

KEY ISSUE 4

Why Do Territorial Conflicts Arise among Religious Groups?

- Religion versus Government Policies
- Religion versus Religion

Learning Outcome 6.4.1

Understand reasons for religious conflicts arising from government policies.

The twentieth century was a century of global conflict—two world wars during the first half of the century and the Cold War between supporters of democracy and communism during the second half. With the end of the Cold War, the threat of global conflict has receded in the twenty-first century, but local conflicts have increased in areas of cultural diversity, as will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

An element of cultural diversity that has led to conflict in many localities is religion. The attempt by intense adherents of one religion to organize Earth's surface can conflict with the spatial expression of other religious or nonreligious ideas.

Contributing to more intense religious conflict has been a resurgence of religious **fundamentalism**, which is a literal interpretation and a strict and intense adherence to basic principles of a religion (or a religious branch, denomination, or sect). In a world increasingly dominated by a global culture and economy, religious fundamentalism is one of the most important ways in which a group can maintain a distinctive cultural identity. A group convinced that its religious view is the correct one may spatially intrude upon the territory controlled by other religious groups.

Religion versus Government Policies

Religious groups may oppose government policies seen as promoting social change conflicting with traditional religious values. The role of religion in organizing Earth's surface has diminished in some societies because of political and economic change.

Islam has been particularly affected by a perceived conflict between religious values and modernization of the economy. Hinduism also has been forced to react to new nonreligious ideas from the West. Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam have all been challenged by Communist governments that diminish the importance of religion in

society. Yet, in recent years, religious principles have become increasingly important in the political organization of countries, especially where a branch of Christianity or Islam is the prevailing religion.

RELIGION VERSUS SOCIAL CHANGE

In developing countries, participation in the global economy and culture can expose local residents to values and beliefs originating in developed countries of North America and Europe. North Americans and Europeans may not view economic development as incompatible with religious values, but many religious adherents in developing countries do, especially where Christianity is not the predominant religion.

TALIBAN VERSUS WESTERN VALUES. When the Taliban gained power in Afghanistan in 1996, many Afghans welcomed them as preferable to the corrupt and brutal warlords who had been running the country. U.S. and other Western officials also welcomed them as strong defenders against a possible new invasion by Russia.

The Taliban (which means “religious students”) had run Islamic Knowledge Movement [religious] schools, mosques, shrines, and other religious and social services since the seventh century A.D., shortly after the arrival of Islam in Afghanistan. Once in control of Afghanistan's government in the 1990s, the Taliban imposed very strict laws inspired by Islamic values as the Taliban interpreted them:

- “Western, non-Islamic” leisure activities were banned, such as playing music, flying kites, watching television, and surfing the Internet.
- Soccer stadiums were converted to settings for executions and floggings.
- Men were beaten for shaving their beards and women stoned for committing adultery.
- Homosexuals were buried alive, and prostitutes were hanged in front of large audiences.
- Thieves had their hands cut off, and women wearing nail polish had their fingers cut off.

Western values were not the only targets: Enormous Buddhist statues as old as the second century A.D. were destroyed in 2001 because they were worshipped as “graven images,” in violation of Islam (Figure 6-42). The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice enforced the laws. The Taliban believed that they had been called by Allah to purge Afghanistan of sin and violence and make it a pure Islamic state. Islamic scholars criticized the Taliban as poorly educated in Islamic law and history and for misreading the Quran.

A U.S.-led coalition overthrew the Taliban in 2001 and replaced it with a democratically elected government. However, the Taliban was able to regroup and resume its fight to regain control of Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan (see Chapter 8).



▲ **FIGURE 6-42 TALIBAN DESTRUCTION** (top) An image taken in 1998 of a 55-meter (180-foot) statue of Buddha in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. (bottom) The empty niche after the Taliban destroyed the statue in 2001.



▲ **FIGURE 6-43 HINDU CASTE** Young boys of the Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaisya castes perform a ceremony to mark the beginning of their studies.

descended from the indigenous people who dwelled in India prior to the Aryan conquest.

Over the centuries, these original castes split into thousands of subcastes. Until recently, social relations among the castes were limited, and the rights of non-Brahmans, especially Dalits, were restricted. In Hinduism, because everyone was different, it was natural that each individual should belong to a particular caste or position in the social order. British administrators and Christian missionaries pointed out the shortcomings of the caste system, such as neglect of the untouchables' health and economic problems.

The type of Hinduism practiced depends in part on an individual's caste. A high-caste Brahman may practice a form of Hinduism based on knowledge of relatively obscure historical texts. At the other end of the caste system, a low-caste illiterate in a rural village may perform religious rituals without a highly developed set of written explanations for them.

The rigid caste system has been considerably relaxed in recent years. The Indian government classifies untouchables, shudras, and other historically discriminated castes as "scheduled castes." They comprise 16 percent of India's total population and are now often called Dalit (Figure 6-46). Consciousness of caste persists: A government plan to devise a quota system designed to give untouchables more places in the country's universities generated strong opposition. People looking for a marriage partner advertise their caste and the castes they are willing to consider for a spouse.

▼ **FIGURE 6-44 DALIT** A Dalit cleans the streets in India.



