

Political Geography

Third Edition

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Perceptions of the Political World

Decisions emanate from a complex set of processes. They are made because the person or group of persons making them desires a state of affairs different from the one that prevails. They are based on information, but in order to assess the process of decision making in a given context, we must know the amount of information the decision makers had and the degree of accuracy of that information. Furthermore, there are different *kinds* of decisions; they may be made as a matter of habit, they may be made subconsciously, or they may be controlled—that is, made in response to a perceived choice of alternatives.

Fortunately, geographers other than political geographers have also been interested in research on decision making, and political geography has benefited from this work. Economic geographers have focused on the element of rationality as part of a decision-making model. This is the concept of the “intendedly rational man,” who may have an incomplete and imperfect information set but who makes rational decisions when confronted with alternative courses of action. Julian Wolpert incorporated this factor into his search for the behavioral elements involved in people’s decisions to move elsewhere—the decision to migrate. In several articles of great relevance to political geography, Wolpert stresses a number of dimensions of decision making. *Place utility* has to do with a decision maker’s relationship with the locale where the decision is being made. The *decision*

environment is constituted by the decision maker’s perceptions of alternatives, information, cues, and stresses. This brings up another related item: *threat*. Often decisions must be made in haste; in a crisis atmosphere. This tends to reduce not only the time involved, but also the range of choices that might have been considered. This has obvious relevance to strategic decision making. In the face of armed hostilities or during actual conflict, decisions often must be made rapidly. A bad decision may cost lives and a good decision made too late may cost even more. This leads to another dimension of decision making: *risk and uncertainty*. Voters, too, face uncertainty when they select among presidential candidates; they cannot be sure platform promises will be kept.

Mental Maps

One of the most important factors influencing us as decision makers is our images of places, our **mental maps** of our immediate surroundings, our country, and the world. When we are asked to draw our mental map of an area, we will distort it in a way that may significantly reflect our misconceptions. In other words, we hold in our mind a “model” of the spatial environment involving notions of shape, area, distance, direction, accessibility, and so forth. It is on the basis of this model, which is at variance with reality, that we operate and form impressions.

So, too, do politicians. Complicated issues are simplified and thus distorted, and then decisions are made (and opinions swayed) accordingly. A good example of this is the comment made by the experienced William A. O'Neill, then Governor of Connecticut, at the annual conference of New England governors and eastern Canadian premiers in June 1990. When asked about the controversy over the status of Québec, which dominated the meeting, he admitted his ignorance of it, and then said, "What you're talking about here is approximately one third of the country, *geographically located in the center of the country, removing itself*" (italics added for emphasis).*

Spatial perception, of course, is only one dimension of a complex of images we hold of the world around us (including ourselves), a totality that has been called the *perceptual field*. This perceptual field is affected by numerous conditions: our cultural conditioning and the values attached to it; our attitudes, motivations, and goals. In the spatial context, at least within cultures, it may be possible to discover broad patterns of common behavior. John Sonnenfeld considers these matters, recognizing geographical, operational, perceptual, and behavioral environments. These generalizations deserve some elaboration.

In Chapter 2 we point out that home is the most important place for people. It is, in fact, central in their world. This *centrality* of home—the most familiar, the most important place in the world—manifests itself clearly in children's maps of their neighborhoods or hometowns, in which their homes, schools, and other special places are shown as both larger and more central than they really are according to the scale of the drawing. It may be observed in the familiar humorous, but quite serious, maps of the United States as seen by Texans, New Yorkers, Bostonians, or others, in which home is enormous and fairly detailed, with the rest of the country fading vaguely into the distance. This is also seen in the all-too-common maps showing Alabama or Jordan or Podunk surrounded

by concentric circles proclaiming its centrality in the universe, and hence its ideal location for a vacation or for new industry. A view with profound political implications is the traditional Chinese perception of the world with China as "The Middle Kingdom" surrounded by barbarians.

In fact, if one takes any **absolute location** on Earth such as a set of latitude and longitude coordinates, that location on a globe can be considered central, and concentric rings around it could demonstrate this clearly. A place is central only because individuals or groups perceive it that way, based on subjective criteria that are subject to change. This raises the notion of **relative location**, a place's location *in relation* to surrounding locations. Substitute "strategic" for "central" and you are thinking geopolitically. More on this later.

Mental, or *cognitive*, maps are based on individual perceptions of the world, which are nearly always influenced strongly by location and culture. Mountain dwellers and valley dwellers have different surroundings, see the world differently, and hence have different attitudes in environmental, social, and political affairs, among others. Similarly, seafarers and landlubbers have different perspectives; so do desert nomads and city residents. Perceptions of space are conditioned by occupation, by technology, and possibly by numerous other factors not fully understood.

Distance is also a matter of perception. It is a cliché by now to observe that the world is shrinking. In terms of **absolute distance** (an inch, a mile, a kilometer), there has been no change. It just seems that way because circulation (transportation and communications) is so much faster, safer, and more efficient now and places seem closer together in time. Thus, **relative distance** (such as travel time) can be shortened by the construction of an interstate highway and communications are dramatically accelerated by satellite transmissions, mobile phones, e-mail, and so on. Americans, in fact, have become accustomed to measuring distance in time (a five-minute walk or a 30-minute drive) or in money (bus zones).

* *New Haven Register*, 20 June 1990.

But our perceptions of distance still vary from one individual to another. Is a place 200 miles away *far away*? That depends. High school students in some parts of the western United States may drive 75 miles to a town to go cruising, while most students in the eastern United States would view that as a great distance. Imagine the difference in attitude between a citizen of a country in which it is physically or politically impossible to travel overland more than a few hours in any direction within the State's boundaries and one who lives in a country as huge as the United States or Russia. Or consider one who lives in Micronesia and customarily sails 100 miles in an outrigger just to get a particular brand of tobacco.

Cognitive distance affects the orientation of peoples. Until the 1970s, Australians felt closer to England than to the Philippines, and Jamaicans still feel closer to England or Canada than to Antigua only 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) away. These perceptions help explain why Australia has only weak links with the Philippines and why the West Indies Federation was doomed to failure.

Direction is a matter of cognition also, conditioned largely by culture and in particular by frequent exposure to maps oriented in a particular direction and by the kind of ethnocentrism already discussed in connection with centrality. Here again, one can consider direction in both absolute and relative terms. **Absolute direction** refers to

Comparison of Spatial Perceptions

A good way to understand how spatial perspectives are created, reinforced, and expressed is to compare atlases produced in different parts of the world. Here is a summary of two student atlases produced in the United States and Australia, with the maps listed in the order in which they appear.

Goode's World Atlas, 18th ed. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1990

The New Jacaranda Atlas, 3rd ed. Milton, Queensland: Jacaranda Wiley, 1987

Area Covered	Pages of Maps	Area Covered	Pages of Maps
World	53	World	12
Northern Lands and Seas	1	Australia	38
United States and Canada	53	Papua New Guinea	4
Middle America	9	South Pacific	10
South America	8	New Zealand	4
Europe	29	Asia	2
Former USSR	11	South and Southeast Asia	4
Asia	9	East Asia	8
Middle East and Southwest Asia	4	India	4
South and East Asia	12	Middle East	2
Pacific Ocean	2	Europe	13
Australia and New Zealand	7	Former USSR	3
Africa	13	Africa	10
Antarctica	1	United States and Canada	6
Ocean Floor	7	Middle America	2
Metropolitan Areas (5 US, 13 foreign)	18	South America	6
		Arctic	2
		Antarctica	2
Total	237	Total	132

specific directions such as north, south, east, west, southeast, northwest, or compass bearings such as 135 degrees. One can travel north from any point on Earth (except the north pole) without regard to one's starting point. Few Americans really understand this, however, and often think in terms of **relative direction**. Examples include Near, Middle, and Far East; Down Under; Top of the World; the Midwest, and Subsaharan Africa. These directions, however, are *relative* to the location where people coined the terms. An American may travel east to reach the Middle East, but a Pakistani will travel west. Likewise, a New Yorker travels west to reach the Midwest, but a Californian will travel east. Indonesia may be the Far East to a Britisher, but to an Australian it's the Near North. This was brought forcefully to the attention of Australians when Japanese troops occupied Indonesia during World War II, invaded eastern New Guinea, and threatened their homeland. Australia had to reorient its attention away from Britain to the west and toward Japan to the north and the United States to the northeast. In the United States, we frequently refer to the cardinal points of the compass as "Up North," "Down South," "Out West," and "Back East." We commonly speak of going up to Canada or down to México; of above the equator or below the Rio Grande. None of these terms has any meaning on a globe or on the surface of the Earth itself. They are all based on the perspective of the viewers who coined the phrases and helped diffuse them around the world, distorting other peoples' perceptions in the process.

