

Chapter 9: Political Geography

Introduction to Geography
Lehman College GEH 101/GEH 501
Spring 2011

Keith Miyake

Political Geography

- Study of the organization and distribution of political phenomena, e.g.:
 - organization of power
 - rule of authority
 - territoriality of citizenship

Political Geography

Key Questions

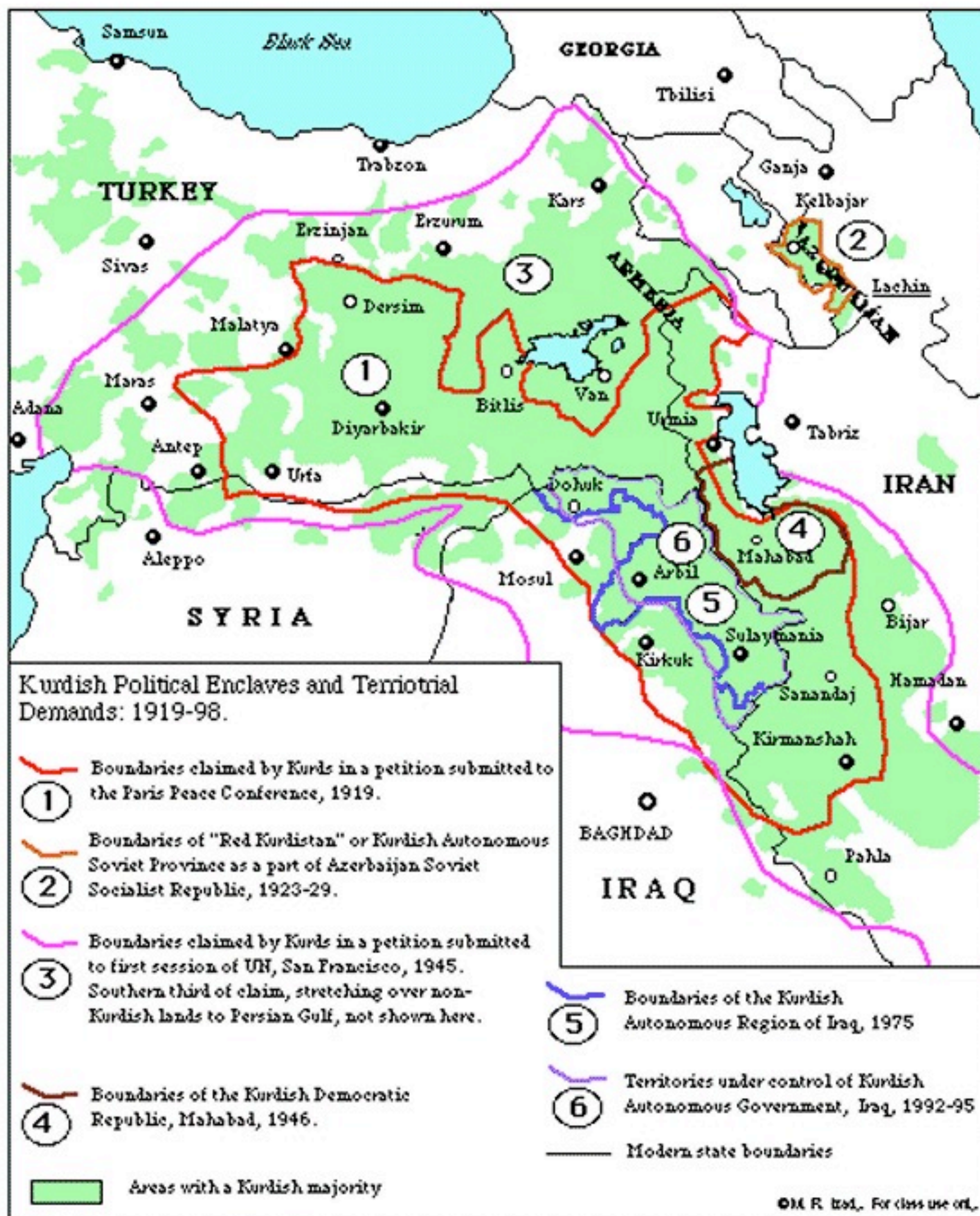
- How is power exerted over different places and at different geographical scales?
- How do different political arrangements and forms of the “state” affect populations?
- How is power exercised through of political borders and citizenship?
- How do geopolitics change through time?

