

## Chapter 8. Political Geography

Today human geographers emphasize a thematic approach, concerned with the location of activities in the world, the reasons for particular spatial distributions, and the significance of the arrangements. Political geographers study how people have organized Earth's land surface into countries and alliances, reasons underlying the observed arrangements, and the conflicts that result from the organization.

### Key Issues

1. Where are states located?
2. Why do boundaries between states cause problems?
3. Why do states cooperate with each other?
4. Why has terrorism increased?

(263)

With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the global political landscape changed fundamentally. Geographic concepts help us to understand this changing political organization of Earth's surface. We can also use geographic methods to examine the causes of political change. Boundary lines are not painted on Earth, but they might as well be, for these national divisions are very real. To many, national boundaries are more meaningful than natural features. In the post-Cold War era, the familiar division of the world into countries or states is crumbling. Between the mid-1940s and the late 1980s two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—essentially “ruled” the world. But the United States is less dominant in the political landscape of the twenty-first century, and the Soviet Union no longer exists. Today globalization means more connections among states. Power is exercised through connections among states created primarily for economic cooperation. Despite (or perhaps because of) greater global political cooperation, local diversity has increased in political affairs, as individual cultural groups demand more control over the territory they inhabit.

### Key Issue 1. Where Are States Located?

- **Problems of defining states**
- **Development of the state concept**

As recently as a half century ago, the world contained only about 50 countries, compared to nearly 200 today. 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. The term country is a synonym for state. The 50 states of the United States are subdivisions within a single state: the United States of America. Antarctica is the only large landmass on Earth's surface that is not part of a state. Several states . . . claim portions of Antarctica. The United States, Russia, and a number of other states do not recognize the claims of any country to Antarctica. The Treaty of Antarctica, signed in 1959 and renewed in 1991, provides a legal framework for managing Antarctica.

### Problems of Defining States

There is some disagreement about the actual number of sovereign states. Among places that test the definition of a state are Korea, China, and Western Sahara (Sahrawi Republic).

#### Korea: One State or Two?

A colony of Japan for many years, Korea was divided into two occupation zones by the United States and former Soviet Union after they defeated Japan in World War II. Both Korean governments are committed to reuniting the country into one sovereign state. Meanwhile, in 1992, North Korea and South Korea were admitted to the United Nations as separate countries.

(264)

#### China and Taiwan: One State or Two?

According to China's government officials, Taiwan is not a separate sovereign state but is a part of China. Until 1999 the government of Taiwan agreed. This confusing situation arose from a civil war.

After losing, nationalist leaders in 1949 fled to the island of Taiwan, 200 kilometers (120 miles) off the Chinese coast . . . (and) proclaimed that they were still the legitimate rulers of the entire country of China.

(265)

Most other governments in the world consider China and Taiwan as two separate and sovereign states. Taiwan's president announced in 1999 that Taiwan would also regard itself as a sovereign independent state.

The United States had supported the Nationalists during the civil war . . . (and) continued to regard the Nationalists as the official government of China until 1971, when U.S. policy finally changed and the United Nations voted to transfer China's seat from the Nationalists to the Communists.

**Western Sahara (Sahrawi Republic).** The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is considered by most African countries as a sovereign state. Morocco, however, controls the territory, which it calls Western Sahara. The United Nations is sponsoring a referendum for the residents of Western Sahara to decide whether they want independence or want to continue to be part of Morocco.

(266)

#### **Varying Size of States**

The land area occupied by the states of the world varies considerably. The largest state is Russia, which encompasses 17.1 million square kilometers (6.6 million square miles), or 11 percent of the world's entire land area. (Five) other states with more than 5 million square kilometers (2 million square miles) include China, Canada, United States, Brazil, and Australia.

At the other extreme are about two dozen **microstates**, which are states with very small land areas. The smallest microstate in the United Nations—Monaco—encompasses only 1.5 square kilometers (0.6 square miles). Many of these are islands, which explains both their small size and sovereignty.

#### **Development of the State Concept**

The concept of dividing the world into a collection of independent states is recent. Prior to the 1800s, Earth's surface was organized in other ways, such as city-states, empires, and tribes. Much of Earth's surface consisted of unorganized territory.