Cognitive direction is also linked with centrality; that is, a single situation viewed from two perspectives can look very different. At the beginning of the Cold War in the 1950s, Americans were told that their country was surrounded by a chain of their own military bases protecting them from attack by the Soviet Union. But a map appearing in a popular weekly news magazine was centered on the Soviet Union rather than the United States and showed unmistakably that it was the Soviet Union that was surrounded—and by hostile, not friendly,

forces. Then, in October 1962, when the United States revealed that the Soviet Union had placed intermediate-range ballistic missiles and long-range bombers in Cuba that were capable of delivering nuclear warheads to nearly every major city in North America, many Latin Americans laughed about a small Latin American country pulling the tail feathers of the "Yanqui" eagle. The smiles faded, however, when a wire service map appeared in local newspapers showing concentric rings around Havana representing the ranges of the weapons (Fig. 3-1). To their surprise and dismay, they saw that those very same nuclear warheads could be delivered anywhere in Latin America as far south as Lima. Fidel Castro lost many supporters in Latin America that day. A final example illustrates the changing role of México in the world as it develops economically and invests heavily in Central America. Mexicans used to refer to the United States as "The Colossus of the North." They seldom use that sobriquet any more since they no longer feel so inferior to the United States, but now Central Americans are using it to refer to México!

Another type of cognitive map is largely *imaginary*, an idealized or stereotyped vision of a place that bears little resemblance to the real place but nevertheless influences decisions and actions. Soldiers go off to war to fight and die for the green fields of England or the Volga steppe or Main Street, USA. In truth, these images have come to them only through folklore, and the soldiers may really live in the industrial slums of Birmingham or Kiev or Pittsburgh. But, be it ever so humble, a slum tenement is hardly worth dying for 20,000 kilometers away, and governments foster images of picket fences and pastures of plenty as morale boosters.

Boosterism has a long and honored history in the United States, and it has helped to shape the iconography that inspires loyalty. We discuss iconography in more detail in Chapter 19, but here's an

* Then there is the classic story of the headline some years ago in *The Times* (London) that symbolizes why Britain was so reluctant to join Europe: "Terrible Gale in the Channel—Continent Isolated."

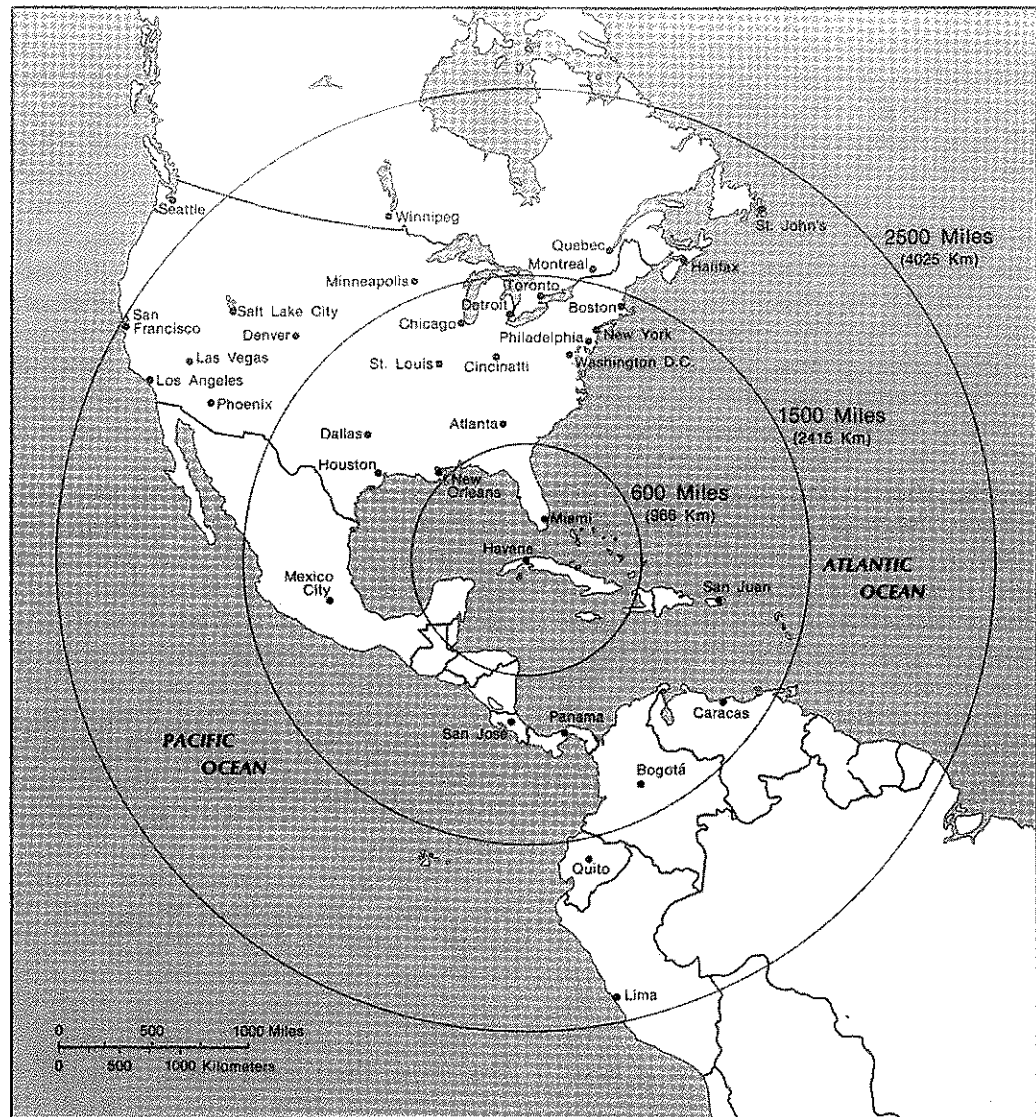


Figure 3-1: The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. This map, centered on Havana, shows clearly the potential threat to Latin America as well as North America posed by Soviet offensive weapons based in Cuba. The inner circle represents the approximate range of the smaller missiles, the second that of the nuclear weapon-carrying bombers and the medium-range ballistic missiles, while the outer circle shows the approximate range of the intermediate-range missiles.

example designed to create a mental image of the United States. It's a song from the late nineteenth century, typical of the poems, advertisements, and songs created to entice immigrants to settle the new lands and build industries.

Bounding the US

Of all the mighty nations in the East and in the West,
Why, the glorious Yankee nation is the wisest

and the best.

There is room for all creation, and the banner is unfurled,
It's a general invitation to the people of the world.

Chorus:

Come along, come along, make no delay;
Come from every nation, come from every way,
Our land it is broad enough, and don't you be alarmed,
Uncle Sam is rich enough, he'll give you all a farm.

The St. Lawrence bounds our Northern line,
 the crystal waters flow,
 And the Rio Grande, the southern bound,
 way down in Mexico.
 From the great Atlantic Ocean where the sun
 begins to dawn,
 It peaks the Rocky Mountains, clear away in Oregon.

Chorus

In the South, they raise the cotton, in the West,
 the corn and pork,
 While New England's manufactory, they do
 the finer work,
 And the little creeks and waterfalls, that force
 along our hills,
 Are just the thing for washing sheep and
 driving cotton mills.

Chorus

This magnificent vision of America as a Garden of Eden was replaced not long after by a less attractive one as settlers began to move out of the prairies of the Old Northwest and the Mississippi Valley, out onto the Great Plains, where rainfall was scantier and the sod would not yield to the simple plows of the period. Then developed the legend of the Great American Desert blocking the way to California and Oregon, a region fit only for grazing, not for large-scale settlement. This legend, like the song, influenced migration patterns profoundly.

Map Distortions

All maps are distortions of reality. They must be, for no flat map can accurately portray even a small portion of the Earth's curved surface, to say nothing of the entire Earth. In terms of *shape*, *area*, *distance*, and *direction*, one or more of these qualities will be distorted. The problem for the cartographer is how to manipulate the distortion so as to minimize it in those characteristics that are most important for the purpose of the map. The three essential qualities of every map are projection, scale, and symbolization.

In order to control distortion, the cartographer chooses the **map projection** most appropriate for the purpose: an equal-area

projection if the map is to show comparisons of areas in different parts of it or an equidistant projection if distance is the critical factor. The wrong projection can convey the wrong impression.

