation-states in the Europe of the 1800s was associated with a rise in nationalism. We can view nationalism from two vantage points: that of the people and that of the state. When *people* have a strong sense of nationalism, they have a loyalty to and a belief in the nation itself. This loyalty does not necessarily coincide with the borders of the state. A *state*, in contrast, seeks to promote a sense of nationhood that coincides with its own borders. In the name of nationalism, a state with more than one nation within its borders may attempt to build a single national identity out of the divergent people within its borders. In the name of nationalism, a state may also promote conflict with another state that it sees as threatening to its territorial integrity.

Even though the roots of nationalism lie in earlier centuries, the nineteenth century was the true age of nationalism in Europe. In some cases the pursuit of nationalist ambitions produced greater cohesion within long-established states, such as in France or Spain; in other cases nationalism became a rallying cry for bringing together people with some shared historical or cultural elements into a single state, such as in the cases of Italy or Germany. Similarly, people who saw themselves as separate nations within other states or empires launched successful separatist movements. Ireland, Norway, and Poland all serve as examples of this phenomenon.

European state leaders used the tool of nationalism to strengthen the state. The modern map of Europe is still fragmented, but much less so than in the 1600s (Fig. 8.4). In the process of creating nation-states in Europe, states absorbed smaller entities into their borders, resolved

■ **Figure 8.4**

European Political Fragmentation in 1648.   A generalized map of the fragmentation of western Europe in the 1600s.   *Adapted with permission from:* Geoffrey Barraclough, ed. *The Times Concise Atlas of World History*, 5th ed., Hammond Incorporated, 1998.
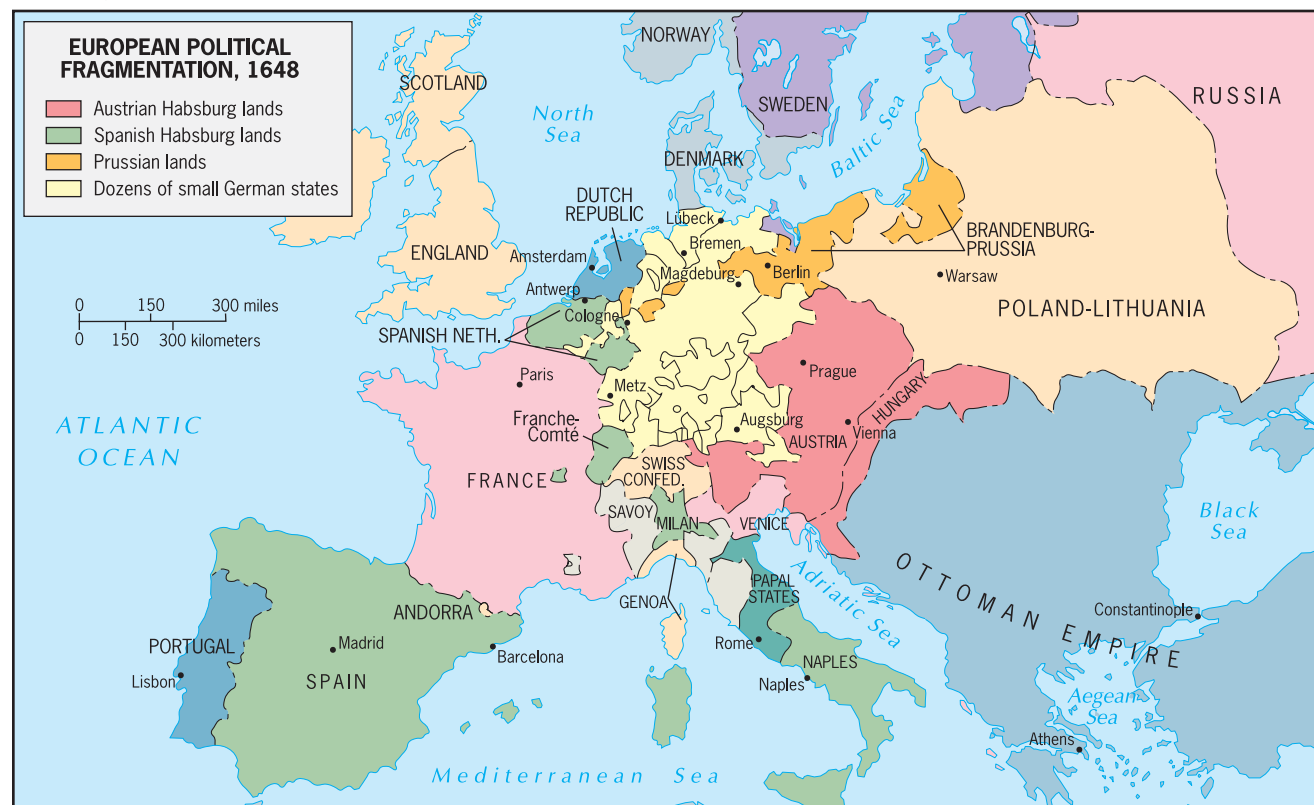
Guest Field Note

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

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

Figure 8.5

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.

Credit: George White, South Dakota State University

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conflicts by force as well as by negotiation, and defined their borders more precisely.

To help people within the borders relate to the dominant national ideal, states provide security, infrastructure, and goods and services for their citizens. States support education, health care, and a military to preserve the state and to create a connection between the people and the state—to build a nation-state. 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 began to build a nation-state.

Multistate Nations, Multinational States, and Stateless Nations

People with a sense of belonging to a particular nation rarely all reside within a single state's borders. The lack of fit between nation and state therefore creates complica-

tions. Such complications might include states containing more than one nation, nations residing in more than one state, and even nations without a state at all.

Nearly every state in the world is a **multinational state**, a state with more than one nation inside its borders. The people living in the former state of Yugoslavia never achieved a strong sense of Yugoslav nationhood. Millions of people who were citizens of Yugoslavia never had a Yugoslav nationality. They long identified themselves as Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, or members of other nations or ethnic groups. Yugoslavia was a state that was always comprised of more than one nation, and it eventually collapsed.

When a nation stretches across borders and across 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 territory that has been illegitimately lost. 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 the case of Romania and Hungary, as in other similar situations, territory is as important as "language, religion, or way of life." 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 Palestinians are an example of a stateless nation. The Palestinian Arabs have gained control over the Gaza Strip and fragments of the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Golan Heights. These territories may form the foundations of a future state. The United Nations Agency for Palestinian Refugees records 4.9 million registered Palestinian refugees. Well over half of the registered Palestinian refugees continue to live in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and other Arab states. Nearly 2 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip and West Bank; however, the international community does not universally recognize the Palestinian lands as a state.

A much larger stateless nation is the Kurds whose population of between 25 and 30 million live 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. The no-fly zone in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq has created a relatively peaceful place compared to continued violence in southern Iraq. Violent acts still mar the Kurdish north, but prosperity has also come to the region through petrodollars. An October 2008 travel article in the *New York Times* described new theme parks and gated communities that reflect the affluence in the city of Erbil, which is the Kurdish capital city in Iraq. The article also described Erbil's 6000-year-old citadel as a reminder that the city is "one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world."

An independent Kurdish state seems unlikely, at least in the near future. In addition to northern Iraq, the Kurds form the largest minority in Turkey where the city of 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, and Turkey regards the Kurdish region as part of the state's core territory. Without the consent of Turkey, establishing a truly independent Kurdish state will be difficult.

European Colonialism and the Diffusion of the Nation-State Model

Europe exported its concepts of state, sovereignty, and the desire for nation-states to much of the rest of the world through two waves of colonialism (Fig. 8.7). In the

Figure 8.6

Kurdish Region of the Middle East. © H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons.
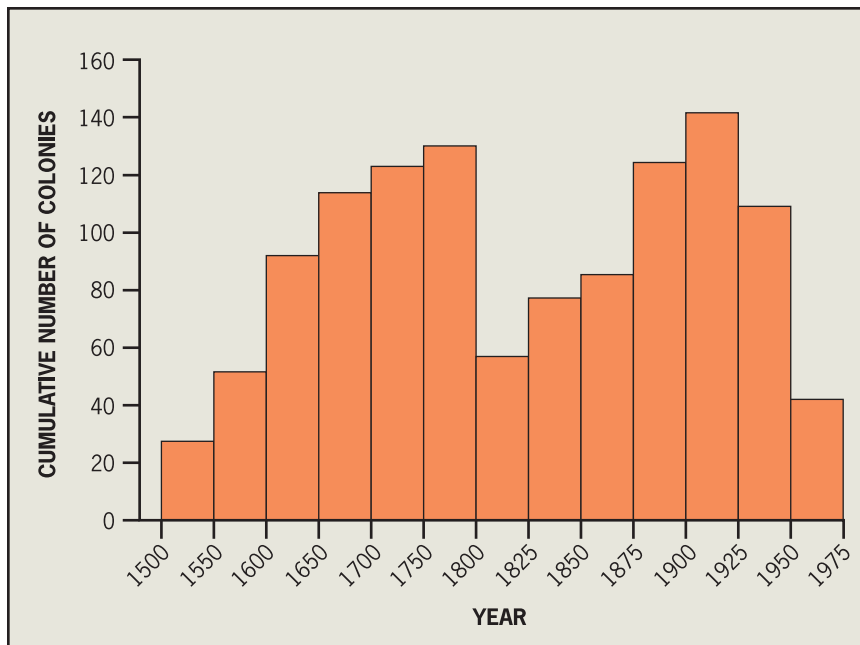
Figure 8.7
Two Waves of Colonialism between 1500 and 1975.   Each bar shows the total number of colonies around the world. *Adapted with permission from:* Peter J. Taylor and Colin Flint, *Political Geography: World-Economy*, *Nation-State and Locality*, 4th ed., New York: Prentice Hall, 2000.

sixteenth century, Spain and Portugal took advantage of an increasingly well-consolidated internal political order and newfound wealth to expand their influence to increasingly far-flung realms during the first wave of colonialism. Later joined by Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, the first wave of colonialism established a far-reaching political and economic system. After independence movements in the Americas during the late 1700s and 1800s, a second wave of colonialism began in the late 1800s. 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 laid out the colonial map of Africa without reference to indigenous cultural or political arrangements. Driven by motives ranging from economic profit to the desire to bring Christianity to the rest of the world, colonialism projected European power and a European approach to organizing political space into the non-European world (Fig. 8.8).

With Europe in control of so much of the world, Europeans laid the ground rules for the emerging international state system, and the modern European concept of the nation-state became the model adopted around the world. Europe also established and defined the ground rules of the capitalist world economy, creating a system of economic interdependence that persists today.

During the heyday of **colonialism**, the imperial powers exercised ruthless control over their domains and organized them for maximum economic exploitation. The capacity to install the infrastructure necessary for such efficient profiteering is itself evidence of the power relationships involved: entire populations were regimented in the service of the colonial ruler. Colonizers organized

the flows of raw materials for their own benefit, and we can still see the tangible evidence of that organization (plantations, ports, mines, and railroads) on the cultural landscape.

