

- What is the role of the modern country in the contemporary political landscape? How do forces such as ethnic separation, economic globalization, regional supranationalism, and regional environmental problems affect the role of the country in the modern world?
- What are the forms and roles of political units above and below the country level?
- How do specific political policies, such as racial segregation, affect the organization of spatial and cultural life?

PART
1

Territorial Dimensions of Politics

Human Territoriality

Territoriality is creating ownership over a defined space. Territoriality can apply to your bedroom or an entire country and often evokes an emotional response. Just as when your sibling “invades” your room uninvited causes you to feel angry (and even to retaliate), a country’s threatening the defined space of another country often provokes an aggressive response. Consider, for example, when Iraq invaded Kuwait’s territory and triggered the first Gulf War; or when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and England and France came to Poland’s defense, fearing that Germany would be moving toward taking their lands.

Some political geographers claim that human territoriality is equal to animals’ aggressive defense of their territories, such as when a dog runs into another dog’s yard. However, American geographer Robert Sack argued that humans are far more complex than animals in their territorial behavior. He posited that human territoriality is contextual and depends on time and place. For example, a country may allow people to cross its administrative border if they have the correct paperwork, and countries enter into and get out of treaties to work together to protect their lands. Such allowances are rare in the animal world.

Territoriality also applies to the geography of personal space. **Personal space** is the area we claim as our own territory into which others may not enter without our permission. A student sitting in a classroom desk, for example, may claim that her personal space extends around her desk like a bubble. If someone invades that space—getting close to her face, for instance—she may feel an immediate sense of anxiety, discomfort,

or even anger. How much space is considered “personal” often varies with time and place. For example, people living in small towns often have larger bubbles of personal space than do New Yorkers, who deal with crowded subways and streets. How many times have you accidentally brushed someone’s leg or arm and said, “I’m sorry”? This indicates your perception that you have invaded that person’s personal space. However, if you walk through a crowded street jammed with people and have to touch people in order to move, your definition of personal space reconfigures, and you may be less likely to say “I’m sorry” every time you make contact with another human. Human territoriality is contextual.



Proxemics is the study of personal space. One commonly established method of claiming personal space is through use of spatial markers, such as a jacket that a man attending a concert places on a seat to mark it as his personal space in the auditorium.

States and Nations

Since first grade, you have probably been referring to England as a country. Political geographers use a more exact term: *state*. In political geography, a **state** is a political unit with a permanent population, territorial boundaries that are recognized by other states, an effective government, a working economy, and sovereignty. **Sovereignty** is the internationally recognized control a state has over the people and territory within its boundaries. Germany, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, the United States, and Mexico are just a few of the nearly 200 states (or countries) on the earth. Some states, such as the United States, have smaller divisions within them that they also refer to as “States.” In political geography, the term “state” is used interchangeably with “country.”

On the other hand, political geographers use the term **nation** to refer to a group of people who share a common culture and identify as a cohesive group. Language, religion, shared history, and territory are cultural elements that can create such cohesion and form a nation. Usually, people are willing to fight on behalf of their national identity. The United States is often considered a nation, a group of people unified around the principle of being American. Perhaps the constitutional sense of liberty is at the base of this idea of an American nation.

Buffer States and Shatterbelts

Sometimes a buffer state or zone is used to try to calm two conflicting states or prevent them from further violence. A **buffer state** is an independent country located between two larger countries that are in conflict. Russia and China have warred over boundaries for centuries, but Mongolia has helped reduce direct confrontation between the two states. A **buffer zone** exists when two or more countries sit between two larger countries in conflict. After World War II, Eastern Europe was a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Western Europe. However, the Soviets worked to dominate that buffer zone and install communist satellite states in Eastern Europe. **Satellite states** are countries controlled by another, more powerful state. For example, Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union, controlled by Moscow almost as tightly as a colonized state. The installation of communist satellite states in Eastern Europe erected what was coined by Winston Churchill as an “iron curtain” boundary between Western Europe and Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe.

A **shatterbelt** is a state or group of states that exists within a sphere of competition between larger states, as Poland was between Russia and Germany in World War II. Often states in a shatterbelt are the victims of invasion, boundary changes, and poor economic development.

Boundaries

Whether it is two states warring or two neighbors on a block arguing over a fence, the locations and definitions of boundaries are at the root of many conflicts at varying scales. Boundaries and their meanings shape our lives. Whether you are crossing into your neighbor's yard or into another country, these human-created lines represent ownership and identity, and they affect human behavior. Boundaries also exist within states at many levels: territories, municipalities, towns, villages, and so forth. *International* political boundaries separate states' territories; this type of political boundary actually extends to define what the state owns above and below the ground. There are several types of political boundaries.

