**Chapter 8: Political Geography**

**Key Issue 1: Where Are States Distributed?**

Political geography is concerned with the study of the way governments organize and administer space on Earth’s surface, and especially the geographic dimensions of conflict. One of Earth’s most fundamental cultural characteristic is the division of our planet’s surface into a collection of spaces occupied by individual countries. Wars have broken out in recent years—both between small neighboring states and among cultural groups within countries—over political control of territory. Old countries have been broken up into collections of smaller ones. Geographers use geographic methods to examine the causes of political change and instability and to anticipate potential trouble spots around the world.

**Introducing Political Geography** A **state** is an area organized into a political unit and ruled by an established government that has control over its internal and foreign affairs. It occupies a defined territory on Earth’s surface and contains a permanent population. *Country* is synonymous with *state*. Nearly all inhabitable land is organized into states. The land area occupied by states around the world widely varies. The largest states, Russia, comprises 6.6 million square miles, or 11 percent of the Earth’s entire land area. On the other end of the spectrum are about two dozen **microstates**, which are states with very small land area. The Vatican is the world’s smallest microstate, coming in at 0.17 square miles. Many microstates are islands, explaining both their small size and sovereignty.

**Challenges in Defining States** A state has **sovereignty**, which means independence from control of its internal affairs by other states. A sovereign state is a good example of a formal or uniform region, as the entire area of a state is managed by its national government, laws, army, and leaders. Disagreement over the number of sovereign states in the world is present in the global community. Places that challenge the definition of *sovereignty* are Korea, China, and Western Sahara.

**Korea: One State or Two?** Not all states are universally recognized or well defined. Korea was divided in half into two occupation zones by the United States and the former Soviet Union after they defeated Japan in World War II. The division of these zones became permanent in the late 1940s, when the two superpowers established separate governments and withdrew their armies. In 1992, North Korea and South Korea were admitted to the United Nations as separate countries. Progress toward reuniting Korea was halted by North Korea’s decision to build nuclear weapons.

**China and Taiwan: One State or Two?** Most countries consider China (officially the People’s Republic of China) and Taiwan (officially the Republic of China) as separate and sovereign states. China does not consider Taiwan to be a separate state but part of China. The question of who was the legitimate government of China plagued U.S. officials in the 1950s and 1960s. The United States considered the Nationalists in Taiwan the official government of China until 1971. The United Nations voted that year to transfer China’s seat in the U.N. from the Nationalists in Taiwan to the Communist government in China. Taiwan is now the most populous state not in the United Nations.

**Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands: Who Is Sovereign?** The People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, and Japan all claim sovereignty over several small uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. These islands are known as Diaoyu in China, Diaoyutai in Taiwan, and Senkaku in Japan. Japan has controlled the islands since 1895, except between 1945 and 1972, when the United States administered them after the Japanese defeat in World War II. China and Taiwan claim that the islands historically belonged to China until the Japanese government illegally seized them in 1985. China and Japan have created overlapping air zones in the East China Sea to bolster their respective claims to the islands, heightening tensions further.

**Western Sahara/Sahrawi Republic: Who Is Sovereign?** Most African countries consider the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic a sovereign state. Spain controlled the territory until withdrawing from the area in 1976. An independent Sahrawi Republic was declared. Morocco and Mauritania annexed the territory, but Mauritania decided to withdraw three years later. Morocco now claims most of the territory and has built a wall around it to keep the rebels out. The United Nations has tried but failed to reach a resolution in this situation.

**Ancient States** The state concept developed in the Middle East. The first states were territories surrounding cities. A **city-state** is a sovereign state that comprises a town and the surrounding countryside. Walls clearly delineated the boundaries of the city. The city controlled the agricultural land surrounding the city that produced food for the urban residents. The countryside also provided the city with an outer line of defense against attack by other city-states. One city may gain military dominance over the others and form an empire.

**Medieval States** The largest unified political territory of the preindustrial times was the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire controlled most of Europe, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. The empire comprised 38 provinces, each using the same set of laws that had been created in Rome. The Roman Empire eventually collapsed in the fifth century. The European portion of the empire was fragmented into a large number of estates owned by competing kings, dukes, barons, and other nobles. Victorious nobles seized control of defeated rivals’ estates. A handful of powerful kings emerged as rulers over a large number of these European estates beginning about the year 1100. The consolidation of neighboring estates under the unified control of a king formed the basis for the development of states.

