



Former Soviet States in Central Asia. Until 1991 states like Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan were part of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union fell apart, 15 independent nation-states were created.

Today many of the world's countries have relatively small populations, with about 90 countries having populations under 5 million, and 33 with fewer than a half-million people.

FEDERAL AND UNITARY STATES

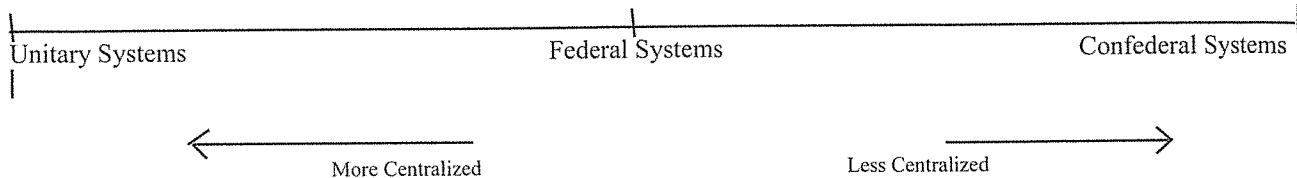
A well-integrated state consists of a stable, clearly bounded territory, served by well-developed institutions, an effective administrative framework, a productive core area, and an influential capital city. All states, however, face challenges, and their internal organizations often determine how successfully they deal with their problems.

Every state has multiple levels of authority, though the geographic distribution of power varies widely. States may be categorized into three types according to their internal geographic distribution of power:

- 1) A **unitary system** is one that concentrates all policy-making powers in one central geographic place. When the nation-state evolved in Europe, democracy had not yet developed, and governments ruled by force. Most European governments were highly centralized; the capital city represented authority that stretched to the limits of the state. Even though local governments developed, they had no separate powers, and most of the states were and still are relatively small in land space. As a result, most European governments today remain unitary states.
- 2) A **confederal system** spreads the power among many sub-units (such as states), and has a weak central government. Most attempts at confederal systems have not been long-lasting, although the modern government of Switzerland has very strong sub-governments, and comes as close to a modern confederation as exists. Examples of failed confederations are the United States government under the Articles of Confederation (1781-1789) and the Confederate States of America that consisted of the southern states of the United States during the Civil War (1861-1865).
- 3) A **federal system** divides the power between the central government and the sub-units. These developed in several colonial areas, including the United States, Canada, and Australia. Federal

systems were possible because the cultures were new, no single cities dominated the new countries, and in all three examples the land space is large, setting the stage for the development of regional governments. Federalism accommodates regional interests by allowing for diverse needs and preferences, but also features a central government that is strong enough to keep the countries from falling apart.

All political systems today fall on a continuum from the most concentrated amount of power to the least. Unitary governments may be placed on the left side, according to the degree of concentration; confederal governments are placed to the right; and federal governments fall in between. Most countries have unitary systems, although some are experimenting with **devolution**, or the transfer of some important powers from central governments to sub-governments.



MODERN CHALLENGES TO THE NATION-STATE CONFIGURATION

Nation-states have always had their challenges, both internal and external, but today new supranational forces are at work that have led some to believe that the nation-state political configuration itself may be changing. Is it possible that large regional organizations, such as the European Union, will replace the smaller state units as basic organizational models? Or will international organizations, such as the United Nations, come to have true governing power over the nation-states? If so, then the very nature of sovereignty may be changing, especially if nation-states of the future have to abide by the rules of **supranational organizations** (cooperating groups of nations that operate on either a regional or international level) for all major decisions and rules.

CENTRIPETAL V. CENTRIFUGAL FORCES

A recurring set of forces affects all nation-states: **centripetal forces** that unify them, and **centrifugal forces** that tend to fragment them.

- **Centripetal forces** bind together the people of a state, giving it strength. One of the most powerful centripetal forces is **nationalism**, or identities based on nationhood. It encourages allegiance to a single country, and it promotes loyalty and commitment. Such emotions encourage people to obey the law and accept the country's overall ideologies. States promote nationalism in a number of ways, including the use of symbols, such as flags, rituals, and holidays that remind citizens of what the country stands for. Even when a society is highly heterogeneous, symbols are powerful tools for creating national unity. Institutions, such as schools, the armed forces, and religion, may also serve as centripetal forces. Schools are expected to instill the society's beliefs, values, and behaviors in the young, teach the nation's language, and encourage students to identify with the nation. Fast and efficient transportation and communication systems also tend to unify nations. National broadcasting companies usually take on the point of view of the nation, even if they broadcast internationally. Transportation systems make it easier for people to travel to other parts of the country, and give the government the ability to reach all of its citizens.

