the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flowing into the Persian Gulf. Forced to cede control of the waterway to Iran in 1975, Iraq took advantage of Iran's revolution to seize the waterway in 1980, but Iran was not defeated outright, so an 8-year war began that neither side was able to win. An estimated 1.5 million died in the war, which ended when the two countries accepted a UN peace plan.

When the United States launched its war on terrorism after 9/11, Afghanistan was the immediate target, followed by Iraq. But after the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president in 2005, relations between the United States and Iran deteriorated. The United States accused Iran of harboring al-Qaeda members and of trying to gain influence in Iraq, where, as in Iran, the majority of the people were Shiites. More troubling to the international community was Iran's aggressive development of a nuclear program. Iran claimed that its nuclear program was for civilian purposes, but other countries believed that it was intended to develop weapons. Prolonged negotiations were undertaken to dismantle Iran's nuclear capabilities without resorting to yet another war in the Middle East.

**Pakistan**

Pakistan along with India was created in 1947 when South Asia was partitioned into predominantly Muslim and Hindu states. The war on terrorism has spilled over from Pakistan's western neighbors Afghanistan and Iran. Although the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis are Muslim, Pakistan is a multiethnic state. Punjabis comprise around 45 percent of the population and, combined, Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Seraikis around 40 percent; the remaining 15 percent are other ethnicities. Around 70 percent of Pakistanis are Sunni Muslims and 30 percent are Shiites. Western Pakistan, along the border with Afghanistan, is a rugged, mountainous region inhabited by several ethnic minorities where the Taliban have been largely in control. Osama bin Laden is thought to have hidden in Pakistan after escaping from Tora Bora (see Contemporary Geographic Tools box).

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**SUMMARY**

The political geography of the second half of the twentieth century was dominated by the Cold War between two superpowers—the United States and the former Soviet Union. In the twenty-first century, military alliances among states have become less important than patterns of global and regional economic cooperation and competition among states.

At the same time, with the end of the Cold War, the world has entered a period characterized by an unprecedented increase in the number of new states created to satisfy the desire of nationalities for self-determination as an expression of cultural distinctiveness. Turmoil has resulted in many places where the boundaries of the new states do not match the territories occupied by distinct nationalities. Terrorism led by ethnic groups has replaced direct military confrontation between states as a leading source of political unrest.

Here is a review of issues raised at the beginning of the chapter:

1. **Where Are States Located?** A state is a political unit, with an organized government and sovereignty, whereas a nation is a group of people with a strong sense of cultural unity. Most of Earth's surface is allocated to states, and only a handful of colonies and tracts of unorganized territory remain.

2. **Why Do Boundaries Between States Cause Problems?** Boundaries between states, where possible, are drawn to coincide either with physical features, such as mountains, deserts, and bodies of water, or with such cultural characteristics as geometry, religion, and language. Boundaries affect the shape of countries and affect the ability of a country to live peacefully with its neighbors. Problems arise when the boundaries of states do not coincide with the boundaries of ethnicities.

3. **Why Do States Cooperate with Each Other?** Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union, as the world's two superpowers, formed military alliances with other countries. With the end of the Cold War, nationalities now are cooperating with each other, especially in Western Europe, primarily to promote economic growth rather than to provide military protection.

4. **Why Has Terrorism Increased?** Terrorism initiated by individuals, organizations, and states has increased, especially against the United States. Terrorists consider all U.S. citizens justifiable targets because they hold all U.S. citizens responsible for U.S. government policies and cultural practices.

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**CASE STUDY REVISITED / Future of the Nation-State in Europe**

In the twenty-first century, the importance of the nation-state has diminished in Western Europe, the world region most closely associated with development of the concept during the previous two centuries (Figure 8-30). Western Europeans carry European Union rather than national passports, which they don't need to show when traveling within Western Europe.

More importantly, European nation-states have put aside their centuries-old rivalries to forge the world's most powerful economic union. France's franc, Germany's mark, and Italy's lira—powerful symbols of sovereign nation-states—have disappeared, replaced by a single currency, the euro. European leaders have bet that every country in the region will be stronger economically by replacing national currencies with the euro.

(Continued)
CASE STUDY REVISITED (Continued)

Cultural differences persist at borders. For example, highways in the Netherlands are more likely than those in neighboring Belgium to be flanked by well-manicured vegetation and paths reserved for bicycles. But boundaries where hundreds of thousands of soldiers once stood guard now have little more economic significance in Europe than boundaries between states inside the United States.

Rather than national boundaries, the most fundamental obstacle to Western European integration is the multiplicity of languages. Although English has rapidly become the principal language of business in the European Union, much of the European Union’s budget is spent translating documents into other languages. Businesses must figure out how to effectively advertise their products in several languages.