Despite the end of colonialism, the political organization of space and the global world economy persist. And while the former colonies are now independent states, their economies are anything but independent. In many cases raw material flows are as great as they were before the colonial era came to an end. For example, today in Gabon, Africa, the railroad goes from the interior forest, which is logged for plywood, to the major port and capital city, Libreville. The second largest city, Port Gentil, is located to the south of Libreville, but the two cities are not connected directly by road or railroad. As the crow flies, the cities are 90 miles apart, but if you drive from one to the other, the circuitous route will take you 435 miles. Both cities are export focused. Port Gentil is tied to the global oil economy, with global oil corporations responsible for building much of the city and its housing, and employing many of its people.

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

The long-term impacts of colonialism are many and varied. One of the most powerful impacts of colonialism was the construction of a global order characterized by great differences in economic and political power. The European colonial enterprise gave birth to a globalized economic order in which the European states and areas dominated by European migrants emerged as the major centers of economic and political activity. Through
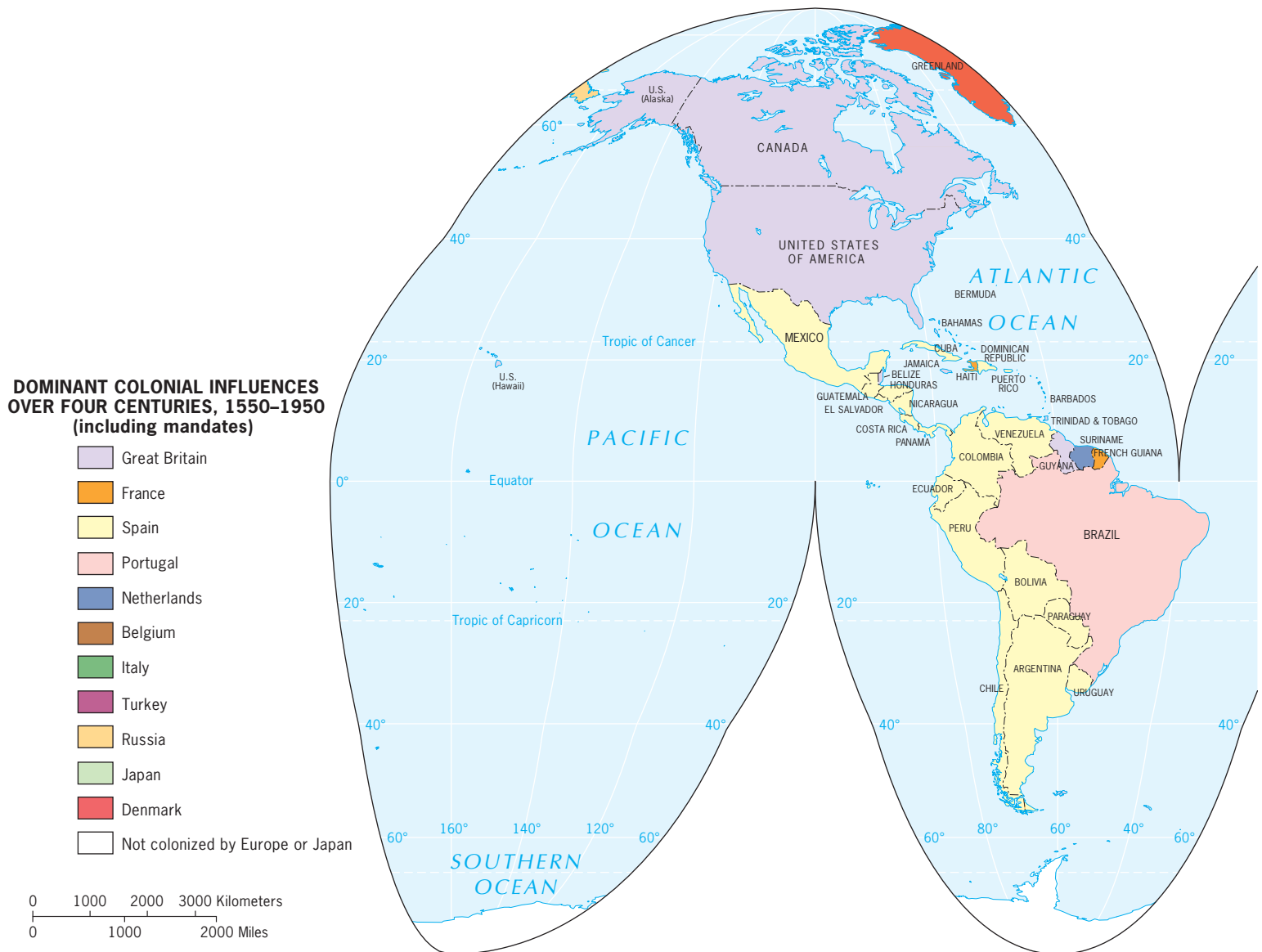
DOMINANT COLONIAL INFLUENCES
OVER FOUR CENTURIES, 1550–1950
(including mandates)

- Great Britain
- France
- Spain
- Portugal
- Netherlands
- Belgium
- Italy
- Turkey
- Russia
- Japan
- Denmark
- Not colonized by Europe or Japan

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers

0   1000   2000 Miles

Figure 8.8

Dominant Colonial Influences, 1550–1950. The map shows the *dominant* European or
Japanese colonial influence in each country over the four centuries.   © H. J. de Blij, John Wiley & Sons.

colonialism, Europeans extracted wealth from colonies
and put colonized peoples in a position of subservience.

Of course, not all Europeans profited equally from
colonialism. Enormous poverty persisted within the most
powerful European states, and sustaining control over
colonies could be costly. In the late seventeenth century,
Spain had a large colonial empire, but the empire was
economically draining Spain by then. Moreover, west-
ern Europeans were not the only people to profit from
colonialism. During the period of European colonialism
(1500–1950), Russia and the United States expanded over
land instead of over seas, profiting from the taking of ter-
ritory and the subjugation of indigenous peoples. Japan
was a regional colonial power, controlling Korea and

other parts of East and Southeast Asia as well as Pacific
Islands by colonial means. 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 even today.

The forces of colonialism played a key role in knit-
ting together the economies of widely separated areas,
which gave birth to a global economic order called the
world economy. Wealth is unevenly distributed in the
world economy, as can be seen in statistics on per cap-
ita gross national income (GNI): Bangladesh's GNI is
only $1,340, whereas Norway's is $53,690. But to truly
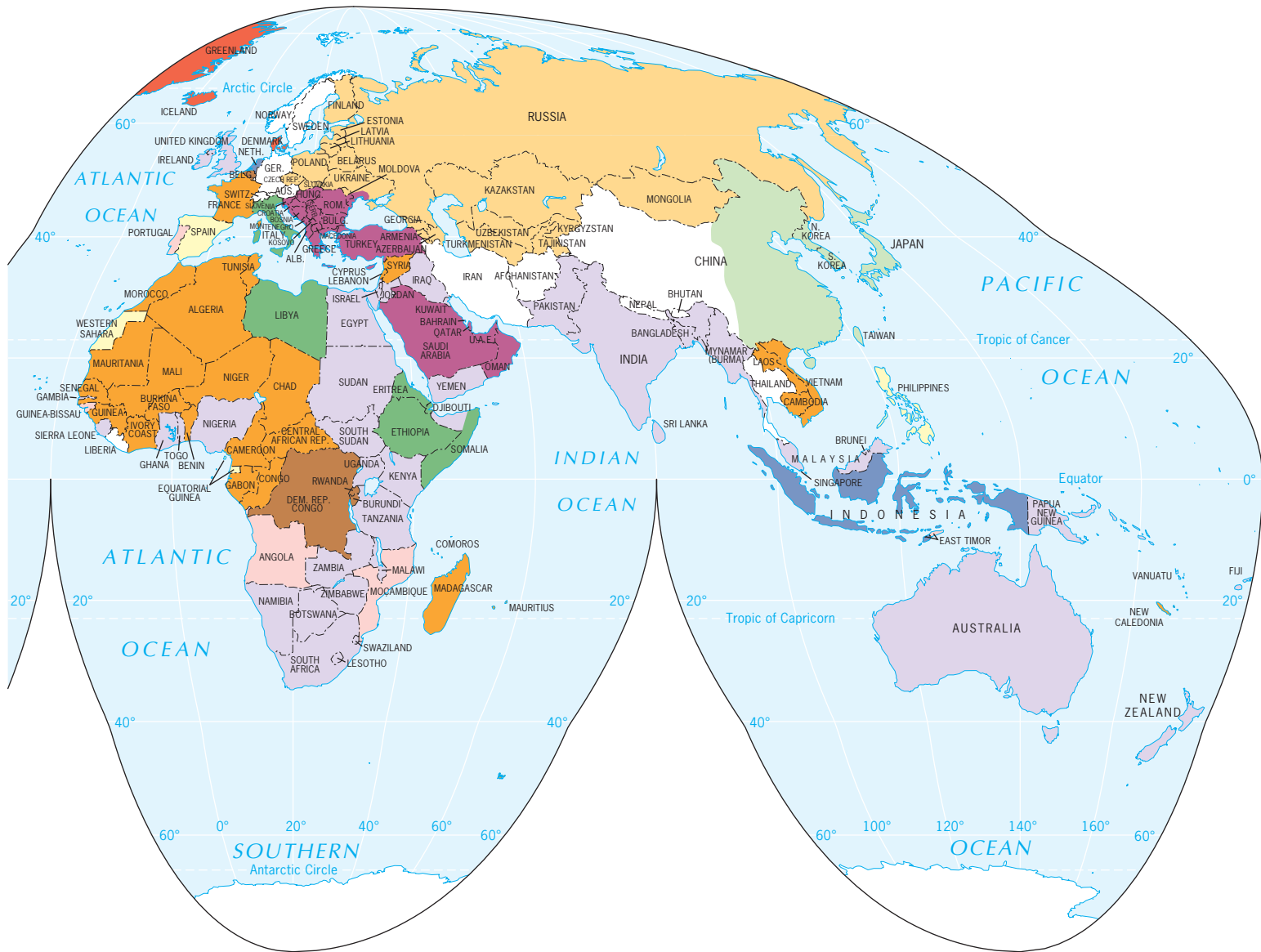
understand why wealth is distributed unevenly, we cannot simply study each country, its resources, and its production of goods. Rather, we need to understand where countries fit in the world economy. That is, we need to see the big picture.

Think of a pointillist painting. Specifically, envision the magnificent work of nineteenth-century French painter Georges Pierre Seurat, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (Fig. 8.9). The painting hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. If you have the opportunity to see the painting and 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 gain a sense of how each dot fits into the picture as a whole.[1] 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 as a whole. To study a single dot or even each dot one at a time, we miss the whole. Even if we study every single dot and add them together, we still miss the whole. We need to step back and see the whole, as well as the individual dots, studying how one affects the other. By now, this should sound familiar: it is one of the ways geographers think about **scale**.

[1] We must 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.

