

# KEY ISSUE 4

## Why Do Ethnicities Engage in Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide?

- Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans
- Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Learning Outcome 7.4.1

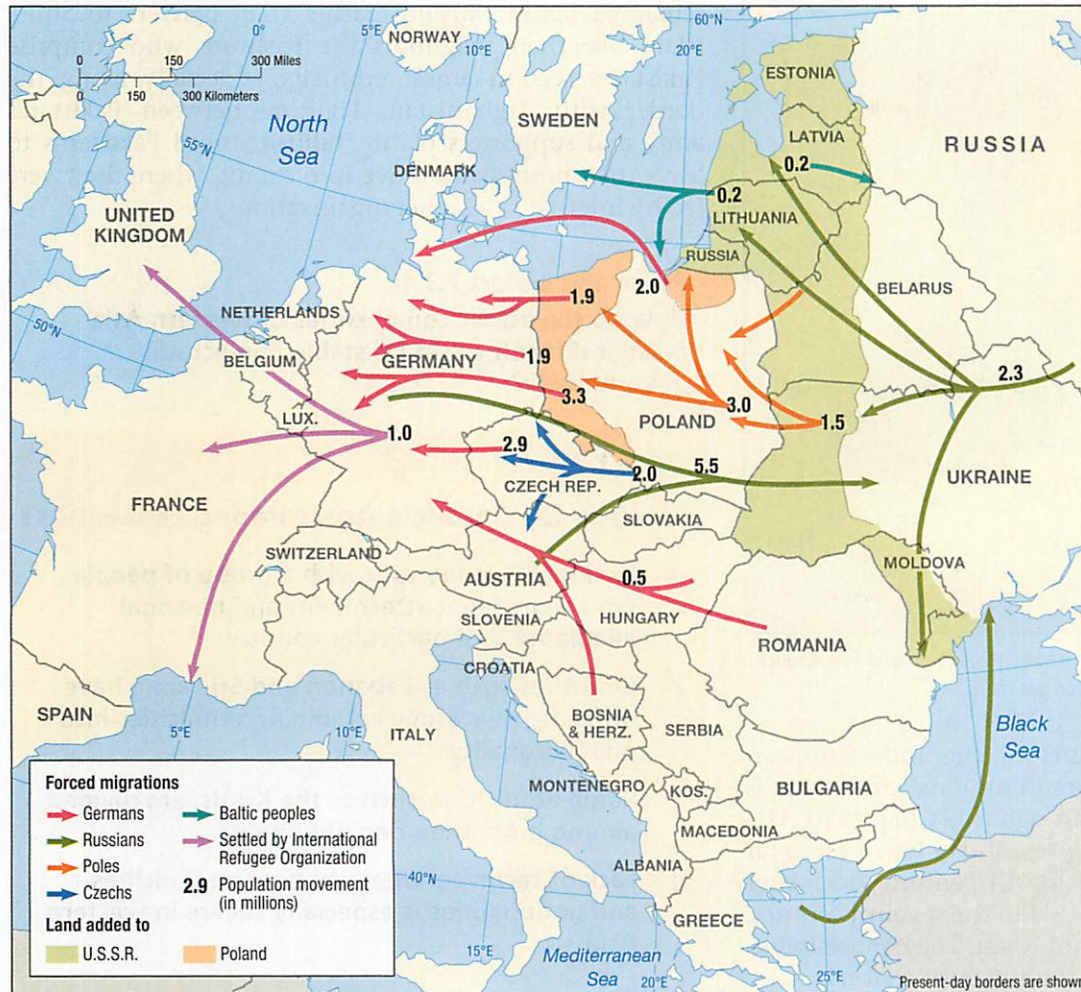
Describe the process of ethnic cleansing.

Throughout history, ethnic groups have been forced to flee from other ethnic groups' more powerful armies. **Ethnic cleansing** is a process in which a more powerful ethnic group forcibly removes a less powerful one in order to create

an ethnically homogeneous region. In recent years, ethnic cleansing has been carried out primarily in Europe and Africa. Ethnic cleansing is undertaken to rid an area of an entire ethnicity so that the surviving ethnic group can be the sole inhabitants. The point of ethnic cleansing is not simply to defeat an enemy or to subjugate them, as was the case in traditional wars. Rather than a clash between armies of male soldiers, ethnic cleansing involves the removal of every member of the less powerful ethnicity—women as well as men, children as well as adults, the frail elderly as well as the strong youth.