At the same time that residents of Western European countries are displaying increased tolerance for the cultural values of their immediate neighbors, opposition has increased to the immigration of people from the south and east, especially those who have darker skin and adhere to Islam. Immigrants from poorer regions of Europe, Africa, and Asia fill low-paying jobs (such as cleaning streets and operating buses) that Western Europeans are not willing to perform. Nonetheless, many Western Europeans fear that large-scale immigration will transform their nation-states into multiethnic societies.

Underlying this fear of immigration is recognition that natural increase rates are higher in most African and Asian countries than in Western Europe as a result of higher crude birth rates. Many Western Europeans believe that Africans and Asians who immigrate to their countries will continue to maintain relatively high crude birth rates and consequently will constitute even higher percentages of the population in Western Europe in the future.

KEY TERMS

**Balance of power** (p. 257) Condition of roughly equal strength between opposing countries or alliances of countries.

**Boundary** (p. 247) Invisible line that marks the extent of a state’s territory.

**City-state** (p. 243) A sovereign state comprising a city and its immediate hinterland.

**Colonialism** (p. 244) Attempt by one country to establish settlements and to impose its political, economic, and cultural principles in another territory.

**Colony** (p. 243) A territory that is legally tied to a sovereign state rather than completely independent.

**Compact state** (p. 247) A state in which the distance from the center to any boundary does not vary significantly.

**Elongated state** (p. 247) A state with a long, narrow shape.

**Federal state** (p. 254) An internal organization of a state that allocates most powers to units of local government.

**Fragmented state** (p. 248) A state that includes several discontinuous pieces of territory.

**Frontier** (p. 253) A zone separating two states in which neither state exercises political control.

**Gerrymandering** (p. 255) Process of redrawing legislative boundaries for the purpose of benefiting the party in power.

**Imperialism** (p. 245) Control of territory already occupied and organized by an indigenous group.

**Landlocked state** (p. 249) A state that does not have a direct outlet to the sea.

**Microstate** (p. 242) A state that encompasses a very small land area.

**Perforated state** (p. 248) A state that completely surrounds another one.

**Prorupted state** (p. 247) An otherwise compact state with a large projecting extension.

**Sovereignty** (p. 241) Ability of a state to govern its territory free from control of its internal affairs by other states.

**State** (p. 241) An area organized into a political unit and ruled by an established government with control over its internal and foreign affairs.

**Unitary state** (p. 254) An internal organization of a state that places most power in the hands of central government officials.
THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY

1. In his book 1984, George Orwell envisioned the division of the world into three large unified states, held together through technological controls. To what extent has Orwell’s vision of a global political arrangement been realized?

2. Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner have identified countries that they call “failed nation-states,” including Cambodia, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan. Helman and Ratner argue that the governments of these countries were maintained in power during the Cold War era through massive military and economic aid from the United States or the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War, these failed nation-states have sunk into civil wars, fought among groups who share language, religion, and other cultural characteristics. What obligations do other countries have to restore order in failed nation-states?

3. Given the movement toward increased local government autonomy on the one hand and increased authority for international organizations on the other, what is the future of the nation-state? Have political and economic trends since the 1990s strengthened the concept of nation-state or weakened it?

4. The world has been divided into a collection of countries on the basis of the principle that ethnicities have the right of self-determination. National identity, however, derives from economic interests as well as from such cultural characteristics as language and religion. To what extent should a country’s ability to provide its citizens with food, jobs, economic security, and material wealth, rather than the principle of self-determination, become the basis for dividing the world into independent countries?

5. A century ago the British geographer Halford J. Mackinder identified a heartland in the interior of Eurasia (Europe and Asia) that was isolated by mountain ranges and the Arctic Ocean. Surrounding the heartland was a series of fringe areas, which the geographer Nicholas Spykman later called the rimland, oriented toward the oceans. Mackinder argued that whoever controlled the heartland would control Eurasia and hence the entire world. To what extent has Mackinder’s theory been validated during the twentieth century by the creation and then the dismantling of the Soviet Union?

RESOURCES

Some recent and classic books and articles on political geography:


**Journals featuring political geography:**

*American Journal of Political Science; American Political Science Review; Foreign Affairs; Foreign Policy; International Affairs; International Journal of Middle East Studies; Political Geography; Post-Soviet Geography.*

**Key Internet site:**

https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/ The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency publishes a World Factbook. Select a country from the drop-down list to find background information, as well as facts and figures about the country's demography, economy, physical geography, government, and military. Maps are also available.