

## KEY ISSUE 2

# Why Are Nation-states Difficult to Create?

- Nation-states and Multinational States
- Colonies

### Learning Outcome 8.2.1

Understand the difference between a nation-state and a multinational state.

There is no such thing as a perfect nation-state because the territory occupied by a particular ethnicity never corresponds precisely to the boundaries of countries:

- In some multinational states, ethnicities coexist peacefully, while remaining culturally distinct. Each ethnic group recognizes and respects the distinctive traditions of other ethnicities.
- In some multinational states, one ethnicity tries to dominate another, especially if one is much more numerous than the others. The people of the less numerous ethnicity may be assimilated into the cultural characteristics of the other, sometimes by force.

## Nation-states and Multinational States

A state that contains more than one ethnicity is a **multiethnic** state. Because no state has a population that is 100 percent of a single ethnicity, every state in the world is to a varying degree multiethnic. In some multiethnic states, ethnicities all contribute cultural features to the formation of a single nationality. The United States has numerous ethnic groups, for example, all of which consider themselves as belonging to the American nationality.

A **multinational state** is a country that contains more than one ethnicity with traditions of self-determination. The Soviet Union was an especially prominent example of a multinational state until its collapse in the early 1990s. Russia, which comprised the largest portion of the Soviet Union, is now the world's largest multinational state. Relationships among ethnicities vary in multinational states.

### NATION-STATES IN EUROPE

Two relatively clear examples of nation-states are Denmark and Slovenia, yet even these two are not perfect examples.

**DENMARK.** Ninety percent of the population of Denmark consists of ethnic Danes. The Danes have a strong sense of unity that derives from shared cultural characteristics



▲ **FIGURE 8-14 DENMARK AND GREENLAND** Greenland's official language is now Greenlandic, an Inuit language. Greenland is now officially known as Kalaallit Nunaat, and the capital city was changed from Godthaab to Nuuk.

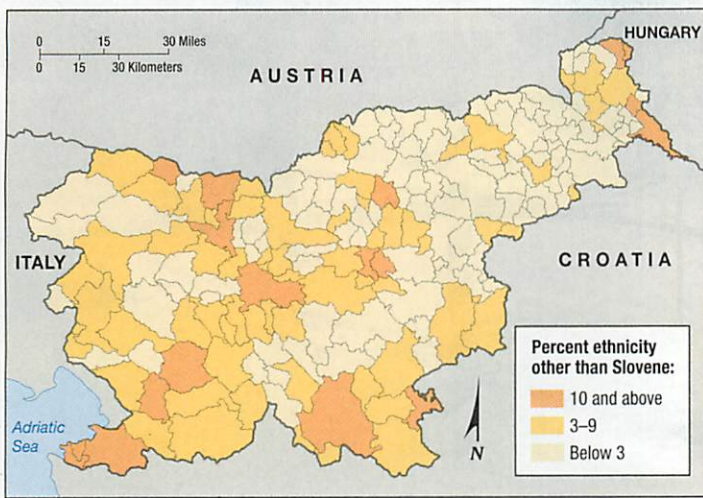
and attitudes and a recorded history that extends back more than 1,000 years. Nearly all Danes speak the same language—Danish—and nearly all the world's speakers of Danish live in Denmark.

However, 10 percent of Denmark's population consists of ethnic minorities. The two largest groups are guest workers from Turkey and refugees from ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. Further diluting the concept of a nation-state, Denmark controls two territories where few ethnic Danes live (Figure 8-14):

- Faeroe Islands, a group of 21 islands, has been ruled by Denmark for more than 600 years. The nearly 50,000 inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands speak Faeroese.
- Greenland, the world's largest island, is controlled by Denmark. Only 12 percent of Greenland's 58,000 residents are considered Danish; the remainder are native-born Greenlanders, primarily Inuit. Greenlanders control most of their own domestic affairs.

**SLOVENIA.** Slovenia was a republic within Yugoslavia that became an independent country in 1991 (Figure 8-15). Slovenes comprise 83 percent of the population of Slovenia, and nearly all the world's 2 million Slovenes live in Slovenia. The relatively close coincidence between the boundaries of the Slovene ethnic group and the country of Slovenia has promoted the country's relative peace and stability, compared to other former Yugoslavian republics, as discussed in Chapter 7.

A census in 1948 showed that Slovenes comprised 97 percent of Slovenia's population. The percentage has declined steadily since then. When it was part of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the most prosperous republic, and it attracted migrants from other republics. Many of them remained in



▲ **FIGURE 8-15 SLOVENIA** The percentage of ethnicities other than Slovene is higher in localities bordering neighboring countries, especially Hungary and Italy.

