

and wasted vote gerrymandering. The *excess vote technique* creates a few electoral districts in which support for the opposition forms a strong majority. In these districts, excess voting occurs because many more votes are cast than are needed to win the election. Although the opposition wins overwhelmingly in these few districts, it does not secure majority control and may lose seats in other districts. In contrast, the *wasted vote technique* disperses support for the opposition so that the opposition loses by a slim margin, say, 45–55%, or 40–60%. “Wasted votes” are the votes recorded for the losing candidate. When the support for the opposition draws heavily from racial or ethnic minorities, it is easy to see how these two gerrymandering techniques make it possible to create voting districts that diminish the effectiveness of the minority vote.

To try to prevent this from happening, the Voting Rights Act was amended in two important ways in the 1980s. First, it prohibited gerrymandering that dilutes minority voting power. Second, it stipulated that there

may be some circumstances in which it is necessary to create voting districts that concentrate the strength of a specific minority group. This last change supported the creation of *majority-minority districts* (districts where minority group members form the majority) in order to improve minority representation. See **Figure 7.19** for an example of gerrymandering involving a majority-minority district.

CONCEPT CHECK



1. **What** is the difference between majority-plurality representation and proportional representation?
2. **Why** are reapportionment and redistricting necessary?
3. **When** does redistricting become gerrymandering?

Political Landscapes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Explain** what a landscape of central authority is.
2. **Distinguish** between security landscapes and landscapes of governance.
3. **Define** political iconography.

How do political affairs shape political landscapes? In what ways are cultural landscapes used to convey political power? How and why do certain landscapes, both cultural and natural, become the focus of intense political disputes? These are just some of the questions that help guide the study of political landscapes.

Landscapes of Central Authority

States exercise their political control through government. In turn, the policies, agencies, and laws of government

affect the look of cities and towns as well as the countryside. When governments fund the design and construction of infrastructure including railroads, sewage, irrigation, or power facilities, they are creating landscapes of central authority. If you drive on a U.S. interstate to get to school or work, that interstate is part of a transportation network and landscape of central authority created by the federal government largely as a result of the 1956 Federal Highway Act. We can also see the stamp of central authority in the landscape of Egypt's Aswan High Dam, a major source of hydroelectric power for the entire country.

Landscapes of central authority are important because they contribute to the process of state-building. For example, they may help connect different parts of a country while reinforcing the power and significance of the central government.

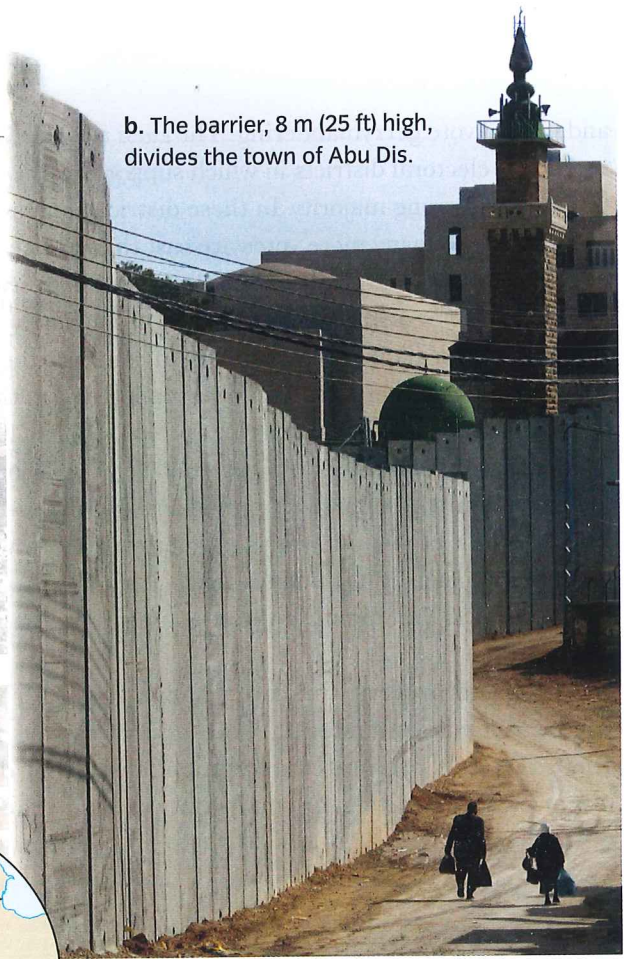
Security landscapes in the West Bank • Figure 7.20

The separation barrier is a concrete wall, some 600 km (400 mi) long, that Israel has built in the West Bank. To some Israelis, the barrier provides security from Palestinian suicide bombings; to Palestinians, it is Israel's way of annexing territory. In an advisory opinion in 2004, the International Court of Justice found the barrier contrary to international law.

a. Here the barrier separates the Israeli town of Matan (foreground) from the Palestinian town of Hableh.



b. The barrier, 8 m (25 ft) high, divides the town of Abu Dis.



