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POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Humans have a tendency to partition space and exert control over that space as a group, often in the pursuit of resources.
 - A state is an area with defined and internationally-acknowledged boundaries—sovereignty is the acknowledgment that government has authority over the population of a state.
 - A nation is a group of people sharing a common culture and an attachment to a particular territory.
 - A nation-state is the combination of these concepts in that it is a politically-recognized territory with a principal national group.
- Nationalism assumes that the nation-state is the natural political unit.
- Many European states undertook periods of exploration and expansion, trying to build their empires by colonizing countries in Asia, Africa, and South America.
- There is variation amongst states about how they are ruled.
- Symptoms of instability can include conflicts, civil war, terrorism, or control by drug trade.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- define and differentiate between nations, states, and nation-states, and describe how multi-state nations or divisions of nations amongst states arose;
- identify the different theories of how nationalism arises and how nation-states form;
- describe how the formation of nation-states in Europe and subsequent empire building and colonialism affected the boundaries of states today;
- explain how states may be ruled and the factors that lead to stability or instability of a state;
- describe how colonialism and imperialism have related to a variety of unstable and even failed states; and
- understand the relevance of space and distance as they relate to international trade or “geopolitics.”

KEY TERMS

Anarchism A political philosophy that rejects the state and argues that social order is possible without a state. (p. 323)

Centrifugal forces In political geography, forces that make it difficult to bind an area together as an effective state; in urban geography, forces that favour the decentralization of urban land uses. (p. 308)

Centripetal forces In political geography, forces that pull an area together as one unit to create a relatively stable state; in urban geography, forces that favour the concentration of urban land uses in a central area. (p. 308)

Core–periphery The concept that states are often unequally divided between powerful cores and dependent peripheries. (p. 314)

Democracy A form of government involving free and fair elections, openness and accountability, civil and political rights, and the rule of law. (p. 323)

Devolution A process of transferring power from central to regional or local levels of government. (p. 314)

Dictatorship An oppressive, anti-democratic form of government in which the leader is often backed by the military. (p. 323)

Federalism A form of government in which power and authority are divided between central and regional governments. (p. 308)

Geopolitics The study of the importance of space in understanding international relations. (p. 307)

Geopolitik The study of states as organisms that choose to expand in territory in order to fulfill their “destinies” as nation-states. (p. 307)

Gerrymandering The realignment of electoral boundaries to benefit a particular political party. (p. 365)

Heartland theory A geopolitical theory of world power based on the assumption that the land-based state controlling the Eurasian heartland held the key to world domination. (p. 307)

Imperialism A relationship between states in which one is dominant over the other. (p. 343)

Irredentism The view held by one country that a minority living in an adjacent country rightfully belongs to the first country. (p. 311)

Malapportionment A form of gerrymandering, involving the creation of electoral districts of varying population sizes so that one party will benefit. (p. 327)

Maoism The revolutionary thought and practice of Mao Zedong (1893–1976), based on protracted revolution to achieve power and socialist policies after power is achieved. (p. 324)

Monarchy The institution of rule over a state by the hereditary head of a family; monarchists are those who favour this system. (p. 323)

Nation A group of people sharing a common culture and an attachment to some territory; a term difficult to define objectively. (p. 302)

Nation-state A political unit that contains one principal national group that gives it its identity and defines its territory. (p. 302)

Oligarchy Rule by an elite group of people, typically the wealthy. (p. 323)

Public goods Goods that are freely available to all or that are provided (equally or unequally) to citizens by the state. (p. 324)

Rimland theory A geopolitical theory of world power based on the assumption that the state controlling the area surrounding the Eurasian heartland held the key to world domination. (p. 307)

Sovereignty Supreme authority over the territory and population of a state, vested in its government; the most basic right of a state understood as a political community. (p. 302)

State An area with defined and internationally acknowledged boundaries; a political unit. (p. 302)

State apparatus The institutions and organizations through which the state exercises its power. (p. 324)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the extent to which theories of state creation are most accurate and why.
2. Have there been successful cases of the devolution of power in multinational states? Give examples in your discussion.
3. Discuss the importance of examining space and voting patterns.
4. Discuss which factors contribute to a failed state. Consider history, geopolitics, and internal processes in your answer.
5. Is the world closer now to democracy and perpetual peace? Why or why not?

LINKS OF INTEREST

- United Nations Decolonization of States
<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/main.htm>

- Foreign Affairs and International Trade on Failed States
<http://www.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/discussions/fragile/index.aspx?lang=eng>
- National Endowment for Democracy
<http://www.ned.org/>
- Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)
<http://www.cigionline.org/>
- Global Geopolitics
<http://globalgeopolitics.net/wordpress/>
- Democracy International
<http://democracyinternational.com/>
- Governance International
<http://www.govint.org/>

SUGGESTED READINGS

Cohen, S. B. 2003. *Geopolitics of the World System*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

A substantial volume that covers issues from a pragmatic perspective, identifying a hierarchy in the world system (geostrategic realms, geopolitical regions, national states, quasi-states, and territorial subdivisions), along with other features; includes predictions for the future.

Kuus, M. 2009. "Political Geography and Geopolitics," *Canadian Geographer* 53: 86–90.

Valuable discussion of contributions made by Canadian political geographers to the subfield of geopolitics in recent years; emphasizes human agency.

Tyner, J. A. 2009. *War, Violence, and Population*. New York: Guilford.

Insightful discussion of how states use violence to control and administer space; includes case studies to elucidate general concepts. Grounded in both theory and research and including detailed case studies.

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

- History Tube. 2009. "European Imperialism in Africa." YouTube video, 4:08. Posted February 2009. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJe1W_HIWmA
1. How did imperialism benefit Europeans?

- Europe made money by accessing tremendous resources south of the Sahara in particular. Millions of people were killed and displaced but profits from the resources were sent back to the imperialism powers in Europe.
- 2. How was imperialism thought to be noble?
 - It was based on the idea that Europeans enjoyed strong economies, organized governments, strong military and navies. Meanwhile, African nations were troubled by economic weakness and poor political conditions.
- Tahrir ICN. 2012. “This is Anarchism (In 10 Minutes).” YouTube video, 8:59. Posted December 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vv6eRj2-k
 1. What are the four dimensions of the political scale used in the video?
 - They are authoritarian left and authoritarian right, libertarian left, and libertarian right.
 2. Where does the word “anarchy” come from?
 - The word comes from *Ankbas* which means without rulers but not without rules. It is a common misperception that there are no rules in an anarchist society.