Political geographers took note of one sociologist's
theory of the world economy and added much to it. Build-
ing 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 hold that to understand
any state, we must also understand its spatial and func-
tional relationships within the world 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 the research, we can study the three basic tenets
of world-systems theory, as Wallerstein defines them:

1. The world economy has one market and a global
   division of labor.
2. Although the world has multiple states, almost every-
   thing takes place within the context of the world
   economy.
3. The world economy has a three-tier structure.

According to Wallerstein, the development of a
world economy began with capitalist exchange around
1450 and encompassed the globe by 1900. **Capitalism**
means that in the world economy, individuals, corpora-
tions, and states produce goods and services that are
exchanged for profit. To generate a profit, producers seek
the cheapest production and costs. Since labor (including
salaries and benefits) is now often the most expensive of
these production costs, corporations often seek to move
production of a good from, for example, North Carolina
to Mexico and then to China, simply to take advantage
of cheaper labor. In addition to 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, gen-
erate new twists on old products, and create demand for
the products through marketing. As children, none of the
authors of this book could have imagined buying a bottle
of water. Now, the sale of water in bottles is commonplace.

Second, despite the existence of approximately 200
states, everything takes place within the context of the
world economy (and has since 1900). Colonialism played
a major role in establishing this system by exporting the
European state idea and facilitating the construction of an
interdependent global economy. When colonies became
independent, gaining the legal status of sovereign states
was relatively easy for most colonies. The United Nations
Charter even set up a committee to help colonies do so
after World War II. But gaining true economic indepen-
dence is all but impossible. The economies of the world
are tied together, generating intended and unintended
consequences that fundamentally change places.

Lastly, world-systems theorists see the world econ-
omy as a three-tiered structure: the core, periphery, and
semiperiphery. The **core** and the periphery are not just
places but the sites where particular processes take place.
The core is where one is most likely to find higher levels
of education, higher salaries, and more technology—core
processes that generate more wealth in the world econ-
omy. The **periphery** more commonly has lower levels of
education, lower salaries, and less technology—peripheral
processes associated with a more marginal position in the
world economy.

■ **Figure 8.10**

The World Economy.   One representation of core, periphery, and semi-periphery based on a calculation called World-Economy Centrality, derived by sociologist Paul Prew. The authors took into consideration factors not quantified in Prew's data, including membership in the European Union, in moving some countries from the categories Prew's data recommended to other categories.   *Data from: Paul Prew, World-Economy Centrality and Carbon Dioxide Emissions: A New Look at the Position in the Capitalist World-System and Environmental Pollution, American Sociological Association, 12, 2 (2010) 162–191.*
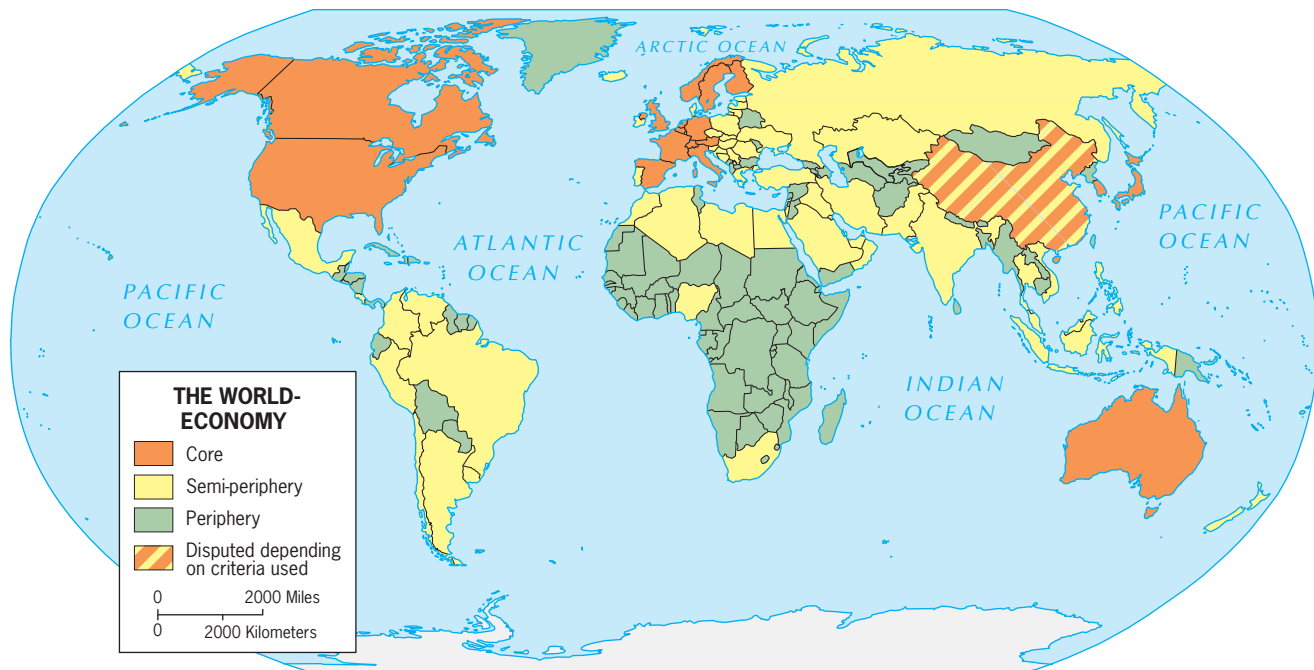

Figure 8.10 presents one way of dividing up the world in world-systems terms. The map designates some states as part of the **semiperiphery**—places where core and periphery processes are both occurring—places that are exploited by the core but in turn exploit the periphery. The semiperiphery acts as 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. The major concerns are that it overemphasizes economic factors in political development, that it is very state-centric, and that it 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 interlinking parts that need to be understood in relation to one another and as a whole. As such, the impact of world-systems theory has been considerable in political geography, and it is increasingly commonplace for geographers to refer to the kinds of core–periphery distinctions suggested by world-systems theory.

World-systems theory helps explain how colonial powers were able to amass 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, cof-

fee, fruit, and cotton production. During the second wave of colonialism, which happened after the Industrial Revolution, colonizers set their sights on cheap industrial labor, cheap raw materials, and large-scale agricultural plantations.

Not all core countries in the world today were colonial powers, however. Countries including Switzerland, Singapore, and Australia have significant global clout even though they were never classic colonial powers, and that clout is tied in significant part to their positions in the global economy. The countries gained positions through access to the networks of production, consumption, and exchange in the wealthiest parts of the world and through their ability to take advantage of that access.

World-Systems and Political Power

Are economic power and political power one and the same? No, but certainly economic power can bring political power. In the current system, economic power means wealth, and political power means the ability to influence others to achieve your goals. 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. Having wealth helps leaders amass political power. For instance, a wealthy

country can establish a mighty military. But political influence is not simply a function of hard power; it is also diplomatic. Switzerland's declared neutrality, combined with its economic might, aids the country's diplomatic efforts.

World-systems theory helps us understand how Europe politically reorganized the world during colonialism. When colonialism ended in Africa and Asia, the newly independent people continued to follow the European model of political organization. The arbitrarily drawn colonial borders of Africa, dating from the Berlin Conference, became the boundaries of the newly independent states. On the map, former colonies became new states; administrative borders transformed into international boundaries; and, in most cases, colonial administrative towns became capitals. The greatest political challenge facing the states of Africa since independence has been building nation-states out of incredibly divergent (sometimes antagonistic) peoples. The leaders of the newly independent states continually work to build nation-states in the hope of quelling division among the people, securing their territory, and developing their economic (as well as other) systems of organization.

The Enduring Impact of the Nation-State Idea

The idea of meshing the nation and state into a nation-state was not confined to nineteenth-century Europe or twentieth-century Africa. Major players in international relations still seek solutions to complex political conflicts by trying to redraw the political map in an effort 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, the tendency is often to propose new state boundaries around nations, with the goal of making the nation and state fit. Drawing neat boundaries of this sort is usually impossible and the creation of new territories can create different ethno-national problems. Regardless of the multitude of problems and lack of simple solutions to nation and state conflicts, the European territorial state idea became the world model, and that idea is still shaping the political organization of space around the world.

thinking
geographically

Imagine you are the leader of a newly independent state in Africa or Asia. Determine what your government can do to build a nation that corresponds with the borders of your state. Consider the roles of education, government, military, and culture in your exercise in nation-building.

HOW DO STATES SPATIALLY ORGANIZE THEIR GOVERNMENTS?

In the 1950s, a famous political geographer, Richard Hartshorne, described the forces within the state that unify the people as **centripetal** and the forces that divide them as **centrifugal**. Whether a state continues to exist, 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 event or process and simply define it as centrifugal or centripetal. An event such as a war can pull the 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 in a state at any given point. Instead of creating a balance sheet of centripetal and centrifugal forces, governments attempt to unify states through nation-building, through structuring the government in a way that melds the nations within, by defining and defending boundaries, and through expressing control over all of the territory within those boundaries.

By looking at how different governments have attempted to unify the peoples and territories within their domains, we are reminded how important geography is. Governance does not take place in a vacuum. The unique characteristics of places shapes whether any possible governmental "solution" solves or exacerbates matters.

Form of Government

The internal political geographic organization of states can have an impact on state unity. Most states in the world are either unitary or federal states.

Until the end of World War II, many European states, including multinational states, were highly centralized, with the capital city serving as the focus of power. States made no clear efforts 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** governments. The administrative framework of a unitary government 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*, whose representatives came to Paris not just to express regional concerns but to implement central-government decisions back home.

One way of governing a multinational state is to construct a *federal* system, organizing state territory into regions, substates (which we refer to as States), provinces, or cantons. In a strong **federal** system, the regions have much control over government policies and funds, and

States in Nigeria with Shari'a Law. *Data from:* BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1962827 .stm#map.

in a weak federal system, the central government retains a significant measure of power. Most federal systems are somewhere in between, with governments at the state scale and at the substate scale each having control over certain revenues and certain policy areas. Giving control over certain policies (especially culturally relative policies) to smaller-scale governments is one strategy for keeping the state as a whole together.

Federalism functions differently depending on the context. In Nigeria, the 36 constituent States choose their own judicial system. In the Muslim north, twelve States have Shari'a laws (legal systems based on traditional Islamic laws), and in the Christian and animist south, the States do not (Fig. 8.11). 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 stricter laws would help root out corruption among politicians, although it has failed to do so.

In the United States, States take different approaches to matters such as the death penalty, access to alcohol (Fig. 8.12), and the right to carry concealed weapons but many of the fundamentals of the legal system do not differ among States.

Federalism accommodates regional interests by vesting primary power in provinces, States, or other regional 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 Belgium as a single state is uncertain.

Devolution

Devolution is the movement of power from the central government to regional governments within the state. Sometimes devolution is achieved by reworking a constitution to establish a federal system that recognizes the permanency of the regional governments, as Spain has done. In other places, governments devolve power without altering constitutions, almost as an experiment. In the United Kingdom, the Northern Ireland Assembly, a parliamentary body, resulted from devolution, but the British government suspended its activities in 2002 and then reinstated the assembly in 2007. 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.

Ethnocultural Devolutionary Movements

Many of Europe's devolutionary movements came from nations within a state that define themselves as being ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct.