- **Centrifugal forces** oppose centripetal forces. They destabilize the government and encourage the country to fall apart. A country that is not well-organized or governed stands to lose the loyalty of its citizens, and weak institutions fail to provide the cohesive support that the government needs. Strong institutions may also challenge the government for the loyalty of the people. For example, when the U.S.S.R. was created in 1917, its leaders grounded the new country in the ideology of communism. To strengthen the state, they forbid the practice of the traditional religion, Russian Orthodoxy. Although church membership dropped dramatically, the religious institution never disappeared, and when the U.S.S.R. dissolved, the church reappeared and is regaining its strength today. The church was a centrifugal force in creating and maintaining loyalty to the communist state. Nationalism, too, can be a destabilizing force, especially if different ethnic groups within the country have more loyalty to their ethnicity than to the state and its government. These loyalties often lead to **separatist movements** in which nationalities within a country demand independence. Such movements served as centrifugal forces for the Soviet Union as various nationalities – Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Georgians, and Armenians – challenged the government for their independence. Other examples are the Basques of Northern Spain, who have different customs (including language) from others in the country, and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, who have waged years of guerrilla warfare to defend what they see as majority threats to their culture, rights, and property. Characteristics that encourage separatist movements are a peripheral location and social and economic inequality. One reaction states have had to centrifugal force is **devolution**, or the decentralization of decision-making to regional governments. Britain has devolved power to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments in an effort to keep peace with Scotland and Wales. As a result, Britain's unitary government has taken some significant strides toward decentralization, although London is still the geographic center of decision-making for the country.

DEVOLUTION: ETHNIC, ECONOMIC AND SPATIAL FORCES

Devolution of government powers to sub-governments is usually a reaction to centrifugal forces – those that divide and destabilize. Devolutionary forces emerge in all kinds of states, old and new, mature and newly created. We may divide these forces into three basic types:

- 1) **Ethnic forces** – An **ethnic group** shares a well-developed sense of belonging to the same culture. That identity is based on a unique mixture of language, religion, and customs. If a state contains strong ethnic groups with identities that differ from those of the majority, it can threaten the territorial integrity of the state itself. **Ethnonationalism** – the tendency for an ethnic group to see itself as a distinct nation with a right to autonomy or independence – is a fundamental centrifugal force promoting devolution. The threat is usually stronger if the group is clustered in particular geographic spaces within the nation-state. For example, most French Canadians live in the province of Quebec, creating a large base for an independence movement. If ethnically French people were scattered evenly over the country, their sense of identity would be diluted, and the devolutionary force would most likely be weaker. Devolutionary forces in Britain – centered in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland – have not been strong enough to destabilize the country, although violence in Northern Ireland has certainly destabilized the region. Political boundaries were rearranged on the Indian subcontinent to separate Hindus

and Muslims, resulting in the creation of the country of Pakistan. Ethnic forces broke up the nation-state of Yugoslavia during the 1990s, devolving it into the separate states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro. Canada responded to pressures for a homeland for native Inuit by the 1999 creation of Nunavut as a separate territory, redrawing Canada's political borders for the first time since 1925.

- 2) **Economic forces** – Economic inequalities may also destabilize a nation-state, particularly if the inequalities are regional. For example, Italy is split between north and south by the “Ancona Line”, an invisible line extending from Rome to the Adriatic coast at Ancona. The north is far more prosperous than the south, with the north clearly part of the European core area, and the south a part of the periphery. The north is industrialized, and the south is rural. These economic differences inspired the formation of the Northern League, which advocated an independent state called Padania that would shed the north of the “economic drag” they considered the south to be. The movement failed, but it did encourage the Italian government to devolve power to regional governments, moving it toward a more federal system. A similar economic force is at work in Catalonia in northern Spain, with Catalonians only about 17% of Spain's population, but accountable for 40% of all Spanish industrial exports.
- 3) **Spatial forces** – Spatially, devolutionary events most often occur on the margins of the state. Distance, remoteness, and peripheral location promote devolution, especially if water, desert,