Slovenia after the country became independent. Slovenia's 90-member National Assembly reserves one seat each for Hungarian and Italian ethnic groups living in Slovenia. The province of Italy bordering Slovenia has a population that is approximately one-fifth Slovene. Boundary changes after World War II resulted in a number of Slovenes living in Italy and Italians living in Slovenia.

### Pause and Reflect 8.2.1

Referring to Figure 7-40, where do the boundaries of Slovenia not match language boundaries?

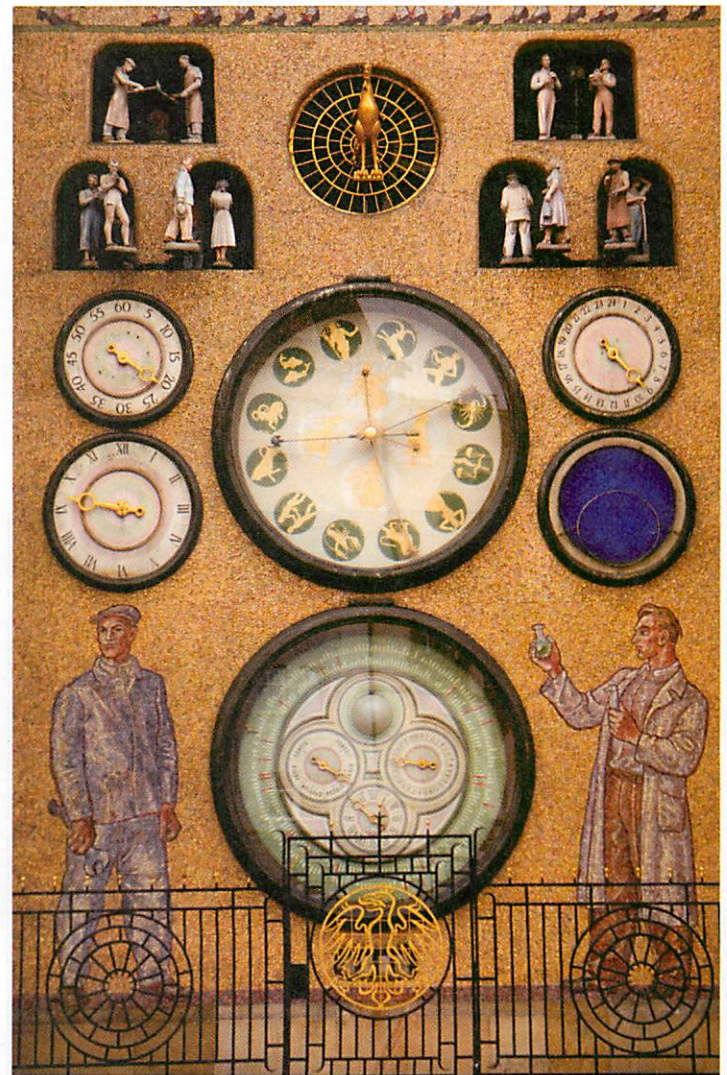
**NATION-STATES AND ETHNIC IDENTITY.** Europeans thought that ethnicity had been left behind as an insignificant relic, such as wearing quaint costumes to amuse tourists. Karl Marx wrote that nationalism was a means for the dominant social classes to maintain power over workers, and he believed that workers would identify with other working-class people instead of with an ethnicity.

In the twenty-first century, ethnic identity has once again become important in the creation of nation-states in much of Europe. The breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia during the 1990s gave more-numerous ethnicities the opportunity to organize nation-states. But the less-numerous ethnicities found themselves existing as minorities in multinational states or divided among more than one of the new states. Especially severe problems have occurred in the Balkans, a rugged, mountainous region where nation-states could not be delineated peacefully.

Until they lost power around 1990, Communist leaders in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union used centripetal forces to discourage ethnicities from expressing their cultural uniqueness. Writers and artists were pressured to conform to a style known as “socialist realism,” which emphasized Communist economic and political values. Use of the Russian language was promoted as a centripetal device throughout the former Soviet Union. It was taught as the second language in other Eastern European

countries. The role of organized religion was minimized, suppressing a cultural force that competed with the government (Figure 8-16).

The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia were dismantled largely because minority ethnicities opposed the long-standing dominance of the most numerous ones in each country—Russians in the Soviet Union, Serbs in Yugoslavia, and Czechs in Czechoslovakia. The dominance was pervasive, including economic, political, and cultural institutions. No longer content to control a province or some other local government unit, ethnicities sought to be the majority in completely independent nation-states. Republics that once constituted local government units within the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia generally made peaceful transitions into independent countries—as long as their boundaries corresponded reasonably well with the territory occupied by a clearly defined ethnicity.