(267)

**Ancient and Medieval States.** The modern movement to divide the world into states originated in Europe. However, the development of states can be traced to . . . the Fertile Crescent.

**Ancient States.** Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Fertile Crescent was a center for land and sea communications in ancient times.

The first states to evolve in Mesopotamia were known as city-states. A **city-state** is a sovereign state that comprises a town and the surrounding countryside. Periodically, one city or tribe in Mesopotamia would gain military dominance over the others and form an empire. Meanwhile, the state of Egypt emerged as a separate empire at the western end of the Fertile Crescent . . . (in a) long, narrow region along the banks of the Nile River. Egypt's empire lasted from approximately 3000 B.C. until the fourth century B.C.

**Early European States.** Political unity in the ancient world reached its height with the establishment of the Roman Empire, which controlled most of Europe, North Africa, and Southwest Asia, from modern-day Spain to Iran and from Egypt to England.

The Roman Empire collapsed in the fifth century A.D. after a series of attacks by people living on its frontiers, as well as internal disputes. The European portion of the Roman Empire was fragmented into a large number of estates. Victorious nobles seized control of defeated rivals' estates. Most

people were forced to live on an estate, working and fighting for the benefit of the noble. Beginning about the year 1100, a handful of powerful kings emerged as rulers over large numbers of estates. The consolidation . . . formed the basis for the development of such modern Western European states as England, France, and Spain. Central Europe . . . remained fragmented . . . until the nineteenth century.

### **Colonies**

A colony is a territory that is legally tied to a sovereign state rather than being completely independent.

(268)

**Colonialism.** European states came to control much of the world through colonialism. European states established colonies . . . for three basic reasons: to promote Christianity; (to) provide resources; (and) to indicate relative power. The three motives can be summarized as God, gold, and glory. The (global) colonial era began in the 1400s. The European states eventually lost most of their Western Hemisphere colonies . . . then turned their attention to Africa and Asia.

The United Kingdom assembled by far the largest colonial empire, (with) colonies on every continent. France had the second-largest overseas territory, although its colonies were concentrated in West Africa and Southeast Asia. Both the British and the French also took control of a large number of strategic islands.

Portugal, Spain, Germany, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium all established colonies outside Europe, but they controlled less territory than the British and French. Germany tried to compete with Britain and France by obtaining African colonies that would interfere with communications in the rival European holdings.

**Colonial Practices.** The colonial practices of European states varied. France attempted to assimilate its colonies into French culture. The British created different government structures and policies for various territories of their empire. This decentralized approach helped to protect the diverse cultures. Most African and Asian colonies became independent after World War II.

(269)

**The Few Remaining Colonies.** At one time, colonies were widespread over Earth's surface, but today only a handful remains. Nearly all are islands in the Pacific Ocean or Caribbean Sea. The most populous remaining colony is Puerto Rico, which is a Commonwealth of the United States. Its 4 million residents are citizens of the United States. The world's least populated colony is Pitcairn Island . . . settled in 1790 by British mutineers.

(270)

### **Key Issue 2. Where Are Boundaries Drawn between States?**

- **Shapes of states**
- **Types of boundaries**
- **Internal organization of states**

A state is separated from its neighbors by a boundary. Boundaries result from a combination of natural physical features (such as rivers, deserts, mountains) and cultural features (such as language and religion). Boundaries interest geographers because the process of selecting their location is frequently difficult. Boundaries . . . also commonly generate conflict, both within a country and with its neighbors.

(271)

### **Shapes of States**

The shape of a state . . . affects the potential for communications and conflict with neighbors, . . . can influence the ease or difficulty of internal administration, and can affect social unity.

## Five Basic Shapes

Countries have one of five basic shapes: compact, prorupted, elongated, fragmented, and perforated.

**Compact States: Efficient.** In a **compact state**, the distance from the center to any boundary does not vary significantly. Compactness is a beneficial characteristic for most smaller states, because good communications can be more easily established to all regions.

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

(272)

**Elongated States: Potential Isolation.** There are a handful of elongated states, or states with a long and narrow shape. The best example is Chile. A less extreme example of an elongated state is Italy. Elongated states may suffer from poor internal communications.