Pause and Reflect 6.4.1

Why did the Taliban destroy priceless artistic works from Afghanistan's ancient past?

HINDUISM VERSUS SOCIAL EQUALITY. Hinduism has been strongly challenged since the 1800s, when British colonial administrators introduced their social and moral concepts to India. The most vulnerable aspect of the Hindu religion was its rigid caste system, which was the class or distinct hereditary order into which a Hindu was assigned, according to religious law.

The caste system apparently originated around 1500 B.C., when Aryans invaded India from the west. The Aryans divided themselves into four castes that developed strong differences in social and economic position:

- Brahmans, the priests and top administrators (Figure 6-43)
- Kshatriyas, or warriors
- Vaisyas, or merchants
- Shudras, or agricultural workers and artisans

The Shudras occupied a distinctly lower status than the other three castes. Below the four castes were the Dalits, outcasts, or untouchables, who did work considered too dirty for other castes. In theory, the untouchables were

RELIGION VERSUS COMMUNISM

Learning Outcome 6.4.2

Summarize reasons for conflicts between religions.

Organized religion was challenged in the twentieth century by the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe and Asia. The three religions most affected were Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Communist regimes generally discouraged religious belief and practice.

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM VERSUS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION.

In 1721, Czar Peter the Great made the Russian Orthodox Church a part of the Russian government (Figure 6-45). The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church was replaced by a 12-member committee, known as the Holy Synod, nominated by the czar.

Following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which overthrew the czar, the Communist government of the Soviet Union pursued antireligious programs. Karl Marx had called religion “the opium of the people,” a view shared by V. I. Lenin and other early Communist leaders. Marxism became the official doctrine of the Soviet Union, so religious doctrine was a potential threat to the success of the revolution.

The Soviet government in 1918 eliminated the official church–state connection that Peter the Great had forged. All church buildings and property were nationalized and could be used only with local government permission. People’s religious beliefs could not be destroyed overnight, but the role of organized religion in Soviet life could be reduced—and it was. The Orthodox religion retained adherents in the Soviet Union, especially among the elderly, but younger people generally had little contact with the church beyond attending a service perhaps once a year. With religious organizations prevented from conducting social and cultural work, religion dwindled in daily life.

The end of Communist rule in the late twentieth century brought a religious revival in Eastern Europe,

▼ **FIGURE 6-45 ST BASIL’S, MOSCOW** A Russian Orthodox cathedral has stood at the center of Moscow since the sixteenth century. The communists turned it into a museum.



especially where Roman Catholicism is the most prevalent branch of Christianity, including Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Property confiscated by the Communist governments reverted to Church ownership, and attendance at church services increased.

In Central Asia, countries that were former parts of the Soviet Union—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—most people are Muslims. These newly independent countries are struggling to determine the extent to which laws should be rewritten to conform to Islamic custom rather than to the secular tradition inherited from the Soviet Union.

Pause and Reflect 6.4.2

How did the end of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe affect religion?

BUDDHISM VERSUS SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES.

In Southeast Asia, Buddhists were hurt by the long Vietnam War—waged between the French and later by the Americans, on one side, and Communist groups on the other. Neither antagonist was particularly sympathetic to Buddhists. U.S. air raids in Laos and Cambodia destroyed many Buddhist shrines, and other shrines were vandalized by Vietnamese and by the Khmer Rouge Cambodian Communists. On a number of occasions, Buddhists immolated (burned) themselves to protest policies of the South Vietnamese government.

The current Communist governments in Southeast Asia have discouraged religious activities and permitted monuments to decay, most notably the Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia, considered one of the world’s most beautiful Buddhist and Hindu structures (Figure 6-46). In any event, these countries do not have the funds necessary to restore the structures, although international organizations have helped.



▲ **FIGURE 6-46 VANDALIZING RELIGIOUS SHRINES** Angkor Wat, Cambodia, considered one of the world’s most important Hindu and Buddhist shrines, was vandalized by the Khmer Rouge.

Religion versus Religion

Refer to the map of world religions near the beginning of this chapter (Figure 6-3). Conflicts are most likely to occur where colors change, indicating a boundary between two religious groups.

Two long-standing conflicts involving religious groups are in Northern Ireland and Southwest Asia.