The capacity of ethnocultural forces to stimulate devolutionary processes has been evident, for example, in eastern Europe. Parts of the eastern European map have changed quite drastically over the past two decades, and two countries, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, succumbed to devolutionary pressures. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the process was peaceful: Czechs and Slovaks divided their country, creating a new international border. As Figure 8.13 shows, however, one of the two new states,

Guest Field Note

Interstate-40, near Blackwell, Arkansas.

In most states in the U.S., a "dry county" might cause one to think of a place where there is very little rain. But in the southern part of the U.S., there are many dry counties—that is, 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 (see Figure 7.28) or other Protestant

■ **Figure 8.12**

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 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.

Credit: Paul T. Gray, Jr., Russellville High School

Slovakia, is not homogeneous. About 11 percent of Slovakians 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 or self-governance to protect its heritage in the new state of Slovakia.

Compared to the constituent units of the former Yugoslavia (discussed in detail in Chapter 7), other countries shown in Figure 8.14 have dealt with devolutionary pressures more peacefully. Among these are Lithuania and Ukraine. Elsewhere in the world, however, ethnocultural fragmentation has produced costly wars. For example, ethno-cultural differences were at the heart of the civil war that wracked Sri Lanka (South Asia) between the 1980s and 2009, with the Sinhalese (Buddhist) majority ultimately suppressing the drive by the Tamil (Hindu) minority for an independent state.

Devolutionary forces based on ethno-cultural claims are gaining momentum in places that have long looked stable from the outside. The communist government of China has pragmatically, and arguably 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 under the government's One Child Policy. Whether the nations within China will challenge the state remains to be seen. In China's far west, Tibetan and Uyghur separatist movements have become more visible, but the Chinese government's firm hold and control of the media and Internet makes it difficult, if not impossible, for separatist groups to hold Egyptian-style protests in China.

Devolution, however, does not *necessarily* fuel greater calls for independence. Nations within states can, instead, call for autonomy within the borders of the state. In the United Kingdom, Scotland voted in 1997 to establish its own parliament, which had last met in 1707. The 129 members of the Scottish Parliament swear allegiance to the Queen of England. The Scottish Parliament has the right to introduce primary legislation over several issues, including education, health, housing, and police. Unlike the parliament in Wales that was established in 1997 and

the assembly in Northern Ireland that was established in 1998, the parliament of Scotland has the right to levy a tax of up to 3 pence per British pound.

Devolutionary pressures can create demands for new states, such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, or for greater autonomy within a state, like Scotland in the United Kingdom.

Economic Devolutionary Forces

Devolutionary pressures often arise from a combination of sources. In Catalonia, ethnocultural differences play a significant role, but Catalonians also cite economics; with about 6 percent of Spain's territory and just 15 percent of its population, Catalonia produces some 25 percent of all Spanish exports by value and 40 percent of its industrial exports (Fig. 8.15). Pro-independence groups in Catalonia held a referendum in April 2011 seeking a vote for independence. The vote failed, but devolutionary forces continue to argue that Catalonia's economy pays more into the Spanish government than it receives from the state of Spain.

Economic forces play an even more prominent role in Italy and France. In Italy, demands for autonomy for Sardinia are deeply 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 forces on its mainland peninsula. One is rooted in regional disparities between north and south. The Mezzogiorno region lies to the south, below the Ancona Line (an imaginary border extending from Rome to the Adriatic coast at Ancona). The wealthier north stands in sharp contrast to the poorer south. Despite the large subsidies granted to the Mezzogiorno, the development gap between the north, very much a 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 within the country.

Brazil provides another example of the interconnections between devolutionary movements and economics. As in northern Italy, a separatist movement emerged in the 1990s in a better-off region in the south that includes the three southernmost States of Rio Grande do Sul,
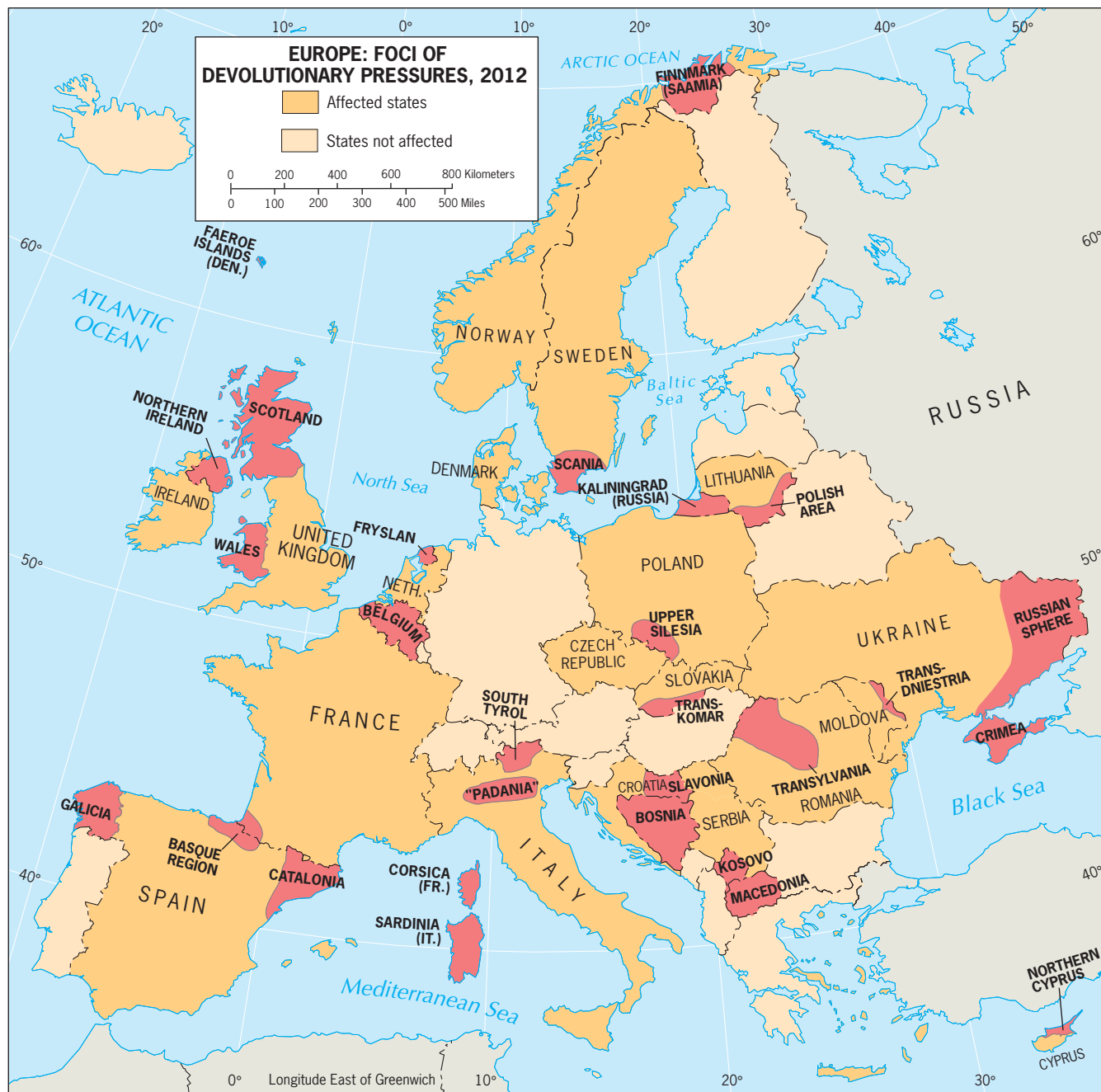
Figure 8.14

Europe: Foci of Devolutionary Pressures, 2012.   © H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons.

Santa Catarina, and Parana. Southerners complained that the government was misspending their tax money on assistance to Amazonia in northern Brazil. The southerners found a leader, manufactured a flag, and demanded independence for their Republic of the Pampas. The Brazilian government responded by outlawing the separatists' political party, but the economic differences between north and south continue, and devolution pressures will certainly arise again.

Territorial Influences on Devolution

We have seen how political decisions and cultural and economic forces can generate devolutionary processes in states. Devolutionary events have at least one feature in common: they most often occur on the margins of states. Note that every one of the devolution-affected areas shown in Figure 8.14 lies on a coast or on a border. Distance, remoteness, and marginal location frequently

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 exist, however. The political geographer Saul Cohen theorized in 1991 that political entities situated in border zones between geopolitical powers may become gateway states, absorbing and assimilating diverse cultures and traditions and emerging as new entities, no longer dominated by one or the other. Hawai'i, he suggests, is a candidate for this status.

Territorial characteristics can play a significant role in starting and sustaining devolutionary processes. Distance can be compounded by differences in physical geography—a feeling of remoteness can be fueled by being isolated in a valley or separated by mountains or a river. Basic physical-geographic and locational factors can thus be key ingredients in the devolutionary process.

Electoral Geography

The partitioning of state territory into electoral districts represents another key component of a state's internal political geography. Electoral geographers examine how the spatial configuration of electoral districts and the voting patterns that emerge in particular elections reflect and influence social and political affairs. Various countries use different voting systems to elect their governments. 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 an extent, the rights of minorities in those regions.

In the 1994 election in South Africa, the leading political party, the African National Congress, designated at least 35 percent of its slate of candidates to women, helping South Africa become one of the world leaders in the percent of women who hold seats in parliament or legislature (see Fig. 5.17).

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 have raised this kind of analysis to

■ 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 that is not just evident in the major public buildings. The major streets are lined with impressive buildings—many with intricate stone façades. © Alexander B. Murphy.

strengthen devolutionary tendencies. The regions most likely to seek devolution are those far from the national capital. Many are separated by water, desert, or mountains from the center of power and adjoin neighbors that may support separatist objectives.

Note also that many islands are subject to devolutionary processes: Corsica (France), Sardinia (Italy), Taiwan (China), Singapore (Malaysia), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Jolo (Philippines), Puerto Rico (United States), Mayotte (Comoros), and East Timor (Indonesia) are notable examples. As this list indicates, some of these islands became independent states, while others were divided during devolution. Insularity clearly has advantages for separatist movements.

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,

Field Note

"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."