The largest forced migration came during World War II because of events leading up to the war, the war itself, and postwar adjustments (Figure 7-37). Especially notorious was the deportation by the German Nazis of millions of Jews, gypsies, and other ethnic groups to the infamous concentration camps, where they exterminated most of them.

After World War II ended, millions of ethnic Germans, Poles, Russians, and other groups were forced to migrate as a result of boundary changes. For example, when a portion of eastern Germany became part of Poland, the Germans living in the region were forced to move west to Germany and Poles were allowed to move into the area. Similarly, Poles were forced to move when the eastern portion of Poland was turned over to the Soviet Union.



◀ **FIGURE 7-37 FORCED MIGRATION OF ETHNICITIES AFTER WORLD WAR II** The largest number were Poles forced to move from territory occupied by the Soviet Union (now Russia), Germans forced to migrate from territory taken over by Poland and the Soviet Union, and Russians forced to return to the Soviet Union from Western Europe.



## Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans

The scale of forced migration during World War II has not been repeated, but in recent years ethnic cleansing within Europe has occurred in portions of former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo. Ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia is part of a complex pattern of ethnic diversity in the region of southeastern Europe known as the Balkan Peninsula. The region, about the size of Texas, is named for the Balkan Mountains (known in Slavic languages as Stara Planina), which extend east–west across the region. The Balkans includes Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania, as well as several countries that once comprised Yugoslavia.

### MULTIETHNIC YUGOSLAVIA

In June 1914 the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serb who sought independence for Bosnia. The incident sparked World War I. After World War I, the allies created a new country, Yugoslavia, to unite several Balkan ethnicities that spoke similar South Slavic languages (Figure 7-38). The prefix “Yugo” in the country’s name derives from the Slavic word for “south.”

Under the long leadership of Josip Broz Tito, who governed Yugoslavia from 1953 until his death in 1980, Yugoslavs liked to repeat a refrain that roughly translates as follows: “Yugoslavia has seven neighbors, six republics, five nationalities, four languages, three religions, two alphabets, and one dinar” (Figure 7-39). Specifically:

- Seven neighbors of Yugoslavia included three longtime democracies (Austria, Greece, and Italy) and four states then governed by Communists (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania). The diversity of neighbors reflected Yugoslavia’s strategic location between the Western democracies and Communist Eastern Europe. Although a socialist country, Yugoslavia was militarily neutral after it had been

expelled in 1948 from the Soviet-dominated military alliance for being too independent minded. Yugoslavia’s Communists permitted more communication and interaction with Western democracies than did other Eastern European countries.

- Six republics within Yugoslavia—Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia—had more autonomy from the national government to run their own affairs than was the case in other Eastern European countries.
- Five of the republics were named for the country’s five recognized ethnic groups—Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs, and Slovenes. Bosnia & Herzegovina contained a mix of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims.
- Four official languages were recognized—Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and Slovene. Montenegrins spoke Serbian.

#### Pause and Reflect 7.4.1

What is an example of another country that is inhabited primarily by people of Slavic ethnicity?







▲ FIGURE 7-39 YUGOSLAVIA UNTIL ITS BREAKUP IN 1992 Yugoslavia comprised six republics (plus Kosovo and Vojvodina, autonomous regions within the Republic of Serbia).

- Three major religions included Roman Catholic in the north, Orthodox in the east, and Islam in the south. Croats and Slovenes were predominantly Roman Catholic, Serbs and Macedonians predominantly Orthodox, and Bosnians and Montenegrins predominantly Muslim.
- Two of the four official languages—Croatian and Slovene—were written in the Roman alphabet; Macedonian and Serbian were written in Cyrillic. Most linguists outside Yugoslavia considered Serbian and Croatian to be the same language except with different alphabets.
- One, the refrain concluded, was the dinar, the national unit of currency. This meant that despite cultural diversity, common economic interests kept Yugoslavia's nationalities unified.

The Balkan Peninsula, a complex assemblage of ethnicities, has long been a hotbed of unrest (Figure 7-40). Northern portions were incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire; southern portions were ruled by the Ottomans. Austria-Hungary extended its rule farther south in 1878 to include Bosnia & Herzegovina, where the majority of the people had been converted to Islam by the Ottomans.