(273)

**Fragmented States: Problematic.** A **fragmented state** includes several discontinuous pieces of territory. There are two kinds of fragmented states: those with areas separated by water, and those separated by an intervening state.

A difficult type of fragmentation occurs if the two pieces of territory are separated by another state. Picture the difficulty of communicating between Alaska and the lower 48 states if Canada were not a friendly neighbor. Perhaps the most intractable fragmentation results from a tiny strip of land in India called Tin Bigha, . . . only 178 meters (about 600 feet) by 85 meters (about 300 feet). For most of the twentieth century, Panama was an example of a fragmented state divided in two parts by the Canal, built in 1914 by the United States.

(274)

**Perforated States: South Africa.** A state that completely surrounds another one is a **perforated state**. The one good example of a perforated state is South Africa, which completely surrounds the state of Lesotho.

## Landlocked States

Lesotho is unique in being completely surrounded by only one state, but it shares an important feature with several other states in southern Africa, as well as in other regions: It is landlocked. The prevalence of **landlocked states** in Africa is a remnant of the colonial era, when Britain and France controlled extensive regions.

Direct access to an ocean is critical to states because it facilitates international trade. To send and receive goods by sea, a landlocked state must arrange to use another country's seaport.

**Landlocked States in Southern Africa.** Cooperation between landlocked states in southern Africa has been complicated by racial patterns. In the past, the states of southern Africa had to balance their economic dependency on South Africa with their dislike of the country's racial policies.

(275)

## Types of Boundaries

Historically, frontiers rather than boundaries separated states. A **frontier** is a zone where no state exercises complete political control. A frontier is a tangible geographic area, whereas a boundary is an infinitely thin, invisible, imaginary line.

A frontier area is either uninhabited or sparsely settled by a few isolated pioneers seeking to live outside organized society. Almost universally, frontiers between states have been replaced by

boundaries. The only regions of the world that still have frontiers rather than boundaries are Antarctica and the Arabian Peninsula.

Boundaries are of two types: physical and cultural. Neither type of boundary is better or more "natural," and many boundaries are a combination of both types.

### **Physical Boundaries**

Important physical features on Earth's surface can make good boundaries because they are easily seen, both on a map and on the ground. Three types of physical elements serve as boundaries between states: mountains, deserts, and water.

**Mountain Boundaries.** Mountains can be effective boundaries if they are difficult to cross . . . (and) because they are rather permanent and usually are sparsely inhabited. Mountains do not always provide for the amicable separation of neighbors. Argentina and Chile agreed to be divided by the crest of the Andes Mountains but could not decide on the precise location of the crest.

**Desert Boundaries.** Like mountains, deserts are hard to cross and sparsely inhabited. Desert boundaries are common in Africa and Asia.

**Water Boundaries.** Rivers, lakes, and oceans are the physical features most commonly used as boundaries. Water boundaries are especially common in East Africa.

(276)

Boundaries are typically in the middle of the water, although the boundary between Malawi and Tanzania follows the north shore of Lake Malawi (Lake Nyasa). Again, the boundaries result from nineteenth-century colonial practices: Malawi was a British colony, whereas Tanzania was German. Water boundaries can offer good protection against attack from another state, because an invading state must . . . secure a landing spot. The state being invaded can concentrate its defense at the landing point. The use of water as boundaries between states can cause difficulties, though. One problem is that the precise position of the water may change over time. Rivers, in particular, can slowly change their course.

Ocean boundaries also cause problems because states generally claim that the boundary lies not at the coastline but out at sea. The reasons are for defense and for control of valuable fishing industries.

### **Cultural Boundaries**

The boundaries between some states coincide with differences in ethnicity. Other cultural boundaries are drawn according to geometry; they simply are straight lines drawn on a map.

**Geometric Boundaries.** Part of the northern U.S. boundary with Canada is a 2,100-kilometer (1,300-mile) straight line (more precisely, an arc) along 49° north latitude, . . . established in 1846 by a treaty between the United States and Great Britain, which still controlled Canada. The United States and Canada share an additional 1,100-kilometer (700-mile) geometric boundary between Alaska and the Yukon Territory along the north-south arc of 14° west longitude.

