

any guide American dominance will not last forever. Challenges to the current order include globalization, the diffusion of nuclear weapons, China's emergence as a global power, terrorism, the economic (and potential political) strength of the European Union, and the instability of the region stretching from Southwest Asia into Russia.

In addition, predictions about future geopolitical orders often assume that *individual states will continue to be the dominant actors in the international arena*. Yet with the traditional powers of the state under increasing strain, other geopolitical arrangements may emerge. Chief among these arrangements are clusters of former states that are bound together by history, tradition, common economic interests, and perceptions of mutual geopolitical advantage (such as the European region). An alternative, and perhaps more likely, version of a multipolar world would be one composed of as many as five or six such clusters, each under the sway of one or several dominant powers. Moreover, within these clusters the power of traditional states may well be increasingly supplemented by the power of regions—whether substate or transstate. In the final section of this chapter, we consider several other challenges to the state that may lead to unforeseen geopolitical orders.

first century, we appear to be caught between the forces of division and those of unification.

Despite the conflicts arising from these contradictory forces, today hardly a country exists that is not involved in some supranational organization. A **supranational organization** is a separate entity composed of three or more states that forge an association and form an administrative structure for mutual benefit and in pursuit of shared goals. The twentieth century witnessed the establishment of numerous supranational associations in political, economic, cultural, and military spheres.

Today, states have formed over 60 major supranational organizations, many of which have subsidiaries that bring the total to more than 100. The more states participate in such multilateral associations, the less likely they are to act alone in pursuit of a self-interest that might put them at odds with neighbors. Ample research establishes that participation in a supranational entity is advantageous to the partners and that being left out can have serious negative effects on state and nation.

### From League of Nations to United Nations

The modern beginnings of the supranational movement can be traced to the conferences following World War I. Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States, proposed an international organization that would include all the states of the world (fewer than 75 states existed at that point), leading to the creation of the League of Nations in 1919. Even though it was the idea of an American president, the United States was among the countries that did not join this organization (isolationists in the U.S. Senate opposed joining). In all, 63 states participated in the League, although the total membership at any single time never reached that number. Costa Rica and Brazil left the League even before 1930; Germany departed in 1933, shortly before the Soviet Union joined in 1934. The League was born of a worldwide desire to prevent future aggression, but the failure of the United States to join dealt the organization a severe blow. In the mid-1930s, the League had a major opportunity when Ethiopia's Haile Selassie made a dramatic appeal for help in the face of an invasion by Italy, a member state until 1937. However, the League failed to take action, and in the chaos of the beginning of World War II the organization collapsed.

Nonetheless, the interwar period witnessed significant progress toward interstate cooperation. The League of Nations spawned other international organizations. Prominent among these was the Permanent Court of International Justice, created to adjudicate legal issues between states, such as boundary disputes and fishing rights. The League of Nations also initiated international nego-

## THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY

Read a major newspaper (in print or online) and look for a recent statement by a world political leader regarding international politics. Using the concept of critical geopolitics, determine what view of the world the world leader has—how he/she defines the world spatially.

### WHAT ARE SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE STATE?

Ours is a world of contradictions. Over the past couple of decades some Quebecois have demanded independence from Canada even as Canada joined the United States in NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). At soccer games in Scotland, fans drown out "God Save the Queen" with a thunderous rendition of "Flower of Scotland," while in London Parliament debates Britain's entry into the European Monetary Union. At every turn we are reminded of the interconnectedness of nations, states, and regions, yet separatism and calls for autonomy are rampant. In the early years of the twenty-

tiations on maritime boundaries and related aspects of the law of the sea. The conferences organized by the League laid the groundwork for the final resolution of the size of territorial seas decades later.

After World War II, states formed a new organization to foster international security and cooperation: the United Nations (UN). The representation of countries in the United Nations has been more universal than it was in the League (Fig. 8.22). A handful of states still do not belong to the United Nations, but with the most recent additions in 2002, it now has 191 member states. The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council have overshadowed the cooperative efforts of numerous less visible but enormously productive subsidiaries, such as the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and WHO (World Health Organization). Membership in these organizations is less complete than in the United Nations as a whole, but their work has benefited all humanity.

