

Political Patterns and Processes

AP Human Geography ■ Unit 4

AP Human Geography



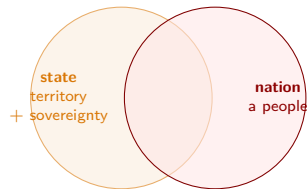
What we will cover

- 1 States & nations
- 2 Power & territoriality
- 3 Boundaries
- 4 Boundary function
- 5 Governance
- 6 Devolution & sovereignty



States, nations, nation-states

- A **state** () has territory + sovereignty; a **nation** is a people.
- A **nation-state** matches one nation to one state.
- A **stateless nation** has identity but no state.



overlap = **nation-state**

one nation + one state = nation-state

Power and territoriality

- **Sovereignty** : a state governs itself; **self-determination** : a people chooses.
- **Territoriality** : controlling an area to influence it.
- A **choke point** controls a vital route; the **EEZ** extends 200 nm.



States claim sovereignty in a global order

Empire, and the geography of pressure points

colonialism

settling and controlling distant territory directly

imperialism

extending power over other territories, by settlement or by control

neocolonialism

continued **economic** control after formal independence – through debt, trade terms and corporate ownership

choke points

narrow passages a great deal of trade must pass: the Suez Canal, the Strait of Malacca, Hormuz

shatterbelts

regions caught between competing powers, so internal conflict is amplified from outside

Colonial boundaries drawn in Europe still explain conflicts today, because they cut through nations and joined rivals. That is the link the FRQ is looking for.



Defining boundaries

- **Antecedent** (before settlement), **subsequent** (fits culture),
- **superimposed** (forced on), **relict** (no longer functions).
- Stages: defined, delimited, demarcated, administered.



Boundaries are drawn, marked, then enforced

Making a boundary takes three steps

definition

agreeing the **wording** of the treaty – what the line is

delimitation

drawing it on a **map**

demarcation

marking it **on the ground** with fences, posts or walls – most boundaries are never demarcated

then administration

who polices it, and how goods and people cross

at sea

UNCLOS sets a 12 nautical-mile **territorial sea** and a 200-mile **exclusive economic zone** (EEZ)

Most boundary disputes are failures at one named step – vague definition, a badly drawn map, or a line nobody ever marked. Say which.

Worked example – name that boundary

Classify each: (a) the 49th parallel, drawn across near-empty land; (b) Europe's line between Dutch- and French-speakers; (c) Africa's straight lines drawn in Berlin; (d) the old inner-German border, still visible in the landscape.

- (a) **antecedent** – drawn **before** settlement.
- (b) **subsequent** – it **followed** the culture.
- (c) **superimposed** – **forced** on from outside.
- (d) **relict** – gone, but still marked.

The label is about **timing**, not shape: what existed **first** – the line or the people? A straight line is not automatically superimposed.

The function of boundaries

- Boundaries organise voting; **redistricting** redraws districts.
- **Gerrymandering** draws them unfairly.
- Disputes: definitional, locational, operational, allocational.

The function of boundaries, in detail

Compact



Elongated



Fragmented



Perforated



Prorupted



AP HuG · U4 · five shapes of states

States take different shapes; each shape affects how easily the state can be governed



Forms of governance

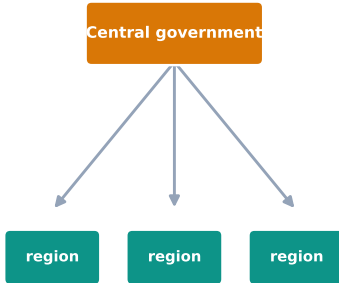
- A **unitary state** centralises power.
- A **federal state** shares power with strong regions.
- Federalism suits large, diverse countries.