Likewise, the **map scale** must be large enough for the amount of detail in the map to be seen clearly, but not so large that the map wastes space or becomes unwieldy. People are easily confused by the issue of scale. Given two maps of equal size, a large-scale map will display a smaller area with more detail than a small-scale map that displays a larger area, but with less detail. It's similar to what occurs in photography when one uses a zoom lens. For instance, a satellite-mounted camera can be used to produce one image of eastern Afghanistan. Using an especially powerful zoom lens, a second image might show the entrance to an individual cave in the region. If the photos are used to prepare two maps of equal size, then the map of the cave will represent a larger scale (more detail) than the map of eastern Afghanistan which is at a smaller scale (less detail). Of course, maps are not always the same size, but the **representative fractions** that provide the relationship between distance on a map and distance on the ground (1:25,000; 1:100,000; 1:1,000,000, etc.) can be compared to determine which map is larger scale.

Map symbols must fit the map scale and be easy for the reader to interpret, with the aid of a legend or key if necessary. A responsible cartographer will select and combine these qualities in various ways to transmit information about a part or all of the Earth's surface. But even a map produced with the best of intentions is not always perfect; it is subject to errors in the original data on which it is based, the inexperience or subconscious biases of the cartographer, and the interpretations of the reader.

Even accurate maps can be misleading. The projection with which we are most familiar is Mercator's. It is a splendid projection for navigation, which is what Mercator designed it for in the sixteenth century, and is widely used today by aerial and maritime navigators all over the world. Unfortunately,

however, it is all too commonly used for general-purpose or reference maps, and, particularly on small-scale maps, it presents a grossly distorted picture of the world, especially in regard to high latitude locations. For instance, South America is about nine times larger than Greenland, but a Mercator projection makes Greenland appear slightly larger than South America. Yet this is the map of the world most of us have indelibly printed on our minds. Wrong as it is, it still shapes our thinking. The original maps in this book have been designed and executed with the greatest care, each one individually, so as to be as useful as possible within the technical limitations imposed by the book itself. Nevertheless, to derive the fullest value from them, the reader must study each map carefully and try to understand its message.

Our Mercator view of the world prior to World War II led us to exaggerate the size of areas in the high latitudes and ignore the polar areas entirely, except when reading or hearing accounts of the exploits of polar explorers such as Robert Peary and Matthew Hensen, or Roald Amundsen, Robert Scott, and Ernest Shackleton. But the global nature of the war plus the extensive use of aircraft made polar projection maps and other azimuthal (or zenithal) maps popular. American insularity has been reinforced by such historical and cultural factors as the central role of the Monroe Doctrine in our foreign policy, the location of the Pan American Union headquarters in Washington, Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor" policy toward Latin America, and the desire of many European immigrants to turn away from the misery and oppression they had left behind and look into the interior of North America for hope and opportunity. All this was changed by World War II when Asia, the Pacific islands, North Africa, and the Soviet Union suddenly became our neighbors.

While we have tended to lapse back into our more traditional view of the world, we are now more accustomed to seeing maps not drawn to cylindrical projections and not oriented with north at the top.* During the war, Richard Edes Harrison produced a number of such unconventional maps, and

J. Paul Goode's homolosine projection became popular. Both helped us to develop mental maps that are somewhat more realistic than a Mercator view. In the 1960s, *The Christian Science Monitor* ran a series of full-page maps that showed portions of the Earth as viewed from different points above it. The series, called "Global Perspectives," was an attempt to help us understand the mental maps of the world carried around by people living in Canada, the Soviet Union, China, Africa, and other places (Fig. 3-2). Increased use of such maps would help us develop a more accurate mental image of the world.

Cartographers sometimes use graphic images that resemble maps but that are deliberately drawn out of scale and not even drawn to a projection. Typically, these images such as pictograms, cartograms, and block diagrams are used to give emphasis to size or shape as the primary symbol. We use a cartogram in Chapter 19 to emphasize the gross disparity in per capita incomes around the world. Maps and other graphic devices can be used to inform, as in most of the cases cited so far, or to persuade. Maps designed deliberately to channel the reader's thinking along certain lines are called *propaganda maps*, and are far more common than we realize.

Propaganda Maps

Some **propaganda maps** are relatively benign, such as the maps mentioned earlier that show the United States or the world revolving around Alabama or Jordan or Podunk. Others are found widely in commercial advertising; they depict how *our* bank blankets the state with its branch offices, or that *our* restaurant chain has

*There is no particular reason why north should be placed at the top of the map, except perhaps that most of the world's land area, people, States, and economic activity are located in the Northern Hemisphere. Medieval European maps were oriented (from orient—east) with east at the top, the general direction of Jerusalem, and some even had Jerusalem in the center with the rest of the world around it, and all were perfectly well understood by their readers.

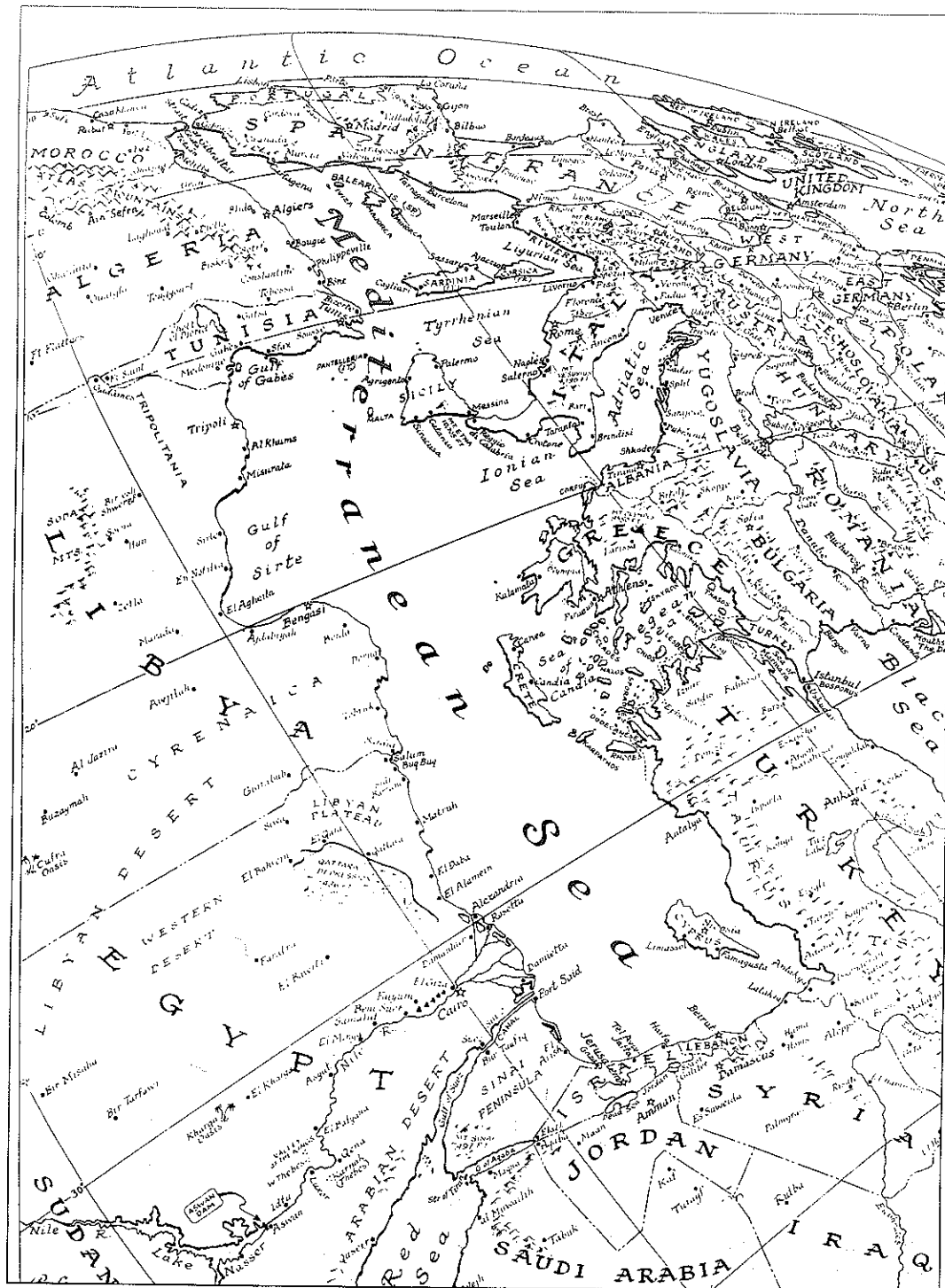


Figure 3-2: North Africa as seen from the Middle East. One of a series of 10 maps published in *The Christian Science Monitor* in late 1968 designed to show how people in various parts of the world perceive nearby areas that look very different when viewed from other perspectives. An understanding of the other person's perspective of the world can help us to appreciate his or her attitudes and decision making. (© 1968 Russel H. Lenz. All rights reserved)

27,479 locations in 49 states and therefore it must be better (or at least nearer) than the competition, or that *our* hotel is located precisely halfway between here and there and is therefore the best possible place to spend the night. We are concerned here, however, with maps that carry political messages.