We can find evidence of the important work of the United Nations in the "world" section of any major newspaper. UN peacekeeping troops have helped maintain stability in some of the most contentious regions of the world. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees is called upon to aid refugees in crises throughout the world. UN documents on human rights standards, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, set a precedent and laid the groundwork for countless human rights groups working in the world today.

Participation in the United Nations serves to commit states to internationally approved standards of behavior. Many states still violate the standards, embodied in the United Nations Charter, but such violations can lead to collective action as, for example, in the cases of South Africa, Iraq, and North Korea. Even when censured or subjected to United Nations-sponsored military action, states do not withdraw from the organization. Membership is too valuable to lose; thus, state governments develop an understanding of the advantages of international cooperation.

### Regional Supranational Organizations

The League of Nations and the United Nations are global manifestations of a phenomenon that is expressed even more strongly at the regional level. States organize supranational organizations at the regional scale to position themselves more strongly economically, politically, and even militaristically.

Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg undertook the first major modern experiment in regional

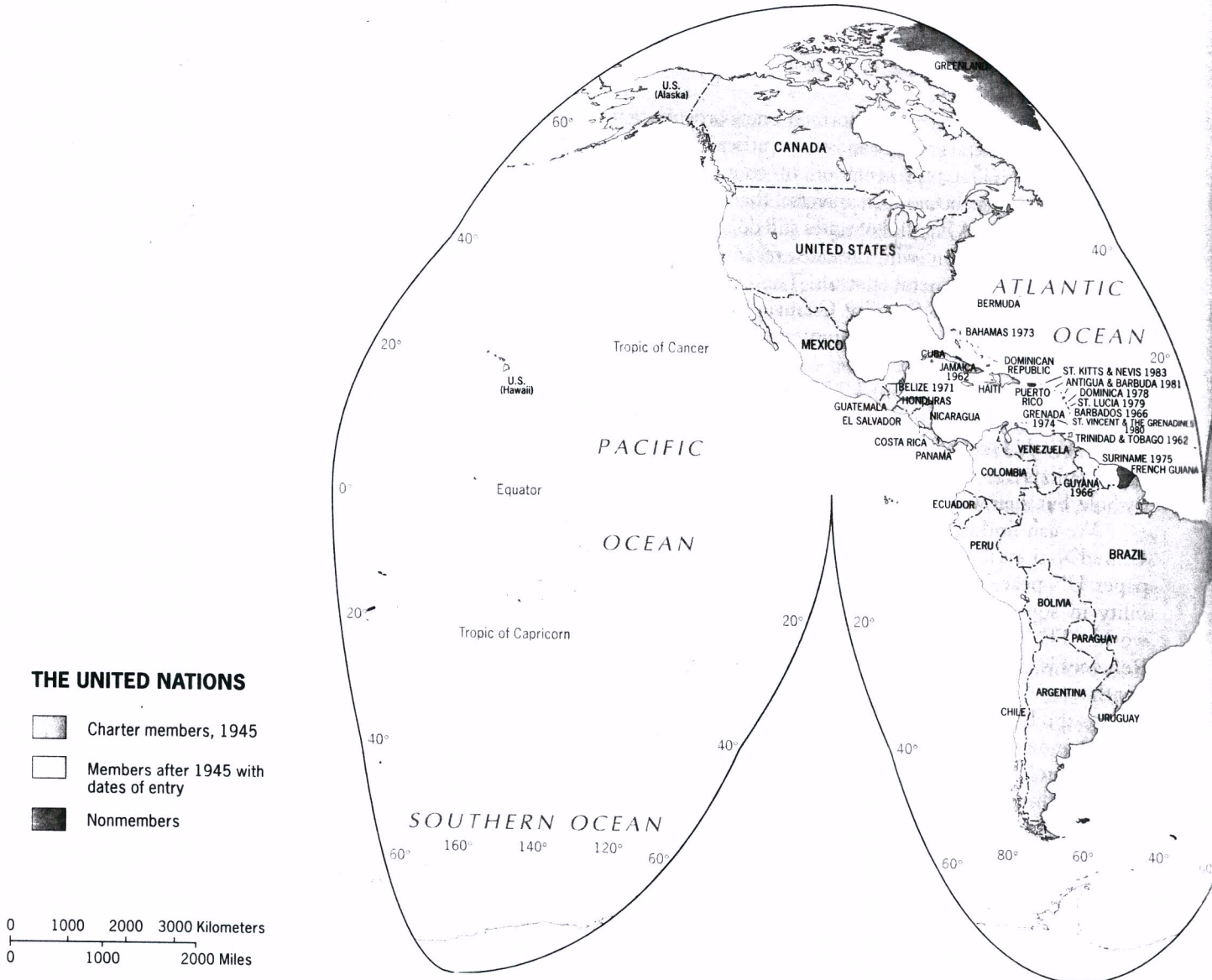
interstate cooperation. The three countries have much in common, linguistically and economically. Dutch farm products are sold on Belgian markets, and Belgian industrial goods go to the Netherlands and Luxembourg. During World War II, representatives of the three countries decided to create common tariffs and eliminate import licenses and quotas. In 1944, even before the end of the war, the governments of the three states met in London to sign an agreement of cooperation, creating the *Benelux* region.

