Field Note:
Independence Is Better than Servitude

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

How is space politically organized into states and nations?
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

- **Political geography** is the study of the political organization of the world.
- A **state** is a politically organized territory with a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government.
- Geographer Stuart Elden: modern concept of **territory** arose in early modern Europe as a system of political units came into being with fixed, distinct boundaries and at least a quasi-independent government; process by which this happens is **territoriality**.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

• Today, territoriality is tied to the concept of sovereignty.
• Sovereignty means having a recognized right to control a territory both politically and militarily.
• Under international law, states are sovereign, and they have the right to defend their **territorial integrity** against incursion from other states.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

The Modern State Idea

• Idea of the state appeared in various forms across world regions 400 or 500 years ago
• The European state idea most influenced the development of the modern state system
• Emerging political state was accompanied by mercantilism, which led to the accumulation of wealth through plunder, colonization, and the protection of home industries and foreign markets
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

The Modern State Idea

• The **Peace of Westphalia**, negotiated in 1648, marks the beginning of the modern state system.

• In the Westphalian system it became the *territory* that defined the *society*.

• Territory is treated as a fixed element of political identification, and states define exclusive, nonoverlapping territories.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Nations

- *Nation* is a culturally defined term, and few people agree on exactly what it means.
- The term was originally meant to refer to a group of people who think of themselves as one based on a sense of shared culture and history, and who seek some degree of political-territorial autonomy.
- All nations are ultimately mixtures of different peoples.
- A nation is identified by its own membership; therefore, we cannot simply define a nation as the people within a territory.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Nation-State

• A nation-state is a politically organized area in which nation and state occupy the same space.
• The goal of creating nation-states dates to the French Revolution: democracy
• Key problem associated with the idea of the nation-state is that it assumes the presence of reasonably well-defined, stable nations living contiguously in discrete territories.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Nation-State

• When *people* have a strong sense of nationalism, they have a loyalty to and a belief in the nation itself.

• A *state*, in contrast, seeks to promote a sense of nationhood that coincides with its own borders.

• To help people within the borders relate to the dominant national ideal, states provide security, infrastructure, and goods and services for their citizens.
Guest Field Note:
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

“To Hungarians, Transylvania is significant because it was an important part of the Hungarian Kingdom for a thousand years. Many of their great leaders were born and buried there, and many of their great churches, colleges, and architectural achievements are located there too.”
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Multistate Nations, Multinational States, and Stateless Nations

• Nearly every state in the world is a **multinational state**, a state with more than one nation inside its borders.

• When a nation stretches across borders and across states, the nation is called a **multistate nation**.

• When multiple nations or states claim attachments to the same piece of territory, the potential for conflict is significant.
• Another complication that arises from the lack of fit between nations and states is that some nations do not have a state; they are **stateless nations**.

• **Ex.: the Kurds**
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

European Colonialism and the Diffusion of the Nation-State Model

- Europe exported its concepts of state, sovereignty, and the desire for nation-states to much of the rest of the world through two waves of colonialism.
- During the heyday of colonialism, imperial powers exercised ruthless control over their domains and organized them for maximum economic exploitation.
- Despite the end of colonialism, the political organization of space and the global world economy persist.
DOMINANT COLONIAL INFLUENCES
OVER FOUR CENTURIES, 1550–1950
(including mandates)

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

Figure 8.8
© H. J. de Blij and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

• One of the most powerful impacts of colonialism was the construction of a global order characterized by great differences in economic and political power.

• The concentration of wealth that colonialism brought to Europe, and to parts of the world dominated by European settlers.

• Colonialism is at the heart of highly uneven global distribution of power that continues even today.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

• Social scientists seek to see how each “dot” fits into the whole.

• Proponents of world-systems theory view the world as much more than the sum total of the world’s states.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

The three basic tenets of world-systems theory, as Immanuel Wallerstein defines them:

1. The world economy has one market and a global division of labor.

- **Capitalism**: in the world economy, individuals, corporations, and states produce goods and services that are exchanged for profit.

- **Commodification** is the process of placing a price on a good, service, or idea and then buying, selling, and trading that item.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

2. Although the world has multiple states, almost everything takes place within the context of the world economy:

• Colonialism played a major role in establishing this system by exporting the European state idea and facilitating the construction of an interdependent global economy.
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

3. The world economy has a three-tier structure:

• **Core** is where one is most likely to find higher levels of education, higher salaries, and more technology

• **Periphery**: processes associated with a more marginal position in the world economy

• **Semiperiphery**: places where core and periphery processes are both occurring
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

Construction of the Capitalist World Economy

Major concerns of the world-systems theory:

• Overemphasizes economic factors in political development

• Very state-centric

• Does not fully account for how places move from one category to another
How Is Space Politically Organized into States and Nations?