**Nation-states in Europe** A nation-state is a state whose territory corresponds to that occupied by a particular ethnicity. To preserve and enhance distinctive cultural characteristics, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without interference. The concept that ethnicities have the right to govern themselves is known as self-determination. By the early twentieth century most of Western Europe was made up of nation-states.

After World War I the Allied leaders used language as the main criteria to create new states in Europe and adjust the boundaries of existing ones. Boundaries were drawn around the states of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Romania to conform closely to the distribution of Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, and Romanian speakers. During the 1930s, the Nazis claimed that all Germanic speaking parts of Europe constituted one nationality and should be unified into one state. The Nazis invaded Austria and the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. It was not until the Nazis invaded Poland (clearly not a German speaking country) that France and England tried to stop them.

**Key Issue 2: Why Are Nation-states Difficult to Create?**

A **nation-state** is a state whose territory corresponds to that occupied by a particular ethnicity. To preserve and promote distinctive cultural traits, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without interference. The idea of partitioning the world into a set of independent nation-states is relatively new.

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**States in Twentieth-Century Europe** At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe’s territory was ruled by several emperors, kings, and queens. Following the first World War, leaders of the victorious countries convened at the Versailles Peace Conference to redraw the map of Europe. Using language as the principle criterion for identifying ethnic groups, the leaders of the Allied powers partitioned Europe into a set of nation-states. Many of the states created at this Conference have not endured as nation-states.

**Nation-States and Multinational States** Aiming to preserve and promote distinctive cultural traits, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without outside interference. **Self-determination** is the concept that ethnicities have the right to govern themselves. There is no perfect nation-state, as territory inhabited by a specific ethnicity never directly reflects the boundaries of countries. However, some states, such as Japan, are excellent examples of a nation-state. The ethnic make-up of Japan is 98.5 percent Japanese,   
0.5 percent Korean, 0.4 percent Chinese, and 0.6 percent other.

**Multiethnic and Multinational States** According to a measure of the extent of ethnic diversity in a country created by political scientist James Fearon, states with the least diversity, such as Japan, would be the best examples of nation-states. A **multiethnic state** is a state that contains more than one ethnicity. Every nation is multiethnic to some degree, as no state’s population encompasses 100 percent of a single ethnicity. A **multinational state** is a state that contains more than one ethnicity with traditions of   
self-determination and self-governance. In some multinational states, distinct ethnic groups control governmental functions in the area of the country it occupies. In others, such as the United States, ethnicities all contribute cultural features to the formation of a single nationality.

**Multiethnic Revival in Europe** In the 1930s, German National Socialists (Nazis) attempted to form a single state that encompasses all German-speaking areas of Europe. The Nazis achieved their goals of forming this state, and continued to seize lands of non-German-speaking populations (such as Poland), precipitating World War II. Following World War II, a large-scale forced migration in Europe relocated many ethnic groups into newly established territory of the region’s many nation-states. Some of the nation-states formed as a result of World War II, such as Yugoslavia, failed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Karl Marx posited that the concept of nationality was an outmoded vestige of years past, used by those in power to dominate the working-class. In the twenty-first century, ethnic identity has once again become important in the creation of nation-states in much of Europe. The breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia during the 1990s gave numerous ethnicities the opportunity to organize nation-states. These ethnic groups were no longer content to just control a local government unit, but sought to be the majority in a completely independent nation-state. The ethnic groups with smaller populations unfortunately found themselves existing as minorities in multinational states or divided among more than one of the new states.

**Russia: The Largest Multinational State** For decades, the many ethnicities within the Soviet Union were unable to realize their nationalist aspirations and form independent nation-states. The Soviet Union consisted of 15 republics, based on its 15 largest ethnicities. With the breakup of the Soviet Union into   
15 independent countries, a number of less numerous ethnicities are now divided among these states. These 15 states constitute five groups:

* Russia.
* Three Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
* Three European states: Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine.
* Five Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
* Three Caucasus states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

Reasonably good examples of nation-states have been carved out of the Baltic, European, and Central Asian republics. Peaceful nation-states have not been created in any of the small Caucasus republics. Russia officially recognizes the existence of 39 nationalities, many of which are eager for independence. Independence movements are flourishing because Russia is less willing to suppress these movements forcibly than the Soviet Union.