Political propaganda maps, often in cartoon form, are not new (Fig. 3-3). The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a spate of them, particularly in Europe, depicting countries in shapes or caricatures purporting to picture the national character. Prussian, Russian, Turk and Englishman were the favorite cartoon-map characters portraying stereotypes of their respective States. With changing tastes and circum-

stances and growing sophistication among propagandists and cartographers, propaganda maps became more serious and perhaps more persuasive. During the 1930s, the German "geopoliticians" made propaganda maps one of their principal weapons in generating support among intellectuals and the general public at home and abroad for the Nazi policy of German expansion.

The Germans clearly used projection, scale, and symbol to distort reality, always retaining enough truth in their maps to lend them credibility, and appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect of their readers. It is difficult to gauge their effectiveness, even with hindsight, but they did leave us a legacy of greater understanding of the utility of maps in

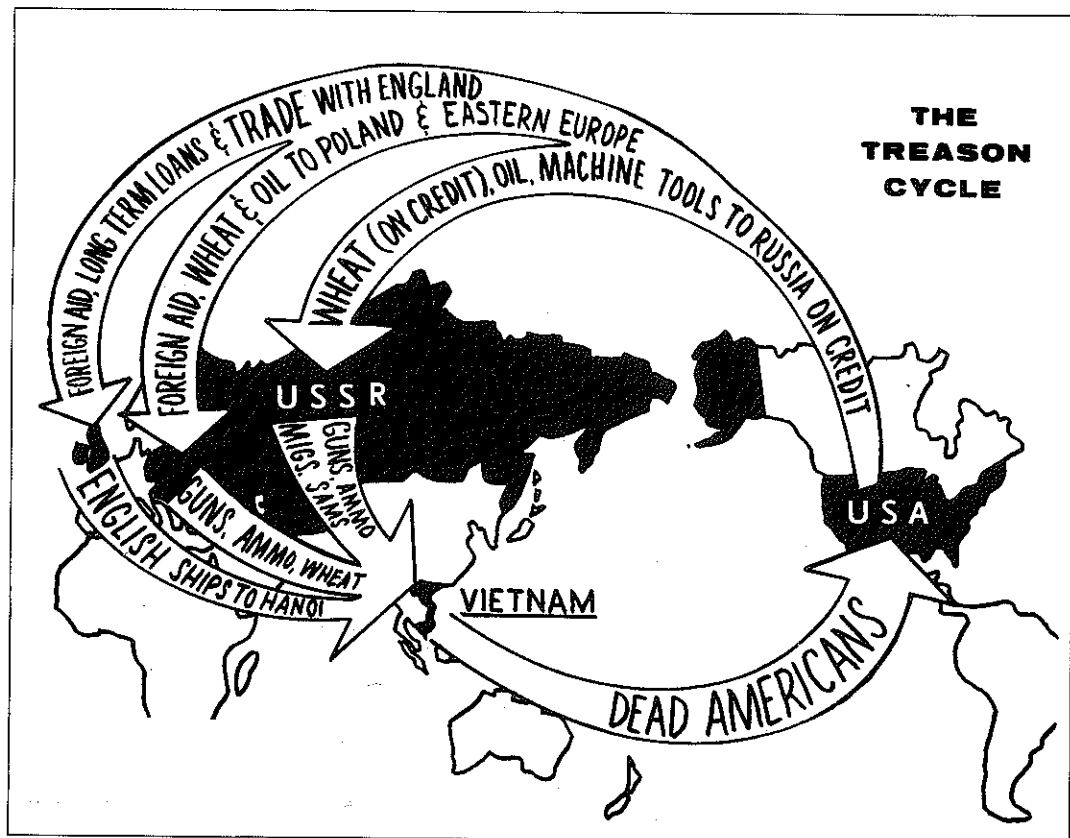


Figure 3-3: A modern propaganda map. This map was distributed in Connecticut (and probably elsewhere) by the John Birch Society at the height of the Viet Nam War in 1968. It uses a number of standard propaganda techniques to convey the message that dealing with those who engage in any way with our enemy of the moment is treason. An older example of a propaganda map may be found in Chapter 21.

persuasion as well as in education. Even during World War II, the Allies used maps to dramatize the threat posed by the enemy or to justify strategies such as attacking the "soft underbelly of Europe" and invading one island in the Pacific after another in stepping-stone fashion toward Japan.

Both sides, particularly the Allies, deliberately falsified maps that the enemy was allowed to "capture." The maps misled the enemy about planned military operations,

part of the intelligence/counterintelligence battles that are so much a part of modern warfare. Even well after the war, the Soviet Union produced falsified maps of its own territory in apparent attempts to mislead strategic planners at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) about the locations of cities and natural features. These are not really propaganda maps, but specialized types of military maps aimed at "disinformation" (Fig. 3-4).

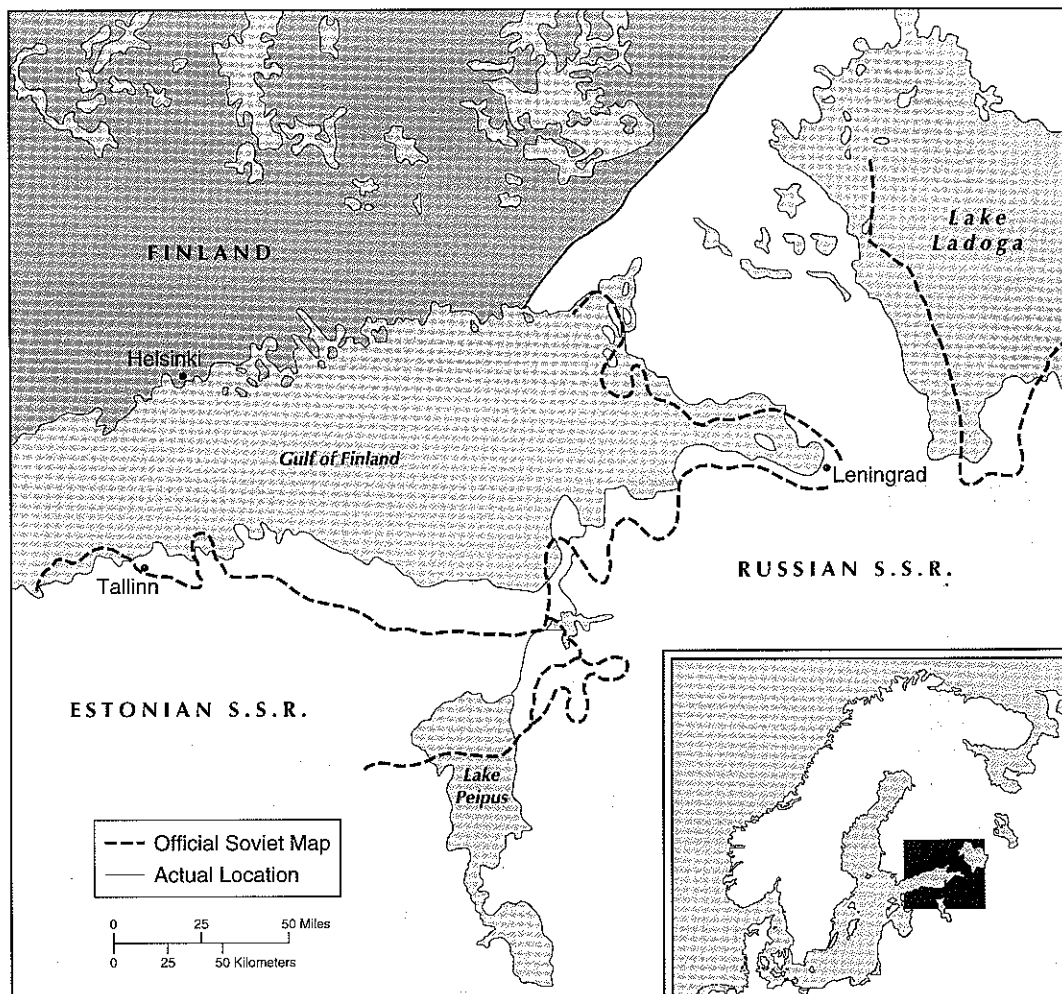


Figure 3-4: Deliberate distortion of a Soviet map. In the late 1960s the Soviet Union, which had a reputation for cartographic excellence, began producing maps such as this one (redrawn for clarity), which distort many areas of the country. Apparently, two techniques were used: creation of a pseudo-projection on which to draw the map, and deliberate shifting of features from their actual positions. Such distortions are relatively easy to detect by comparison with older, accurate maps and through remote sensing from aircraft or space vehicles.