RELIGIOUS WARS IN IRELAND

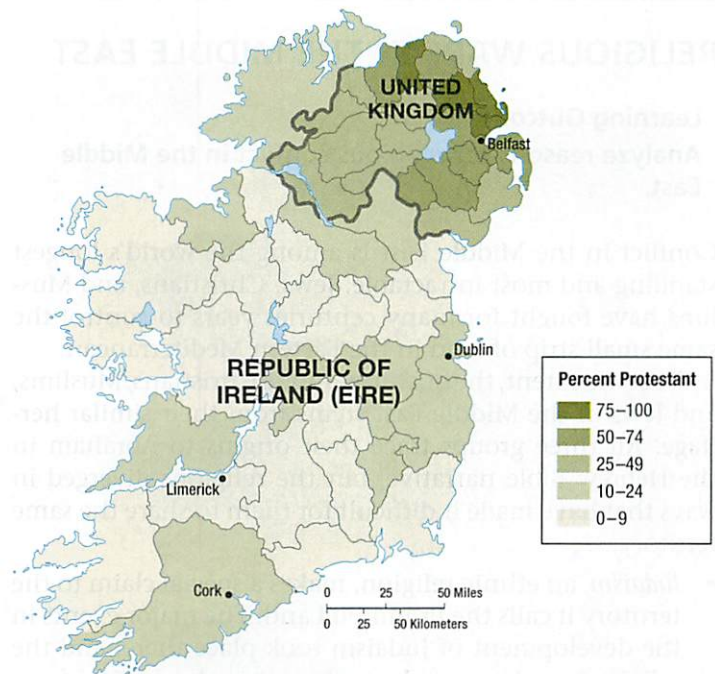
The most troublesome religious boundary in Western Europe lies on the island of Eire (Ireland). The Republic of Ireland, which occupies five-sixths of the island, is 87 percent Roman Catholic, but the island's northern one-sixth, which is part of the United Kingdom rather than Ireland, is 46 percent Protestant and 40 percent Roman Catholic, according to the 2001 census. (The remaining 14 percent stated no religion or did not respond.)

The entire island was an English colony for many centuries and was made part of the United Kingdom in 1801. Agitation for independence from Britain increased in Ireland during the nineteenth century, especially after poor economic conditions and famine in the 1840s led to mass emigration. Following a succession of bloody confrontations, Ireland became a self-governing dominion within the British Empire in 1921. Complete independence was declared in 1937, and a republic was created in 1949. When most of Ireland became independent, a majority in six northern counties voted to remain in the United Kingdom. Protestants, who comprised the majority in Northern Ireland, preferred to be part of the predominantly Protestant United Kingdom rather than join the predominantly Roman Catholic Republic of Ireland (Figure 6-47).

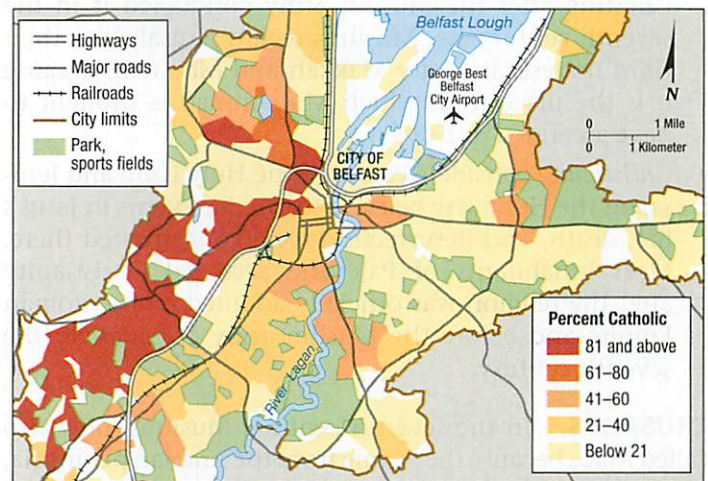
Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland have been victimized by discriminatory practices, such as exclusion from higher-paying jobs and better schools. The capital Belfast is highly segregated, with predominantly Catholic neighborhoods to the west and Protestant neighborhoods to the east (Figure 6-48). Demonstrations by Roman Catholics protesting discrimination began in 1968. Since then, more than 3,000 have been killed in Northern Ireland—both Protestants and Roman Catholics—in a continuing cycle of demonstrations and protests.

A small number of Roman Catholics in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a militant organization dedicated to achieving Irish national unity by whatever means available, including violence. Similarly, a scattering of Protestants created extremist organizations to fight the IRA, including the Ulster Defense Force (UDF).

Although the overwhelming majority of Northern Ireland's Roman Catholics and Protestants are willing to live peacefully with the other religious group, extremists disrupt daily life for everyone and do well in elections. As long as most Protestants are firmly committed to remaining in the United Kingdom and most Roman Catholics are



▲ FIGURE 6-47 DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN IRELAND, 1911 Long a colony of England, Ireland became a self-governing dominion within the British Empire in 1921. In 1937, it became a completely independent country, but 26 districts in the north of Ireland chose to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Republic of Ireland today is 87 percent Roman Catholic, whereas Northern Ireland has a Protestant majority. The boundary between Roman Catholics and Protestants does not coincide precisely with the international border, so Northern Ireland includes some communities that are predominantly Roman Catholic. This is the root of a religious conflict that continues today.



▲ FIGURE 6-48 DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN BELFAST Belfast, Northern Ireland, is highly segregated. Most Roman Catholics live to the west, and Protestants to the east.

equally committed to union with the Republic of Ireland, peaceful settlement appears difficult. Peace agreements implemented in 1999 provided for the sharing of power, but the British government has suspended the arrangement several times because of violations.

RELIGIOUS WARS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Learning Outcome 6.4.3

Analyze reasons for religious conflict in the Middle East.

Conflict in the Middle East is among the world's longest standing and most intractable. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have fought for many centuries years to control the same small strip of land in the Eastern Mediterranean.