▲ **FIGURE 8-16 COMMUNIST ART** After the Communists took over Czechoslovakia in 1948, they altered this sixteenth-century clock in the city of Olomouc to conform to socialist realism art. Because they discouraged religion, the Communists removed the statues of the 12 apostles and replaced them with statues of workers.

## INDEPENDENT NATION-STATES IN FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS

### Learning Outcome 8.2.2

Describe differences among states formerly in the Soviet Union.

For decades, the many ethnicities within the Soviet Union were unable to realize their nationalist aspirations and form independent nation-states. The Soviet Union consisted of 15 republics, based on its 15 largest ethnicities (Figure 8-17). The 15 republics that once constituted the Soviet Union are now independent states. These 15 states consist of five groups:

- Three Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
- Three European states: Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine
- Five Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
- Three Caucasus states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia
- Russia

Reasonably good examples of nation-states have been carved out of the Baltic, European, and some Central Asian states. On the other hand, peaceful nation-states have not been created in any of the small Caucasus states, and Russia is an especially prominent example of a state with major difficulties in keeping all its ethnicities contented. With the breakup of the Soviet Union into 15 independent countries, a number of these less-numerous ethnicities are now divided among these states.



▲ **FIGURE 8-17 STATES IN THE FORMER U.S.S.R.** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics included 15 republics, named for the country's largest ethnicities. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the 15 republics became independent states.



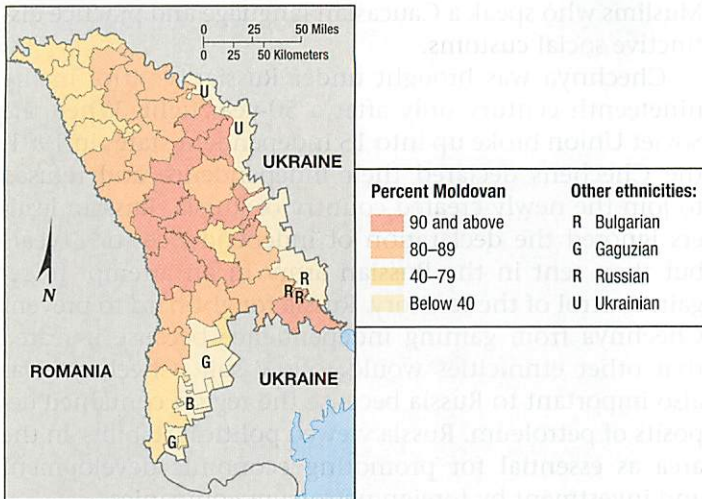
▲ **FIGURE 8-18 BORDER CROSSING BETWEEN ESTONIA AND LATVIA** This is the border between the towns of Valga, Estonia, and Valka, Latvia.

**BALTIC STATES.** Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are known as the Baltic states for their location on the Baltic Sea. They were independent countries between the end of World War I in 1918 and 1940, when the former Soviet Union annexed them under an agreement with Nazi Germany. These three small neighboring Baltic countries have clear cultural differences and distinct historical traditions:

- **Lithuania.** Of the three Baltic states, Lithuania most closely fits the definition of a nation-state because ethnic Lithuanians comprise 85 percent of its population. Most Lithuanians are Roman Catholic and speak a language of the Baltic group within the Balto-Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family (Figure 8-18).
- **Estonians.** In Estonia, ethnic Estonians comprise only 69 percent of the population. Most Estonians are Protestant (Lutheran) and speak a Uralic language related to Finnish.
- **Latvians.** In Latvia, only 59 percent are ethnic Latvians. Latvians are predominantly Lutheran, with a substantial Roman Catholic minority, and they speak a language of the Baltic group.

**EUROPEAN STATES.** To some extent, the former Soviet republics of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine now qualify as nation-states. Belarusians comprise 81 percent of the population of Belarus, Moldovans comprise 78 percent of the population of Moldova, and Ukrainians comprise 78 percent of the population of Ukraine. The ethnic distinctions among Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Russians are somewhat blurred. The three groups speak similar East Slavic languages, and all are predominantly Orthodox Christians (some western Ukrainians are Roman Catholics):

- **Belarus and Ukraine.** Belarusians and Ukrainians became distinct ethnicities because they were isolated from the main body of Eastern Slavs—the Russians—during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was the consequence of Mongolian invasions and conquests by Poles and Lithuanians. Russians conquered the Belarusian and Ukrainian homelands in the late 1700s, but after five centuries of exposure to non-Slavic influences, the three Eastern Slavic groups displayed



▲ **FIGURE 8-19 ETHNICITIES IN MOLDOVA** Ethnicities other than Moldovan predominate in the eastern portion of the country.

sufficient cultural diversity to consider themselves three distinct ethnicities.