Economic Devolutionary Forces in Italy and Spain. Geographically, southern Italy and most of Spain lie outside the European core, creating economic devolutionary forces within the two nation-states. In Spain, the Catalonians in the north are connected to the core, but the bulk of Spain is not. In Italy the core extends its reach over the northern half of the country, creating centrifugal tensions between north and south.

or mountains separate the areas from the center of power, and neighbor nations that may support separatist objectives. For example, the United States claims Puerto Rico as a territory, and has offered it recognition as a state. However, Puerto Ricans have consistently voted down the offer of statehood, and a small but vocal pro-independence movement has advocated complete separation from the U.S. The movement is encouraged by spatial forces; Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean, close to other islands that have their independence.

CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL CONCERNS

Geopolitics is the study of the spatial and territorial dimensions of power relationships within the global political-territorial order. This approach was taken by geographer **Friedrich Ratzel** in the 19th century, when he theorized that a state compares to a biological organism with a life cycle from birth to death, with a predictable rise and fall of power. The field became controversial after Adolf Hitler used this principle to justify the growth of the German state through attacking weaker states around him and aggressively promoting German nationalism. Meanwhile, a British geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder, concerned himself with power relationships surrounding Britain's global empire. Naval power was responsible for British power, but Mackinder believed that a land-based power, not a sea power, would ultimately rule the world. His **heartland theory** stated that the "pivot area" of the earth – Eurasia – holds the resources, both natural and human, to dominate the globe. When the Soviet Union emerged as a super power after World War II, the heartland theory attracted a great deal of support.

The rimland theory challenged the heartland theory in Nicholas Spykman's book *The Geography of Peace*, written in 1944. Spykman argued that the Eurasian rim, not its heart, held the key to global power. What is the rimland? It is a large swath of land that encircles the heartland, roughly touching oceans and seas. It includes China, Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, the Arabian Peninsula, and Europe. This area is unlikely to fall under any one superpower's control, an important key to keeping a global, geopolitical balance of power.

In recent years, with ever-increasing globalization, geopolitics have reinvigorated, especially as they were dominated from 1945 to 1991 by the **Cold War**, the competition between two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union – for control of land spaces all over the world. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. was left as the only superpower, but in a world rapidly being redefined. Not only does Russia remain a force to contend with today, China is becoming an economic powerhouse that increasingly seeks participation in world trade and politics. Europe has united in an economic union that is developing more political bonds that may well foresee a new world order of supranational organizations that will challenge the sovereignty of the nation-state.

SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: CHANGING THE MEANING OF SOVEREIGNTY

Supranational organizations have been around for some time now, but their nature is changing, with some real implications for the sovereignty of individual nation-states. Several countries formed the Concert of Europe in the early 19th century in an effort to restore balance of power after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. It was a voluntary agreement, and it did not prevent the outbreak of several limited wars. However, many scholars believe that the effort to balance power that the agreement sparked was at least partly responsible for the relative peace among quarrelsome European neighbors until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. That war stimulated another more global effort to form a lasting international

organization, and resulted in the creation of the League of Nations, whose fate was doomed with the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Even before the United States joined the war, U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed to try again when the war ended. In this spirit the United Nations was formed in 1945.

The United Nations

Only 49 nation-states signed the original charter of the United Nations in 1945, but because many new nations have been created since then, the membership of the U.N. has grown to 193 members by 2012. It has lasted for more than 65 years, and its membership makes it a truly global organization. Membership in the U.N. is voluntary, but it has some limited powers to force its members to abide by the organization's peacekeeping principles. As a result, it plays an important role in geopolitics, and changes the dynamics of international relationships from the previous almost exclusive focus on nation-states as individual actors on the world stage. The U.N. changes the nature of sovereignty by applying the concept to an organization with collective membership, not just to individual nation-states.

