

## Maps, Countries, and Conflict

The world is divided into nearly 200 countries.

The borders on our maps may look clean and neat, but if we look back into history, we don't have to go back very far at all to find a time when there were far fewer countries. The reason maps are not always very realistic is partially due to the new boundaries and divisions that are added every time a new country is made. Additionally, there are plenty of territories that are claimed by multiple countries and are unlikely to be awarded to a winner anytime soon, so clear boundaries can't be drawn from an *objective* perspective.

It may be possible to draw a map that is "correct" from the perspective of one country, or a group of countries, but how long would such a map last? For example, you might have heard of either the Persian Gulf, or the Arabian Gulf. They refer to the same place, but depending where you are in the world, you might have strong feelings that it should be called one name instead of the other. Many of these disputed territories are hot button political issues. Arunachal Pradesh is a disputed territory claimed by India and China. See this article <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2010/1007.gravois.html> for an explanation of why a Google Maps server error stirred up some trouble just before India and China met to discuss Arunachal Pradesh and why we can't have one world map.

This week, you'll investigate and explain just one of the world's contentious borders or territories. Have you ever wondered why peace in the Middle East is a volatile topic or why you see odd stories about North Korea in the news? Choose a contentious border or territory and explain:

1. What are the "sides"? Often there are two competing countries, but sometimes there are many more!
  2. Why is there a conflict?
  3. Is the conflict resolved, likely to be resolved soon, or will it continue for a long time? Why?
- Write at least 300 words.
  - Include at least 3 vocabulary words from the textbook (preferably from chapter six) and put them in **bold** or a **color**.

The goal is not simply to use the vocab, but to engage with the material in chapter six. To do this, demonstrate how a concept relates to or helps explain the conflict you have chosen, or use the material in chapter six to help you understand and explain the conflict in geographers' terms. Citations aren't required, but links to good information are encouraged and will tend to help your grade. In your response to the prompt and your replies this week, I caution you to be sensitive, polite, and academic in your writing. ***Nothing in the world is more***

***contentious than the issues underlying some of the conflicts listed below.***

Here are some suggestions for major territorial and border disputes you might choose to investigate. Most of them are ongoing.

- Korea (North & South)
  - Western Sahara
  - Arunachal Pradesh (partially explained in the article mentioned above)
  - U.S./Mexico border
  - India/Pakistan border (especially if you're a Monty Python fan, see video 10 on the YouTube Playlist)
  - Current conflict in Ukraine/Crimea
  - Israel/Palestine
  - The Caucasus region, or any particular part of it (the Boston Marathon bombers were from the North Caucasus region)
  - Serbia/Kosovo
  - Tibet
  - Taiwan
  - Malaysia-Singapore border
  - Northern Ireland (resolved in 1998)
  - Kashmir (It is much more than just the best Led Zeppelin song ever)
  - Disputed territories in Georgia (the country, not the U.S. state)
- South Sudan