- **Moldova.** Moldovans are ethnically indistinguishable from Romanians, and Moldova (then called Moldavia) was part of Romania until the Soviet Union seized it in 1940. When Moldova changed from a Soviet republic back to an independent country in 1992, many Moldovans pushed for reunification with Romania, both to reunify the ethnic group and to improve the region's prospects for economic development. But it was not to be that simple. When Moldova became a Soviet republic in 1940, its eastern boundary was the Dniester River. The Soviet government increased the size of Moldova by about 10 percent, transferring from Ukraine a 3,000-square-kilometer (1,200-square-mile) sliver of land on the east bank of the Dniester. The majority of the inhabitants of this area, known as Trans-Dniestia, are Ukrainian and Russian. They, of course, oppose Moldova's reunification with Romania (Figure 8-19).

### Pause and Reflect 8.2.2

To what branches of Indo-European do the principal languages of Moldova belong? How might these linguistic differences affect politics in Moldova?

**CENTRAL ASIAN STATES.** The five states in Central Asia carved out of the former Soviet Union display varying degrees of conformance to the principles of a nation-state (Figure 8-20). Together the five provide an important reminder that multinational states can be more peaceful than nation-states:

- **Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.** In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the leading ethnic group has an overwhelming majority—85 percent Turkmen and 80 percent Uzbek, respectively. Both ethnic groups are Muslims who

speak an Altaic language; they were conquered by Russia in the nineteenth century. Turkmen and Uzbeks are examples of ethnicities split into more than one country—Turkmen between Turkmenistan and Russia, and Uzbeks among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

- **Kyrgyzstan.** Kyrgyzstan is 69 percent Kyrgyz, 15 percent Uzbek, and 9 percent Russian. The Kyrgyz—also Muslims who speak an Altaic language—resent the Russians for seizing the best farmland when they colonized this mountainous country early in the twentieth century.
- **Kazakhstan.** In principle, Kazakhstan, twice as large as the other four Central Asian countries combined, is a recipe for ethnic conflict. The country is divided between Kazakhs, who comprise 67 percent of the population, and Russians, at 18 percent. Kazakhs are Muslims who speak an Altaic language similar to Turkish, whereas the Russians are Orthodox Christians who speak an Indo-European language. Tensions exist between the two groups, but Kazakhstan has been peaceful, in part because it has a somewhat less depressed economy than its neighbors.
- **Tajikistan.** In contrast to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan—80 percent Tajik, 15 percent Uzbek, and 1 percent Russian—would appear to be a stable country, but it suffers from a civil war among the Tajik people, Muslims who speak a language in the Indic group of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European language. The civil war has been between Tajiks, who are former Communists, and an unusual alliance of Muslim fundamentalists and Western-oriented intellectuals. Fifteen percent of the population has been made homeless by the fighting.



▲ **FIGURE 8-20 ETHNICITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA** The map shows the distribution of ethnicities in Central Asia.

## THE LARGEST MULTINATIONAL STATE: RUSSIA

### Learning Outcome 8.2.3

Describe patterns of distribution of ethnicities in Russia and the Caucasus.

Multinational states face complex challenges in maintaining unity and avoiding fragmentation as discontented ethnicities seek to break away and form new nation-states. Russia officially recognizes the existence of 39 ethnic groups as nationalities, many of which are eager for independence. Russia's ethnicities are clustered in two principal locations (Figure 8-21). Some are located along borders with neighboring states, including Buryats and Tuvianian near Mongolia, and Chechens, Dagestani, Kabardins, and Ossetians near the two former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Overall, 20 percent of the country's population is non-Russian.

Other ethnicities are clustered in the center of Russia, especially between the Volga River basin and the Ural Mountains. Among the most numerous in this region are Bashkirs, Chuvash, and Tatars, who speak Altaic languages similar to Turkish, and Mordvins and Udmurts, who speak Uralic languages similar to Finnish. Most of these groups were conquered by the Russians in the sixteenth century, under the leadership of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible).

Independence movements are flourishing because Russia is less willing to suppress these movements forcibly than the Soviet Union once was. Particularly troublesome for the Russians are the Chechens, a group of Sunni

Muslims who speak a Caucasian language and practice distinctive social customs.