To some extent, the hostility among Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Middle East stems from their similar heritage. All three groups trace their origins to Abraham in the Hebrew Bible narrative, but the religions diverged in ways that have made it difficult for them to share the same territory:

- *Judaism*, an ethnic religion, makes a special claim to the territory it calls the Promised Land. The major events in the development of Judaism took place there, and the religion's customs and rituals acquired meaning from the agricultural life of the ancient Israelite tribes. Descendants of 10 of Jacob's sons, plus 2 of his grandsons, constituted the 12 tribes of Israelites who emigrated from Egypt in the Exodus narrative. Each received a portion of Canaan. After the Romans gained control of Judea, which they later renamed the province of Palestine, they dispersed the Jews from Palestine, and only a handful were permitted to live in the region until the twentieth century.
- *Islam* became the most widely practiced religion in Palestine after the Muslim army conquered it in the seventh century A.D. Muslims regard Jerusalem as their third holiest city, after Makkah and Madinah, because it is the place from which Muhammad is thought to have ascended to heaven.
- *Christianity* considers Palestine the Holy Land and Jerusalem the Holy City because the major events in Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection were concentrated there. Most inhabitants of Palestine accepted Christianity after the religion was officially adopted by the Roman Empire and before the Muslim army conquest in the seventh century.

CRUSADES. In the seventh century, Muslims, now also called Arabs because they came from the Arabian peninsula, captured most of the Middle East, including Palestine and Jerusalem. The Arab Muslim presence the Arabic language across the Middle East and diffused subsequently converted most of the people from Christianity to Islam.

The Arab Muslims moved west across North Africa and invaded Europe at Gibraltar in A.D. 711 (see Figure 6-20). The army conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula, crossed the Pyrenees Mountains a few years later, and for a time occupied much of present-day France. Its initial advance in Europe was halted by the Franks (a West Germanic people), led by Charles Martel, at Poitiers, France, in 732. The

Muslims made further gains in Europe in subsequent years and continued to control portions of present-day Spain until 1492, but Martel's victory ensured that Christianity rather than Islam would be Europe's dominant religion.

To the east, Ottoman Turks captured Eastern Orthodox Christianity's most important city, Constantinople (present-day Istanbul in Turkey), in 1453 and advanced a few years later into southeast Europe, as far north as present-day Bosnia & Herzegovina. The recent civil war in that country is a legacy of the fifteenth-century Muslim invasion (see Chapter 7).

To recapture the Holy Land from its Muslim conquerors, European Christians launched a series of military campaigns, known as Crusades, over a 150-year period. Crusaders captured Jerusalem from the Muslims in 1099 during the First Crusade, lost it in 1187 (which led to the Third Crusade), regained it in 1229 as part of a treaty ending the Sixth Crusade, and lost it again in 1244.

Pause and Reflect 6.4.3

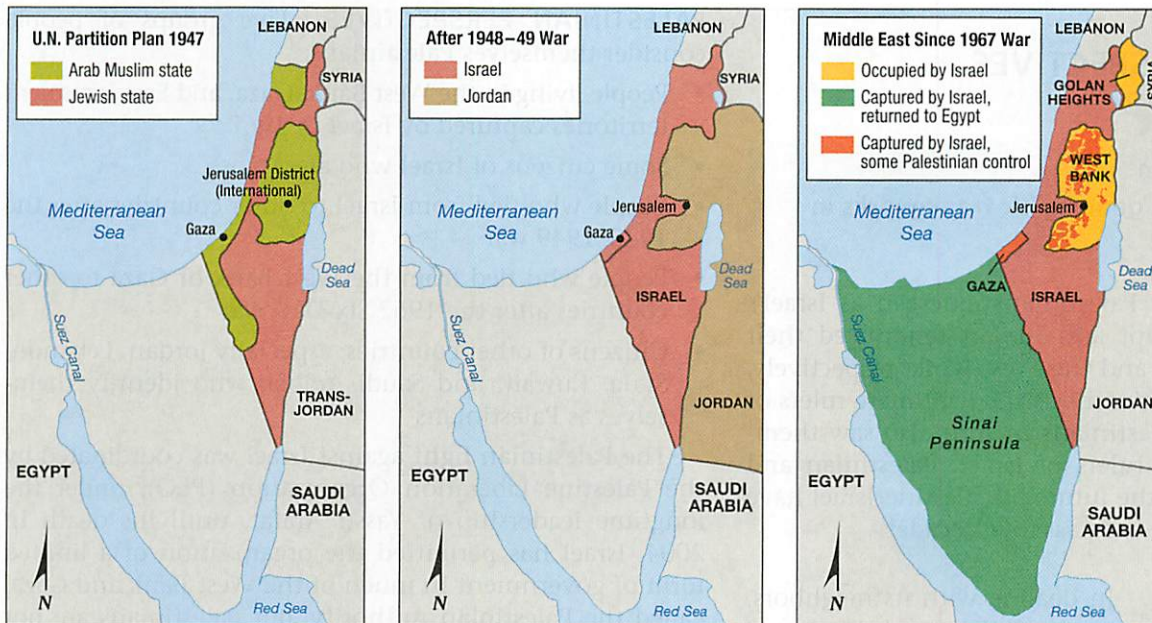
Why is a narrow strip of land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea so important in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

PARTITION OF PALESTINE. The Muslim Ottoman Empire controlled Palestine for most of the four centuries between 1516 and 1917. Upon the empire's defeat in World War I, the United Kingdom took over Palestine, under a mandate from the League of Nations, and later from the United Nations.