**Russia in Ukraine** Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, prospects for a stable nation-state were favorable in independent Ukraine because it possessed economic assets, such as coal deposits, a steel industry, and proximity to the wealthy countries of Western Europe. Despite these favorable conditions, the Russian minority population clustered in eastern Ukraine rebelled against the Ukrainian government in 2014, leading to the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia and the War in Donbass. Russia has held a claim on Crimea throughout the past (such as in 1783 and in 1954), bolstering their claim to the territory. Nearly every other country continues to recognize Ukraine’s sovereignty over Crimea.

**Nation-States in the Former Soviet Union** The new states in the former Soviet Union are an assemblage of nation-states and multinational states.

**Three European States** Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine are located between Russia to the east and European democracies to the west. Belarus peacefully transitioned into an independent nation-state, while Moldova and Ukraine have experienced ethnic tensions.

**Belarus and Ukraine** The ethnic distinction among Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Russians is difficult to pin down. All three groups speak similar East Slavic languages and believe themselves to have a common ethnic heritage, originating in medieval Europe. Following invasions and conquests of the area by Mongolians, Poles, and Lithuanians beginning in the thirteenth century, Belarusians and Ukrainians became isolated from Russians and developed distinct ethnicities.

**Moldova** Moldovans are ethnically indistinguishable from Romanians, and Moldova was historically a part of Romania until the Soviet Union took control of it in 1940. Following Moldova’s declaration of independence in 1992, many Moldovans wished to reunify with Romania. However, when Moldova was a Soviet republic, it was ceded lands from Ukraine on the Dniester River, containing ethnic Ukrainians and Russians. Opposition from these groups have prevented Moldovan reunification with Romania.

**Three Baltic States** Located on the Baltic Sea, the countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are known as the Baltic states. These three states were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under an agreement with Nazi Germany. All three have distinct cultural differences and discernable historical traditions. Most Lithuanians are Roman Catholic, while Estonians and Latvians are predominantly Lutheran. Lithuanians and Latvians speak a language in the Baltic group of the Indo-European family, while Estonian is a Uralic language.

**The Caucasus: Many Ethnicities** The Caucasus region is situated between the Black and Caspian seas and gets its name from the mountains that separate Azerbaijan and Georgia from Russia. When the Caucasus region was part of Soviet Union the Soviet government promoted allegiance to the Soviet state and quelled disputes among ethnicities, by force if necessary. With the breakup of the region into several independent countries, long-standing conflicts among ethnicities have erupted into armed conflicts. The region’s ethnicities have had varying degrees of success in forming nation-states.

**Armenia** Armenia is a Christian-majority state that has historically lived under the rule of Turkish Muslims. A century ago, an estimated 1 million ethnic Armenians were killed in what most observers now classify a genocide. Following World War I, the Allies created the independent state of Armenia, although it was soon divided between Turkey and the Soviet Union in 1921. 98 percent of the Armenian population are ethnic Armenians, making it the most ethnically homogenous country in the area.

**Azerbaijan** Azeris originated with Turkish invaders who migrated from Central Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries and combined with the existing Persian population. Armenians and Azeris have contested the boundaries between their countries, fighting specifically over an Azerbaijani enclave called Nagorno-Karabakh inhabited primarily by Armenians. While Nagorno-Karabakh is still technically a part of Azerbaijan as a result of a 1994 cease-fire agreement, it acts as an independent republic (known as Artsakh).

**Georgia** Georgia is more ethnically diverse than Armenia and Azerbaijan. The population is made up of 71 percent ethnic Georgians, 8 percent Armenians, 6 percent each Azeri and Russian, 3 percent Ossetian, and 2 percent each Abkhazian, Greek, and other ethnicities. Ossetians and Abkhazians have fought the Georgian government for control over the territory that their respective ethnicity predominantly occupies, forming two independent republics. These republics, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, are only recognized by a handful of states (such as Russia, which has installed troops in both areas).