Chechnya was brought under Russian control in the nineteenth century only after a 50-year fight. When the Soviet Union broke up into 15 independent states in 1991, the Chechens declared their independence and refused to join the newly created country of Russia. Russian leaders ignored the declaration of independence for 3 years but then sent in the Russian army in an attempt to regain control of the territory. Russia fought hard to prevent Chechnya from gaining independence because it feared that other ethnicities would follow suit. Chechnya was also important to Russia because the region contained deposits of petroleum. Russia viewed political stability in the area as essential for promoting economic development and investment by foreign petroleum companies.

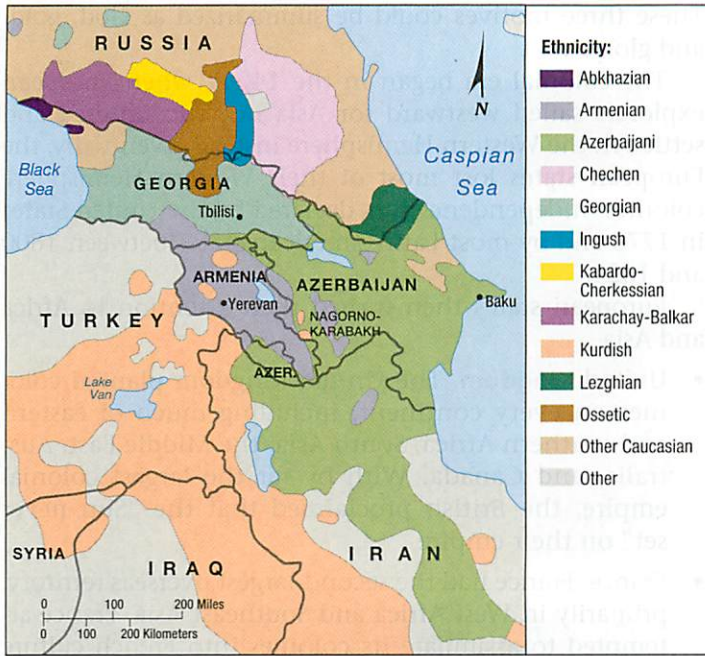
## TURMOIL IN THE CAUCASUS

The Caucasus region, an area about the size of Colorado, is situated between the Black and Caspian seas and gets its name from the mountains that separate Russia from Azerbaijan and Georgia. The region is home to several ethnicities, with Azeris, Armenians, and Georgians the most numerous (Figure 8-22). Other important ethnicities include Abkhazians, Chechens, Ingush, and Ossetians. Kurds and Russians—two ethnicities that are more numerous in other regions—are also represented in the Caucasus.

When the entire Caucasus region was part of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government promoted allegiance to communism and the Soviet state and quelled disputes among ethnicities, by force if necessary. With the breakup

► **FIGURE 8-21 ETHNICITIES IN RUSSIA** Russians are clustered in the western portion of Russia, and the percentage declines to the south and east. The largest numbers of non-Russians are found in the center of the country between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains and near the southern borders.





**▲ FIGURE 8-22 ETHNICITIES IN THE CAUCASUS** Armenians, Azeris, and Georgians are examples of ethnicities that were able to dominate new states during the 1990s, following the breakup of the Soviet Union. But the boundaries of the states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia do not match the territories occupied by the Armenian, Azeri, and Georgian ethnicities. The Abkhazians, Chechens, Kurds, and Ossetians are examples of ethnicities in this region that have not been able to organize nation-states.

of the region into several independent countries, long-simmering conflicts among ethnicities have erupted into armed conflicts. Each ethnicity has a long-standing and complex set of grievances against others in the region. But from a political geography perspective, every ethnicity in the Caucasus has the same aspiration: to carve out a sovereign nation-state. The region's ethnicities have had varying degrees of success in achieving this objective, but none have fully achieved it.

**AZERBAIJAN.** Azeris (or Azerbaijanis) trace their roots to Turkish invaders who migrated from Central Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries and merged with the existing Persian population. An 1828 treaty allocated northern Azeri territory to Russia and southern Azeri territory to Persia (now Iran). In 1923, the Russian portion became the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union.

With the Soviet Union's breakup in 1991, Azerbaijan again became an independent country. The western part of the country, Nakhichevan (named for the area's largest city), is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by a 40-kilometer (25-mile) corridor that belongs to Armenia.

More than 7 million Azeris now live in Azerbaijan, 91 percent of the country's total population. Another 16 million Azeris are clustered in northwestern Iran, where they constitute 24 percent of that country's population. Azeris hold positions of responsibility in Iran's government and economy, but Iran restricts teaching of the Azeri language.