For a few years, the British allowed some Jews to return to Palestine, but immigration was restricted again during the 1930s, in response to intense pressure by Arabs in the region. As violence initiated by both Jewish and Muslim settlers escalated after World War II, the British announced their intention to withdraw from Palestine. The United Nations voted in 1947 to partition the Palestine Mandate into two independent states, one Jewish and one Arab (Figure 6-49, left). Jerusalem was to be an international city, open to all religions, and run by the United Nations.

WARS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND NEIGHBORS. When the British withdrew in 1948, Jews declared an independent state of Israel within the boundaries prescribed by the UN resolution. Over the next quarter-century, Israel fought four wars with its neighbors:

- **1948–1949 Independence War.** The day after Israel declared independence, the neighboring Arab states declared war. Israel survived the attack, and the combatants signed an armistice in 1949. Israel's boundaries were extended beyond the UN partition, including the western suburbs of Jerusalem. Jordan gained control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City, where holy places are clustered. Egypt gained the Gaza Strip.
- **1956 Suez War.** Egypt seized the Suez Canal, a key shipping route between Europe and Asia that had been



◀ **FIGURE 6-49**
BOUNDARY CHANGES IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE (left) The 1947 UN partition plan, (center) Israel after the 1948–1949 war, (right) Israel and its neighbors since the 1967 Six-Day War.

built and controlled up until then by France and the United Kingdom. Egypt also blockaded international waterways near its shores that Israeli ships were using. Israel, France, and the United Kingdom attacked Egypt and got the waterways reopened, although Egypt retained control of the Suez Canal.

- **1967 Six-Day War.** Israel's neighbors massed a quarter-million troops along the borders and again blocked Israeli ships from using international waterways. In retaliation, Israel launched a surprise attack, destroying the coalition's air forces. Israel captured territory:
 - From Jordan, the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank (the territory west of the Jordan River taken by Jordan in the 1948–1949 war) (Figure 6-50)
 - From Syria, the Golan Heights
 - From Egypt, the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula
- **1973 Yom Kippur War.** A surprise attack on Israel by its neighbors took place on the holiest day of the year for Jews. The war ended without a change in boundaries.

- **1979 Peace Treaty.** Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed a peace treaty in 1979, following a series of meetings with U.S. President Jimmy Carter at Camp David, Maryland. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and in return Egypt recognized Israel's right to exist. Sadat was assassinated by Egyptian soldiers, who were extremist Muslims opposed to compromising with Israel, but his successor Hosni Mubarak carried out the terms of the treaty. A half-century after the Six-Day War, the status of the other territories occupied by Israel has still not been settled.



▶ **FIGURE 6-50 WEST BANK SETTLEMENT** In this Google Earth image from 2010, the Israeli settlement Betar Illit is under construction (top of the photo) in the West Bank, on a hillside overlooking the Palestinian villages Nahalin (bottom) and Husan (top right).

CONFLICTING PERSPECTIVES OF THE HOLY LAND

Learning Outcome 6.4.4

Describe differences in geographic frameworks in the Middle East.

After the 1973 war, the Palestinians emerged as Israel's principal opponent. Egypt and Jordan renounced their claims to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively, and recognized the Palestinians as the legitimate rulers of these territories. The Palestinians in turn also saw themselves as the legitimate rulers of Israel. Palestinian and Israeli perspectives over the future of Palestine/Israel have not been reconciled over the past four decades.

ISRAELI PERSPECTIVES. In dealing with its neighbors, Israel considers two elements of the local landscape especially meaningful:

- Israel is a very small country (smaller than New Hampshire), with a Jewish majority, surrounded by a region of hostile Muslim Arabs encompassing more than 25 million square kilometers (10 million square miles). Israel's people live extremely close to international borders, making them vulnerable to attack.
- Palestine is divided into three narrow, roughly parallel physical regions (Figure 6-51):
 - A coastal plain along the Mediterranean Sea
 - A series of hills reaching elevations above 1,000 meters (3,300 feet)
 - The Jordan River valley, much of which is below sea level

The UN plan for the partition of the Palestine Mandate in 1947 (as modified by the armistice ending the 1948–1949 war) allocated most of the coastal plain to Israel, whereas Jordan took most of the hills between the coastal plain and the Jordan River valley, a region generally called the West Bank (of the Jordan River). Farther north, Israel's territory extended eastward to the Jordan River valley, but Syria controlled the highlands east of the valley, known as the Golan Heights.

Jordan and Syria used the hills between 1948 and 1967 as staging areas to attack Israeli settlements on the adjacent coastal plain and in the Jordan River valley. Israel captured these highlands during the 1967 war to stop attacks on the lowland population concentrations. Israel still has military control over the Golan Heights and West Bank a generation later, yet attacks by Palestinians against Israeli citizens have continued.

Israeli Jews were divided for many years between those who wished to retain the disputed territories and those who wished to make compromises with the Palestinians. In recent years, a large majority of Israelis have supported construction of a barrier to deter Palestinian attacks (refer to the Sustainability and Inequality in Our Global Village box).

PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVES. Five groups of people consider themselves Palestinians:

- People living in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem territories captured by Israel in 1967
- Some citizens of Israel who are Arabs
- People who fled from Israel to other countries after the 1948–1949 war
- People who fled from the West Bank or Gaza to other countries after the 1967 Six-Day War
- Citizens of other countries, especially Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, who identify themselves as Palestinians

The Palestinian fight against Israel was coordinated by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), under the longtime leadership of Yassir Arafat, until his death in 2004. Israel has permitted the organization of a limited form of government in much of the West Bank and Gaza, called the Palestinian Authority, but Palestinians are not satisfied with either the territory or the power they have received thus far.

The Palestinians have been divided by sharp differences, reflected in a struggle for power between the Fatah and Hamas parties. Some Palestinians, especially those aligned with the Fatah Party, are willing to recognize the state of Israel with its Jewish majority in exchange for return of all territory taken by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War. Other Palestinians, especially those aligned with the Hamas Party, do not recognize the right of Israel to exist

▼ **FIGURE 6-51 ISRAEL/PALESTINE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY** The physical geography of Israel/Palestine consists of narrow coastal lowlands and interior highlands interrupted by the Jordan River valley.



and want to continue fighting for control of the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The United States, European countries, and Israel consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization.

After capturing the West Bank from Jordan in 1967, Israel permitted Jewish settlers to construct more than 100 settlements in the territory (refer to Figure 6-51 in the Sustainability and Inequality in our Global Village feature). Some Israelis built settlements in the West Bank because they regarded the territory as an integral part of the biblical Jewish homeland, known as Judea and Samaria. Others migrated

to the settlements because of a shortage of affordable housing inside Israel's pre-1967 borders. Jewish settlers comprise about 10 percent of the West Bank population, and Palestinians see their immigration as a hostile act. To protect the settlers, Israel has military control over most of the West Bank.

Pause and Reflect 6.4.4

What is the difference in elevation between Hebron (the largest city in the West Bank) and Tel Aviv (the largest city in Israel)?

SUSTAINABILITY AND INEQUALITY IN OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

West Bank Barrier: Security Fence or Segregation Wall

Constructing a barrier to keep out the unwanted is one of the oldest of geographic tools. The United States is using this tool today, building a fence along the border with Mexico (refer to Figure 3-39 in Chapter 3).

To deter Palestinian suicide bombers from crossing into Israel, the Israeli government has constructed barriers along the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The West Bank barrier is especially controversial because it places on Israel's side around 10 percent of the land, home to between 10,000 and 50,000 Palestinians,

according to various sources (Figure 6-52).

According to Israel's government, the routes of the barrier were selected for two technical reasons:

- The area had to be wide enough to make construction of a barrier 60-meters (200 feet) wide feasible.
- High ground was placed on the Israeli side.

Critics charge that the circuitous route was chosen to encompass most of the 327,000 Israelis living

in West Bank settlements that most other countries consider illegal.

Naming the structure is controversial. Israel calls the barrier a "security fence," and Palestinians call it a "racial segregation wall." Neutral sources call it a "separation barrier."

The Israel Supreme Court has twice declared portions of the route illegal because Palestinian rights were violated. The barrier made daily life unsustainable for some Palestinians: They could no longer reach their fields, water sources, and places of work.



▲ **FIGURE 6-52 WEST BANK SEPARATION BARRIER** (left) Route of the barrier. (right) The barrier separating Palestinian land (foreground) from Jewish settlement near Jerusalem (rear).

JERUSALEM: CONTESTED GEOGRAPHY

Learning Outcome 6.4.5

Explain the importance of Jerusalem to Jews and Muslims.

One of the most intractable obstacles to comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the status of Jerusalem (Figure 6-53). As long as any one religion—Jewish, Muslim, or Christian—maintains exclusive political control over Jerusalem, the other religious groups will not be satisfied. But Israelis have no intention of giving up control of the Old City of Jerusalem, and Palestinians have no intention of giving up their claim to it.

The geography of Jerusalem makes it difficult if not impossible to settle the long-standing religious conflicts. The difficulty is that the most sacred space in Jerusalem for Muslims was literally built on top of the most sacred space for Jews.

JUDAISM'S JERUSALEM. Jerusalem is especially holy to Jews as the location of the Temple, their center of worship in ancient times. The First Temple, built by King Solomon in approximately 960 B.C. was destroyed by the

