Introduction to Political Geography – Boundaries, Borders and Shapes of States

AP Human Geography 2013
The study of the interaction of geographical area and political process.

It is the formal study of territoriality and power.

Covers forms of government, borders, treaties, trading blocs, conflicts and war.
Shapes of States

Do Now

How does the shape of a state affect its political geography?
Shapes of States

- **Compact State**: the distance from the geographic center of the area to any point on the boundary does not vary greatly,

ie. Poland
Shapes of States

- **Prorupt/Protruded State**: state having a portion of territory that is elongated, i.e., DRC
Shapes of States

- **Elongated State**: state that is geographically long and narrow, i.e., Chile.

- **Possible Problems?**
Shapes of States

- **Perforated State:** state that totally surrounds another state, i.e., South Africa.
Shapes of States

- **Fragmented State:**
  state split into many pieces, ie. Indonesia.

- **Problems that archipelagos face?**
Shapes of States

- **Landlocked State:** state not having direct access to an ocean, ie. Bolivia.
- **What problems do landlocked states face?**
Shapes of States

- **Microstate**: state that is extremely small, i.e. San Marino, Vatican City.
Shapes of States

- **Frontier** - zone where no state exercises complete political control.

- Area of separation, uninhabited, tangible geographic area
## Essential Political Geography Concepts

### State

- **A political unit**
- Based on Latin *status* - “to stand”
- **Independent country**
  - Defined boundaries
  - Internationally recognized
  - Sovereignty over land and people within boundaries
  - Gray areas, including colonies

### Nation

- **A cultural unit**
- Based on Latin *nation* - “birth”
- **Ethnic identity**
  - Common ancestry (mythical or actual);
- Common religion (usually) and/or language;
- accepted ways of behavior
- **Political aspirations**
- *Has a homeland*
Nation: geographic area that is dominated by a large population that shares a common history and culture, i.e., Kurds and Palestinians.
A state must also contain:

- A *politically organized* territory
- Administered by a *sovereign government*
- *Recognized* by a significant portion of the international community.

A state must also contain:

- a *permanent resident population*
- an *organized economy*
Nation-State: political unit comprising a clearly delineated territory where the population shares a common history and culture, i.e., Japan.
Scenarios

**Nation-State Model** - close match between political sovereignty and extent of a nation’s homeland

**Multi-nation State** - Political unit with two or more national homelands may lead to ethnonationalism and stages of political fragmentation: separatism, devolution, or secession

**Multi-state Nation** Cultural unit (homeland) exists across the boundaries of more than one political unit – may lead to irredentism: political goal to unify a nation across existing state borders

**Stateless Nation** – a nation (with political aspirations) without sovereignty over its homeland
Strategies used by multi nation states

1. *Maintain central control*
   Dominant group (political core) doesn’t grant any political autonomy to ethnic regions
   **Examples:** Yugoslavia under Tito, UK prior to Irish independence

2. *Devolution*
   Peripheral ethnic regions pressure core group for local control = *sharing of some power by the core (dominant) group with the ethnic-minority region*
   **Examples:** Spain (Basques, Catalans), Belgium (Walloons, Flemish)
Forms of Nationalism

- "Ethnic nationalism" – pride of nation based on group identification with specific culture

- "Civic nationalism" – pride of nation based on government system or political ideals that transcends ethnicity

- How do multi-ethnic or multi-nation states promote a sense of *national identity*?

- Is there a downside with fostering *nationalism*?
Types of States

- **Unitary State** – centralized power
  For example, former Soviet Union, North Korea

- **Federal State** – de-centralized power
  For example, U.S., Nigeria, India
Using what you now know about nations, states, and nation states fill in the your sheet. You should be able to explain your response.
Boundary Types

- **Cultural Political Boundary**: political boundary that separates different cultures, i.e., former Yugoslavia.
Boundary Types

- **Religious Boundary:**
  boundary that separates different religions, i.e., Northern Ireland (protestant)/Ireland (Catholic).
Boundary Types

- **Language Boundary:** boundary that separates different language speakers, i.e. traditionally many countries in Europe such as England, France, Spain, and Portugal.
Boundary Types

- **Antecedent Boundary:** boundary that was created before the present day cultural landscape developed, i.e. Malaysia/Indonesia on the island of Borneo. The northern section is part of Malaysia and the majority of the landscape in the south is part of Indonesia. The boundary passes through a mountainous, sparsely inhabited rainforest where there is a break in settlement.
Boundary Types

- **Relict Boundary**: boundary that ceases to exist, however the imprint of the boundary still remains on the cultural landscape, i.e. North/South Vietnam. East and West Beriln/Germany
Boundary Types

- **Fortified Boundary:** when a state constructs physical barriers along a boundary to either keep people in or out of their territory, i.e., Great Wall of China, Berlin Wall, Earth berms along the Morocco/Spanish Sahara border.