**ARMENIA.** More than 3,000 years ago Armenians controlled an independent kingdom in the Caucasus. Converted to Christianity in 303, they lived for many centuries as an isolated Christian enclave under the rule of Turkish Muslims.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were killed in a series of massacres organized by the Turks. Others were forced to migrate to Russia, which had gained possession of eastern Armenia in 1828.

After World War I the Allies created an independent state of Armenia, but it was soon swallowed by its neighbors. In 1921, Turkey and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Armenia between them. The Soviet portion became the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and then an independent country in 1991. Armenians comprise 98 percent of the population in Armenia, making it the most ethnically homogeneous country in the region.

Armenians and Azeris both have achieved long-held aspirations of forming nation-states, but after their independence from the Soviet Union the two went to war over the boundaries between them. The war concerned possession of Nagorno-Karabakh, a 5,000-square-kilometer (2,000-square-mile) enclave within Azerbaijan that is inhabited primarily by Armenians but placed under Azerbaijan's control by the Soviet Union during the 1920s. A 1994 cease-fire has left Nagorno-Karabakh technically part of Azerbaijan, but in reality it acts as an independent republic called Artsakh. Numerous clashes have occurred since then between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**GEORGIA.** The population of Georgia is more diverse than that in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ethnic Georgians comprise 71 percent of the population. The country also includes about 8 percent Armenian, 6 percent each Azeri and Russian, 3 percent Ossetian, and 2 percent each Abkhazian, Greek, and other ethnicities.

Georgia's cultural diversity has been a source of unrest, especially among the Ossetians and Abkhazians. During the 1990s, the Abkhazians fought for control of the northwestern portion of Georgia and have declared Abkhazia to be an independent state. In 2008, the Ossetians fought a war with the Georgians that resulted in the Ossetians declaring the South Ossetia portion of Georgia to be independent.

Russia has recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent countries and has sent troops there. Only a handful of other countries recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, although the two operate as if they were independent of Georgia.

### Pause and Reflect 8.2.3

If Abkhazia, Artsakh, and South Ossetia were widely recognized independent states, how would they compare in size to microstates described earlier in this chapter?

## Colonies

### Learning Outcome 8.2.4

Explain the concept of colonies and describe their current distribution.

Although we live in an era when state creation has been a frequent phenomenon, some territories remain that have not achieved self-determination and statehood. A **colony** is a territory that is legally tied to a sovereign state rather than being completely independent. In some cases, a sovereign state runs only the colony's military and foreign policy. In others, it also controls the colony's internal affairs.

## COLONIALISM

European states came to control much of the world through **colonialism**, which is an effort by one country to establish settlements in a territory and to impose its political, economic, and cultural principles on that territory (Figure 8-23). European states established colonies elsewhere in the world for three basic reasons:

- To promote Christianity.
- To extract useful resources and to serve as captive markets for their products.
- To establish relative power through the number of their colonies.