Figure 8.16
Honolulu, Hawai'i.   © H. J. de Blij.

new levels. Political geographers study church affiliation, income level, ethnic background, education attainment, and numerous other social and economic factors to gain an understanding of why voters in a certain region might have voted the way they did.
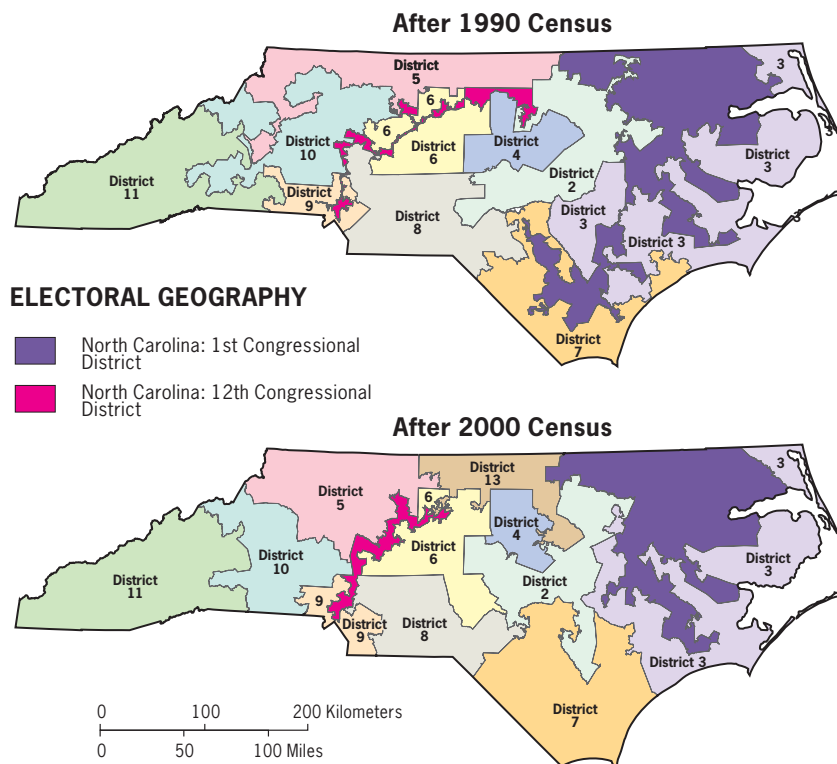
The domain in which electoral geographers can have the most concrete influence is in the drawing of electoral districts. In a democracy with representatives elected by district, spatial organization of the districts determines whose voice is heard in a given place—with impacts on who is elected. A voter's most direct contact with government is at the local level. The United States Constitution establishes a system of **territorial representation.** In the Senate, each major territorial unit (State) gets two representatives, and in the House of Representatives, members are elected from territorially defined districts based on population.

The Constitution requires a census every ten years in order to enumerate the population and reapportion the representatives accordingly. **Reapportionment** is the process by which districts are moved according to population shifts, so that each district encompasses approximately the same number of people. For example, after the 2010 census, several States in the Rust Belt, including

Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan lost representatives and the Sun Belt States of Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida along with the southwestern States of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah gained representatives.

In the United States, once reapportionment is complete, individual States go through the process of redistricting, each following its own system. The criteria involved in redistricting are numerous, but the most important is equal representation, achieved by ensuring that districts have approximately the same populations. In addition, the Supreme Court prefers compact and contiguous districts that keep political units (such as counties) intact. Finally, the courts have repeatedly called for representational equality of racial and linguistic minorities.

Even after the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, minorities were refused voting rights in a multitude of districts and States around the country. County registrars would close their doors when African Americans came to register to vote, and intimidation kept many away from voting at the polls. Even in places where minorities were allowed to register and vote, the parties drawing the voting districts or choosing the electoral system would make it nearly impossible

After 1990 Census

ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY

District 5
6
6
District 10
District 6
District 4
District 9
District 2
District 11
District 8
District 3
District 3
District 3
District 3
District 7
3

North Carolina: 1st Congressional District

North Carolina: 12th Congressional District

After 2000 Census

District 13
District 5
6
District 4
District 6
District 10
District 2
District 11
9
District 9
District 8
District 3
District 3
District 7
3

0   100   200 Kilometers

0   50   100 Miles

Figure 8.17

Electoral Geography. North Carolina's congressional districts in 1992 and 2002. In 1992, North Carolina concentrated minorities into majority-minority districts. In 2002, North Carolina made its districts more compact and defended them on criteria other than race, in accordance with Supreme Court decisions during the 1990s. *Data from: United States Census, 2011.*

for the election of a minority to occur. For example, if a government has to draw ten districts in a State that is 60 percent white, 30 percent African American, and 10 percent Hispanic, it can easily dilute the 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 have the effect of weakening minority voting power. In a series of decisions, the courts interpreted this amendment to mean States needed to redistrict in a way that would ensure minority representation. Using this criterion in the redistricting that followed the 1990 census, 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 above, 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 pack minorities who do not live compactly and contiguously, States have drawn bizarrely shaped districts, connecting

minority populations with meandering corridors and following Interstates to connect urban areas that have large minority populations (Fig. 8.18).

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." Certainly, many of the districts now on the United States electoral map may be seen as gerrymanders, but for an important purpose: to provide representation to minorities who, without it, would not be represented as effectively in the House of Representatives. Despite this well-intended 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 peoples' notions of fairness. And that is only the beginning. The voting patterns that emerge from particular elections can help reinforce a sense of regionalism and can shape a government's

response to issues in the future. Small wonder, then, that many individuals who have little general understanding of geography at least appreciate the importance of its electoral geography component.

Choose an example of a devolutionary movement and consider which geographic factors favor, or work against, greater autonomy (self-governance) for the region. Would granting the region autonomy strengthen or weaken the state in which the region is currently situated?

HOW ARE BOUNDARIES ESTABLISHED, AND WHY DO BOUNDARY DISPUTES OCCUR?

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

Many borders 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 coal reserves, for example, 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–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. The Germans wanted compensation for the gas they felt they lost. 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; they also alleged that the Kuwaitis were 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, as well as by what lies beyond, at higher altitudes. But how high does the airspace
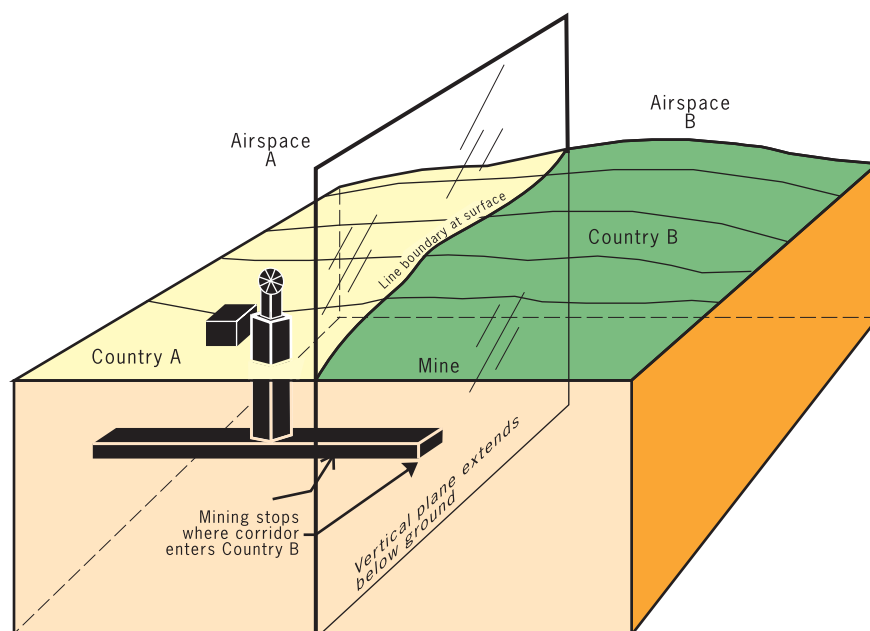

Figure 8.18

The Vertical Plane of a Political Boundary. © E. H. Fouberg, A. B. Murphy, H. J. de Blij, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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

States typically *define* the boundary 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 by drawing on a map. If either or both of the states so desire, they can *demarcate* the boundary by using steel posts, concrete pillars, fences, walls, or some other visible means to mark the boundary on the ground. 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 *administrate* borders—to determine how the boundaries will be maintained and to determine which goods and people may cross them. How a boundary is administered can change dramatically over time, however (Fig. 8.20).

Types of Boundaries

When boundaries are drawn using grid systems such as latitude and longitude or township and range, political geographers refer to these boundaries as **geometric boundaries**. In North America, the United States and Canada used a single line of latitude west of the Great Lakes to define their boundary. During the 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 on the landscape as physical geographic features. **Physical-political** (also called natural-political) **boundaries** are boundaries that 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 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; for example, four of the five Great Lakes of North America are borders between the United States

Field Note

"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 Agreement eliminating border controls between countries, crossing that same border today is literally like a walk in the park."

Figure 8.20
Piazza della Transalpina   A square divided between the towns of Gorizia, Italy and Nova Gorica, Slovenia.   © Alexander B. Murphy.

and Canada, and several of the Great Lakes of East Africa are borders between Congo and its eastern neighbors.

Physical features sometimes make convenient political boundaries, but topographic features are not static. Rivers change course, volcanoes erupt, and slowly, mountains erode. People perceive physical-political boundaries as stable, but many states have entered territorial conflicts over borders based on physical features (notably Chile and Argentina). Similarly, 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 (the United States on the Rio Grande). The stability of boundaries has more to do with local historical and geographical circumstances than with the character of the boundary itself.

Boundary Disputes

The boundary we see as a line on a map is the product of a complex series of legal steps that begins with a written description of the boundary. Sometimes that legal description is old and imprecise. Sometimes it was dictated by a stronger power that is now less dominant, giving the weaker neighbor a reason to argue for change. At other times the geography of the borderland has actually changed; the river that marked the boundary may have changed course, or a portion of it has been cut off.

Resources lying across a boundary can lead to conflict. In short, states often argue about their boundaries. Boundary disputes take four principal forms: definitional, locational, operational, and allocational.

Definitional boundary disputes focus on the legal language of the boundary agreement. For example, 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, it would seem, 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 the delimitation and possibly the demarcation of the boundary. The definition is not in dispute, but its interpretation is. Sometimes the language of boundary treaties is vague enough to allow mapmakers to delimit the line in various ways. For example, when the colonial powers defined their empires in Africa and Asia, they specified their international boundaries rather carefully. But internal administrative boundaries often were not strictly defined. When those internal boundaries became the boundaries between independent states, there was plenty of room for argument. In a few instances, locational disputes arise because no definition of the boundary exists at all. An important case involves Saudi Arabia and Yemen, whose potentially oil-rich boundary area is not covered by a treaty.

Operational boundary disputes involve neighbors who 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 lead to operational disputes 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 of the kind described earlier, involving the Netherlands and Germany over natural gas and Iraq and Kuwait over oil, are becoming more common as the search for resources intensifies. Today many such disputes involve international boundaries at sea. Oil reserves under the seafloor below coastal waters sometimes lie in areas where exact boundary delimitation may be difficult or subject to debate. Another growing area of allocational dispute has to do with 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.

People used to think physical-political boundaries were always more stable than geometric boundaries. Through studies of many places, political geographers have confirmed that this idea is false. Construct your own argument explaining why physical-political boundaries can create just as much instability as geometric boundaries.

HOW DOES THE STUDY OF GEOPOLITICS HELP US UNDERSTAND THE WORLD?

Geopolitics is the interplay among geography, power, politics, and international relations on Earth's surface. Political science and international relations tend to focus on governmental institutions, systems, and interactions. Geopolitics brings locational considerations, environmental contexts, territorial ideas and arrangements, and spatial assumptions to the fore. Geopolitics helps us understand the spatial power arrangements that shape international relations.