Following World War II, the U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall proposed that the United States finance a European recovery program. A committee representing 16 Western European states plus (then) West Germany presented the United States Congress with a joint program for economic rehabilitation, and Congress approved it. From 1948 to 1952, the United States gave Europe about \$12 billion under the Marshall Plan. This investment revived European national economies and also spurred a movement toward cooperation among European states.

### The European Union

From the European states' involvement in the Marshall Plan came the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), and this body in turn gave rise to other cooperative organizations. Soon after Europe established the OEEC, France proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with the goal of lifting the restrictions and obstacles that impeded the flow of coal, iron ore, and steel among the mainland's six primary producers: France, West Germany, Italy, and the three Benelux countries. The six states entered the ECSC, and gradually, through negotiations and agreement, enlarged their sphere of cooperation to include reductions and even eliminations of certain tariffs and a freer flow of labor, capital, and nonsteel commodities. This led, in 1958, to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC).

The success of the EEC induced other countries to apply for membership. Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. The organization became known as the European Community (EC) because it was seen as more than an economic union. By the late 1980s, the EC had 12 members: the three giants (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom); the four southern countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece); and the five small states (the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Ireland). These 12 members initiated a program of cooperation and unification that led to the formal establishment of a European Union (EU) in 1992. In the mid-1990s,



**Figure 8.22**  
**Member States of the United Nations.** This map shows charter members, members after 1945 (with dates of entry), and nonmembers of the United Nations. *Data from:* the United Nations, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