(277)

The 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) boundary between Chad and Libya is a straight line drawn across the desert in 1899 by the French and British. Subsequent actions by European countries created confusion over the boundary.

**Religious Boundaries.** Religious differences often coincide with boundaries between states, but in only a few cases has religion been used to select the actual boundary line. The most notable example was in South Asia, when the British partitioned India into two states on the basis of religion. Religion was also used to some extent to draw the boundary between two states on the island of Eire (Ireland).

**Language Boundaries.** Language is an important cultural characteristic for drawing boundaries, especially in Europe. By global standards, European languages have substantial literary traditions and formal rules of grammar and spelling.

The French language was a major element in the development of France as a unified state in the seventeenth century. In the nineteenth century, Italy and Germany also emerged as states that unified the speakers of particular languages. The movement to identify nationalities on the basis of language spread throughout Europe in the twentieth century. After World War I, . . . the Versailles Peace Conference (met) to redraw the map of Europe. The geographer Isaiah Bowman played a major role in the decisions. Language was the most important criterion . . . used to create new states . . . and to adjust the boundaries of existing ones. The conference was particularly concerned with Eastern and Southern Europe, regions long troubled by political instability and conflict. Although the boundaries imposed by the Versailles conference on the basis of language were adjusted somewhat after World War II, they proved to be relatively stable, and peace ensued for several decades. However, during the 1990s, the map of Europe drawn at Versailles in 1919 collapsed.

**Cyprus' "Green Line" Boundary.** Cyprus, the third-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, contains two nationalities: Greek and Turkish. When Cyprus gained independence from Britain in 1960, its constitution guaranteed the Turkish minority a substantial share of elected offices and control over its own education, religion, and culture.

(278)

Cyprus has never peacefully integrated the Greek and Turkish nationalities. In 1974 several Greek Cypriot military officers who favored unification of Cyprus with Greece seized control of the government. Turkey invaded Cyprus to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. Traditionally, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots mingled, but after the coup and invasion, the two nationalities became geographically isolated. The Turkish sector declared itself the independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983, but only Turkey recognizes it as a separate state. A buffer zone patrolled by U.N. soldiers stretches across the entire island to prevent Greeks and Turks from crossing. Some cooperation continues between sectors: The Turks supply the Greek side with water and in return receive electricity.

The United Nations put together a plan to reunite the two portions of Cyprus into a single country with considerable autonomy for each side. Adding pressure to the reunification movement, the European Union agreed to accept the entire island of Cyprus as a member in 2004. The Turkish Cypriots opened the borders between the two sides in 2003. However, many generations of distrust made resolution and implementation of a final agreement difficult.

### **Boundaries inside States**

Within countries, local government boundaries are sometimes drawn to separate different nationalities or ethnicities. They are also drawn sometimes to provide advantage to a political party.

### **Unitary and Federal States**

In the face of increasing demands by ethnicities for more self-determination, states have restructured their governments to transfer some authority from the national government to local government units.

The governments of states are organized according to one of two approaches: the unitary system or the federal system. The **unitary state** places most power in the hands of central government officials, whereas the **federal state** allocates strong power to units of local government within the country.

(279)

In principle, the unitary government system works best in nation-states characterized by few internal cultural differences and a strong sense of national unity. Unitary states are especially common in Europe. In reality, multinational states often have adopted unitary systems, so that the values of one

nationality can be imposed on others. In a federal state, such as the United States, local governments possess more authority to adopt their own laws. Multinational states may adopt a federal system of government to empower different nationalities, especially if they live in separate regions of the country.

The federal system is also more suitable for very large states because the national capital may be too remote to provide effective control over isolated regions. The size of the state is not always an accurate predictor of the form of government.

### **Trend toward Federal Government**

In recent years there has been a strong global trend toward federal government.

**France: Curbing a Unitary Government.** A good example of a nation-state, France has a long tradition of unitary government in which a very strong national government dominates local government decisions. Their basic local government unit is the *département*. A second tier of local government in France is the *commune*. The French government has granted additional legal powers to the departments and communes in recent years. In addition, 22 regional councils that previously held minimal authority have been converted into full-fledged local government units.