An important power of the U.N. is that its members can vote to establish a peacekeeping force in a "hotspot" and request states to contribute military forces. The body responsible for making this decision is the **Security Council**, and any one of its five permanent members (the U.S., Britain, France, China, and Russia) may veto a proposed peacekeeping action. During the era of the Cold War, the Security Council was often in gridlock because the U.S. and Russia almost always disagreed. Today that gridlock is broken, but it is still difficult for all five countries to agree on a single course of action. Peacekeeping forces have been sent to separate warring forces in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The U.N. forces are supposed to remain neutral, and they usually have restrictions on their rights to use weapons against either side in a dispute. Despite its limitations, the United Nations is a forum where most of the states of the world meet and vote on issues without resorting to war.

The U.N. is an umbrella organization that includes many sub-organizations that promote the general welfare of the world's citizens and monitor and aid world trade and other economic contacts. These efforts are funded by membership dues, and represent an extension of international cooperation into areas other than peacekeeping. Examples of such organizations are the World Bank, the International Court of Justice, and UNESCO (an economic and social council).

Regional Organizations

During the Cold War era, regional military alliances appeared, and countries joined them based on their affiliation either with the United States or Russia. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formed in the late 1940s with 14 European members, the United States, and Canada. An opposing alliance – the Warsaw Pact – began in 1955 that was composed of the Soviet Union and six Eastern European countries. Together the two organizations were designed to maintain a bipolar balance of power in Europe. The Warsaw Pact disbanded with the breakup of the Soviet Union, and NATO expanded to include many of its former members. Other regional organizations include the Organization of American States (OAS) created to promote social, cultural, political, and economic links among member states; the Arab League founded to promote the interests and sovereignty of countries in the Middle East; and the Organization for African Unity (OAU) that has promoted the elimination of minority white-ruled governments in southern Africa.

The European Union

A regional organization that promises to redefine the meaning of sovereignty is the **European Union**. All the countries of Europe are deeply affected by a trend toward **integration**. Integration is a process that encourages states to pool their sovereignty in order to gain political, economic, and social clout. Integration binds states together with common policies and shared rules. The organization began in an effort to revitalize a war-torn Europe after World War II ended. The most immediate need was to repair the nations' broken economies, so the initial goals were almost completely economic in intent. In 1949 the Council of Europe, which had little power, formed to provide an opportunity for national leaders to meet. The following year a supranational authority was formed to coordinate the coal and steel industries, both damaged heavily during the war.

The organization went through several name changes, but until 1993 its goals were exclusively economic. The Maastricht Treaty created the modern organization, and gave it authority in new areas, including monetary policy, foreign affairs, national security, transportation, the environment, justice, and tourism. The treaty established the **three pillars**, or spheres of authority:

1. Trade and other economic matters, including economic and monetary union into a single currency, and the creation of the European Central Bank
2. Justice and home affairs, including policy governing asylum, border crossing, immigration, and judicial cooperation on crime and terrorism
3. Common foreign and security policy, including joint positions and actions, and common defense policy

The EU has made remarkable strides in its ability to set European **monetary policy**, or control of the money supply. Today the euro has replaced the old national currencies, which are well on their way to being phased out. Also, the power to set basic interest rates and other fiscal policies is being passed from national banks and governments to the **European Monetary Union** and its central bank. Today, in 12 of the member countries, the euro is accepted as a common currency both in banking and for everyday business transactions. Two exceptions to the rule are Britain and Sweden, which as of 2012 still refuse to give up their national currencies in favor of a common European currency.