World-Systems and Political Power

• Each state is theoretically sovereign, but not all states have the same ability to influence others or achieve their political goals.

• World-systems theory helps explain how Europe politically reorganized the world during colonialism.

The Enduring Impact of the Nation-State Idea

• Regardless of many problems and lack of simple solutions to nation and state conflicts, the European territorial state idea became the world model and still shapes the political organization of space worldwide.
Imagine you are the leader of a newly independent state in Africa or Asia. Determine what your government can do to build a nation that corresponds with the borders of your state. Consider the roles of education, government, military, and culture in your exercise in nation-building.
How do states spatially organize their governments?
Political geographer Richard Hartshorne described the forces within the state that unify the people as centripetal and the forces that divide them as centrifugal.

According to Hartshorne, whether a state continues to exist depends on the balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces.
How Do States Spatially Organize Their Governments?

Form of Government

• **Unitary** governments: centralized states whose administrative framework is designed to ensure the central government’s authority over all of the state.

• In a strong **federal** system, the regions have much control over government policies and funds, and in a weak federal system, the central government retains a significant measure of power.

• Federalism accommodates regional interests by vesting primary power in provinces, States, or other regional units over all matters except those explicitly given to the central government.
Devolution

- Devolution is the movement of power from the central government to regional governments within the state.
- Sometimes devolution is achieved by reworking a constitution to establish a federal system that recognizes the permanency of the regional governments.
- In other places, governments devolve power without altering constitutions, almost as an experiment.
Interstate-40, near Blackwell, Arkansas.
“In most states in the U.S., a ‘dry county’ might cause one to think of a place where there is very little rain. But in the southern part of the U.S., there are many dry counties—that is, counties with laws forbidding the sale of packaged alcohol. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, keeping counties dry was much easier than it is today. A hundred years ago, it took up to a day to travel to the next town or city on very poor roads. Today, with cars traveling 70 MPH on an interstate, the same trip takes a matter of minutes. Why would counties continue to ban alcohol sales today? Many of the reasons are cultural. Of the Arkansas residents who attend church, most are Baptists (see Figure 7.28) or other Protestant denominations. Many of these churches prohibit consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Arkansas legislature supports dry counties by requiring counties that want to sell packaged liquor to get 38 percent of the voters in the last election to sign a petition. It only takes 10 percent of that voter pool to get any other issue on the ballot. Today, however, many dry counties in Arkansas are known as ‘damp.’ Damp counties are those where restaurants, country clubs and social organizations can apply and receive a license to serve alcohol by the drink. This arrangement seems counterintuitive to the idea of a dry county. But business and economic development authorities want damp counties to encourage investment and growth in the local economy.”

Credit: Paul T. Gray, Jr.
How Do States Spatially Organize Their Governments?

Electoral Geography

- Partitioning of state territory into electoral districts.
- Electoral geographers examine how the spatial configuration of electoral districts and the voting patterns that emerge in particular elections reflect and influence social and political affairs.
  - Ex.: 1994 South Africa
- Geographers study patterns of voting behavior to assess the influence of their geographic situation
- **Reapportionment**: process by which districts are moved according to population shifts so that each district has about the same number of people.
Field Note

“As I drove along a main road through a Honolulu suburb I noticed that numerous houses had the Hawai‘i State flag flying upside down. I knocked on the door of this house and asked the homeowner why he was treating the State flag this way. He invited me in and we talked for more than an hour. ‘This is 1993,’ he said, ‘and we native Hawai‘ians are letting the State government and the country know that we haven’t forgotten the annexation by the United States of our kingdom. I don’t accept it, and we want our territory to plant our flag and keep the traditions alive. Why don’t you drive past the royal palace, and you’ll see that we mean it.’ He was right. The Iolani Palace, where the Hawai‘ians’ last monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, reigned until she was deposed by a group of American businessmen in 1893, was draped in black for all of Honolulu to see. Here was devolutionary stress on American soil.”
Choose an example of a devolutionary movement and consider which geographic factors favor, or work against, greater autonomy (self-governance) for the region. Would granting the region autonomy strengthen or weaken the state in which the region is currently situated?
Key Question

How are boundaries established, and why do boundary disputes occur?
How Are Boundaries Established, and Why Do Boundary Disputes Occur?