**Central Asian States** Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are relatively stable nation-states. In contrast, Tajikistan is a nation-state that has endured a civil war, fought between Tajiks who were former Communists, and a coalition of Muslim fundamentalists and Western-oriented intellectuals. Kazakhstan is a relatively peaceful multinational state divided between Kazakhs and Russians. Kyrgyzstan, however, is relatively unstable, facing prolonged ethnic conflict. Consisting of Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Russian ethnicities, successive presidents were ousted in the early twenty-first century, and ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks by Kyrgyz is alleged.

**Colonies** A **colony** is a territory that is legally tied to a sovereign state rather than being completely independent. In some instances, a sovereign state manages the colony’s military and foreign affairs. In others, it also manages the colony’s internal affairs.

**Distribution of Colonies** The United Nations has classified 17 places in the world as “non-self-governing territories.” Western Sahara, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia are all examples of this type of territory. The U.N. does not include territories that are uninhabited, or those that they consider to have considerable autonomy in self-governing. Puerto Rico, Greenland, and Hong Kong and Macao are all examples of territories with significant levels of self-governance.

**Colonialism Colonialism** is an attempt by one country to establish settlements and impose its political, economic, and cultural principles in another territory. European states established colonies for three basic reasons: God, gold, and glory. European states started establishing colonies in the Western Hemisphere in the 1400s. The European colonial era ended in the Western Hemisphere by 1824. European states then started to establish colonies in Africa and Asia. Most African and Asian colonies became independent after World War II. The United Kingdom and France had the largest colonial empire.

**Key Issue 3: Why Do Boundaries Cause Problems?**

A **boundary** is an invisible line that marks the extent of a state’s territory. Boundaries completely surround an individual state to mark the outer limits of its territorial control and to give it a distinctive shape. Historically, frontiers rather than boundaries separated states. A **frontier** is a zone where no state exercises complete political control. Frontiers between states have been replaced by boundaries. Boundaries may be classified into three categories:

* Cultural boundaries follow the distribution of cultural features.
* Geometric boundaries are based on human constructs, such as straight lines.
* Physical boundaries coincide with significant features of the natural landscape.

Boundary locations may be the source of conflict, both within a country and with its neighbors.

**Cultural Boundaries** Boundaries have been established when possible to separate speakers of different languages, followers of different religions, or members of different ethnicities.

**Religious Boundary: Ireland** Ireland is divided by a boundary based on the separation between two major religions: Roman Catholicism in the Republic of Ireland, and Protestantism in Northern Ireland. Language may also play a role in drawing boundaries, as is evident in the formation of Italy and Germany over common languages in the nineteenth century.

**Ethnic Boundary: Cyprus** Two nationalities predominantly inhabit the island of Cyprus: Greek and Turkish. Despite its proximity to Turkey, only 24 percent of the island’s occupants are of Turkish descent, while 63 percent are Greek. Following independence from Britain in 1960, the Turkish minority was guaranteed a substantial share of elected offices and control over its own education, religion, and culture. Cyprus has yet to peacefully integrate both nationalities. A wall has been built separating the northern area of the island occupied by ethnic Turks, and the southern area inhabited by Greeks. Today, a portion of the wall has been demolished, and the two nationalities can freely travel between the two areas.

**Geometric Boundaries** North American and North Africa are two regions where geometric boundaries are particularly prominent parts of the political landscape.

**Geometric Boundaries: North America** Part of the northern U.S. boundary with Canada is a   
1,300-mile straight line along 49° north latitude. A geometric boundary between the United States and Canada is also present along Québec’s boundary with New York and Vermont, and between Alaska and the Yukon Territory. The U.S.-Canada boundary was established through a series of treaties between 1783 and 1903.

**Geometric Boundary: North Africa** Boundaries between Algeria, Libya, and Egypt on the north and Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan on the south are generally geometric. These boundaries can largely be attributed to the colonial legacy of Africa.

**Geometric Boundary: South Pole** The South Pole contains the only large landmass on Earth’s surface that is not part of a state. These states claim portion of the South Pole: Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Chile and the United Kingdom have conflicting and overlapping claims. The United States, Russia, and other countries do not recognize the claims of any countries in Antarctica. States may establish research stations there for scientific investigations, but no military activities are permitted.

**Physical Boundaries** Physical features of the landscape can be appropriate boundaries because they are easily seen, both on a map and on the ground. Deserts, mountains, and water are the three types of physical elements serve as physical boundaries.