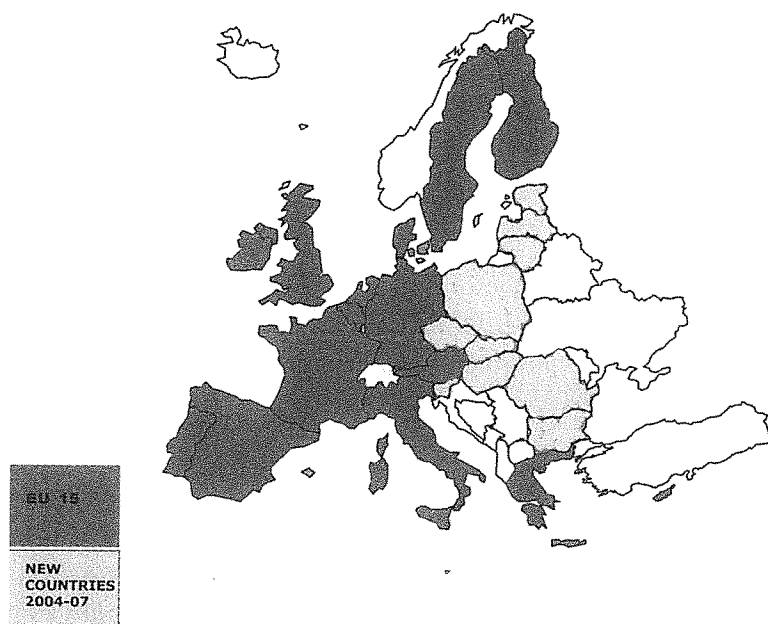
Even though the political and economic muscle of so many countries united is considerable, this rapid integration presents many difficult issues for the EU. First, organizational issues abound. Structures that work for six countries do not necessarily operate smoothly for 27. Second, the expansion brings in many former communist countries whose economies were relatively weak by the end of the 20th century. Older member states worry that immigrants from the east will flood their labor markets and strain their economies. EU supporters believe that these problems will be overshadowed by the benefits of common markets, currencies, political policies, and defense.

The European Union has long been defined by a tension between economic liberalism that favors open, free markets and an economic nationalism that seeks to protect national economic interests from the uncertainty of free markets. The older, more established EU members tend to reflect the latter policy orientation, while the newer, less economically-stable members often favor economic liberalism. Supranationalism encourages economic integration but the proper balance with national interests is often a controversial

topic. The sovereign debt crisis that began with the near-collapse of the Greek economy in 2010 illustrates this tough issue, and the arguments that have erupted since then strike at the heart of this old tension.

It was no surprise that the debt crisis began in Greece, which failed to join the euro area when it was set up in 1999 because it did not meet the economic or fiscal criteria for membership. Revisions to its budget figures showed that it probably shouldn't have been allowed in when it did join in 2001. After the international banking crisis of 2008, concern for "sovereign debts" (debts of individual EU countries) increased, especially for those with high debt-to-GNP ratios. Attention focused first on Greece, and in May 2010, the eurozone countries and International Monetary Fund agreed to a large loan to Greece, conditional on the implementation of harsh austerity measures. The Greek bailout was followed by a rescue package for Ireland in November and another for Portugal in May 2011.

These bailouts have been controversial, with some arguing that they are essential for keeping the economic health of the entire EU region, but others complaining that it is unfair to expect taxpayers in healthier countries to pay for the economic woes of less stable members. The bailouts are particularly unpopular in Germany, where one poll showed that a majority of the public thinks that the rescue of Greece was a mistake. As talk of a second bailout for Greece materialized in mid-2011, there was strong resistance in Germany to further assistance to the Greek economy. At summit meetings in 2011, European political leaders discussed the possibility of "restructuring" the economies of Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. Economic structural adjustment would mean that at least part of the debt would be forgiven. Supporters of restructuring claim that it is the only way to allow the weakened countries to recover; critics believe that restructuring makes the stronger countries pay for the weaker ones, a process that they claim weakens the entire continent. The crisis seriously questions the economic stability of the euro and the European banking system, and so the solutions that European leaders find will almost certainly influence the future development of the EU.



The European Union. Ongoing expansion is a major characteristic of the European Union, with a total membership of 27 countries as of 2012. The European Union began with six members in 1957: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Denmark, Great Britain, and Ireland joined in the early 1970s; Greece in 1981; Portugal and Spain in 1986; and Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995. Ten countries joined on May 2, 2004: Cyprus (Greek part), the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania joined on January 1, 2007.

FORCES OF CHANGE: GLOBALIZATION, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND RELIGIOUS POLITICS

In considering the changing political imprint on the earth's surface, it is important to take notice of overall patterns of development that affect everyone in the contemporary world. Two of these trends – democratization and the move toward market economies – indicate growing commonalities among nations, or the forces of **globalization**. The third represents fragmentation – the revival of ethnic or cultural politics.