Political Rule over Land

- **Sovereignty:** Independent authority over a territory; the power to rule and create laws
- **State:** The set of political institutions that govern a territory and maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force.
- **Sovereign State:** Territory containing a permanent population, sovereign government, and independence from other states and powers.
- **Country:** Territory of a sovereign state
- **Government:** Particular group of people, forming an administrative bureaucracy, that controls the state apparatus at any given time

Nation

- Community of people with a common history, language, culture, ancestry, and/or territory
- Sovereignty can be absent or disputed
- Stateless nations



Nation-State

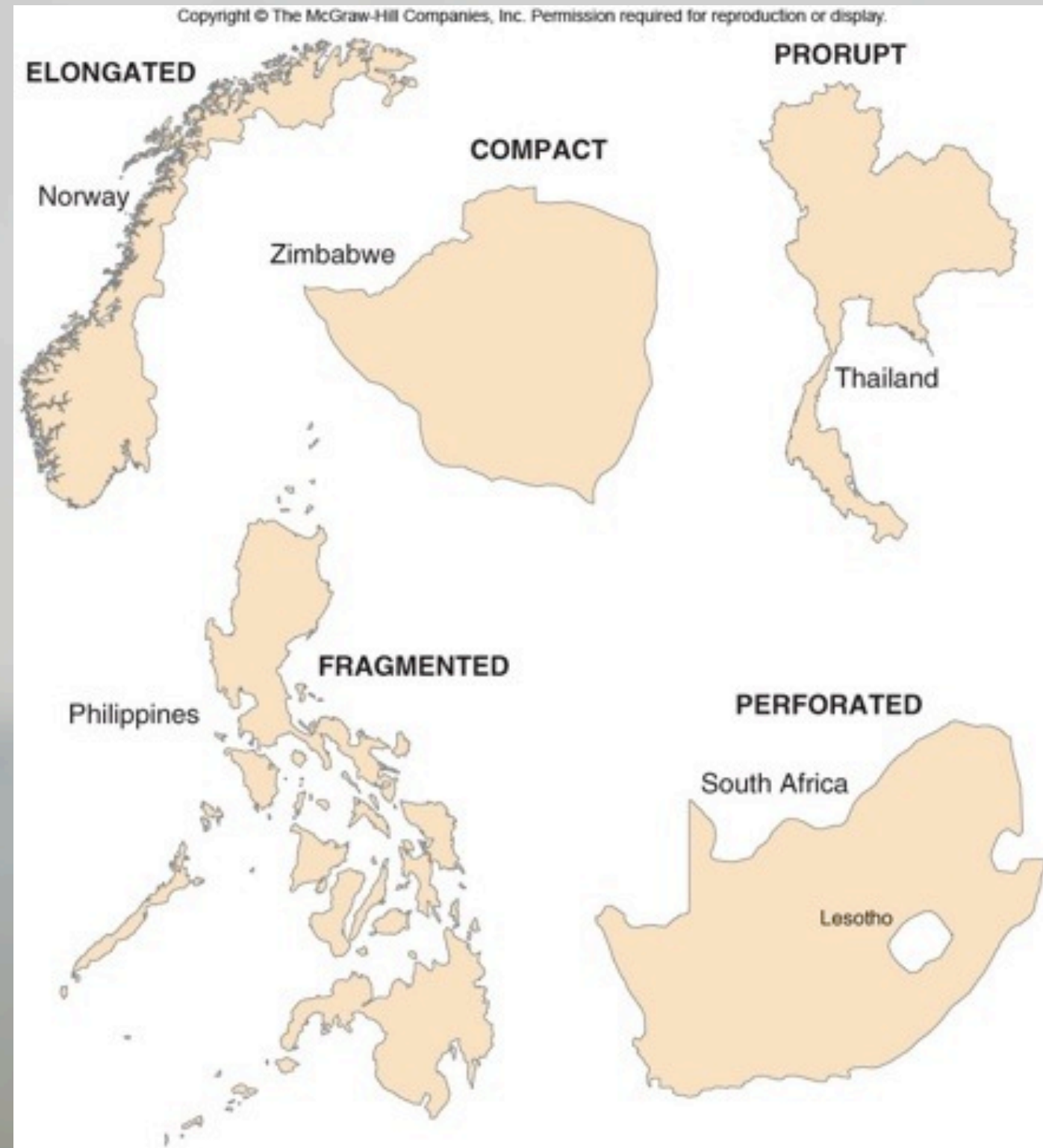
- **Nation-state:** State whose territory coincides with that occupied by a particular nation
- Majority of the population from a single ethnic group
- Language, education, infrastructure, and economic systems organized by central government

