

# The Sovereign State

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The State

No, not Texas, Oregon, Vermont . . . Those are states, but “a state” is something more than that. A **state** is a body of people, living in a defined space, with the power to make and enforce laws, and with an organization to do this. A state does not have to check with any higher authority in order to make and enforce laws. Its own organization, or government, is its highest authority.



*The Department of State represents the United States when dealing with other states.*



## Population

A **population** is the group of people who are the members or citizens of a state. A population can be large or small. China has a population of more than 1.3 billion people, while the island state of Fiji has just over 860,000.

The population of a state also has a variety of features. The population might be mainly *rural* or mostly *urban*. A state's economic situation might mean most people are very *poor*, with little access to electricity or even water. Or the people might be generally *wealthy*, enjoying modern homes, running water, and the latest technology. Often this is connected to the level of *education* most people within the population have achieved. Populations also have their own *cultural traditions*, and they usually speak a common *language*.

## Territory

A state's **territory** is the area in which a state's rule applies. A state must have set boundaries. However, countries do not always agree on what each other's boundaries are.

Boundaries can change over time. Sometimes they change after a *war*, when the states involved agree on new boundaries. When there is a dispute, states might also *negotiate* with each other to decide what the actual boundaries should be. Finally, states can *purchase* territory from other states, although this is less common today than it was in the past. In 1867, the U.S. bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million.



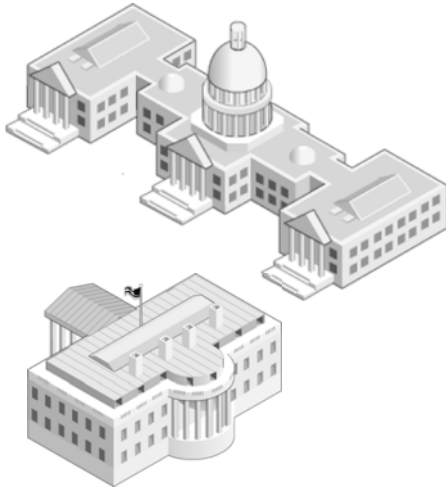
*Flags outside the United Nations headquarters. Each flag represents a sovereign state.*

## Sovereignty

**Sovereignty** (pronounced SAW-vren-tee) is the ability to rule absolutely within a territory. The principle of sovereignty means that all states are considered *equal* to each other, and no state may interfere in the affairs of another state. In reality, the world's states have created a higher authority, called the United Nations. States agree to follow the UN's rules for dealing with each other — but they don't have to follow them. Sovereign states are free to set their own *foreign policy*, meaning the kind of relationships they will have with other states. States also have the power to decide how things will operate inside their own boundaries. Today, though, if a state is unable to keep its population safe and many people are being killed—perhaps even by the government—the UN allows other states to use military force to protect the population.

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## Government

A **government** is the organization inside a state that controls the actions and policies of the state. A government has four main roles.

First a government makes laws. In this role, the government provides rules for how things inside the state are run. A government is also responsible for protecting the state. In this role, the government provides a military to defend the state against outside attack. Third, a government keeps order inside the state. It does this by establishing law enforcement agencies that deal with criminal activity. Finally, a government usually helps its citizens by providing services people need. This can be anything from a post office to paving streets to providing health care or unemployment benefits.

**Government's Roles.** Use the word bank below to complete the graphic organizer. Write the four roles in the stars. Then put examples of each role at each point of the stars. Each role has 4 examples.

Keep Order

Kids under 14 can't work

Army

The voting age is 18

Marines

Make Laws

Police

Protect the Country

Highway Patrol

People have freedom of speech

Help Citizens

FBI

Retirement benefits

Highway system

Sheriff

Navy

Veterans' hospital

Air Force

Schools

Jobs must pay minimum wage