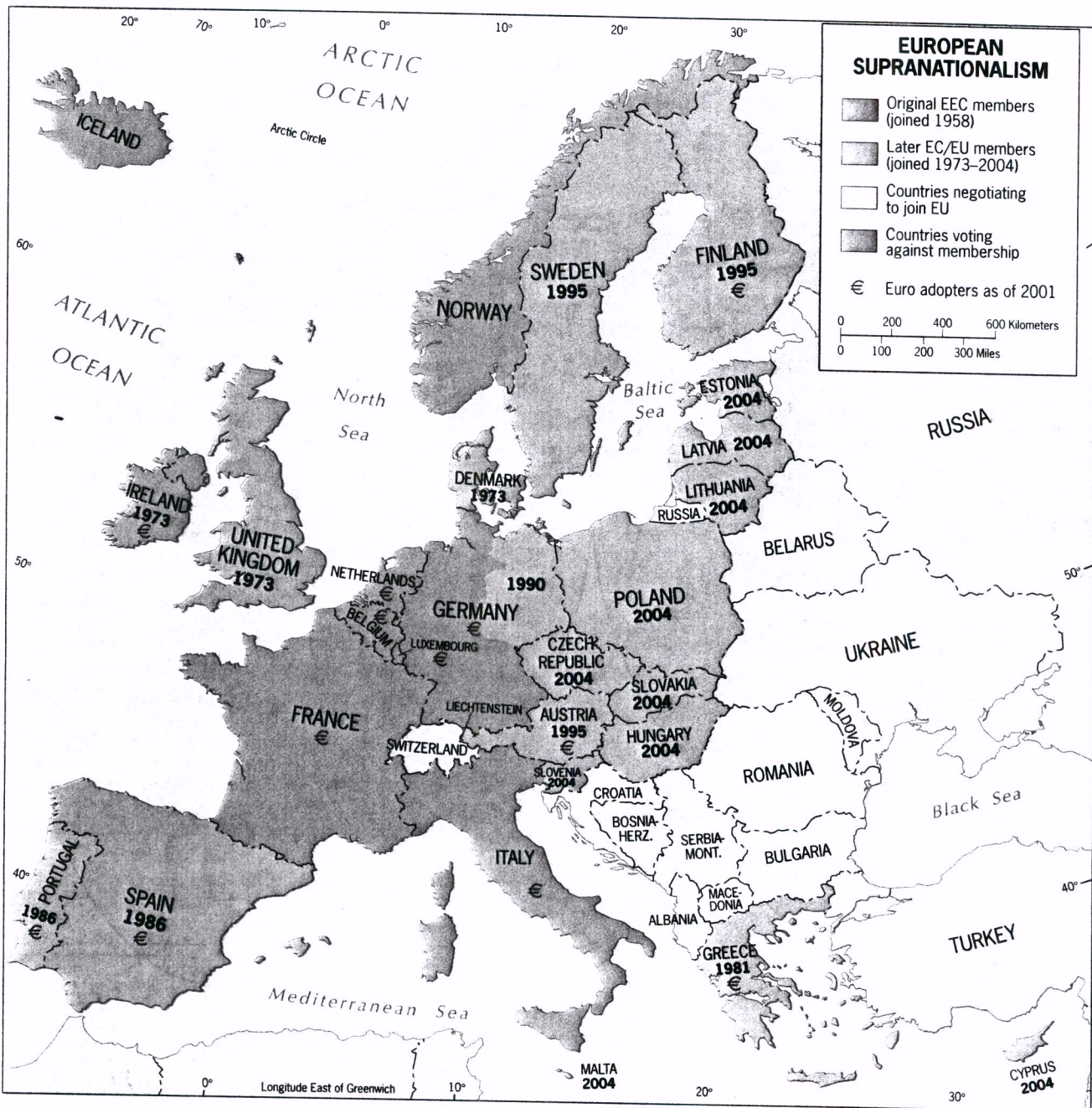
Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined the EU, bringing the total number of members to 15 (Fig. 8.23).

In the late 1990s, the EU began preparing for the establishment of a single currency—the euro (Fig. 8.24). First, all financial transactions were denominated in euros, and on January 1, 2002, the EU introduced euro coins and notes. Not all EU member states are currently a part of the euro-zone, but others may join soon as the euro begins to creep into their economies anyway.

The integration of 10 Eastern European and Mediterranean island states into the European Union in 2004 is the most significant development of its kind in the

world today. Integration is a difficult process in which the anticipated advantages are increasingly being weighed against concerns over the loss of local autonomy. Integration often requires painful adjustments because of the diversity of the European states. For example, agricultural practices and policies have always varied widely. Yet some general policy must govern agriculture throughout the European Union. Individual states have found these adjustments difficult at times, and the EU has had to devise policies to accommodate regional contrasts and delays in implementation. In addition, integration requires significant expenditures. Under the rules of the EU, the





**Figure 8.23**

**European Supranationalism.** Members of the European Union and their dates of entry. *Data from: the European Union, [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int)*

over Turkey's human rights record, specifically its treatment of the Kurdish minority, which would not meet the standards set by the Union. Behind these claims lies an unspoken sense among many that Turkey is not "European" enough to warrant membership. Despite the varied opinions on Turkey's membership in the European Union, in late 2004, the EU extended an accession invita-

tion to Turkey, with Turkey's recognition of Cyprus remaining a potential stumbling block.

Even as the debate over expansion continues, the EU is experiencing other stresses. An overarching question remains—just where is the European Union heading? Member states are considering a constitution for the European Union, the European Union is becoming more



**Figure 8.24**  
Hesdin, France. A market in northern France advertises the price of mushrooms in euros. © Marie-Louise Avery/Alamy Images.

activist in international affairs, and the effects of the 2004 enlargement will not be known for some time.