Classical Geopolitics

Classical geopoliticians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally fit into one of two camps: the German school, which sought to explain why certain states are powerful and how to become powerful, and the British/American school, which sought to offer strategic advice by identifying parts of Earth's surface that were particularly important for the maintenance and projection of power. A few geopoliticians tried to bridge the gap, blending the two schools, but for the most part classical geopoliticians who are still writing today are in the British/American school, offering 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 the acquisition of territories that provide adequate space for the members of the state's dominant nation to thrive, which is what Ratzel called *lebensraum*. If a state is confined within permanent

and static boundaries and deprived of overseas domains, Ratzel argued, it can atrophy. Territory is thus seen as the state's essential, life-giving force.

Ratzel's theory was based on his 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 translated his abstract writings into policy recommendations that ultimately led to 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, studying the physical geographic map with a view toward determining the locations of 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.

Mackinder was concerned with power relationships at a time when Britain had acquired a global empire through its strong navy. To many of his contemporaries, the oceans—the paths to colonies and trade—were the key to world domination, but Mackinder disagreed. He concluded that a land-based power, not a sea power, would ultimately rule the world. His famous article contained a lengthy appraisal of the largest and most populous landmass on Earth—Eurasia (Europe and Asia together). At the heart of Eurasia, he argued, lay an impregnable, resource-rich "pivot area" extending from eastern Europe to eastern Siberia (Fig. 8.21). Mackinder issued a warning: if this pivot area became influential in Europe, a great empire could be formed.

Mackinder later renamed his pivot area the heartland, and his warning became known as the heartland theory. In his book *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919), Mackinder (calling Eurasia "the World Island") issued a stronger warning to the winners of World War I, stating:

> 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 in disarray, 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 controlled over much of Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, the heartland theory attracted renewed attention.

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

In 1943, Mackinder wrote a final paper expressing concern that the Soviet Union, under Stalin, would seek to exert control over the states of Eastern Europe. He offered strategies for keeping the Soviets in check, including avoiding the expansion of the Heartland into the Inner Crescent (Fig. 8.21) and creating an alliance around the North Atlantic to join the forces of land and sea powers against the Heartland. His ideas were not embraced by many at the time, but within ten years of publication, the United States began its containment policy to stop the expansion of the Soviet Union, and the United States, Canada, and Western Europe formed an alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Further proof of the importance of Mackinder's legacy can be seen in the fact that, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, his theories enjoy widespread currency in Russian foreign policy circles.

Influence of Geopoliticians on Politics

Ratzel and Mackinder are only two of many geopoliticians who influenced international relations. Their writings, grounded in history, current events, and physical geography, sounded logical and influenced many politicians, and in some ways still do. NATO still exists and has not invited Russia to join the military alliance, but it has extended membership to 28 states since the end of the Cold War, including eastern European states. NATO has a working partnership with former republics of the Soviet Union, though the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 produced a chilling effect on NATO's eastward expansion.

Despite the staying power of geopolitical theories, geopolitics declined as a formal area of study after World War II. Because of the influence Ratzel's theory had on Hitler and because another geopolitician, Karl Haushofer, also influenced Hitler, the term *geopolitics* acquired a

negative connotation. For some decades after World War II, the term was in such disrepute that few political geographers, even those studying power relationships, would identify themselves as students of geopolitics. Time, along with more balanced perspectives, has reinstated geopolitics as a significant field of study, encompassing efforts to understand the spatial and territorial dimensions of power relationships past, present, and future.

Critical Geopolitics

Rather than focusing their attention on predicting and prescribing, many current students of geopolitics focus on revealing and explaining the underlying spatial assumptions and territorial perspectives of international actors. Political geographers Gearoid O'Tuathail and John Agnew refer to those actors in the most powerful states, the core states, as "intellectuals of statecraft." The basic concept behind **critical geopolitics** is that intellectuals of statecraft construct ideas about geographical circumstances and places, these ideas influence and reinforce their political behaviors and policy choices, and then affect what happens and how most people interpret what happens.

O'Tuathail has focused particular attention on American geopolitical reasoning—examining speeches and statements by U.S. intellectuals of statecraft. He has drawn attention to how several American leaders often spatialize politics into a world of "us" and "them." Political leaders can shape 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 argues that presidents have repeatedly defined an "us" that is pro-democracy, 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 ensuing presidencies, terrorism replaced the Soviet Union as the "they." Sounding remarkably similar, Democratic President William J. Clinton and Republican President George W. Bush justified military actions against terrorists. 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 made a similar claim, arguing 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. That much may seem obvious, as there are clear ideological fault lines between an organization such as al-Qaeda and a state such as the United States. But critical geopolitics seeks to move beyond such differences to explore the spatial ideas and understandings that undergird particular political perspectives and that shape policy approaches.

One of the most powerful geopolitical ideas since Samuel Huntington published *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1996 posits an "Islamic World." September 11, 2001 amplified the idea of a threatening Islamic realm. The U.S. government, concerned about al-Qaeda's influence in the Islamic World, justified military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The idea of a unified "Islamic World" appears in the words of commentators on 24-hour news channels. The problem with such conceptions is that the "Islamic World" is tremendously diverse, culturally, and religiously, and some of the most intractable conflicts of recent times have been fought within the Islamic World. Belief in or fear of a unified "Islamic World" is not any more rational than belief in or fear of a unified "Christian World." Regardless, if geopolitical ideas are believed, they shape the policies that are pursued and how we perceive what happens on the ground. An important task for geographers, then, is to understand the ideological roots and implications of geopolitical reasoning by intellectuals of statecraft.

Geopolitical World Order

Political geographers study geopolitical world orders, which are the temporary periods of stability in the way international politics is conducted. For example, during the Cold War, the geopolitical world order was bipolar—the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact satellites versus the United States and its close allies in Western Europe. In the past, after a stable geopolitical world order broke down, the world went through a transition, eventually settling into a new geopolitical world order. Noted political geographers Peter J. Taylor and Colin Flint argue that at the end of World War II, five possible orders could have emerged among the three major powers, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Each could have created its own bloc with its own allies; the three could have come together under the United Nations; or three possible alliances could have occurred—the United States and USSR against the UK, the United States and the UK against the USSR, or the UK and USSR against the United States. What emerged was the bipolar world order of the Cold War: the United States and the UK against the USSR.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the world entered a transition period, again opening up a variety of different geopolitical possibilities. Some politicians spoke

optimistically about a new geopolitical world order where a standoff of nuclear terror between two superpowers would no longer determine the destinies of states. Supposedly, this new geopolitical order would be shaped by the forces that connect nations and states; by supranational entities like the European Union (discussed in the next section of this chapter); and, should any state violate international rules of conduct, by multilateral military action. The risks of nuclear war would recede, and negotiation would replace confrontation. When a United Nations coalition of states led by the United States in 1991 drove Iraq out of Kuwait, the framework of a New World Order seemed to be taking shape. The Soviet Union, which a few years before was the United States' principal geopolitical antagonist, endorsed the operation. Arab as well as non-Arab forces helped repel the invaders.

Soon, however, doubts and uncertainties began to cloud hopes for a mutually cooperative geopolitical world order. Although states were more closely linked to each other than ever before, national self-interest still acted as a powerful force. Nations wanted to become states, and many did, as the number of United Nations members increased from 159 in 1990 to 184 by 1993 and 192 as of 2006. At the same time, a variety of organizations not tied to specific territories posed a new challenge to the territorially defined state. The number and power of economic and social networks that extend across state borders increased. The new world order includes non-state organizations with political agendas that are not channeled through states and are often spatially diffuse.

Some hoped to see a geopolitical world order based on **unilateralism**, with the United States in a position of hard-power dominance and with allies of the United States following rather than joining the political decision-making process. The U.S. military budget is as large as all the military budgets of all other states in the world combined. The United States' controversial invasion of Iraq significantly undermined its influence in many parts of the globe. Southeast Asian states that had long been oriented toward the United States began to turn away. A significant rift developed across the Atlantic between the United States and some European countries, and anti-Americanism surged around the world. The processes of globalization, the diffusion of nuclear weapons, the emergence of China and India as increasingly significant powers, and the growth of networked groups and organizations, including terrorist groups, also challenged American unilateralism.

When geopolitical strategists and intellectuals of statecraft predict future geopolitical orders, they often assume that individual states will continue to be the dominant actors in the international arena. Yet as we discuss later in this chapter, many of the same forces that worked against American unilateralism have undermined some of the traditional powers of the state. The rise of regional blocs could lead to a new multipolar order, with key clusters of states functioning as major geopolitical nodes. Alternatively, as we will discuss in Chapter 9, global cities may gain increasing power over issues typically addressed by states.

Read a major newspaper (in print or online) and look for a recent statement by a world political leader regarding international politics. Using the concept of critical geopolitics, determine what geopolitical view of the world the leader has—how does he or she view and divide up the world spatially?

WHAT ARE SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND WHAT ARE THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STATE?

Ours is a world of contradictions. Over the past couple of decades some French Canadians, Quebeçois, have demanded independence from Canada even as Canada joined the United States and Mexico in NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). Flemings in northern Belgium called for autonomy or even independence despite the fact that Brussels, the capital of Belgium (and Flanders), serves as the de facto capital of the European Union. At every turn we are reminded of the interconnectedness of nations, states, and regions; yet, separatism and calls for autonomy are rampant. In the early decades of the twenty-first century, we appear to be caught between the forces of division and unification.

Despite conflicts arising from these contradictory forces, today hardly a country exists that is not involved in some supranational organization. A **supranational organization** is an entity composed of three or more states that forge an association and form an administrative structure for mutual benefit and in pursuit of shared goals. 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 NAFTA), many of which have subsidiaries that bring the total to more than 100 (Figure 8.22). 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 neighbors. And in most cases participation in a supranational entity is advantageous to the partners, and being left out can have serious negative implications.

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 point), leading to the creation of the League of Nations in 1919. Even though it was the idea of an American president, the United States was among the countries that did not join this organization because isolationists in the U.S. Senate opposed joining. 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 even 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 League was born of a worldwide desire to prevent future aggression, but 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 made a dramatic appeal 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 of the beginning of World War II the organization collapsed.

Even though the League of Nations ceased functioning, it spawned other supranational organizations. Between World War I and World War II, states created the Permanent Court of International Justice to adjudicate 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 size of territorial seas decades later.

After World War II, states formed a new organization to foster international security and cooperation: the United Nations (UN). Membership in the UN has grown significantly since its inception in 1947 (Fig. 8.23). A handful of states still do not belong to the United Nations, but with the most recent additions in 2006, it now has 192 member states. The United Nations organization includes numerous less visible but nonetheless significant subsidiaries, including the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and WHO (World Health Organization). Not all United Nations members participate in every United Nations subsidiary, but many people around the world have benefited from their work.

We can find evidence of the United Nations' work in the "world" section of any major newspaper. UN peacekeeping troops have helped maintain stability in some of the most contentious regions of the world. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees is called upon to aid refugees in crises in far-flung places. 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, set a precedent and laid the groundwork for countless human rights groups working in the world today.