Geometric political boundaries are straight-line boundaries that do not relate to the cultural or physical features of the territories involved. The original boundary separating North and South Korea followed a line of latitude. **Physical (or natural) political boundaries** separate territory according to natural features in the landscape, such as mountains, deserts, or rivers. France is divided from Spain by the Pyrenees

- The global economic semiperiphery is a third region in the world system in which countries are between the economic core and the periphery.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is a branch of political geography that analyzes how states behave as political and territorial systems. In other words, geopolitics is the study of how states interact and compete in the political landscape. Nineteenth-century geopolitical thinker Friedrich Ratzel's **organic theory** argued that states are living organisms that hunger for land and, like organisms, want to grow larger and larger by acquiring more nourishment in the form of land. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis used Ratzel's theory as justification for invading other states to feed Germany's organic hunger for land.

Another prominent geopolitical thinker was Halford J. Mackinder, author of the heartland theory. According to the **heartland theory**, the era of sea power was ending and control over land would be the key to power. He believed that Eurasia was the "world island" and the key to dominating the world. Ruling this world island necessitated controlling eastern Europe. Mackinder's theory is linked to the Communists' efforts to dominate eastern Europe and to the U.S. "containment policy" of keeping the Russians from gaining additional territories in the heartland, which the United States believed, based on the **domino theory**, would cause a fall of the world island to the Soviets.

Another geopolitical thinker, Nicolas Spykman, built off of Mackinder's theory and wrote of the "rimland." In his **rimland theory**, Spykman defined the rimland to be all of Eurasia's periphery, not its core of Russia and Central Asia. Therefore, the rimland encompasses western Europe and Southeast, South, and East Asia. He thought it was



Figure 6.6. Mackinder heartland theory: The "pivot area" shown is the "heartland" in the Mackinder Theory. Mackinder argued that whoever controlled this pivot area would rule the world.

important to balance power in the rimland to prevent a global power from emerging. His theory is linked to the Vietnam and Korean wars, in which Communists and non-Communists fought for control of peripheral lands in the rimland.

PART 3

Challenges to Inherited Political-Territorial Arrangements

Core Areas and Multicore States

A region's internal organization of power can affect its level of unity and cohesion. The region in a state wherein political and economic power is concentrated, like the nucleus of a cell, is called a state's **core**. A well-integrated core, one that functions as a healthy part of its state, not in isolation, helps spread development throughout the country. Countries having more than just one core region are called **multicore states**. When these core areas are competing for political and economic power and none is dominant, the result can be internal division within the state. Nigeria, for example, has several core regions competing for control and thus jeopardizing Nigeria's unification. Strong infrastructure development, in the form of roads, communication lines, and so forth, can help distribute the growth generated in a core to less developed areas in a state.

TEST TIP

If your cell phone rings during the AP Human Geography class, it may be a little embarrassing. If your phone rings during the AP Human Geography Exam, however, it may be a disaster! Phones, iPods, MP3 players, and all other electronic devices are strongly prohibited in the test room. The test proctor can make you leave the test immediately and cancel your score if he or she sees that you have any of these devices with you. Don't just put your phone on silent; put it in your locker or leave it in your car.

Capital Cities

The capital of most countries is its political nucleus. Some countries have a capital city, called a **primate city**, that is not only the political nucleus but also many times

more economically powerful than any other city in the state. Primate cities often exist in less-developed countries, where most of the resources are attracted, like a magnet, to one city that grows and grows and is supplied by the smaller cities in the state that do not get an equal share of the development. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, is an example of a primate city that is many times larger and more powerful than the next-largest city in Mongolia. In many such cases, governments are trying to spread the growth and development out among different cities, rather than allowing it to focus on the primate city. Primate cities are also common in old nation-states, like France and Britain. In these places, the primate city has been the cultural center for a long time and still attracts many migrants.

States also move their capital cities for various reasons. A **forward capital** is a capital city built by a state to achieve some national goal. The Russian czar Peter the Great built the forward capital of Saint Petersburg, moving the capital of Russia from Moscow to bring Russia's capital city and its focus closer to Europe; Moscow is farther east and thus farther from Europe than is Saint Petersburg. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, Germany chose to move its capital city back to Berlin, a forward capital, to show unification.

Gerrymandering

Internal political boundaries often are the subject of debate and manipulation. Electoral boundaries affect voting patterns and outcomes. In the United States alone, considerable debate surrounds the placement of electoral district boundaries. The definition of these boundaries can give one party an advantage over another in competing for a spot in a legislature. For example, boundaries can be drawn to give the number of registered Republicans a majority in a particular district, or registered Democrats in another. Redrawing electoral boundaries to give a political party an advantage is called **gerrymandering**. In total, the spatial organization of electoral geography can have a profound effect on power structures in a state.



In 2000, only 57 of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives were decided by margins of 10 percent or less.