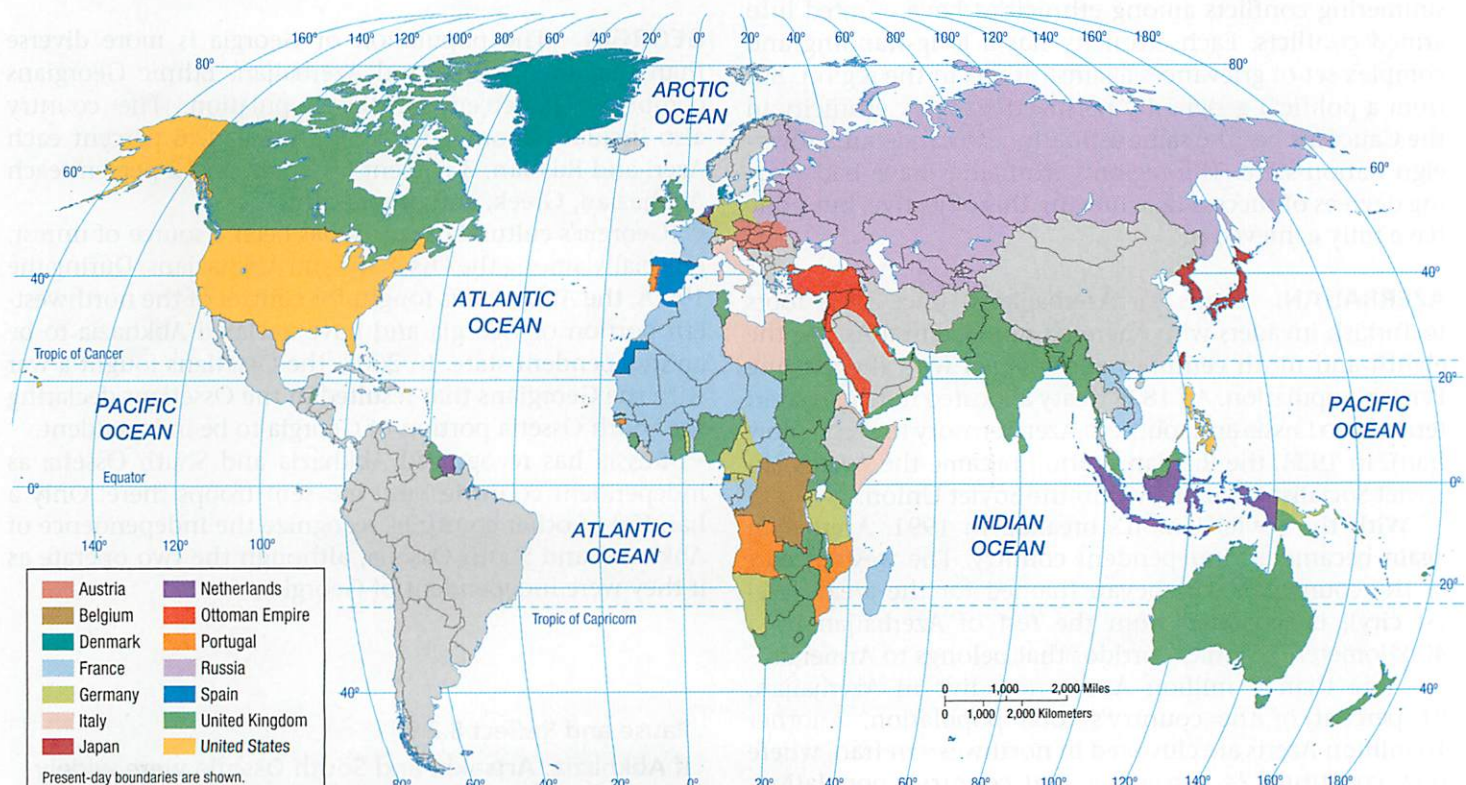
These three motives could be summarized as God, gold, and glory.

The colonial era began in the 1400s, when European explorers sailed westward for Asia but encountered and settled in the Western Hemisphere instead. Eventually, the European states lost most of their Western Hemisphere colonies: Independence was declared by the United States in 1776 and by most Latin American states between 1800 and 1824.

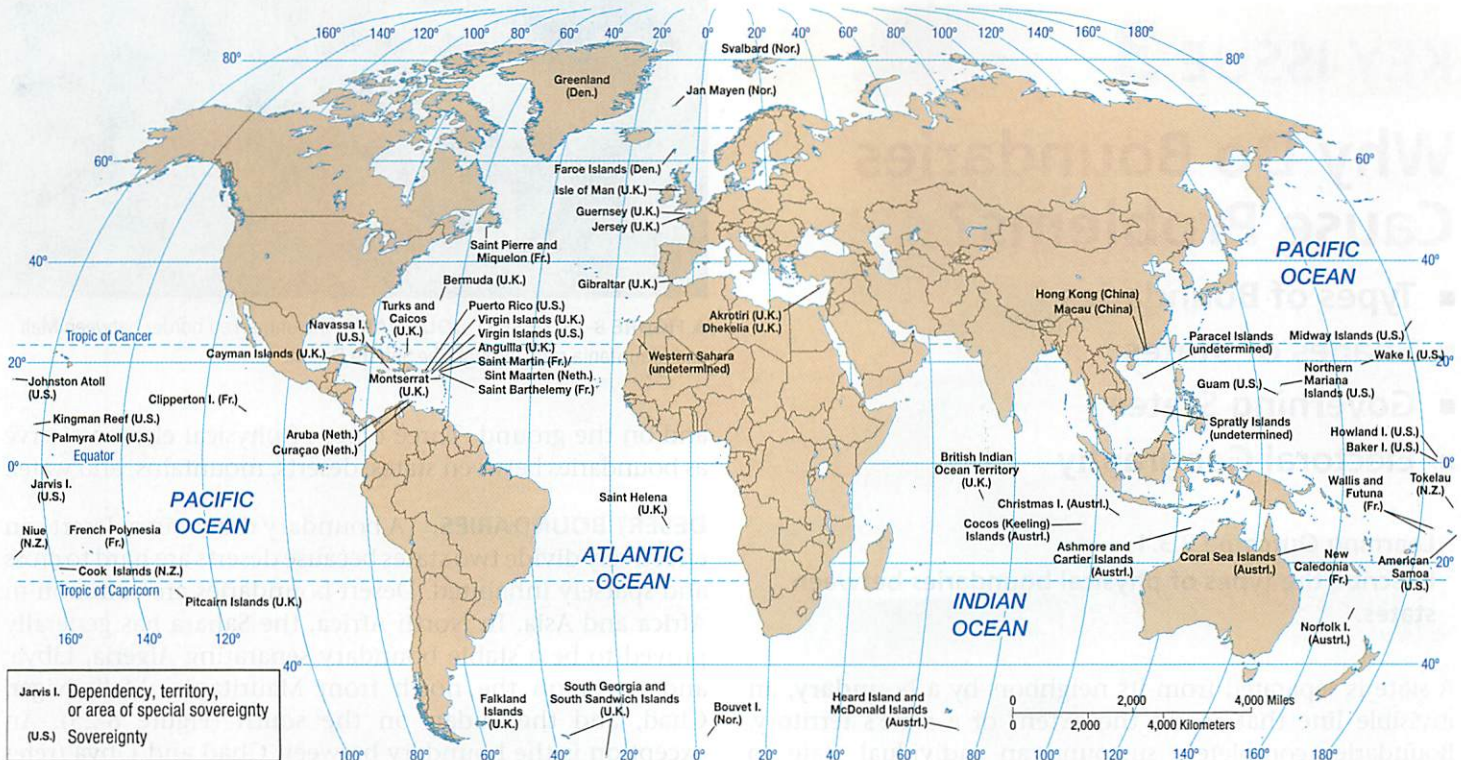
European states then turned their attention to Africa and Asia