By participating in the United Nations, states commit 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 United Nations' actions in South Africa (Apartheid) and Iraq (the Gulf War) are examples of UN success, but the organization has its critics as well. Some argue that the composition of its Security Council reflects the world of 1950 more than the world of today. Others express concern about power being vested in an organization that is not directly responsible to voters and that provides little room for non-state interests. Still others criticize the fact that states like Iran, Cuba, and North Korea 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 problems confronting the globe.

Regional Supranational Organizations

The League of Nations and the United Nations are global manifestations of a phenomenon that is expressed even more strongly at the regional level. States organize supranational organizations at the regional scale to position themselves more strongly economically, politically, and even militarily.

Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg undertook the first major modern experiment in regional economic cooperation. The three countries have much in common culturally and economically. Dutch farm products are sold on Belgian markets, and Belgian industrial goods go to the Netherlands and Luxembourg. During World War II, representatives of the three countries decided to create common tariffs and eliminate import licenses and quotas. In 1944, even before the end of the war, the governments of the three states met in London to sign an agreement of cooperation, creating the *Benelux* (*Bel*gium, the *Ne*therlands, and *Lux*embourg) 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 United States Congress with a joint program for economic rehabilitation, and Congress approved it. From 1948 to 1952, the United States gave Europe about $12 billion under the Marshall Plan, the largest foreign aid program in history. This investment revived European national economies and spurred a movement toward cooperation among European states.

The European Union

From the European states' involvement in the Marshall Plan came the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), and this body in turn gave rise to other cooperative organizations. Soon after Europe established the OEEC, France proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with the goal of lifting 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

Figure 8.22

Select Supranational Organizations. *Data from:* Crawford, Jo-Ann and Roberto V. Fiorentino "Changing Landscape of Regional Trade Agreements," World Trade Organization. http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/discussion_papers8_e.pdf

SELECT SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Agadir Agreement
- Andean Community
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
- Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement
- Association of South East Asian Nations
- Caribbean Community and Common Market
- Central American Common Market
- Central American-Dominican Free Trade Agreement
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
- Commonwealth of Independent States
- East African Community
- Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
- Economic Community of West African States
- European Community
- European Customs Union (Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, and Turkey)
- European Free Trade Association
- Gulf Cooperation Council
- North American Free Trade Agreement
- South Africa Customs Union
- South Africa Development Community
- South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement
- Southern Common Market

Striped coloring represents membership in two organizations

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers

0   1000   2000 Miles

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. 8.24).

In the late 1990s, the EU began preparing for the establishment of a single currency—the euro (Fig. 8.25). 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 ten eastern European and Mediterranean island states into the European Union in 2004, and two more in 2007, is a significant development. Integration is a difficult process and often requires painful adjustments

because of the diversity of the states involved. For example, agricultural practices and policies have always varied widely. Yet some general policy must govern agriculture throughout the European Union. 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. In addition, integration requires significant expenditures. 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. Recent financial crises in Greece and Ireland have put the union under unprecedented pressure, as wealthier countries such as Germany question why they should foot the bill for countries that have not (at least in German eyes) managed their finances responsibly.
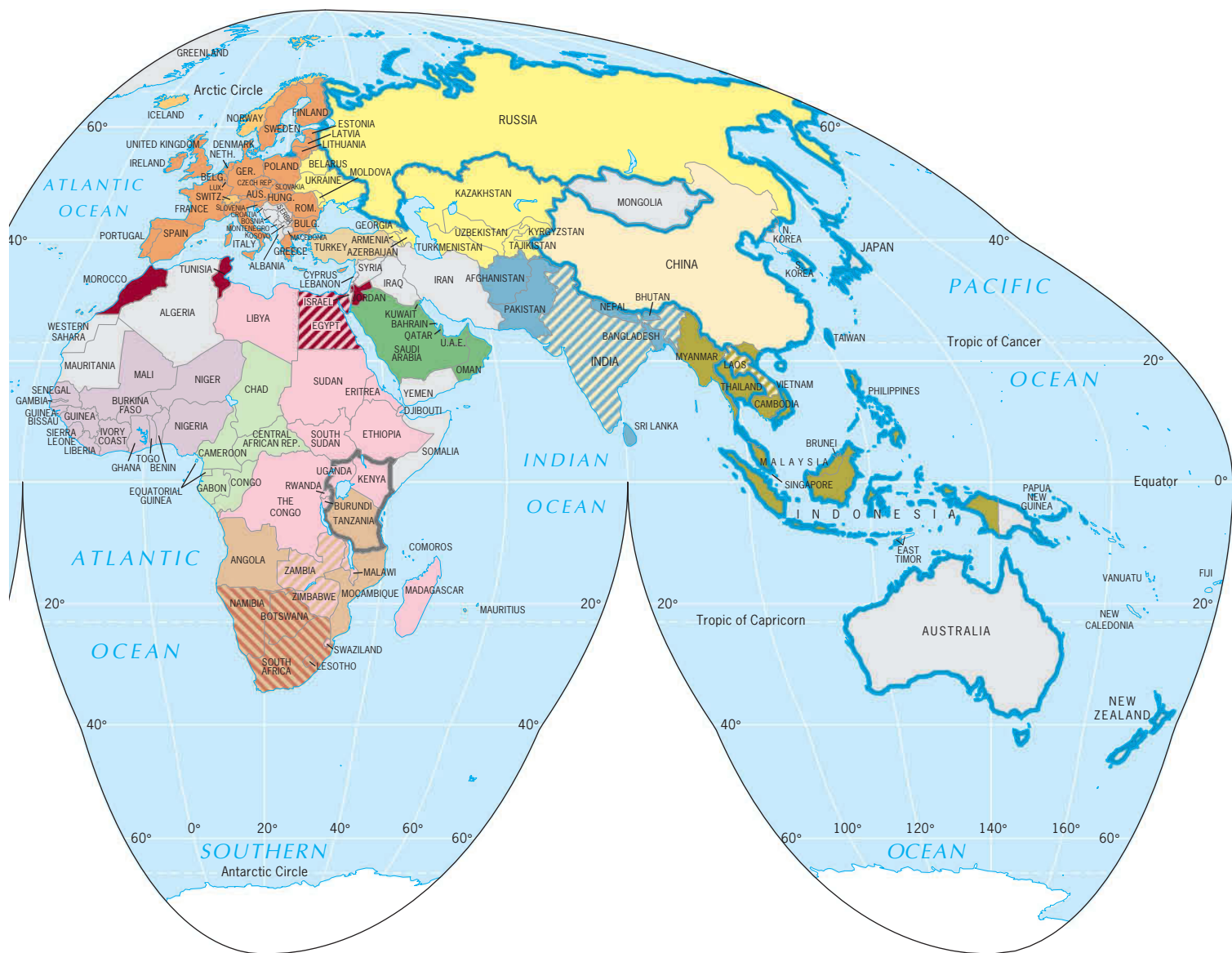
The Union is a patchwork of states with many different ethnic traditions and histories of conflict and competition, and some in Europe express concern over losing traditional state powers. Economic success and growing well-being tend to submerge hesitancy and differences, but in the face of difficult economic or social times, divisive forces can, and have, reasserted themselves. Moreover, as the EU gets bigger, it becomes increasingly difficult for individual states (even powerful ones) to shape the direction of the union. And some citizens in smaller states such as Denmark and Sweden worry about getting lost in the mix.

Another difficult problem involves Turkey. Some western Europeans would like to see Turkey join the EU, thereby widening the organization's reach. The government of Turkey has long sought to join, but many Greeks are hesitant to support Turkish membership because of the long-standing dispute between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus and a number of islands off the Turkish coast. Other EU members have expressed concern over Turkey's human rights record, specifically its treatment of Kurds and its reluctance to recognize the extent of the mass killing of Armenians in World War I. Behind these claims lies an often-unspoken sense among many Europeans that Turkey is not "European" enough to warrant membership, perhaps rooted in a historical and cultural tendency to define Muslims as the "Other." The debate within the EU

■ **Figure 8.23**

Member States of the United Nations.   This map shows charter members, members after 1945 (with dates of entry), and nonmembers of the United Nations.   *Data from:* the United Nations, www.un.org
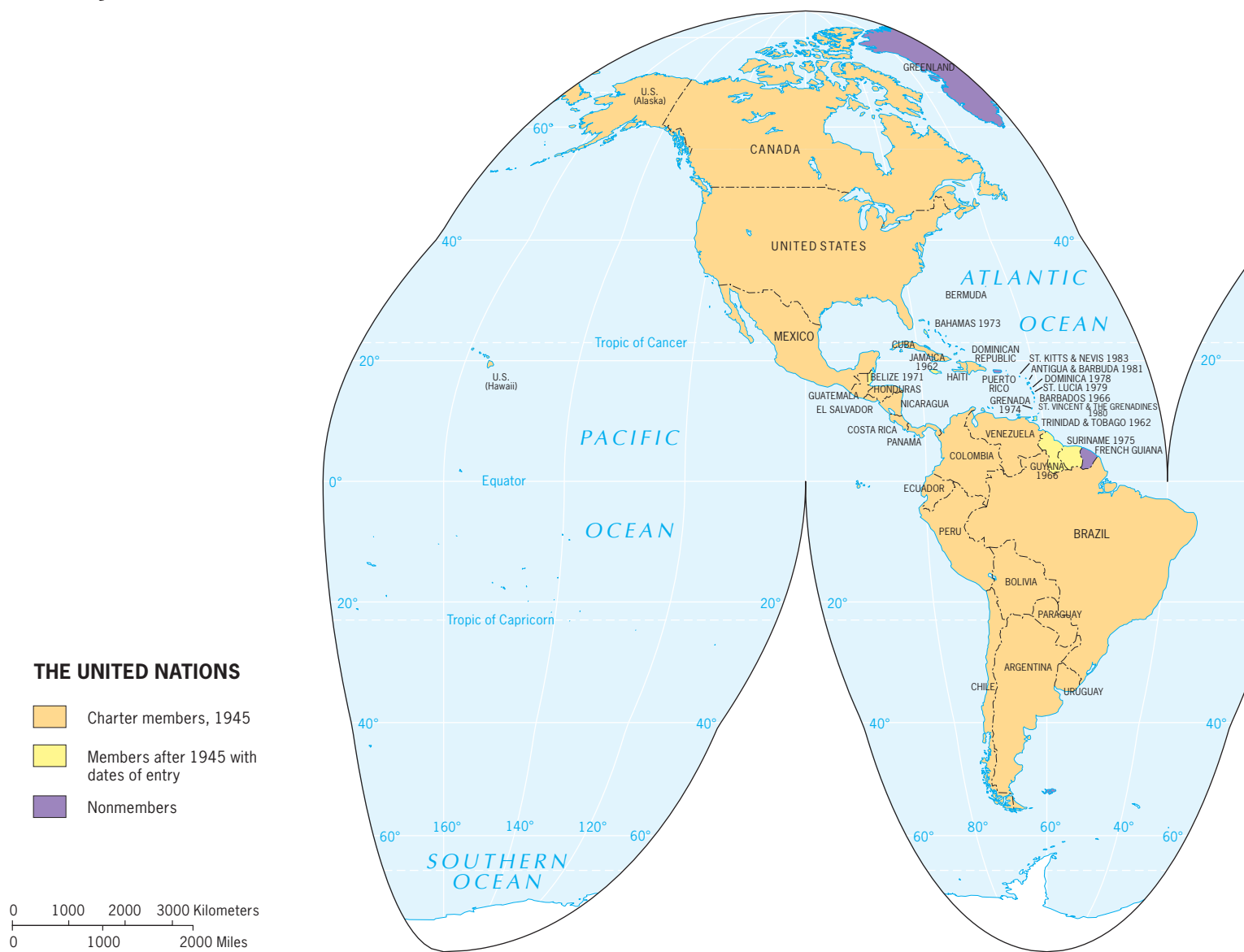
about Turkey has alienated many Turkish people, causing them to question their support for EU membership.