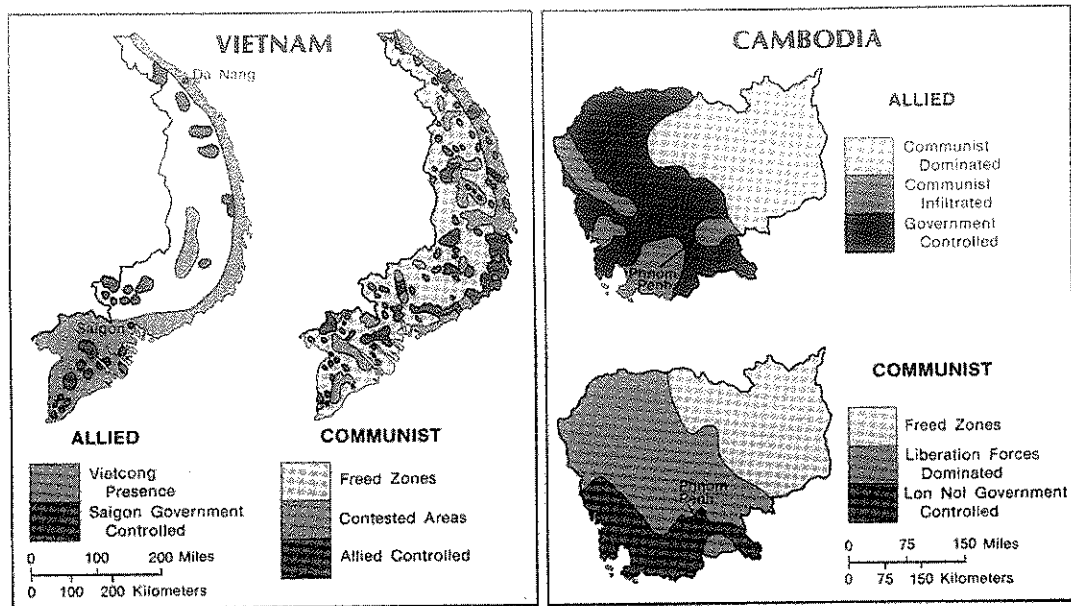


Figure 3-5: The map war in Indochina. These two pairs of maps represent versions of the military situation in South Viet Nam and Cambodia toward the end of 1970, produced by the United States and its allies on one hand and the Communist-led insurgents on the other. Each side was trying to convince the world that it controlled the most territory, in order to win support and establish credibility. Similar map wars to influence public opinion have been waged in Portuguese Guinea and elsewhere.

Maps are also used extensively in psychological warfare. During the Cold War in the 1950s and 1960s, both the United States and the Soviet Union used maps to impress their peoples with the danger of imminent attack by the other, across Europe or over the north polar region. We have mentioned the maps of U.S. bases surrounding the USSR; there were many more. An example may be found in Chapter 23.

Maps continue to play an important role in attempts to mold public opinion on political issues. The Viet Nam War (Fig. 3-5), the Panama Canal treaties, the Egyptian blockade of the Strait of Tiran, "wars of national liberation," illegal immigration into Western Europe, and many other issues have become the object of such attempts at cartographic manipulation. There is no reason to believe that maps will be used in this way any less

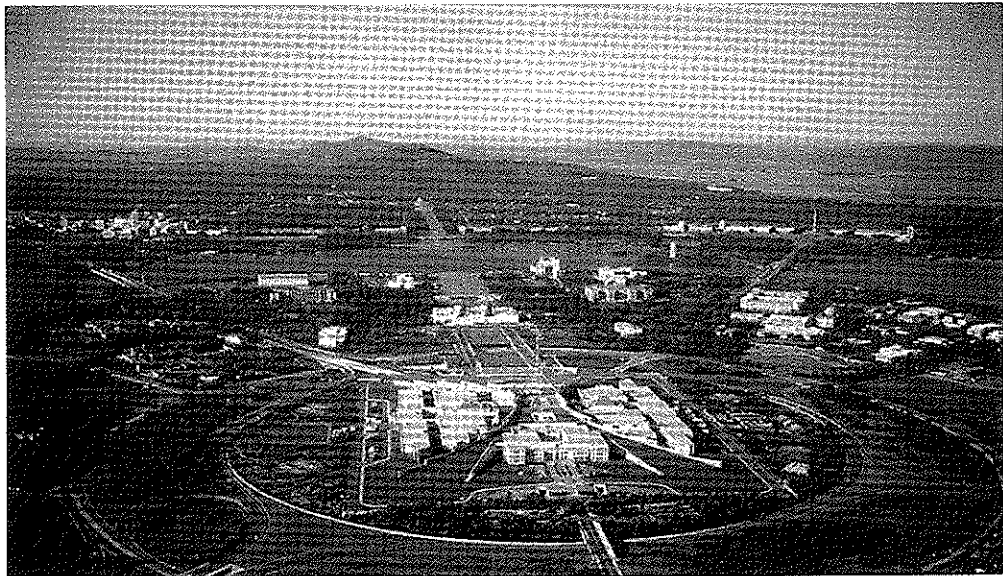
in the future. Examples are scattered throughout this book, and so are other instances of perception in political decision making. The concept should be kept in mind as we explore various elements of political geography.

Key Terms and Concepts

Absolute Direction
Absolute Distance
Absolute Location
Map Projection
Map Scale
Map Symbol
Mental Map
Propaganda Map
Relative Direction
Relative Distance
Relative Location
Representative Fraction
Spatial Perception

PART TWO

The State



Canberra, compromise capital of Australia

State, Nation, and Nation-State

In the history of political geography, more attention has been devoted to studying the State than any other topic. The State has been described, classified, analyzed, discussed, and argued about from the time of Aristotle and Plato—if not earlier. Despite numerous important subjects to investigate, some of them relatively new, the State remains one of the primary topics for study by political geographers. This should not seem surprising, for in the past two centuries the State has become the dominant form of political organization in the world and is likely to remain so for some time to come.

In much of the discussion, not only among nonspecialists but even among scholars in many disciplines, the term *State* is confused with *state* or *nation*. Often State or state or nation is used interchangeably with *nation-state*, and sometimes the hyphenated word is used rather pompously in place of a simpler one. Before we proceed further, we should clarify the proper meanings of these terms. Here, we follow the United Nations practice of using the term *State* with a capital "S" to denote an independent country such as Egypt, Ireland, Spain, or the United States. In contrast, the word *state* with a lowercase "s" refers to a first-order civil division such as California, South Carolina, Nuevo León, or West Bengal.

State

A **State** is an independent country consisting of a specific territory and citizens bound by

a sovereign government that demands (but does not always obtain) their loyalty. Its intangible qualities are discussed later, but here we can examine some of its more measurable qualities. In order for a place to be considered a State in the strictest sense, it must possess to a reasonable degree certain characteristics:

1. **Land territory.** A State must occupy a definite portion of the Earth's land surface and should have more or less generally recognized limits, even if some of its boundaries are undefined or disputed.
2. **Permanent resident population.** An area devoid of people altogether, no matter how large, cannot be a State. An area only traversed by nomads or occupied seasonally by hunters or scientists similarly cannot be a State. A State is a human institution created by people to serve some of their particular needs.
3. **Government.** The people living within a territory must have some sort of administrative system to perform functions needed or desired by the people. Without political organization, there can be no State.
4. **Organized economy.** Although every society has some form of economic system, a State invariably has responsibility for many economic activities, even if they include little more than the issuance and supervision of money and the regulation of foreign trade, and even if economic activities are managed badly.

5. Circulation system. For a State to function, there must be some organized means of transmitting goods, people, and ideas from one part of the territory to another. All forms of transportation and communication are included within the term *circulation*, but a modern State must have more sophisticated forms available to it than runners or the "bush telegraph."