**Desert Boundaries** A desert can act as an effective boundary, as desert terrain is generally hard to traverse and sparsely populated. Desert boundaries are common in North Africa and Asia. The Sahara acts as both a physical and geometric boundary, separating Algeria, Libya, and Egypt on the north from Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and the Sudan on the south.

**Mountain Boundaries** Mountains can similarly be effective boundaries, especially if they are hard to traverse, are generally sparsely populated, and are permanent installations of the landscape. If passes are closed during winter months on account of intense storms, contact between nationalities living on opposite sides may be limited or totally impossible. Mountain boundaries can sometime be hard to discern, as can be seen in the relations between Argentina and Chile and their boundary in the Andes Mountains. The two countries could not agree on a common mountain boundary, and nearly went to war over this issue until U.S. mediators helped settle the conflict.

**Water Boundaries** Rivers, lakes, and oceans are the most common physical features used as physical boundaries. Water boundaries are particularly common in East Africa. For instance, the boundary separating Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda runs through Lake Victoria. While water boundaries may seem to be permanent, the precise position of water may change over time. Rivers can slowly change their course, as can be seen in the Rio Grande boundary separating the United States and Mexico.

**The Law of the Sea** The Law of the Sea identifies three types of water boundaries:

* Territorial waters. Up to 12 nautical miles from shore, a state may set laws regulating passage by ships registered in other states.
* Contiguous zone. Between 12 and 24 nautical miles from shore, a state may enforce laws concerning pollution, taxation, customs, and immigration.
* Exclusive economic zone. Between 24 and 200 nautical miles, a state has the sole right to the fish and other marine life.

Disputes that may arise as a result of the Law of the Sea may be settled at the International Court of Justice.

**Shape of States** The shape of a state controls the length of its boundaries with other states. Therefore, the shape affects the potential for communication and conflict with neighbors. The shape is also a part of its unique identity. Beyond its position as a centripetal force, the shape of a state can impact the degree of successful of internal administration and can affect social unity. States may take on one of five basic shapes: compact, elongated, prorupted, fragmented, or perforated.

**Compact States: Efficient** In a **compact state**, the distance from the center to any boundary does not vary significantly. The ideal theoretical compact state would be shaped like a circle, with the capital at the center and with the shortest possible boundary to defend. A compact state has efficient communication and transportation.

**Elongated States: Potential Isolation** An **elongated** **state** has a long and narrow shape. Elongated states may suffer from poor internal communications. A region located at an extreme end of the elongation might be isolated from the capital, which is usually placed near the center.

**Prorupted States: Access or Disruption** An otherwise compact state with a large projecting extension is a **prorupted state**. Proruptions can provide a state with access to a resource, such as water. Proruptions are also used to separate two states that would otherwise share a boundary.

**Perforated States: South Africa** A state that completely surrounds another one is a **perforated state**. In this situation, the state that is surrounded may face problems of dependence on, or interference from, the surrounding state. South Africa completely surrounds the state of Lesotho.

**Fragmented States: Problematic** A **fragmented state** includes several discontinuous pieces of territory. Fragmented states separated by water can face problems and costs associated with communications and maintaining national unity. Fragmented states separated by an intervening state sometimes have problems dealing with the states in between the fragments.

**Landlocked States Landlocked states** have difficulty engaging in international trade because they lack direct access to the ocean. A landlocked state is completely surrounded by other countries. Landlocked states are most common in Africa, where 14 of the continent’s 54 states have no direct access to the ocean. The prevalence of landlocked states in Africa is a remnant of the colonial era. Landlocked states must cooperate with neighboring states that have seaports.

**Governing States** A state has two types of government: a national government and local governments. At the national scale, a government can be more or less democratic. At the local scale, the national government can determine how much power to allocate to local governments.

**National Scale: Regime Types** A **democracy** is a country in which citizens elect leaders and can run for office. An **autocracy** is a country that is run according to the interests of the ruler rather than the people. An **anocracy** is country that is not fully democratic or fully autocratic, but rather displays a mix of the two types. Democracies and autocracies differ in three essential elements: selection of leaders, citizen participation, and checks and balances. The Arab Spring shows how the world is becoming more democratic.

**Local Scale: Unitary and Federal States** State organization of internal territory falls into a continuum from a unitary stateand a federal state. A **unitary state** places most power in the hands of central government officials. A **federal state** allocates strong power to units of local government within the country.