- A **boundary** between states is actually a vertical plane that cuts through the rocks below (called the subsoil) and the airspace above, dividing one state from another (**Fig. 8.18**).

- Only where the vertical plane intersects the Earth’s surface (on land or at sea) does it form the line we see on the ground.

The Vertical Plane of a Political Boundary
Establishing Boundaries

• States typically define the boundary in a treaty-like legal document in which actual points in the landscape or points of latitude and longitude are described.

• Cartographers delimit the boundary by drawing on a map.

• If either or both of the states so desire, they can demarcate the boundary by using steel posts, concrete pillars, fences, walls, or some other visible means to mark the boundary on the ground.
How Are Boundaries Established, and Why Do Boundary Disputes Occur?

Boundary Disputes

• **Geometric boundaries** are drawn using grid systems such as latitude and longitude or township and range.

• **Physical-political boundaries** follow an agreed upon figure in the natural landscape.
  • Ex.: The center point of a river or crest of a mountain range.
How Are Boundaries Established, and Why Do Boundary Disputes Occur?

Types of Boundaries

• *Definitional boundary disputes* focus on the legal language of the boundary agreement.

• *Locational boundary disputes* center on the delimitation and possibly the demarcation of the boundary. The definition is not in dispute, but its interpretation is.

• *Operational boundary disputes* involve neighbors who differ over the way their border should function.

• *Allocational boundary disputes* are becoming more common as the search for resources intensifies.
People used to think physical-political boundaries were always more stable than geometric boundaries. Through studies of many places, political geographers have confirmed that this idea is false. Construct your own argument explaining why physical-political boundaries can create just as much instability as geometric boundaries.
Key Question

How does the study of geopolitics help us understand the world?
How Does the Study of Geopolitics Help Us Understand the World?

Classical Geopolitics

• Late 19th century/early 20th century geopoliticians were usually either part of the German school or the British/American school.

The German School

• Tried to explain why certain states were powerful and how they became powerful.

• Friedrick Ratzel: influenced by Darwin; the state resembles a biological organism whose life cycle extends from birth through maturity and, ultimately, decline and death.
How Does the Study of Geopolitics Help Us Understand the World?

The British/American School


• Land-based power, not sea power, would ultimately rule the world.

Influence of Geopoliticians on Politics

• NATO

• Geopolitics: term with negative connotations
How Does the Study of Geopolitics Help Us Understand the World?

Critical Geopolitics

• **Critical Geopolitics:** intellectuals of statecraft construct ideas about geographical circumstances and places, these ideas influence and reinforce their political behaviors and policy choices, and then affect what happens and how most people interpret what happens.
How Does the Study of Geopolitics Help Us Understand the World?

Geopolitical World Order

• Cold War: bipolar, with Soviet versus West alliances
• New World Order: Global cooperation to bring discipline to rogue states
• **Unilateralism:** one country (e.g., United States) in position of dominance, with other countries following its lead
Key Question

What are supranational organizations, and what are their implications for the state?
What Are Supranational Organizations, and What Are Their Implications for the State?

• **Supranational organization:** three or more states that forge an association and form an administrative structure for mutual benefit and in pursuit of shared goals

League of Nations to United Nations

• Started with the League of Nations in 1919
• United Nations (UN), FAO, WTO, UNESCO

Regional Supranational Organizations

• Benelux, Marshall Plan
What Are Supranational Organizations, and What Are Their Implications for the State?

European Union

• After the Marshall Plan, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) formed.
• EU formed in 1992.
• Not all EU member states are currently a part of the euro-zone, but the euro has emerged as a significant global currency.
THE UNITED NATIONS

Charter members, 1945

Members after 1945 with dates of entry

Nonmembers

Figure 8.23
© John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Figure 8.23
Member States of the United Nations. This map shows charter members, members after 1945 (with dates of entry), and nonmembers of the United Nations. Data from: the United Nations

© 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.
Figure 8.25
Cortina, Italy. A market in northern Italy advertises the price of fruit in euros. © Alexander B. Murphy.
What Are Supranational Organizations, and What Are Their Implications for the State?

How Does Supranationalism Affect the State?

• Economics associations: NAFTA, CIS, etc.
• European Union: “taken on a life of its own”
• **Deterritorialization**: globalization, networked communities, etc. undermine the state’s traditional territorial authority
• **Reterritorialization**: the state is moving to solidify control over its territory