Other National Political Systems

- Binational or multinational state: More than one nation within a sovereign state
 - Nigeria, Russia, UK, etc.
- Stateless nation: People without a state

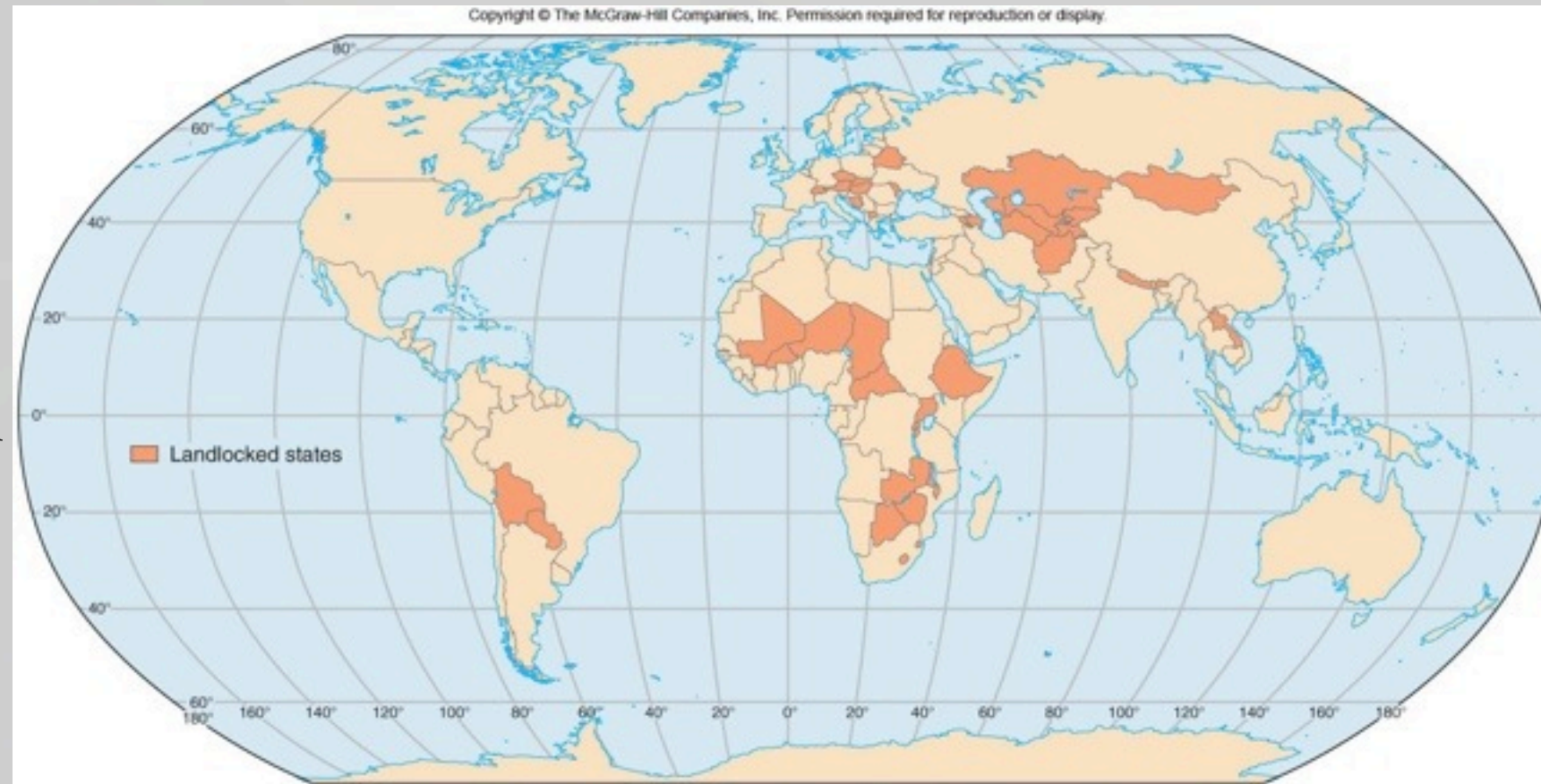
Physical Shape of Countries

- Compact
- Prorupt
- Elongated
- Fragmented
- Perforated
- Enclave



Locations of Countries

- Absolute location
 - Relative location
 - Landlocked
 - Geographic disadvantage
 - On major trade routes
 - Economic advantages
 - Diffusion of new ideas and technologies
- 
- A world map showing landlocked states in orange. The map includes latitude and longitude lines. A legend indicates 'Landlocked states'. The map shows that landlocked states are located in various parts of the