These requirements for a State are all geographic, and political geographers have long been studying them. Two other requirements, however, have traditionally been in the realms of political science and international law. If we are to be realistic in any attempt to classify the political units of the world, we must give careful consideration to them. In many cases the geographic criteria may be quite clear, but only the political criteria can be decisive in determining whether or not a political unit is a State. These criteria are:

1. **"Sovereignty".** There is general agreement that a State is "sovereign" or "possesses sovereignty," but no agreement on precisely what constitutes sovereignty. In a general sense it means power over the people of an area unrestrained by laws originating outside the area, or independence completely free of direct external control. If we try to get more specific than this, however, we encounter serious problems. There are so many qualifications and exceptions to the general concept that it would seem wise to use quotation marks around "sovereign" or "sovereignty" in most cases. That is often awkward, however, and we may omit them as long as we understand that the term is imprecise and often used too loosely.
2. **Recognition.** For a political unit to be accepted as a State with "an international personality" of its own, it must be recognized as such by a significant portion of the international community—the existing States. In effect, it must be voted into the club by the existing members. Specialists in international law disagree about whether such recognition is

"declarative" or "constitutive"; that is, whether the formal act of recognition simply puts the label of "State" on a political unit that has already demonstrated that it possesses most or all of the five characteristics and criteria already mentioned, or whether it is the act of recognition itself that brings the State into being for the first time. There is also disagreement over what proportion of the club's members must extend such a welcome and even over whether numbers alone have any value or whether affirmative acts by most of the "great powers" are necessary. These details need not concern us here, but we cannot forget that recognition is important, perhaps decisive, in determining the proper application of the word "State."

Among all the political units in the world, many are clearly States. The United States is one, as are Portugal and Peru, Thailand and Tunisia. Many others are not: Puerto Rico, Bermuda, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), and French Polynesia are all dependent territories, even though they possess many of the attributes of statehood, including varying degrees of self-government. Others are officially independent, but lack full sovereignty such as Monaco, whose Minister of State must be a French citizen selected from a list of senior civil servants for a three-year term. Still others are questionable for a variety of reasons. Is Taiwan a State? Or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus? Or Vatican City? These questions illustrate the difficulty in identifying a State. For our purposes, it is enough to understand that the term *State* has a fairly precise meaning and should be used with great care.

Nearly all States have civil divisions; that is, administrative districts within them that perform governmental functions and even, in the case of federal States, possess some measure of sovereignty. These civil divisions are frequently ranked in a hierarchy of size and/or authority, from first-order civil divisions on down. States give many names to their first-order civil divisions. Département, province, and county are among the most

common.* In some States, all of which have at least nominally federal systems, the first-order civil divisions are called states. These include México, Brazil, Nigeria, India, Germany and, of course, the United States.†

Nation

Unlike a State, a **nation** is a group of people. Although definitions of the term vary considerably, political scientists and political geographers generally use it to mean a reasonably large group of people with a common culture, a territory they view as their homeland, and sharing one or more important culture traits, such as religion, language, political institutions, values, and historical experience. They tend to identify with one another, feel closer to one another than to outsiders, and believe that they belong together. They are clearly distinguishable from others who do not share their culture.

This may seem rather vague, but it may help a bit if we point out that the term "people" when used as a singular noun is roughly equivalent to "nation," just as "country" is roughly equivalent to "State." Thus, we may properly speak of the Polish nation or the Navajo nation or the Ewe nation because each is a people distinguished from all others by its distinctive culture.

How small a group may be considered a nation? There is no answer to this question. Certainly the group has to be larger than a family, a clan, or even a tribe, but how much larger no one can say. This is one of the dilemmas in the application of the principle of "national self-determination" or "self-determination of peoples," which we discuss later. We have in the world today some very large nations and some very small ones.

* Others include krai, prefecture, division, parish, governorate, commune, circonscription, republic, region, wilaya, and district.

† It should be noted that the word is customarily capitalized when giving the official name of the division, as in State of New Hampshire or State of New South Wales. On the other hand, some countries use the word in their official long-form names: some are the State of Bahrain, State of Israel, State of Kuwait, and the Independent State of Samoa.

Compiling a list would be impossible. Bernard Nietschmann estimated that the number is between 5,000 and 8,000. In comparison, the 2002 admission of Switzerland and Timor-Leste (East Timor) to the United Nations has brought that body's membership up to 191. The concept of the nation as a cultural entity is very old, and it has been very important in the development of the modern political world. Perhaps the critical factor is whether the group in question considers itself to be a nation.

The feeling among a people that they constitute a nation may be carried further, into the political realm, to produce a feeling of nationalism. **Nationalism**, a feeling of belonging to a particular nation, is a term that strains efforts to distinguish between State and nation. It is often used as synonymous with all the citizens of a State. But some of those citizens may feel nationalist sentiments toward another State or toward a non-existent State. Thus, the leaders of Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Tajikistan may wish to promote *civic nationalism* within their States, but Turks, Hungarians, and Uzbeks who live there may feel a sense of *ethnic nationalism*‡ toward Turkey, Hungary, and Uzbekistan, respectively. Likewise, governments may try to foster civic nationalism among Indonesians, South Africans, and Spaniards, but within those States are Dayaks, Zulus, and Catalans who may feel the pull of ethnic nationalism for their cultural groups. In Israel, Jews from around the world are most united by a sense of *religious nationalism*, but 17 percent of the Israeli population consists of Muslim and Christian Palestinians. Many of them share a greater sense of ethnic nationalism with other Palestinians than of civic nationalism toward Israel.

Nationalism is an old sentiment, apparently dating from our earliest civilizations, but we are primarily concerned here with its modern manifestations and its effects on the political organization of space. In some

‡The term "ethnic" offends many indigenous peoples who consider it insulting. The term is used here, however, because it is widely used in the literature of nationalism.

instances, nationalism can be a healthy emotion. It can encourage people to identify with a group larger than their family, clan, or tribe. It can get them interested, even involved, in the affairs of modern society. It can stimulate them to create new ideas and institutions that will advance society as a whole, in partnership with other people and other nations. But nationalism frequently creates a sense of solidarity *against* rival nations. If the emotion becomes powerful enough, it can lead to a demand for self-determination among ever-smaller groups and to the fragmentation of society instead of its unification. Just as mountains are uplifted by tectonic forces and eroded by wind and rain, States too can expand and contract in size. Nationalist sentiments frequently play a role in such changes. In some cases, the emotion can lead to **irredentism**, the desire to incorporate within the State all areas that had once been part of the State and/or areas of adjacent States that have become home to their ethnic kin. If such efforts succeed, one State expands at the expense of another. On the other hand, **secession** occurs when a people and their territory withdraw from a State to become independent. In that situation, the original State may contract due to the establishment of a new State rather than the expansion of a neighbor. Either process can result from strong nationalist feelings. A particularly extreme form of nationalism is *chauvinism*,* which may be defined as "superpatriotism," excessive and bellicose feelings of superiority over all other peoples and countries. Clearly this is unhealthy; it has frequently led to wars of aggression and to imperialism.

Nation-State

Just as the State is the dominant form of political organization today, the **nation-state** is the ideal form to which most nations

and States aspire and which best promotes territorial stability. That this ideal is very difficult to attain becomes evident when we try to count the number of true nation-states in the world today. Put in the simplest terms, a nation-state is a nation with a State wrapped around it. That is, it is a nation with its own State, a State in which there is no significant group that is not part of the nation. This does not mean simply a minority ethnic group, but a nationalistic group that either wants its own State or wants to be part of another State or wants at least a large measure of autonomy within the State in which it lives.

Iceland is one such example. Isolated on their island in the Atlantic Ocean, the people of Iceland have evolved over the centuries into a distinct nation. Japan is another island State that certainly qualifies as a nation-state. Egypt, Portugal, Sweden, and Uruguay are all nation-states, though they have very different histories and demographic characteristics. Despite being composed of a large number of minorities, the United States, as a "melting pot," is arguably a nation-state from the standpoint of civic nationalism.