**Poland: A New Federal Government.** Poland switched from a unitary to a federal system after control of the national government was wrested from the Communists. Under the Communists' unitary system, local governments held no legal authority. Poland's 1989 constitution called for a peaceful revolution: creation of 2,400 new municipalities, to be headed by directly elected officials. To these municipalities, the national government turned over ownership of housing, water supplies, transportation systems, and other publicly owned structures. Businesses owned by the national government . . . were either turned over to the municipalities or converted into private enterprises.

The transition to a federal system of government proved difficult in Poland and other Eastern European countries. The first task for many newly elected councilors was to attend a training course in how to govern.

(280)

### **Electoral Geography**

The boundaries separating legislative districts within the United States and other countries 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, whereas others are losing.

The job of redrawing boundaries in most European countries is entrusted to independent commissions. In most U.S. states the job of redrawing boundaries is entrusted to the state legislature. The process of redrawing legislative boundaries for the purpose of benefiting the party in power is called gerrymandering. The term gerrymandering was named for Elbridge Gerry (1744–1814), governor of Massachusetts (1810–12) and vice president of the United States (1813–14).

**Types of Gerrymandering.** Gerrymandering takes three forms. "Wasted vote" spreads opposition supporters across many districts but in the minority. "Excess vote" concentrates opposition supporters into a few districts. "Stacked vote" links distant areas of like-minded voters through oddly shaped boundaries.

**"Stacked Vote" Gerrymandering.** Recent gerrymandering in the United States has been primarily "stacked vote."

(281)

"Stacked vote" gerrymandering has been especially attractive to create districts inclined to elect ethnic minorities. Through gerrymandering, only about one-tenth of Congressional seats are competitive, making a shift of more than a few seats increasingly improbable from one election to another in the United States.

### **Key Issue 3. Why Do States Cooperate with Each Other?**

- **Political and military cooperation**
- **Economic cooperation**

Chapter 7 illustrated examples of threats to the survival of states from the trend toward local diversity. In a number of cases, the inability to accommodate the diverse aspirations of ethnicities has led to the breakup of states into smaller ones. The future of the world's current collection of sovereign states is also threatened by the trend toward globalization. States are willingly transferring authority to regional organizations, established primarily for economic cooperation.

#### **Political and Military Cooperation**

During the Cold War era (late 1940s until early 1990s) most states joined the United Nations, as well as regional organizations, . . . established primarily to prevent a third world war.

#### **The United Nations**

When established in 1945, the United Nations comprised 49 states, but membership grew to 189 in 2000, making it a truly global institution. Switzerland and Taiwan are the only two populous countries that are not in the United Nations. Taiwan resigned when the United Nations voted to admit the People's Republic of China in 1971. The number of countries in the United Nations has increased rapidly on three occasions: 1955, 1960, and the early 1990s.

U.N. members can vote to establish a peacekeeping force and request states to contribute military forces. During the Cold War era, U.N. peacekeeping efforts were often stymied because any one of the five permanent members of the Security Council . . . could veto the operation. Because it must rely on individual countries to supply troops, the United Nations often lacks enough troops to keep peace effectively. Despite its shortcomings . . . the United Nations represents a forum where, for the first time in history, virtually all states of the world can meet and vote on issues without resorting to war.

(282)

**Regional Military Alliances.** In addition to joining the United Nations, many states joined regional military alliances after World War II.

**Era of Two Superpowers.** During the Cold War era, the United States and the Soviet Union were the world's two superpowers. Before then, the world typically contained more than two superpowers. During the Napoleonic Wars in the early 1800s, Europe boasted eight major powers. Before the outbreak of World War I in the early twentieth century, eight great powers again existed. When a large number of states ranked as great powers were of approximately equal strength, no single state could dominate. Instead, major powers joined together to form temporary alliances.