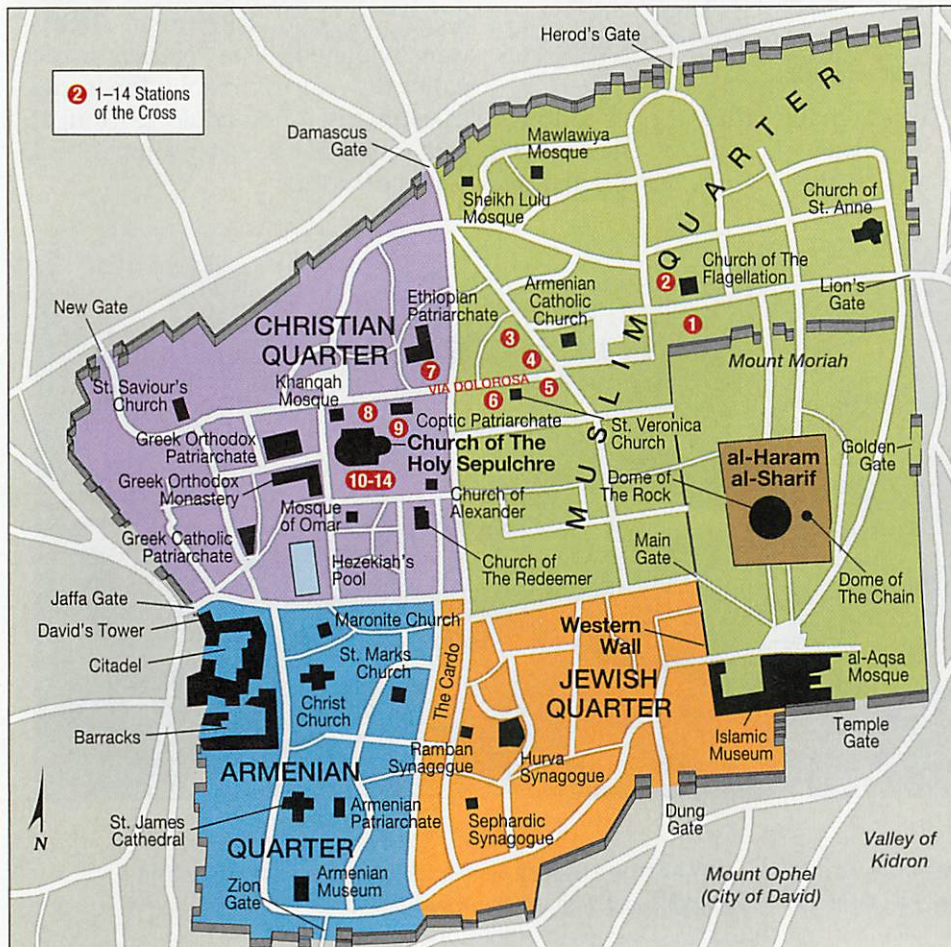
Babylonians in 586 B.C. After the Persian Empire, led by Cyrus the Great, gained control of Jerusalem in 614 B.C., Jews were allowed to build a Second Temple in 516 B.C. The Romans destroyed the Jewish Second Temple in A.D. 70. The Western Wall of the Temple survives.

Christians and Muslims call the Western Wall the Wailing Wall because for many centuries Jews were allowed to visit the surviving Western Wall only once a year to lament the Temple's destruction. After Israel captured the entire city of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War, it removed the barriers that had prevented Jews from visiting and living in the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall. The Western Wall soon became a site for daily prayers by observant Jews.

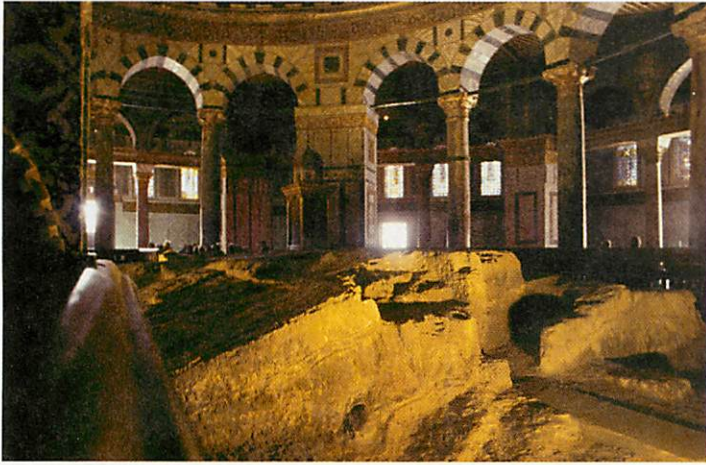
ISLAM'S JERUSALEM. The most important Muslim structure in Jerusalem is the Dome of the Rock, built in 691 (Figure 6-54). Muslims believe that the large rock beneath the building's dome is the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven, as well as the altar on which Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (according to Jews and Christians) or his son Ishmael (according to Muslims). Immediately south of the Dome of the Rock is the al-Aqsa Mosque. The challenge facing Jews and Muslims is that al-Aqsa Mosque was built on the site of the ruins of the Jewish Second Temple. Thus, the surviving Western Wall of the Jewish Temple is situated immediately beneath holy Muslim structures.

Israel allows Muslims unlimited access to that religion's holy structures in Jerusalem and some control over them. Ramps and passages patrolled by Palestinian guards provide Muslims access to the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque without having to walk in front of the Western Wall, where Jews are praying. However, because the holy Muslim structures sit literally on top of the holy Jewish structure, the two sets of holy structures cannot be logically divided by a line on a map (Figure 6-55).

The ultimate obstacle to comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the status of Jerusalem. As long as any one religion—Jewish, Muslim, or Christian—maintains exclusive political control over Jerusalem, the other religious groups will not be satisfied. But Israelis have no intention of giving up control of the Old City of Jerusalem, and Palestinians have no intention of giving up their claim to it.