1) Democratization

Even though democracy takes many different forms, more and more nations are turning toward some form of popular government. One broad, essential requirement for democracy is the existence of competitive elections that are regular, free, and fair. In other words, the election offers a real possibility that the incumbent government may be defeated. By this standard, a number of modern states that call themselves “democracies” fall into a gray area that is neither clearly democratic nor clearly undemocratic. Examples are Russia, Nigeria, and Indonesia. In contrast, liberal democracies display other democratic characteristics beyond having competitive elections:

- Civil liberties, such as freedom of belief, speech, and assembly
- Rule of law that provides for equal treatment of citizens and due process
- Neutrality of the judiciary and other checks on the abuse of power
- Open civil society that allows citizens to lead private lives and mass media to operate independently from government
- Civilian control of the military that restricts the likelihood of the military seizing control of the government

Countries that have regular, free, and fair competitive elections, but are missing these other qualities (civil liberties, rule of law, neutrality of the judiciary, open civil society, and civilian control of the military) are referred to as illiberal democracies.

According to political scientist Samuel Huntington, the modern world is now in a “**third wave**” of **democratization** that began during the 1970s. The “first wave” developed gradually over time; the “second wave” occurred after the Allied victory in World War II, and continued until the early 1960s. This second wave was characterized by de-colonization around the globe. The third wave is characterized by the defeat of dictatorial or totalitarian rulers from South America to Eastern Europe to some parts of Africa. The recent political turnover in Mexico may be interpreted as part of this “third wave” of democratization.

Why has democratization occurred? According to Huntington, some factors are:

- The loss of legitimacy by both right and left wing authoritarian regimes
- The expansion of an urban middle class in developing countries
- A new emphasis on “human rights” by the United States and the European Union
- The “snowball” effect has been important: when one country in a region becomes democratic, it influences others to do so. An example is Poland’s influence on other nations of Eastern Europe during the 1980s.

One of the greatest obstacles to democratization is poverty because it blocks citizen participation in government. Huntington gauges democratic stability by this standard: democracy may be declared when a country has had at least two successive peaceful turnovers of power.

2) Movement Toward Market Economies

Many political economists today declare that the economic competition between capitalism and socialism that dominated the 20th century is now a part of the past. The old **command economies**, with socialist principles of centralized planning and state ownership are fading from existence, except in combination with market economies. The issue now is what type of **market economy** will be most successful: one that allows for significant control from the central government – a “**mixed economy**” – or one that does not – a pure market economy. For example, modern Germany has a “social market economy” that is team-oriented and emphasizes cooperation between management and organized labor. In contrast, the United States economy tends to be more individualistic and anti-government control.

Marketization is the term that describes the state’s re-creation of a market in which property, labor, goods, and services can all function in a competitive environment to determine their value. **Privatization** is the transfer of state-owned property to private ownership. Because central political control of economies waned during the 20th century, some have speculated that market economies promote the move toward democratization of political institutions. However, both China and Russia have developed capitalist economies in recent years, but their governments have remained highly authoritarian in nature.

3) Revival of Ethnic or Cultural Politics

Until recently, few political scientists predicted that **fragmentation** – divisions based on ethnic or cultural identity – would become increasingly important in world politics. A few years ago **nationalism** – identities based on nationhood – seemed to be declining in favor of increasing globalization. However, nationality questions almost certainly blocked Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts to resuscitate the Soviet Union, and national identities remain strong in most parts of the world. Perhaps most dramatically, the **politicization of religion** (the use of religious principles to promote political ends and vice versa) has dominated world politics during the early 21st century. Most Westerners have been caught off guard by this turn of events, especially in the United States, where separation of church and state has been a basic political principle since the founding of the country.

Samuel Huntington argues that our most important and dangerous future conflicts will be based on clashes of civilizations, not on socioeconomic or even ideological differences. He divides the world into several different cultural areas that may already be poised to threaten world peace: the West, the Orthodox world (Russia), Islamic countries, Latin American, Africa, the Hindu world, the Confucian world, the Buddhist world, and Japan. Some political scientists criticize Huntington by saying that he distorts cultural divisions and that he underestimates the importance of cultural conflicts within nations. In either case – a world divided into cultural regions or a world organized into multicultural nations – the revival of ethnic or cultural politics tends to emphasize differences among nations rather than commonalities.