- **United Kingdom.** The United Kingdom planted colonies on every continent, including much of eastern and southern Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and Canada. With by far the largest colonial empire, the British proclaimed that the “Sun never set” on their empire.
- **France.** France had the second-largest overseas territory, primarily in West Africa and Southeast Asia. France attempted to assimilate its colonies into French culture and educate an elite group to provide local administrative leadership. After independence, most of these leaders retained close ties with France.

Most African and Asian colonies became independent after World War II. Only 15 African and Asian states were members of the United Nations when it was established in 1945, compared to 106 in 2012. The boundaries of the new states frequently coincide with former colonial provinces, although not always.



▲ **FIGURE 8-23 COLONIAL POSSESSIONS, 1914** At the outbreak of World War I in 1914, European states held colonies in much of the world, especially in Africa and Asia. Most of the countries in the Western Hemisphere were at one time colonized by Europeans but gained their independence in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.



▲ **FIGURE 8-24 COLONIAL POSSESSIONS, 2012** Most remaining colonies are tiny specks in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, too small to appear on the map.

## THE REMAINING COLONIES

At one time, colonies were widespread over Earth's surface, but only a handful remain today. The U.S. Department of State lists 68 places in the world that it calls dependencies and areas of special sovereignty (Figure 8-24). The list includes 43 with indigenous populations and 25 with no permanent population. Most current colonies are islands in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.

The most populous is Puerto Rico, a commonwealth of the United States, with 4 million residents on an island of 8,870 square kilometers (3,500 square miles). Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States, but they do not participate in U.S. elections or have a voting member of Congress.

One of the world's least-populated colonies is Pitcairn Island, a 47-square-kilometer (18-square-mile) possession of the United Kingdom. The island in the South Pacific was settled in 1790 by British mutineers from the ship *Bounty*, commanded by Captain William Bligh. Its 48 islanders survive by selling fish as well as postage stamps to collectors.

The U.S. State Department list does not include several inhabited islands considered by other sources to be colonies, including Australia's Lord Howe Island, Britain's Ascension Island, and Chile's Easter Island. On the other hand, the State Department list includes several entities that others do not classify as colonies:

- Greenland has a high degree of autonomy and self-rule and makes even foreign policy decisions independently of Denmark, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Greenland regards the Queen of Denmark as its head of state.

- Hong Kong and Macao, attached to the mainland of China, were colonies of the United Kingdom and Portugal, respectively. The British returned Hong Kong to China in 1997, and the Portuguese returned Macao to China in 1999. These two areas are classified as special administrative regions with autonomy from the rest of China in economic matters but not in foreign and military affairs.

### Pause and Reflect 8.2.4

What would need to change for Puerto Rico to no longer be classified as a colony of the United States?

### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 2

#### Why Are Nation-States Difficult to Create?

- ✓ Good examples of nation-states can be identified, though none are perfect.
- ✓ The Soviet Union was once the world's largest multinational state; with its breakup, Russia is now the largest.
- ✓ Much of Earth's land area once comprised colonies, but only a few colonies remain.