◀ **FIGURE 6-53 OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM** The Old City of Jerusalem is less than 1 square kilometer (0.4 square miles). It is divided into four quarters.



▲ **FIGURE 6-54** **DOMES OF THE ROCK** The large rock, which is under the golden dome of the Dome of the Rock is believed by Jews, Christians, and Muslims to be the place where Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son. The son to be sacrificed was Isaac according to Jews and Christians, and Ishmael according to Muslims.

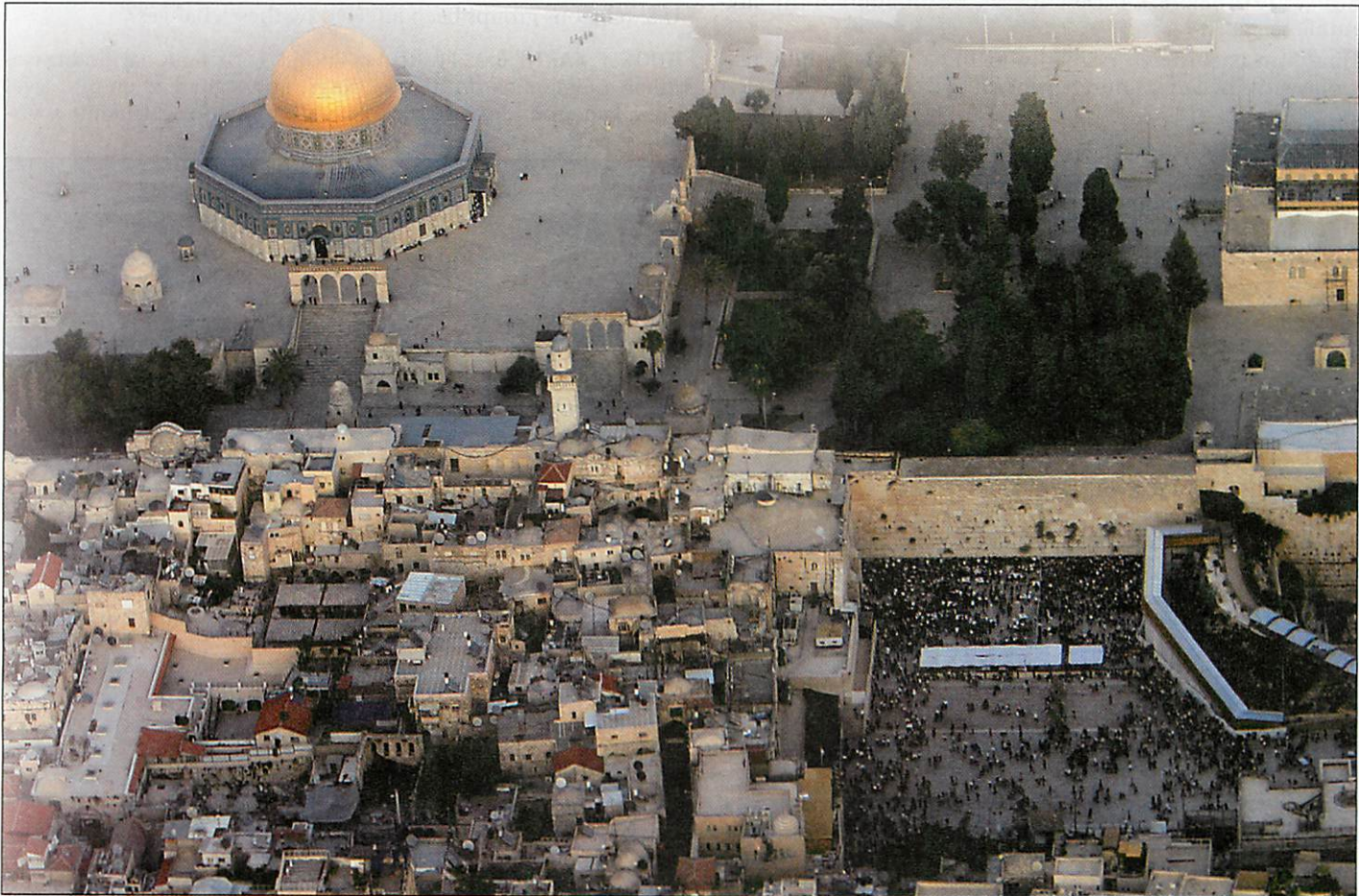
Pause and Reflect 6.4.5

Why are the Western Wall important in Judaism and the Dome of the Rock important in Islam?

CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 4

Why Do Territorial Conflicts Arise among Religious Groups?

- ✓ Religious groups have opposed government policies, especially those of Communist governments.
- ✓ Religious principles seen as representing Western social values have been opposed by groups in Asia.
- ✓ An especially long-standing and intractable conflict among religious has been centered in Israel/Palestine, an area considered holy by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.



▲ **FIGURE 6-55** **WESTERN WALL AND DOME OF THE ROCK** A crowd of Jews are praying at the Western Wall (right), situated immediately below the mount containing Islam's Dome of the Rock (top left) and al-Aqsa Mosque (top right).