Where power sits shapes the state

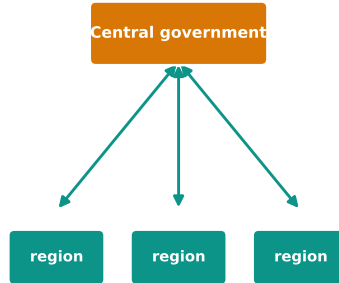
A unitary state keeps power central; a federal one shares it

Unitary state



power flows DOWN from the centre

Federal state



power SHARED between centre and regions

AP HuG · U4 · unitary vs federal governance

A unitary state keeps power central; a federal state shares power with regional governments

Devolution and sovereignty

- **Devolution** : power moves to regions (physical, ethnic, economic factors).
- **Supranational organizations** (UN, EU) limit sovereignty from above.
- **Centripetal** forces unify a state; **centrifugal** forces divide it.



Borders and regions test state power

What pulls sovereignty apart, from inside and outside

devolution

a central government hands powers to a region – Scotland, Catalonia, Quebec

autonomy

strong ethnic, linguistic or economic differences win a region self-rule, or fuel a movement for full independence

supranational organisations

the EU and UN take decisions members must follow – sovereignty given up in exchange for influence

globalisation

capital, corporations and the internet all cross borders a state cannot close

Devolution pulls power **down** to regions; supranationalism pushes it **up** to a larger body. The state is squeezed from both directions at once.

Three forces on the modern state

Ethnonationalism

Ethnonationalism claims that a nation defined by ethnicity should have its own state – the strongest centrifugal force in the unit.

Failed states

Failed states cannot provide security, services or law across their territory, so power devolves to militias and neighbours.

UNCLOS

The **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** sets the territorial sea, the contiguous zone and the 200 nautical-mile exclusive economic zone – which is what makes small islands strategically valuable.

Supranationalism

Joining the EU or the WTO trades some sovereignty for market access and security – a centripetal force at one scale and a centrifugal one at another.

Sort every force by scale *and* direction: does it pull the state together or apart, and at which level?

Key points

State = territory+sovereignty;
nation = a people

Boundaries: antecedent / subsequent / superimposed / relict

Unitary centralises;
federal shares power

Centrifugal forces + devolution challenge sovereignty

Worked example – the command word is the question

“Define the concept of an independent state.” (real AP question)

“A sovereign country that governs itself and its own territory, is not controlled by any outside power, and is recognised by other states.”

Define wants a **short, precise meaning** – one clear sentence is enough. You do **not** need examples here; save those for “Describe” and “Explain”.

Introduction to Political Geography

Political geography studies how humans divide and control space.

- A **state** (country) is an area with defined **borders**, a permanent population, a government, and **sovereignty** – full control over its own affairs.
- A **nation** is a group of people with a shared culture and identity; a **nation-state** is a state whose borders match one nation (Japan is close).
- A **multinational state** contains several nations; a **stateless nation** (like the Kurds) has no state of its own.

Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces



Cities concentrate political and economic power across territory

Exam tips

- Keep **state** (territory + sovereignty), **nation** (a people), and **nation-state** clearly separate.
- Classify a boundary by history (**antecedent** / **subsequent** / **superimposed** / **relict**) and by stage (defined to administered).
- Name the boundary-dispute type: **definitional**, **locational**, **operational**, or **allocational**.
- Compare **unitary** and **federal** governance, and link the choice to managing diversity.
- Explain instability through **centrifugal** and **centripetal** forces and **devolution**; use neutral examples.



Unit 4 – key takeaways

1

Terms

state vs nation vs nation-state

2

Boundary

antecedent/subsequent/superimposed/relict

3

Dispute

definitional, locational,
operational, allocational

4

Stability

centrifugal vs centripetal;
devolution

Check yourself

- 1 What three things define an independent state?
- 2 Nation or state: a people sharing a culture?
- 3 What is devolution?
- 4 Superimposed or antecedent: a boundary drawn ignoring culture?

Answers 1. sovereignty, territory, recognition 2. a nation 3. power moving from central to regional government 4. superimposed