world, including South America (Bolivia, Paraguay), Africa (Chad, Sudan, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa), and Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Mongolia).



Cores and Capitals

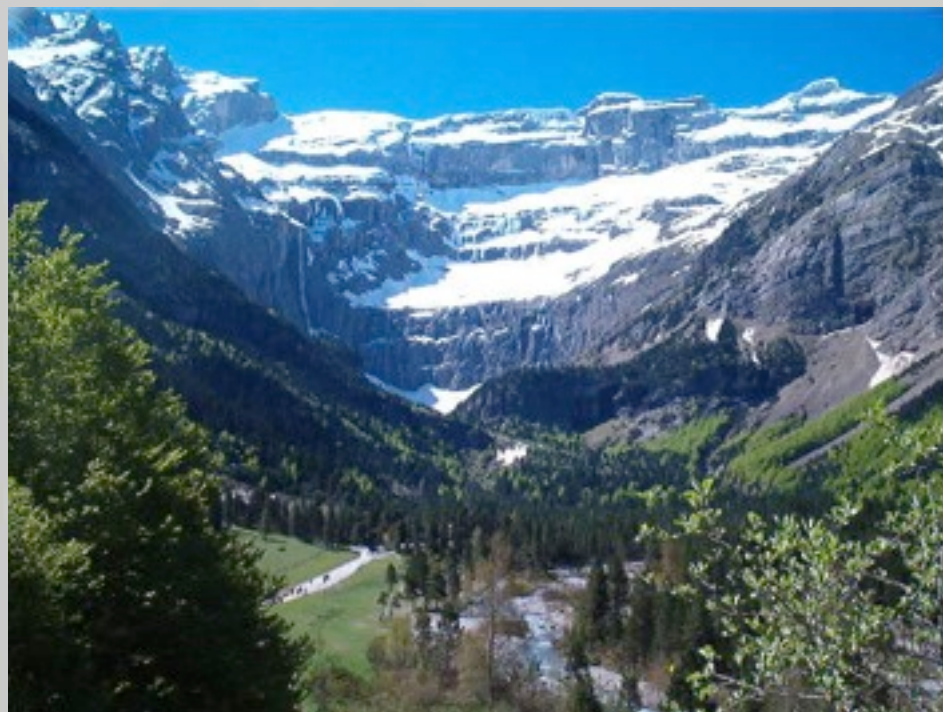
- Core area: Nucleus and main center of industry, commerce, population, political, and intellectual life
- Capital is usually in the core and frequently the primate city (unitary state)
- Federal states: regional governments that have limited autonomy under a central government; administrative capital city is often relocated outside of core cities
- U.S.A., Canada
- Forward-thrust capitals: deliberately sited to promote commerce and population growth outside of core cities (Brasilia)