How Does Supranationalism Affect the State?

Supranationalism is a worldwide phenomenon. Other economic associations, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Central American Common Market, the Andean Group, the Southern Cone Community Market (MERCOSUR), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), have drawn up treaties to reduce tariffs and import restrictions in order to ease the flow of commerce in their regions. Not all of these alliances are successful, but economic supranationalism is a sign of the times, a grand experiment still in progress.

Yet, when we turn back to the European Union, we see a supranational organization that is unlike any other. It is not a state, nor is it simply an organization of states. The European Union is remarkable in that it has taken on a life of its own—with a multifaceted government structure, three capital cities, and billions of euros flowing through
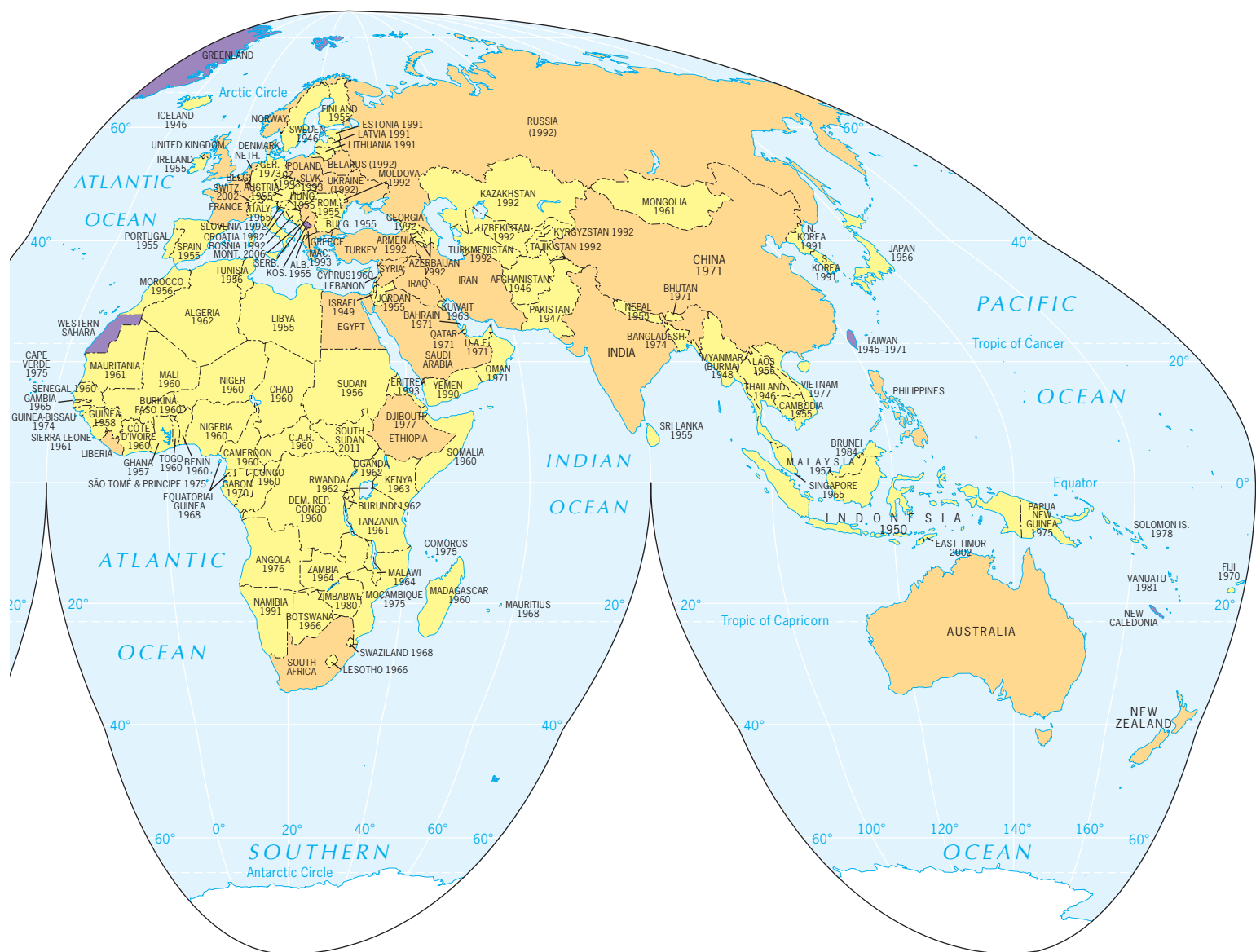
■ **Figure 8.24**

European Supranationalism.   Members of the European Union and their dates of entry.   *Data from:* the European Union, www.europa.eu.int ©H. J. de Blij, P. O. Muller, and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

its coffers. The European Union is extending into foreign relations, domestic policies, and military policies, with sovereignty over certain issues moving from the states to the European Union. One of the authors of this book has studied the degree to which Europeans in some regions are feeling a greater attachment to their region and to the European Union than to their own state (Fig. 8.26). Identifying with the European Union (over the state) is strong in the Benelux countries (the first members) and in regions where people have been disempowered by their

state governments. With the European Union, we may be witnessing a transformation to a new political geographic construct that signifies a change in the political organization of space similar to the transformation to the modern state system that occurred in Europe in the seventeenth century.

Other movements in addition to the European Union are posing major challenges to the state as we know it and raising questions as to whether the division of the world into territorial states is logical, effective, or

■ **Figure 8.25**
Cortina, Italy.   A market in northern Italy advertises the price of fruit in euros.   © Alexander B. Murphy.

even necessary. Among these challenges are the demand of nations within states for independence, economic globalization, increasing connectedness among people and cultures, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons give even small states the ability to inflict massive damage on larger and distant adversaries. Combined with missile technology, this may be the most serious danger the world faces, which is why the United Nations insisted on dismantling Iraq's nuclear capacity after the 1991 Gulf War and why concerns over Iran's nuclear program are so great. Some states publicize their nuclear weapons programs, whereas other nuclear states have never formally acknowledged that they possess nuclear weapons. Reports of nuclear proliferation have led to military actions in the last 30 years. In 1981, when reports of Iraq's nuclear program reached Israel, the Israelis attacked Iraq. As nuclear weapons have become smaller and "tactical" nuclear arms have been developed, the threat of nuclear weapons sales is of growing concern. It is now possible for a hostile state

or group to purchase the power with which to threaten the world.

Although states provide the territorial foundation from which producers and consumers still operate and they continue to exert considerable regulatory powers, economic globalization makes it ever more difficult for states to control economic relations, which is an example of deterritorialization. States are responding to this situation in a variety of ways, with some giving up traditional regulatory powers and others seeking to insulate themselves from the international economy. Still others are working to build supranational economic blocs that they hope will help them cope with an increasingly globalized world. The impacts of many of these developments are as yet uncertain, but it is increasingly clear that states now compete with a variety of other forces in the international arena.

The state's traditional position is being further eroded 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. In 2011, when unrest broke out in Egypt, for example, activists used Facebook to garner support. Scholars and researchers in different countries 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. Katy Perry 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 Mumbai to Santiago.

The rise of fundamentalist religious movements with geopolitical goals represents another global phenomenon with potentially significant implications for a future world order. In Chapter 6, we noted that fundamental religious movements sometimes become extremist by inciting violent acts in the name of their faith. Violence by extremists challenges the state—whether undertaken by individuals at the local scale or by widely diffused groups spread across major world realms. The state's mission to combat religious violence can produce support for the state government in the short term, but the state's 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 international terrorism that began in the 1980s in the name of Islam has dominated the international scene over the past two decades. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the downing of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania, and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan that followed, moved terrorism to the geopolitical center stage. More recent terrorist attacks in Madrid, Moscow, and Mumbai have helped to keep it there.

Figure 8.26

Brussels, Belgium. A woman with a European Union umbrella shops in the flower market in the Grande Place of Brussels. Note that the flag of the European Union has 12 stars, which recognizes the 12 European Community member states that committed to becoming the European Union in 1992. © Erin H. Fouberg.

All of the foregoing processes are creating economic, social, and cultural geographies that look less and less like the map of states (Fig. 8.3). The term **deterritorialization** is sometimes used to describe these processes because globalization, networked communities, and the like undermine the state's traditional territorial authority. But the state is far from disappearing, and nationalism continues to be a fundamental social force in the world today. Indeed, in many instances. the state is moving to solidify control over its territory through a process known as **reterritorialization**. For example, in response to concerns over illegal immigration, some state borders are becoming more heavily fortified, and moving across those borders is becoming more difficult. However one views the balance between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the state of the geopolitical order is clearly in flux. We appear to be headed toward a world in which the spatial distribution of power is more complex than the traditional map of states would suggest. Describing that spatial distribution will be a challenge for geographers for generations to come.

thinking geographically

In 2004, the European Union welcomed ten additional states, and in 2007, it welcomed two more. Examine the European Union website (listed below in the Learn More Online section). Read about the European Union's expansion and what is going on in the European Union right now. Assess how complicated it is for the European Union to bring together these many divergent members into one supranational organization.

Summary

We tend to take the state for granted, but the modern state idea is less than 400 years old. The idea and ideal of the nation-state have diffused around the globe in the wake of colonialism and the emergence of the modern international legal order.

The state may seem natural and permanent, but it is not. New states are being recognized, and existing states are vulnerable to destructive forces. How long can this way of politically organizing space last?

As we look to arrangements beyond the state, we can turn to the global scale and consider what places the global world economy most affects, shapes, and benefits. In the next chapter, we study global cities with major links in the world economy. Global cities dominate their surroundings and connect with each other across the world in many ways that transcend the state.

Geographic Concepts

political geography	scale	splitting
state	world-systems theory	majority-minority
territory	capitalism	districts
territoriality	commodification	gerrymandering
sovereignty	core	boundary
territorial integrity	periphery	geometric boundary
mercantilism	semiperiphery	physical-political
Peace of Westphalia	ability	boundary
nation	centripetal	heartland theory
nation-state	centrifugal	critical geopolitics
democracy	unitary	unilateralism
multinational state	federal	supranational
multistate nation	devolution	organization
stateless nation	territorial representation	deterritorialization
colonialism	reapportionment	reterritorialization

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