**Unitary States** The unitary government system works best in nation-states characterized by few internal cultural differences and a strong sense of national unity. Smaller states are also more likely to adopt a unitary government system. Some multinational states have adopted unitary systems so that the values of one nationality can be imposed on others, such as in Kenya and Rwanda.

**Federal States** Local government poses considerable authority to adopt their own laws in a federal state. The federal system empowers different nationalities, especially if they live in separate regions of the country. The federal system is more suitable for large states because the national capital may be too remote to provide effective control over isolated regions. Most of the world’s large states are federal, including Russia, Canada, the United States, Brazil, and India.

**Electoral Geography** The process of redrawing legislative boundaries for the purpose of benefiting the party in power is called **gerrymandering**. The boundaries separating the 435 legislative districts within the United States are redrawn periodically to ensure that each district has approximately the same population. Boundaries must be redrawn because migration inevitably results in some districts gaining population and losing population. The political party in control of the state legislature naturally attempts to redraw boundaries to improve the chances of its supporters to win seats.

**Geography of Gerrymandering A** measure of each Congressional district’s level of gerrymandering was devised by the Washington Post. This score was determined by calculating the ratio of the area of the district to the area of a circle with the same perimeter. A district that follows a regular compact shape has a lower score than a district with irregularities. The state judged to have the most gerrymandering is North Carolina.

**Key Issue 4: Why Do States Face Threats?**

**Global Cooperation and Competition** The most important global forums for cooperation among states is the United Nations, created at the end of World War II by the victorious Allies. The early years of the U.N. were colored by competition and tension between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies.

**The United Nations** The most important global organization is the United Nations. The United Nations has provided a forum for the discussion of international problems. On occasion, the U.N. has intervened in conflicts between or within member states, authorizing military and peacekeeping actions. The U.N. seeks to promote international cooperation to address global economic problems, promote human rights, and provide humanitarian relief. The U.N. members can vote to establish a peacekeeping force and request states to contribute military forces. The U.N. tries very hard to maintain strict neutrality in separating warring factions.

The League of Nations was the world’s first attempt at an international peacekeeping organization. The League of Nations was never an effective peacekeeping organization because it could not stop aggression by these states against neighboring countries. The United States never joined the League of Nations and it fell apart in the 1930s. The United Nations was created at the end of World War II and only had   
51 member states. The number of U.N. members reached 193 in 2011.

**The Cold War** During the Cold War era, The United States and Soviet Union were the world’s two superpowers. To maintain strength in regions that were not contiguous to their own territory, the United States and Soviet Union established military bases in other countries. Both superpowers repeatedly demonstrated they would use military force if necessary to prevent an ally from becoming too independent. Because the power of the United States and Soviet Union was so much greater than the power of all other states, the world comprised of two camps, each under the influence of one of the superpowers.

**Cuban Missile Crisis** A major confrontation during the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union came in 1962, when the Soviet Union covertly began to construct missile-launching sites in Cuba, less than 90 miles from U.S. territory. President John F. Kennedy appeared on television to demand that the missiles be removed, and he ordered a naval blockade to prevent additional Soviet material from reaching Cuba. At the U.N., immediately after the Soviet Ambassador denied these installations existed, U.S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson dramatically revealed aerial photographs taken by the U.S. Department of Defense, showing that the naval blockade in fact did exist. Following this revelation, the missiles were removed.

**Competition and Cooperation in Europe** During the Cold War that followed World War II, two military alliances and two economic alliances formed in Europe. In the twenty-first century, one of the military alliances and one of the economic alliances continues, whereas the other two have been disbanded.

**Cold War-Era Military Alliances** After World War II, most European states joined one of two military alliances dominated by the superpowers—NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) or the Warsaw Pact. NATO was a military alliance among 16 democratic states, including the United States and Canada plus 14 European states. For NATO allies, the principle objective was to prevent the Soviet Union from overrunning West Germany and other smaller countries. The Warsaw Pact was a military agreement among seven communist Eastern European countries to defend each other in case of attack. The Warsaw Pact provided the Soviet Union with a buffer of allied states between it and Germany to discourage a third German invasion of the Soviet Union in the twentieth century.