Boundaries

- Natural (physical) boundaries
 - Mountains, rivers, lakes, etc.
- Artificial (geometric) boundaries
 - Sections of parallels or meridians
- Antecedent boundaries
 - Established before the area is well populated
- Subsequent boundaries
 - Established after the area has been settled

Natural (Physical) Boundaries

- Depend on some physical characteristics of the landscape
- e.g., France and Spain separated by Pyrenees Mountains



Artificial Boundaries

- Depend on socially developed systems of demarcation like parallels or meridians
- e.g., DPRK (North Korea) and ROK (South Korea) along 38th Parallel



Antecedent Boundaries

- Boundaries that are established **before** an area is heavily populated by groups recognized by the State.
- e.g., Western part of U.S.A. and Canadian border (ignoring presence of non-white peoples...)

Subsequent Boundaries

- Borders established after populations are established in an area, often along ethnic/national territorial claims
- e.g., break-up of Yugoslavia

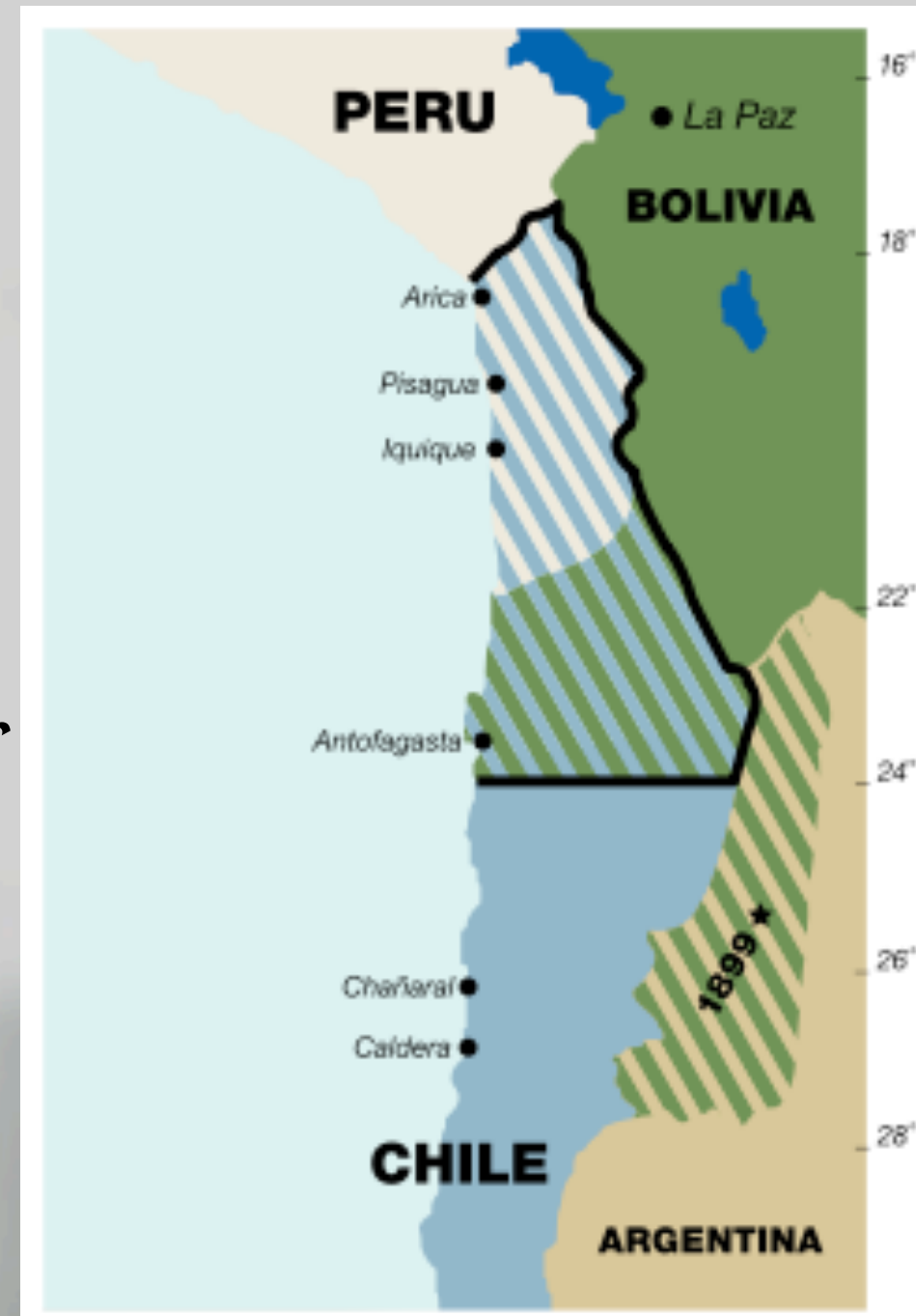


Subsequent Boundaries

- Consequent (ethnographic) boundaries
 - Drawn to accommodate existing national territories (Yugoslavia)
- Superimposed boundaries
 - Ignore existing ethnic national territories (Western Africa)

Boundaries as Sources of Conflict

- Landlocked states
- Use of facilities at a foreign port
- Access through a corridor to the sea or navigable river



Boundaries as Sources of Conflict

- Waterbodies as boundaries
 - Where the boundary line should lie
 - Use of water resources