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was an empire, composed of many "nationalities," most of which retained much of their cultural heritage in their ancestral homelands. The breakup of the Soviet Union has not erased this problem as ethnic friction continues to cause problems in Russia, Uzbekistan, and other former Soviet republics. Canada is frequently referred to as "two nations in one State" referring to English and French-speaking Canadians, although that phrase overlooks the First Nations such as the Inuit and the Cree. With the inclusion of all groups, one can see that Canada is an example of a **multinational State**. Belgium, South Africa, Afghanistan, and China are other examples of older countries that are multinational States rather than nation-states. Very few countries that have become independent since World War II can be considered nation-states (Fig. 4-1). Instead, most of them must contend with varying degrees of conflicting loyalties in regard to civic, ethnic, and religious nationalism. As usual, some

* From Nicolas Chauvin, a French soldier wounded and decorated many times during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars but who retained a simple-minded devotion to Napoleon. He came to typify the cult of military glory and ultranationalism.

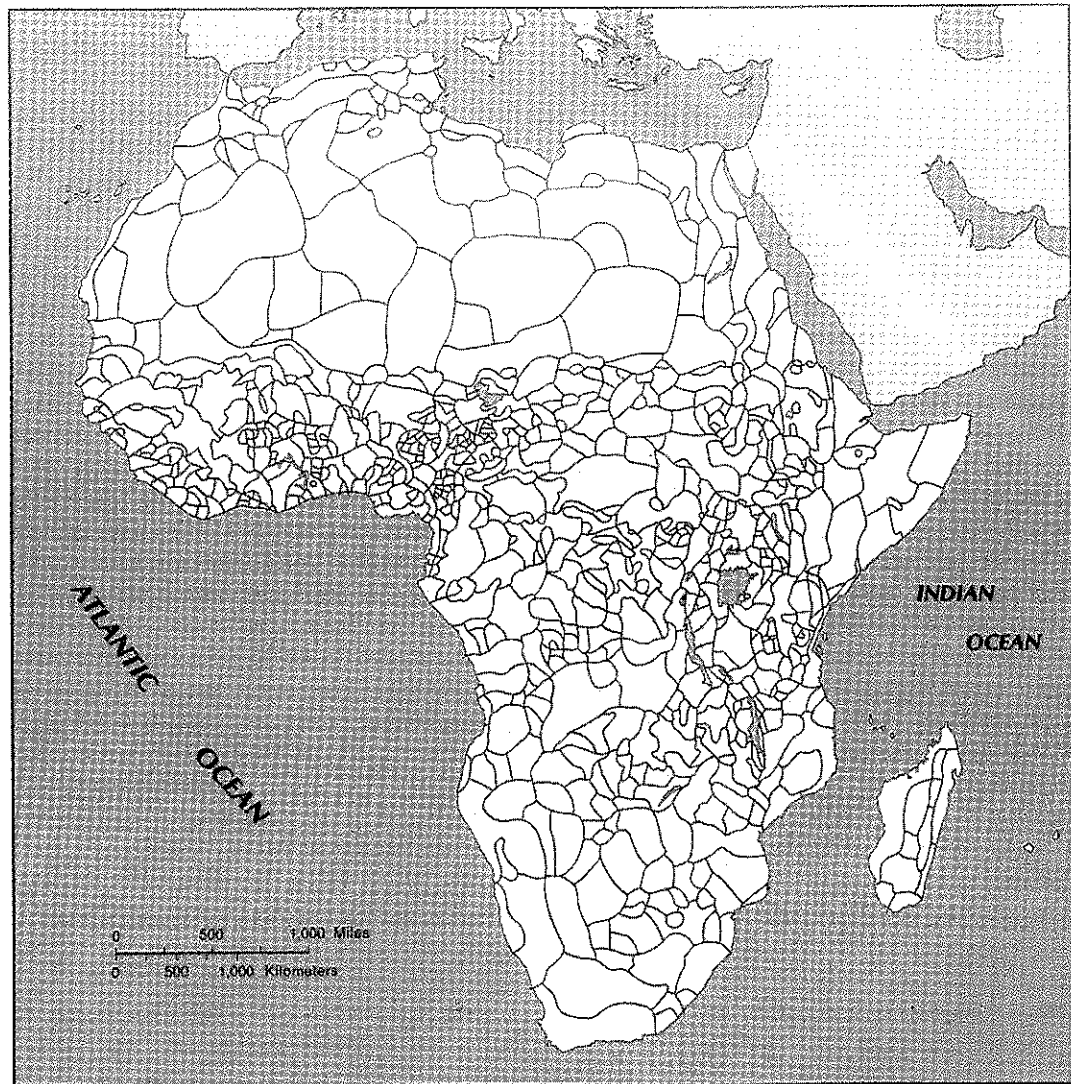


Figure 4-1: Ethnic groups of Africa. The almost unbelievable cultural fragmentation of the continent contributes greatly to its political instability. It is nearly impossible to draw political boundaries along strictly ethnic lines that would make sense in other respects. Clearly, the concepts of nation-state and self-determination have their limitations in the real world. This problem is discussed in more detail in Parts Four and Eight.

States fall in the question-mark column; it would take precise definitions, adequate data, and careful analysis to determine whether Jordan, Bolivia, or Liberia, for example, can truly be called nation-states.

Although the end of colonialism led to the creation of scores of independent States, there are still large numbers of **Stateless nations**. These nations, also known as *non-state nations*, refer to peoples living as a minority in one or more States who want

a State of their own carved from territory currently included in one or more States. In recent times we have seen a number of such nations that are split among two or more States attempt to break away and form States of their own. Usually those in one country are more enthusiastic about independence than their compatriots in adjacent countries. In no case yet has the group succeeded in assembling its politically separated parts and creating from them a new nation-state. Some

examples are demands for independent States of Macedonians living in Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and perhaps Albania; Basques living in Spain and France; and Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and possibly the Caucasus.

In the first case, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) became independent in 1991, thereby eliminating the Macedonians from the ranks of Stateless nations. Macedonian irredentism regarding their kin in neighboring Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia appears, at present, unlikely to succeed. The great majority of Spanish Basques are probably content with a large measure of autonomy within Spain, which most of them received in 1977. Only a small minority is actively fighting for independence, while across the border, the

French Basques seem to be content with the cultural autonomy they have long enjoyed.

Kurdish insurgencies against Iraq and Turkey have been prolonged and frequently intense, while the Kurds in Iran have also revolted at times, demanding autonomy within these countries—at the least (Fig. 4-2). These examples indicate the very great difficulty today of detaching portions of States to form a new one on ethnic grounds.

There are even more instances of nations attempting to secede when only one State is involved. We have seen numerous examples of this in the past few decades alone, and we are likely to see more in the future. The creation of Bangladesh is one such example, although ethnic considerations were important, but not decisive. Indonesia has had

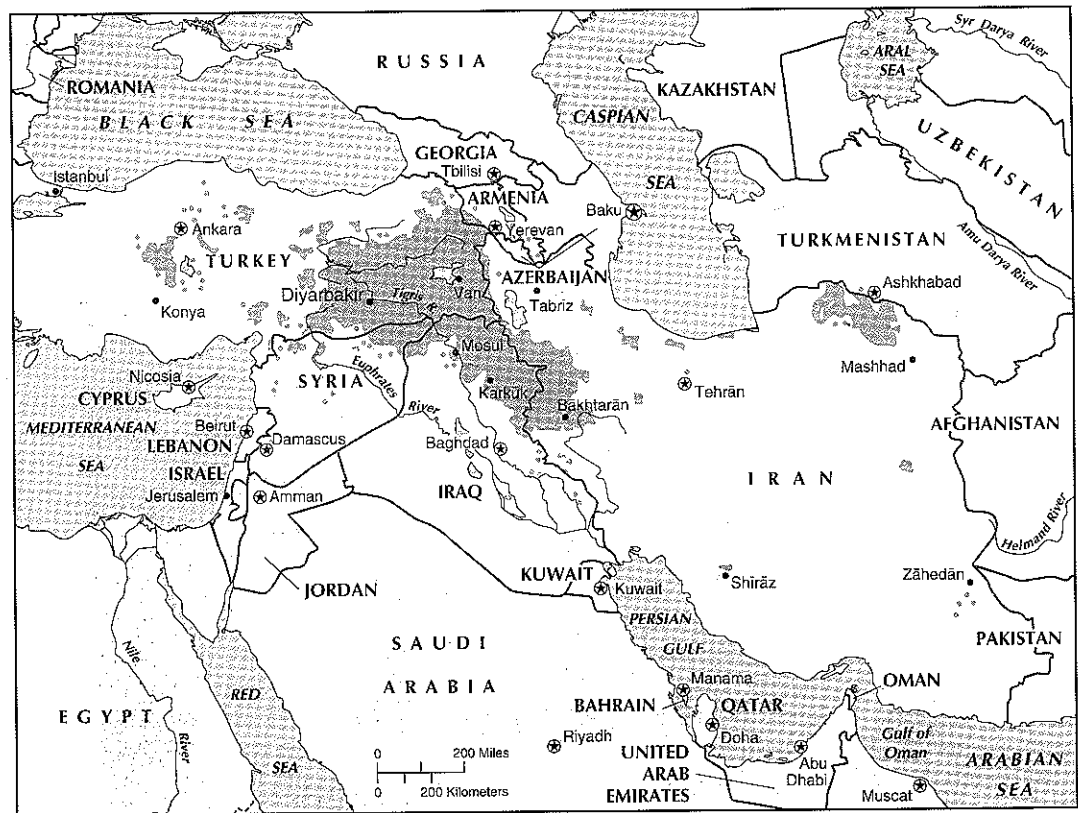


Figure 4-2: The Kurds: A nation without a State. The Kurdish people are scattered through Southwest Asia, but their heartland is a contiguous area divided among Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Armenia, a region they have been striving for generations to establish as a sovereign State of Kurdistan. This effort has always been thwarted by outside powers, local sovereigns, and their own internal divisions. Iraqi Kurdistan is a major oil-producing region. The projected capital of an independent Kurdistan is Diyarbakir, Turkey.