**Cold War-Era Economic Alliances** Two economic alliances formed in Europe during the Cold War:

* European Union (EU). The EU (formerly known as the European Economic Community, the Common Market, and the European Community) formed in 1958 with six members. The EU was designed to catalyze cooperation in Europe in the wake of World War II.
* Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). COMECON formed in 1949 with   
  six members in 1960. Mongolia, Cuba, and Vietnam also joined. COMECON was designed to enhance trader and sharing of natural resources in Communist Eastern Europe. Like the Warsaw Pact, COMECON dissolved in 1991.

**The European Union in the Twenty-First Century** Economic power is eclipsing political and military power on the world stage. The EU has emerged as the world’s leading superpower because it turned Europe into the world’s wealthiest market. The EU now has 28 members. The main task of the European Union is to promote development within the member states through economic and political cooperation. A single bank, the European Central Bank, was given responsibility for setting interest rates and minimizing inflation in the EU countries. Most importantly, a common currency, the euro, was created for electronic transactions beginning in 1999 and in notes and coins beginning in 2002. European leaders bet that every country in the region would be stronger economically if it replaced its national currency with the euro. For the first few years that was the case, but the future of the euro has been called into question by the severe global recession that began in 2008. Economically strong countries, especially Germany, have been forced to subsidize the weaker states.

**Alliances in Other Regions** Economic cooperation has been an important factor in the creation of international organizations that now can be found far beyond Western Europe. Other regional political and military organizations include the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, the African Union, and the Commonwealth.

**Terrorist Attacks Against the United States** The systematic use of violence by a group in order to intimidate a populace or coerce a government into granting demands is considered **terrorism**. Terrorists generally have distinctive attributes, such as:

* Attempting to achieve their objectives through organized acts that spread fear and anxiety among the population, such as bombing, kidnapping, hijacking, taking of hostages, and assassination.
* Viewing violence as a means of bringing widespread publicly to goals and grievances that are not being addressed through peaceful means.
* Believing in a case so strongly that they do not hesitate to attack despite knowing that they will probably die in the act.

Terrorist attacks are contrasted from other forms of political violence, such as assassination, in that ordinary people are targeted in attacks rather than political leaders or military groups. The number of terrorist incidents increased from around 1,000 in 2000 to around 10,000 in 2013.

**Terrorism against Americans** The United States has suffered several terrorist attacks since 1988. Among the most destructive:

* December 21, 1988. A terrorist bomb destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 aboard, plus 11 on the ground.
* February 26, 1993. A car bomb parked in the underground garage damaged New York’s World Trade Center, killing 6 and injuring about 1,000.
* April 19, 1995. A car bomb killed 168 people in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.
* June 25, 1996. A truck bomb blew up an apartment complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. soldiers who lived there and injuring more than 100 people.
* August 7, 1998. U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed, killing 190 and wounding nearly 5,000.
* October 12, 2000. The USS Cole was bombed while in the port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 I.S. service personnel.
* April 15, 2013. Two bombs were detonated near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing 3 and injuring more than 180.
* April 2, 2014. Four people were killed and fourteen injured in an attack on the military base at Fort Hood, Texas.
* July 16, 2015. Five U.S. military personnel were killed in an attack on two installations in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
* December 2, 2015. A mass shooting at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, killed 14 and injured 21.

Theodore J. Kaczynski, Timothy J, McVeigh, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev are some of the terrorists during the late twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries.

**September 11, 2001, Attacks** The United States has experienced a number of terrorist attacks since the late 1980s, but the attacks of September 11, 2001, caused dramatic concern. The twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were the two tallest buildings in the United States before they were destroyed in the attacks. The Pentagon was also damaged. The attacks resulted in nearly 3,000 fatalities.

**Terrorist Organizations** Some terrorist attacks are the work of one or two individuals who are not formally associated with terrorist organizations. However, most recent attacks have been carried out by members belonging to terrorist organizations. Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram are three prominent terrorist organizations from recent years.