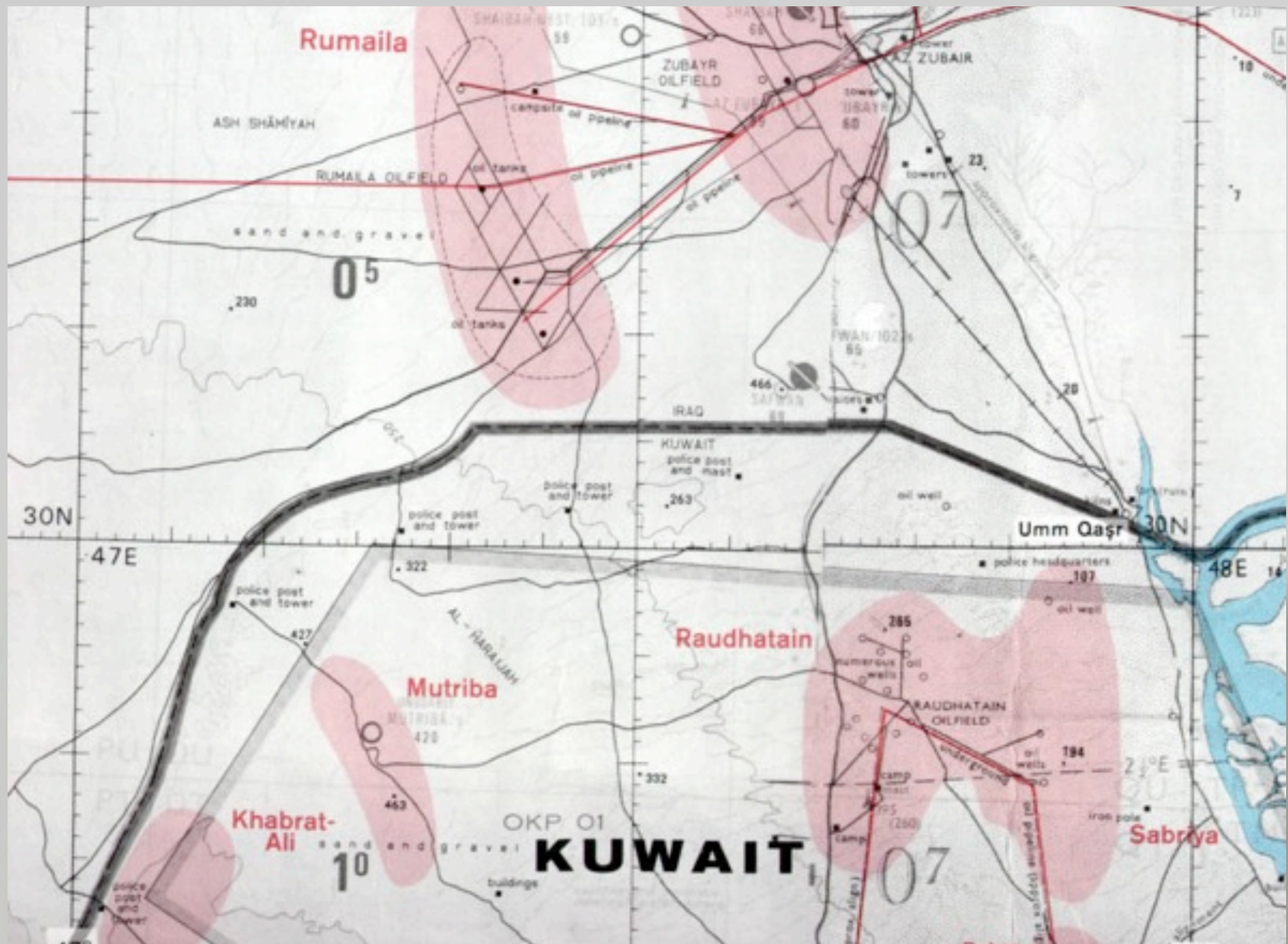
Boundaries as Sources of Conflict

- Minority group identification
- Irredentism
 - Advocating a state to annex territory claimed by another state, but which is inhabited by people who have common ethnicity or historical claims to the land.
- Location of ethnic homeland spans border
- Internal separatist movements

Boundaries as Sources of Conflict

- Resource disputes
 - Movement of peoples across border
 - Natural resource reserves in border regions (Iraq-Kuwait)
 - Physical or cultural resource on adjacent land in neighboring state (Jerusalem)

Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait



Promoting State Cohesion

- Nationalism
 - Identification with the state and acceptance of national goals
 - Strengthens the political system
 - Helps integrate different groups into a unified population
 - Unites geographically dispersed populations

Promoting State Cohesion

- Symbols are used to promote nationalism
 - Unifying Institutions
- Schools, armed forces, media
- Organization and administration
- Transportation and communication



States and Religion

- Religious institutions may compete with national institutions for allegiance
- Religious institutions may serve a primary role in governance over a state
- Conflict between majority and minority religious groups
- Sectarian conflict between different denominations

Challenges to the State

- Imperialism, colonialism, anti-colonialism
- Globalization of economies and governance
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Migration, citizenship, nationalism
- Increase in nationalist and separatist movements
- Legitimacy of rule