A condition of roughly equal strength between opposing alliances is known as a **balance of power**. Historically, the addition of one or two states to an alliance could tip the balance of power. The British in particular entered alliances to restore the balance of power and prevent any other state from becoming too strong. In contrast, the post-World War II balance of power was bipolar between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Other states lost the ability to tip the scales significantly in favor of one or the other superpower. They were relegated to a new role, that of ally or satellite. Both superpowers repeatedly demonstrated that they would use military force if necessary to prevent an ally from becoming too independent.



**Military Cooperation in Europe.** After World War II, most European states joined one of two military alliances dominated by the superpowers: NATO or the Warsaw Pact. NATO and the Warsaw Pact were designed to maintain a bipolar balance of power in Europe. In a Europe no longer dominated by military confrontation between two blocs, the Warsaw Pact and NATO became obsolete. Rather than disbanding, NATO expanded its membership in 1997 to include several former Warsaw Pact countries.

(283)

The Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has 55 members, including the United States, Canada, and Russia, as well as most European countries. Although the OSCE does not directly command armed forces, it can call upon member states to supply troops if necessary.

**Other Regional Organizations.** The Organization of American States (OAS) includes all 35 states in the Western Hemisphere. Cuba is a member but was suspended . . . in 1962. The OAS promotes social, cultural, political, and economic links among member states. A similar organization encompassing all countries in Africa is the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Founded in 1963, the OAU has promoted the end of colonialism in Africa. The Commonwealth of Nations includes the United Kingdom and 53 other states that were once British colonies. Commonwealth members seek economic and cultural cooperation.

(284)

### **Economic Cooperation**

The era of a bipolar balance of power formally ended when the Soviet Union was disbanded in 1992. The world has returned to the pattern of more than two superpowers. But the contemporary pattern of global power displays two key differences. The most important elements of state power are increasingly economic rather than military, (and) the leading superpower in the 1990s is not a single state.

### **European Union**

With the decline in the military-oriented alliances, European states increasingly have turned to economic cooperation. Western Europe's most important economic organization is the European Union (formerly known as the European Economic Community, the Common Market, and the European Community).

(286)

When it was established in 1958, the European Union included 6 countries. The European Union has taken on more importance in recent years, as member states seek greater economic and political cooperation. It has removed most barriers to free trade. The introduction of the euro as the common currency in 11 European Union countries eliminates most of the remaining differences in prices, interest rates, and other economic policies within the region. The effect of these actions has been to turn Western Europe into the world's wealthiest market.

**Former Communist Countries and the European Union.** In 1949 . . . the seven Eastern European states . . . formed an organization for economic cooperation, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Cuba, Mongolia, and Vietnam were also members. Like the Warsaw Pact, COMECON disbanded in the early 1990s.

(287)

Joining the European Union in 2004 were eight former Communist Eastern European countries that had made the most progress in converting to market economies: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. Also joining in 2004 were the island countries of Cyprus and Malta. Current EU members are wary of admitting a large number of relatively poor Southern and Eastern European countries.

(288)

#### **Key Issue 4. Why Has Terrorism Increased?**

- **Terrorism by individuals and organizations**
- **State support for terrorism**

Terrorism is the systematic use of violence by a group in order to intimidate a population or coerce a government into granting its demands. Violence is considered necessary by terrorists to bring widespread publicity to goals and grievances that are not being addressed through peaceful means.

The term *terror* (from the Latin “to frighten”) was first applied to the period of the French Revolution between March 1793 and July 1794 known as the Reign of Terror. In modern times, terrorism has been applied to actions by groups operating outside government rather than by official government agencies, although some governments provide military and financial support for terrorists.

Terrorism differs from assassinations and other acts of political violence because terrorist attacks are aimed at ordinary people rather than military targets or political leaders. Average individuals are unintended victims rather than principal targets in most conflicts, whereas a terrorist considers all citizens responsible for the actions being opposed, so therefore equally justified as victims.

Distinguishing terrorism from other acts of political violence can be difficult. For example, if a Palestinian suicide bomber kills several dozen Israeli teenagers in a Jerusalem restaurant, is that an act of terrorism or wartime retaliation against Israeli government policies and army actions?

Spokespersons on television make competing claims: Israel’s sympathizers denounce the act as a terrorist threat to the country’s existence, while advocates of the Palestinian cause argue that long-standing injustices provoked the act. Similarly, Russia claims that Chechen rebels are terrorists, and the British have long claimed that Irish Republican Army rebels are terrorists.