Security landscapes Boundaries establish the limits of a state's jurisdiction and, in effect, the limits of a state's political authority. Many demarcated boundaries are **security landscapes**—a specific type of political landscape created to protect the territory, people, facilities, and infrastructure of a state. Security cameras, metal detectors, and gated entrances are some measures intended to deter terrorist attacks and, in the event of one, minimize the damage and loss of life (Figure 7.20).

Landscapes of governance The imprint of central authority can also be revealed through an examination of legal policies. Laws can encourage or discourage certain human behaviors, which, in turn, may lead to the creation of distinctive landscapes of governance. Farm policy can influence agricultural practices. In Europe, where it is too cool to cultivate sugarcane, the sugar beet crop is an important source of sugar. Without sizable EU subsidies, however, sugar beet production would not be as widespread in Europe as it presently is, nor would the EU continue to be a net sugar exporter.

Landscapes of governance are also created when systems of land survey are commissioned by a government prior to

the settlement of an area. Many other kinds of laws affect the landscape as well. Inheritance laws requiring that land be divided among all children, rather than passing to the oldest child, can result in fragmented landholdings. When governments change the laws and regulations in order to encourage particular businesses or industries to locate in an area, landscape change is likely to occur. The establishment of national parks and forests signals the impact of laws that protect, preserve, or regulate the use of the natural environment.

Political Iconography

Landscapes are not only affected by governmental laws and policies, but are also coded with political meaning. Examples of **political iconography** include flags, statues or images of political or military leaders, national anthems, war memorials, and symbols of political parties. These symbols come to represent certain ideals, such as freedom or democracy, and help build a shared sense of identity (*Where Geographers Click* and Figure 7.21).

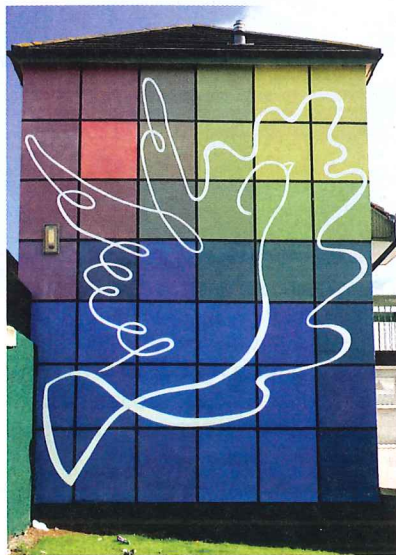
political iconography An image, object, or symbol that conveys a political message.

Where Geographers CLICK



CAIN Web Service: Political Wall Murals in Northern Ireland

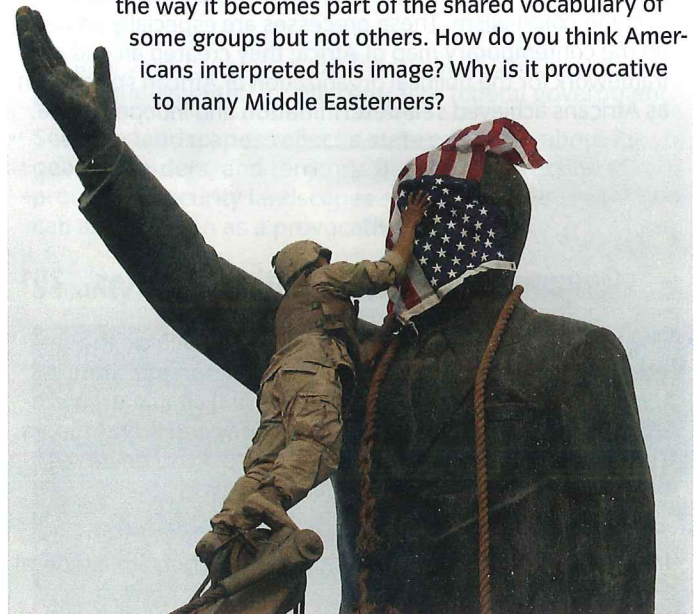
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/murals/index.html>



Learn more about political iconography and the conflict in Northern Ireland by exploring the murals that mark and demarcate the region's public spaces. There is a great deal to explore here. You might begin by following the link to **The Bogside Artists**.

Political iconography • Figure 7.21

U.S. Marines placed an American flag on a statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 2003. The Marines then helped topple the statue. The power of political iconography derives from the way it becomes part of the shared vocabulary of some groups but not others. How do you think Americans interpreted this image? Why is it provocative to many Middle Easterners?



CONCEPT CHECK



1. **What** functions do landscapes of central authority serve?
2. **What** are landscapes of governance and why are they significant?
3. **How** is political iconography related to nationalism?

THE PLANNER

Summary

1 Key Concepts in Political Geography 194

- **Political geography** is a branch of human geography that focuses on the spatial aspects of political affairs and is heavily influenced by human **territoriality**, which can transform an open space into a divided or closed one, as shown here.
- An important turning point in the development of the **state** occurred during the middle of the 17th century, when ideas about **sovereignty** became strongly linked to specific units of territory.

A divided state • Figure 7.2