**Al-Qaeda** Al-Qaeda is not a single unified organization and the number of people involved is unknown. In addition to the original organization founded in 1990 by Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda also encompassed local franchises concerned with country-specific issues, as well as imitators and emulators ideologically aligned with al-Qaeda but not financially tied to it. Osama bin Laden moved to Afghanistan from Saudi Arabia in the mid-1980s to support the fight against the Soviet army and the country’s Soviet-installed government. Bin Laden used his several hundred-million-dollar inheritance to fund al-Qaeda around 1990 to unite *jihad* fighters in Afghanistan. Bin Laden left Afghanistan in 1989, and was later expelled from both Saudi Arabia and Sudan. He returned to Afghanistan in 1994. In 1996, he issued a declaration of war, known as a fatwa, against the United States because of U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and Israel. The al-Qaeda network subsequently planned and coordinated the 9/11 attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Center. The deadliest attacks perpetrated by al-Qaeda since the 9/11 occurred in 2007 and 2011, both in Baghdad. Al-Qaeda’s most active affiliate has been in Yemen in recent years. In 2015, the Yemeni affiliate undertook the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris.

**Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL)** The Islamic State, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), originated in 1999 and became an affiliate of al-Qaeda in 2004. In 2014, ISIS split from al-Qaeda due to a lack of agreement on how to coordinate and consult with each other. Members of the Islamic State are Sunni Muslims who seek to impose strict religious laws throughout Southwest Asia. They have gained control of territory through human rights violations, such as beheadings, massacres, and torture, commanding territory in northern Iraq and eastern Syria. ISIS has found remarkable success in recruiting members on the Internet and social media, showing beheadings and destruction of sites of historical important, such as Shiite Muslim shrines. ISIS has also launched attacks in Europe in 2015.

**Boko Haram** Boko Haram (Arabic for “Western education is forbidden”) was founded in 2002 in northeastern Nigeria. The organization seeks to impose their interpretation of Islamic law in Nigeria. Originally a peaceful organization, the group evolved to use violence following the death of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and a fierce uprising. Its current leader, Abubakar Shekau, aligned the group with ISIS in 2014.

**State Support for Terrorism** In recent years in Southwest Asia, several states have provided support for terrorism. Support may include providing sanctuary for terrorists wanted by other countries, supplying weapons, money, and intelligence to terrorists, and planning attacks using terrorists.

**Sanctuary for Terrorists** Afghanistan and Pakistan have provided sanctuary for al-Qaeda terrorists. The Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1995 and imposed strict Islamic fundamentalist law on the population. The Taliban rule came to an end in 2001, following the U.S. invasion. Destroying the Taliban was necessary in order for the United States to go after al-Qaeda leaders who were living in Afghanistan as guests of the Taliban. The United States also believes that Pakistan security was aware that Osama bin Laden was living in a fortified compound located in the city of Abbottabad which is only 75 miles from Pakistan’s capital.

**Supplying Terrorists** Iraq and Iran are both alleged to have provided material and financial support for terrorists. Controversy surrounds the degree of their involvement in terrorism.

**Iraq** The United States removed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein in 2003 because the U.S. government believed that he had biological and chemical weapons that could eventually fall into the hands of terrorists. U.N. experts concluded that Iraq had these weapons at one time but destroyed them in 1991 after its Desert Storm defeat. U.S. officials believed instead that Iraq hid the weapons, though they were never able to find them. The United States also said that close links existed between Iraq’s government and al-Qaeda. Saddam Hussein was not an observant Muslim and did not derive his philosophies from religious principles.

**Iran** The Iranian Hostage Crisis has long been a source of tension between the United States and Iran.The United States also accused Iran of harboring al-Qaeda members and trying to curry favor with fellow Shiite Muslims, as both countries have Shiite majorities. Iran has also long provided support to Hezbollah, an organization based in Lebanon that the United States categorizes as a terrorist organization due to its calls for Israel’s destruction. Iran has also aggressively pursued a nuclear program in recent years, causing tension between the country and much of the rest of the world. Iran maintains that the nuclear program is for civilian purposes, such as energy production, while other countries have evidence that it is meant to contribute to weapon development.

**State Terrorist Attacks: Libya** The government of Libya, including its longtime leader, Muammar el-Qaddafi, was accused of sponsoring a 1986 bombing of a nightclub in Berlin, Germany, that was popular with U.S. military personnel then stationed there. Libyan agents were found to have planted bombs on Pam Am Flight 103 that killed 270 people over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, as well as 170 people on UTA Flight 772 over Niger in 1989. Qaddafi was overthrown by Libyan protestors in 2011 as a part of the Arab Spring. Qaddafi also was captured and killed following his overthrow.