#### **Terrorism by Individuals and Organizations**

The United States suffered several terrorist attacks during the late twentieth century. With the exception of the Oklahoma City bombing, which killed 168 people in 1995, Americans generally paid little attention to the attacks and had only a vague notion of who had committed them. It took the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, for most Americans to feel threatened by terrorism.

**American Terrorists.** Some of the terrorists during the 1990s were American citizens operating alone or with a handful of others. Theodore J. Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber, was convicted of killing 3 people and injuring 23 others by sending bombs through the mail during a 17-year period. His targets were mainly academics in technological disciplines and executives in businesses whose actions he considered to be adversely affecting the environment.

Timothy J. McVeigh claimed his terrorist act was provoked by rage against the U.S. government for such actions as the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s 51-day siege of the Branch Davidian religious compound near Waco, Texas, culminating with an attack on April 19, 1993, that resulted in 80 deaths.

(289)

**Al-Qaeda.** Responsible or implicated in most of the anti-U.S. terrorism during the 1990s, as well as the September 11, 2001, attack, was the al-Qaeda network, founded by Osama bin Laden. His father, Mohammed bin Laden, a native of Yemen, established a construction company in Saudi Arabia and became a billionaire through close connections to the royal family. Osama bin Laden, one of about 50 children fathered by Mohammed with several wives, used his several hundred million dollar inheritance to fund al-Qaeda.

Bin Laden moved to Afghanistan during the mid-1980s to support the fight against the Soviet army and the country’s Soviet-installed government. Calling the anti-Soviet fight a holy war or *jihad*, bin Laden recruited militant Muslims from Arab countries to join the cause. Al-Qaeda (an Arabic word meaning “the base”) was created around 1990 to unite *jihad* fighters in Afghanistan, as well as supporters of bin Laden elsewhere in the Middle East. Most al-Qaeda cell members lived in ordinary

society, supporting themselves with jobs, burglary, and credit card fraud. If arrested, members of one cell were not in a position to identify members of other cells.

Bin Laden issued a declaration of war against the United States in 1996, because of U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and Israel. Al-Qaeda's holy war against the United States culminated in simultaneous attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The attacks resulted in nearly 3,000 fatalities.

(290)  
Heightened security prevented al-Qaeda from launching another attack in the United States. Instead, al-Qaeda turned to targets in other countries that were lightly guarded.

Al-Qaeda's use of religion to justify attacks posed challenges to both Muslims and Americans. For many Muslims, the challenge was to express disagreement with U.S. policies, yet disavow the terrorist's approach to opposing the United States. For many Americans, the challenge was to distinguish between the peaceful but unfamiliar principles and practice of the world's three quarters of a billion Muslims, and the misuse and abuse of Islam by a handful of terrorists.

### **State-sponsored Terrorism**

States sponsored terrorism at three increasing levels of involvement:

- providing sanctuary for terrorists wanted by other countries;
- supplying weapons, money, and intelligence to terrorists;
- planning attacks using terrorists.

In response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack against the United States, the U.S. government accused first Afghanistan, then Iraq, and then Iran of providing at least one of the three levels of state support for terrorists. As part of its war against terrorism, the U.S. government in cooperation with other countries attacked Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 to depose those countries' government leaders considered supporters of terrorism.

A generation earlier, the United States also attacked Libya in retaliation for using terrorists to plan attacks during the 1980s.

### **Libya**

After deposing the King of Libya in a 1969 military coup, Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi provided terrorists with financial aid to kill his opponents living in exile in Europe. U.S. relations with Libya deteriorated in 1981 after U.S. aircraft shot down attacking Libyan warplanes while conducting exercises over waters the United States considered international but Libya considered inside its territory.

Terrorists sponsored by Libya in 1986 bombed a nightclub in Berlin popular with U.S. military personnel then stationed there, killing two U.S. soldiers (three, including one civilian). In response, U.S. bombers attacked the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi in a failed attempt to kill Colonel Qaddafi. In 1990, investigators announced that the 1988 destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, was conducted by Libyan agents. Following eight years of U.N. economic sanctions, Colonel Qaddafi turned over the suspects for a trial that was held in the Netherlands under Scottish law. One of the two was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, while the other was acquitted.

