

Stateless Nations: AP Human Geography Crash Course Review

An Introduction to Stateless Nations

A stateless nation is a special case of national political systems, but nonetheless crucial to understanding political geography. They are quite common throughout the world and consistently make major headlines. In this article, we will discuss what a stateless nation is, look at examples of stateless nations, explain why it's important in having a comprehensive understanding of geography, and how to understand it in the context of the AP Human Geography exam. We will finish by showing how this fits into the AP Human Geography [multiple choice and free response question \(FRQ\)](#) by showing an example, followed by a summary of this entire page.

What is a Stateless Nation?

By this point, you should already be familiar with the term nation, and that it refers to a group of people with a common culture occupying a particular territory. You should also be familiar with a state as an independent political unit occupying a defined, permanently populated territory with full sovereign control over its internal and foreign affairs. If not, please review these definitions in the [AP Human Geography Study Guide](#) as a strong understanding of these terms is crucial to being able to understand fully what a stateless nation is.

So, now that you know the definitions of a nation and a state, you can deduce that a stateless nation is a group of people with a common culture occupying a particular territory that does not operate as an independent political unit with a defined, permanently populated territory and has no sovereign control over its internal and foreign affairs. Essentially, it refers to a people without a state.

There are plenty of stateless nations in the world today. The Kurds are one of the largest stateless nations, with over 20 million people dispersed throughout six countries: Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Others include Palestinians, Basques, and Roma.



Why are Stateless Nations Important to Understand?

Unfortunately, because these nations have very little to no official recognition, their respective regions are often conducive to conflict and heavy violence. They resent the fact that they are not recognized and given political control over the land that they believe rightfully belongs to them. They believe because they have a distinct culture, language, religion (or sect thereof) and have occupied a certain region of land for centuries, they are entitled to that particular piece of land. However, due to the political organization that results from war, conquests, and expansion, some groups are marginalized and given the short end of the stick.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand stateless nations and how they came about because a significant amount of conflict today in the world comes from stateless nations. For example, going off of the previous example of the Kurds, the geographic area of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, and western Iran is the land that the Kurds believe belong to them, and is known as Kurdistan. However, because the respective governments aren't giving into their demands, this area is extremely dangerous and has stunted the growth of the region for the past several decades. Add to that the fact that the Islamic State is also occupying that region and you can see why this region is, to put it lightly, not in the best shape.

Kurdistan is not the only example of violence due to stateless nations. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 by Great Britain as a Jewish state marginalized the Palestinian Muslim minority. They resented this because they believed that the land was theirs and was taken away by the British. This is also a region of heavy conflict. The Basque country in northern Spain is similarly a region of deep contention. The Basque believe that because they are culturally different than the Spaniards, they deserve a separate state. This has led to plenty of attacks and violence throughout Spanish cities.



As you can see, despite the fact that the concept of stateless nations is relatively not as important as compared to other concepts in geographic studies, it is a major key to understanding why the world is the way it is right now. Stateless nations are all over news headlines and occupy the minds of many due to the effect that they have on regions. Therefore, understanding stateless nations allows you to gain a better perspective on why certain areas in the world are violence-ridden.