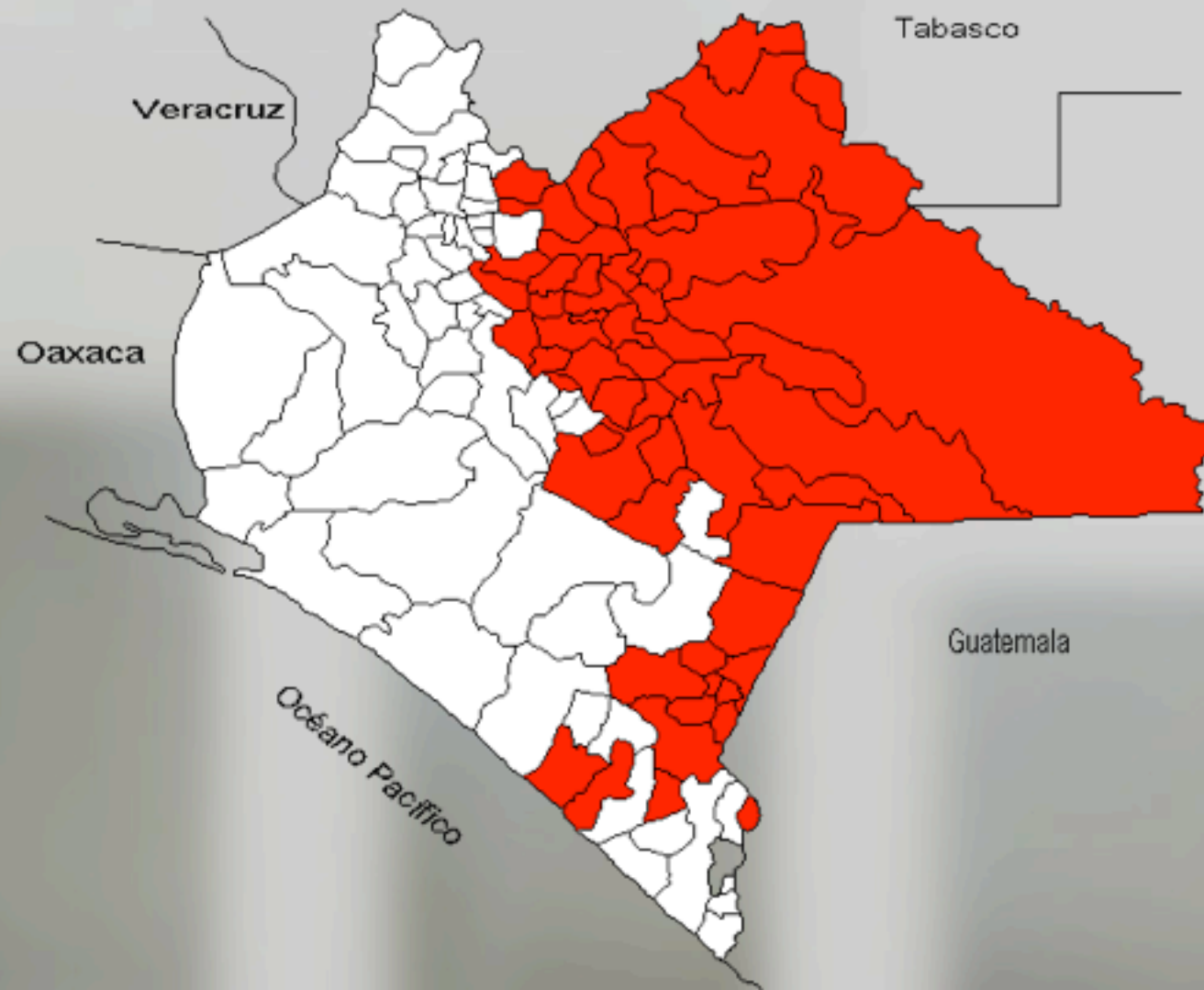
Challenges to State Authority

- Subnationalism: Feeling that one owes primary allegiance to a traditional group or nation rather than to the state
- Self-determination
- Regionalism: Minority group identification with a particular region of a state rather than with the state as a whole

Challenges to State Authority

- Separatist movements

MUNICIPIOS CON PRESENCIA ZAPATISTA



Challenges to State Authority

- Ethnic cleansing: Killing or forcible relocation of one traditional or ethnic group by a more powerful one
- Preconditions of separatist movements: Territory and nationality
- Common characteristics of separatist movements: Peripheral location and social and economic inequality

Cooperation Among States

- Supranationalism: Associations of states created for mutual benefit and to achieve shared objectives
- United Nations (UN)
 - Provides a forum where countries can discuss international problems and regional concerns and a mechanism for forestalling disputes or ending wars
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Bank, International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO)

Cooperation Among States

- Economic Governance
 - World Trade Organization (WTO)
 - International Monetary Fund, World Bank
- Military and Political Governance
 - Geneva Convention
 - Bandung Conference
- Environmental Governance
- Regional Governance

Local and Regional Political Organization

- Local and regional governmental organization represent spatial systems of political decision making
- The geography of representation
 - Urban/rural divisions
 - Politics of difference
 - Redistricting/reapportionment

Quiz

- Explain what is meant by environmental determinism and possibilism and how they differ.
- What is the difference between a nation, a sovereign state, and a nation-state?
- Do you think regions of a country ought to be able to secede? If decided by a popular vote, do you think that majority approval should be required throughout the entire country or only in the areas seeking to secede?