### **Afghanistan**

The United States attacked Afghanistan in 2001 when its leaders, known as Taliban, sheltered Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda terrorists. Taliban (Arabic for "students of Muslim religious schools") had gained power in Afghanistan in 1995, temporarily suppressing a civil war that had lasted for more than two decades and imposing strict Islamic fundamentalist law on the population.

Afghanistan's civil war began when the King was overthrown by a military coup in 1973 and replaced five years later in a bloody coup by a government sympathetic to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union sent 115,000 troops to Afghanistan beginning in 1979 after fundamentalist Muslims, known as *mujahedeen*, or "holy warriors," started a rebellion against the pro-Soviet government.

Unable to subdue the *mujahedeen*, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops in 1989, and the Soviet-installed government in Afghanistan collapsed in 1992. After several years of infighting among the factions that had defeated the Soviet Union, Taliban gained control over most of the country.

Six years of Taliban rule came to an end in 2001 following the U.S. invasion. Destroying Taliban was necessary for the United States in order to go after al-Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden, who were living in Afghanistan as guests of the Taliban. Removal of Taliban unleashed a new struggle for control of Afghanistan among the country's many ethnic groups.

(291)

### **Iraq**

The United States attacked Iraq in 2003 in order to remove from power the country's longtime President Saddam Hussein. U.S. officials, supported by the United Kingdom and a few other countries, argued that Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction that could be turned over to terrorists.

The U.S. confrontation with Iraq predated the war on terrorism. After Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait in 1990 and attempted to annex it, the U.S.-led coalition launched the 1991 Gulf War known as Operation Desert Storm to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. Although Iraq was defeated in the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party remained in power for another dozen years until deposed by the United States in the 2003 war.

In contrast with the 1991 Gulf War, most U.N.-member states did not support the U.S.-led attack in 2003. Most other countries did not view as sufficiently strong the evidence that Iraq still possessed weapons of mass destruction or intended to use them. Hussein's brutal treatment of Iraqis over several decades was widely acknowledged by other countries but not accepted as justification for military action against him.

U.S. assertion that Hussein had close links with al-Qaeda was also challenged by most other countries, as well as by U.S. intelligence agencies. One reason was that Hussein's Ba'ath Party, which ruled Iraq between 1968 and 2003, espoused different principles than the al-Qaeda terrorists.

(292)

### **Iran**

Hostility between the United States and Iran dates from 1979, when a revolution forced abdication of Iran's pro-U.S. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Iran and Iraq fought a war between 1980 and 1988 over control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flowing into the Persian Gulf.

Because both Iran and Iraq were major oil producers, the war caused a sharp decline in international oil prices. An estimated 1.5 million died in the war, until it ended when the two countries accepted a UN peace plan. As the United States launched its war on terrorism, Iran was a less immediate target than Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the United States accused Iran of harboring al-Qaeda members and of trying to install a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq after the United States removed Saddam Hussein from power in 2003.

Other states considered by the United States to be state sponsors of terrorism in recent years have included the following:

- Yemen, which served as a base for al-Qaeda cells and sheltered terrorists who attacked the USS *Cole*;
- Sudan, which sheltered Islamic militants, including Osama bin Laden;
- Iran, which had the capability to produce enriched uranium;
- Syria, which was implicated in support of Iranian and Libyan terrorists;
- North Korea, which was developing nuclear weapons capability.

### **Key Terms**

Balance of power (p.282)  
 Boundary (p.270)  
 City-state (p.267)  
 Colonialism (p.268)  
 Colony (p.267)  
 Compact state (p.271)  
 Elongated state (p.272)  
 Federal state (p.278)  
 Fragmented state (p.273)  
 Frontier (p.275)

Gerrymandering (p.280)  
 Imperialism (p.268)  
 Landlocked state (p.274)  
 Microstate (p.266)  
 Perforated state (p.274)  
 Prorupted state (p.271)  
 Sovereignty (p.263)  
 State (p.263)  
 Unitary state (p.278)