### How Does Supranationalism Affect the State?

The notion of a supranational association for mutual benefit is a worldwide phenomenon. Other economic associations, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Central American Common Market, the Andean Group, the Southern Cone Community Market (MERCOSUR), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), have drawn up treaties to reduce tariffs and import restrictions in order to ease the flow of commerce in their regions. Not all of these alliances are successful, of course, but economic supranationalism is a sign of the times, a grand experiment still in progress.

Yet, when we turn back to the European Union, we are looking at a supranational organization that is unlike any other. In simple terms, it is a beast we have never seen before. It is not a state, nor is it simply an organization of states. The European Union is remarkable in that it has taken on a life of its own—with a multifaceted government

structure, three capital cities, and billions of euros flowing through its coffers. The European Union is extending into foreign relations, domestic policies, and military policies, with sovereignty over certain issues moving from the states to the European Union. Geographer Alexander Murphy has studied how Europeans in some regions are feeling a greater attachment to their region and to the European Union than to their own state (Fig. 8.25). Identifying with the European Union (over the state) is strong in the Benelux countries (the first members) and in regions where people have been disempowered by their state governments. With the European Union, we may be witnessing a transformation in the political organization of space similar to the transformation to the modern state system in Europe in the seventeenth century.

Other movements in addition to the European Union are posing major challenges to the state as we know it—all questioning whether the spatial organization of the world into states is logical, effective, or even necessary. Among these challenges are the demand of nations within states for independence (as discussed earlier), the proliferation of nuclear weapons, economic globalization, increasing connectedness among people and cultures, and terrorism perpetrated in the name of religion.

Nuclear weapons give even small states the ability to inflict massive damage on larger and distant adversaries.



**Figure 8.25**

**Brussels, Belgium.** A woman with a European Union umbrella shops in the flower market in the Grande Place of Brussels.

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Combined with missile technology, this may be the most serious danger the world faces, which is why the United Nations insisted on the dismantling of Iraq's nuclear capacity after the 1991 Gulf War and why North Korea's apparent progress in the nuclear arms arena in the 1990s caused President Clinton to threaten military action. Although it was always known that the former Soviet Union and several Western powers possessed nuclear bombs and the missiles to deliver them to enemy targets, the nuclear capabilities of other countries have been carefully guarded secrets. Thus in 1981, when reports of Iraq's nuclear program reached Israel, the Israelis attacked Iraq. But Israel itself is believed to possess a nuclear arsenal; South Africa was building one during the Apartheid period; India and Pakistan have recently joined the nuclear club; and Iran may well be building itself up as a nuclear power. As nuclear weapons became smaller and "tactical" nuclear arms were developed, the threat of nuclear weapons sales had to be taken seriously. It is now possible for a hostile state to purchase the power with which to threaten the world.

Although states provide the territorial foundation from which producers and consumers still operate and they continue to exert considerable regulatory powers, economic globalization makes it ever more difficult for the state to control economic relations. States are responding to this situation in a variety of ways, with some

giving up traditional regulatory powers and others seeking to insulate themselves from the international economy. Still others are working to build supranational economic blocs that they hope will help them cope with an increasingly globalized world. The impacts of many of these developments are as yet uncertain, but it is increasingly clear that states now compete with a variety of other forces in the international economics arena.

The state's traditional position is being further eroded by the globalization of social and cultural relations. Networks of interaction are being constructed in ways that do not correspond to the map of states. When unrest breaks out in southern Mexico, for example, activists use the Internet to contact interested people throughout the world. Scholars and researchers in different countries work together in teams. Increased mobility has brought individuals from far-flung places into much closer contact than before. Paralleling all this change is the spread of popular culture in ways that make national borders virtually meaningless. Gwen Stefani is listened to from Iceland to Australia; fashions developed in northern Italy are hot items among Japanese tourists visiting Hawai'i; Thai restaurants are found in towns and cities across the United States; countless Russian women hurry home to watch the next episode of soap operas made in Mexico; and movies produced in Hollywood are seen on screens from Mumbai to Santiago.