serious unrest in the Riau Archipelago, in Southern Sulawesi (Celebes), in Aceh, Irian Jaya, and the Southern Maluku (Molucca) Islands. The recent success of Timor-Leste in achieving independence from Indonesia will likely increase the desires of these other peoples to follow suit. Minority ethnic, or national, groups have engaged in political efforts or even armed conflict to obtain independence or autonomy in such countries as Chad (Muslim Toubou tribesmen), India (Kashmir, Mizos, Nagas), France (Bretons, Corsicans), Myanmar (Karens, Kachins, Shans), Ethiopia (Eritreans, Somalis), Nigeria (Ibos), China (Uighurs, Tibetans, others), Canada (Québécois), Viet Nam ("Montagnards"), Philippines (Moros), Sudan (Dinka, Nuer, others), Sri Lanka (Tamils), and many others. Besides Timor-Leste, only Eritrea has so far achieved success, and only after three decades of bitter fighting. States that are struggling to maintain control may consider devolution of power as a means to ease tension. **Devolution** is a process in

which a region receives greater *autonomy* (local rule) from the central government. The process may be initiated by a central government in an attempt to forestall greater demands by the region, or it may be the regional leaders who press for devolution to lessen the central government's control. It can serve as a middle ground between a failed and a successful secessionist movement. As Figure 4-3 illustrates, however, devolution may not overcome secessionist desires.

Irredentism

Another manifestation of nationalism, mentioned earlier, is irredentism. The term derives from an area in northern Italy that was still part of Austria in 1871 after the rest of Italy had been unified into a nation-state. Young Italian nationalists referred to it as *Italia irredenta*, or unredeemed Italy. Today there are a number of irredentist movements around the world, although it is often



Figure 4-3: Secession for Québec? This 1995 cartoon appeared the day after residents of Québec narrowly defeated a referendum for independence. (Dayton Daily News) Reprinted with special permission of King Features Syndicate.

difficult to distinguish them from relatively routine border disputes, ideological conflicts, or simple aggression. There are also many cases in which people who speak the language or share other cultural attributes with those of a particular State live across the border of a neighboring State but are not involved in irredentist claims. They live in peace as citizens of their State, and the neighboring States are on good terms.

On occasion, however, such circumstances lead to political problems. Sometimes it is felt that members of a nation living in an adjoining State are being mistreated and the State embodying their nation tries to defend them. This may lead to more vigorous action on their behalf, claims to the territory in which they live, and ultimately to military action designed to incorporate the territory into its own. The continuing conflict between Pakistan and India over Kashmir is one example. When the two countries became independent in 1947, many Muslim Kashmiris wanted to become part of Pakistan, not India. Since then, Kashmir has served as a focal point for conflict between the two South Asian countries. Although the Pakistani military denies supporting Kashmiri insurgents, significant portions of the Pakistani people believe that Muslim Kashmiris in the Indian-controlled sector are subject to mistreatment and should be "liberated." Various aspects of this issue are discussed in Parts Four, Five, and Six.

Strong factions in Greece and Cyprus have long campaigned for *enosis*, or union of the two countries. Turkey has tended in the same direction to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority and in 1974 actually invaded Cyprus, ultimately occupying some 37 percent of the island. Although they have not annexed the occupied area, they have sponsored therein a "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus."

In the 1950s, Indonesia waged a vigorous campaign for the incorporation into its national territory of Dutch-held western New Guinea. It was finally successful in 1962 in forcing out the Dutch, and in May 1963 it obtained control after a nine-month period of United Nations administration. Indonesia then turned its attention increasingly to its "confrontation" with the new

State of Malaysia, demanding all the former British territories on the island of Borneo. In this endeavor, it received no support from the United Nations and temporarily withdrew from that body in January 1965. A change in government in late 1965 and the forced retirement of President Sukarno led to the abandonment of the irredentist (or imperialist) campaign in August 1966.

One of the most protracted, violent, and clear-cut irredentist campaigns in our time has been the Somali drive for a "Greater Somalia." The Somali Republic, itself the product of a 1960 merger of former Italian Somaliland and the British-ruled Somaliland Protectorate, has waged an intermittent propaganda and guerrilla war against Ethiopia since independence in 1960. Similar efforts against Kenya and Djibouti have generally been less violent, although occasionally intense battles have erupted over control of the Somali-inhabited portions of those countries as well. The campaign reached a crescendo with a full-scale Somali invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia in the summer of 1977. By October, the Somalis had occupied most of the Ogaden, including all but one of its important cities, and cut the vital Ethiopian railway to the port of Djibouti. This aggression received little support from abroad, and within a few months the Ethiopians, with considerable Cuban help, drove the Somali regulars and most of the guerrillas back across the border. Since then the Ogaden has been relatively peaceful, but Somali irredentism has not been extinguished; it has only been submerged by problems of drought, famine, civil war, and foreign intervention. Ironically, the former British protectorate in the north proclaimed itself to be independent Somaliland in 1991. Although international recognition has not been forthcoming, Somaliland has an established government and continues to assert its independence from Somalia.

A different and rather strange case is that of Pushtunistan (also called Pakhtoonistan and other varieties of the name). Afghanistan was not happy about the creation of Pakistan in 1947, and late that year made its first demand of the new State for the formation of an independent entity in its



Figure 4-4: One version of the proposed State of Pushtunistan. This crude map claims as the territory for a new Pushtun (Pakhtun) State nearly all of Pakistan west of the Indus River, including all of Baluchistan, but none of the adjacent area of Afghanistan occupied by Pushtu-speaking peoples. Note the absence of such major cities as Peshawar and Sukkur, whereas many quite unimportant places are shown. (Source of original map: Rahman Pazhwak, *Pakhtunistan; The Khyber Pass as The Focus of the New State of Pakhtunistan*, London: Afghan Information Bureau, [1951].)

Northwest Frontier Province. The Pushtun people on both sides of the border are closely related, but the Afghan government neither made irredentist claims to Pakistan's Pushtun-inhabited area, nor did it offer to cede its own Pushtun regions to a new State of Pushtunistan. Thus, there has been no attempt to reunite a people divided by a colonial boundary. It seems instead to be an artificial political issue created by Afghanistan

for its own purposes, waxing and waning according to political conditions in the two countries and relations with the former Soviet republics, Iran, Arab States, and others. It may also be related to the Afghan desire for a seacoast, as evidenced by a map of the proposed new country produced by an Afghan diplomat (see Fig. 4-4). It has resulted in border closings, broken relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and even warfare

in 1947. The issue resurfaced among Pash-tuns on both sides of the border after U.S.-led military operations commenced against the Taliban and al-Qaeda."

Although the State is still the basic unit for politicogeographical analysis, it is coming under increasing pressure from the forces of globalization, environmental degradation, and human rights concerns. Some states are beginning to surrender or share some of the powers that are hallmarks of sovereign States. Circulation systems are increasingly merging across State borders, and commercial transactions are rapidly growing in scale and scope making transnational corporations (TNCs) important actors on the international stage. Such issues of *suprana-*

tionism are addressed in greater detail in Part Six. Meanwhile, the world's political map has not stopped evolving. In the following chapter, we turn to the beginning of that evolutionary process.

Key Terms and Concepts

Devolution
Irredentism
Multinational State
Nation
Nationalism
Nation-State
Secession
Sovereignty
State
Stateless Nation