The creation of Yugoslavia brought stability that lasted for most of the twentieth century. Old animosities among ethnic groups were submerged, and younger people began to identify themselves as Yugoslavs rather than as Serbs, Croats, or Montenegrins.

Rivalries among ethnicities resurfaced in Yugoslavia during the 1980s after Tito's death, leading to the breakup of the country. Breaking away to form independent countries were Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia during the 1990s and Montenegro in 2006. The breakup left Serbia standing on its own as well.

As long as Yugoslavia comprised one country, ethnic groups were not especially troubled by the division of the country into six republics. But when Yugoslavia's republics were transformed from local government units into five separate countries, ethnicities fought to redefine the boundaries. Not only did the boundaries of Yugoslavia's six republics fail to match the territory occupied by the five major nationalities, but the country contained other important ethnic groups that had not received official recognition as nationalities.



▲ FIGURE 7-40 THE BALKANS IN 1914

At the outbreak of World War I, Austria-Hungary controlled the northern part of the region, including all or part of Croatia, Slovenia, and Romania. The Ottoman Empire controlled some of the south, although during the nineteenth century it had lost control of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Greece, Romania, and Serbia.



## CONTEMPORARY GEOGRAPHIC TOOLS

# Documenting Ethnic Cleansing

Early reports of ethnic cleansing by Serbs in the former Yugoslavia were so shocking that many people dismissed them as journalistic exaggeration or partisan propaganda. It took one of geography's most important analytic tools, aerial-photography interpretation, to provide irrefutable evidence of the process, as well as the magnitude, of ethnic cleansing.

A series of three photographs taken by NATO air reconnaissance over the village of Glodane, in western Kosovo, illustrated the four steps in ethnic cleansing. Figure 7-41 is the first of the three photos:

- Illustrating step 1, the red circles in Figure 7-41 show the location of Serb armored vehicles along the main street of the village.

Figure 7-41 shows the village's houses and farm buildings clustered on the left side, with fields on the outskirts of the village, including the center and right portions of the photograph. As discussed in Chapter 12, rural settlements in most of the world have houses and farm buildings clustered together and surrounded by fields rather than in isolated, individual farms typical of North America.

- Illustrating step 2, the farm field immediately to the east of the main north-south road is filled with the villagers. At the scale that the photograph is reproduced in this book, the people appear as a dark mass. The white rectangles to

the north of the people are civilian cars and trucks.

- Illustrating step 3, the second photograph of the sequence showed the same location a short time later, with one major change—the people and vehicles massed in the field in the first photograph are gone—no people and no vehicles.
- Illustrating step 4, the third photograph showed that the buildings in the village had been set on fire.

Aerial photographs such as these not only “proved” that ethnic cleansing was occurring but also provided critical evidence to prosecute Serb leaders for war crimes.



▲ **FIGURE 7-41 EVIDENCE OF ETHNIC CLEANSING IN KOSOVO** Ethnic cleansing by Serbs forced Albanians living in Kosovo to flee in 1999. The village of Glodane is on the west (left) side of the road. The villagers and their vehicles have been rounded up and placed in the field east of the road. The red circles show the locations of Serb armored vehicles.



## ETHNIC CLEANSING IN BOSNIA

### Learning Outcome 7.4.2

Explain the concept of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.

The creation of a viable nationality has proved especially difficult in the case of Bosnia & Herzegovina. At the time of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the population of Bosnia & Herzegovina was 48 percent Bosnian Muslims, 37 percent Serbs, and 14 percent Croats. Bosnian Muslim was considered an ethnicity rather than a nationality. Rather than live in an independent multiethnic state with a Muslim plurality, Bosnia & Herzegovina's Serbs and Croats fought to unite the portions of the republic that they inhabited with Serbia and Croatia, respectively.

To strengthen their cases for breaking away from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbs and Croats engaged in ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims (Figure 7-42). Ethnic cleansing ensured that areas did not merely have majorities of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats but were ethnically homogeneous and therefore better candidates for union with Serbia and Croatia. Ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs against Bosnian Muslims was especially severe because much of the territory inhabited by Bosnian Serbs was separated from Serbia by areas with Bosnian Muslim majorities. By ethnically cleansing Bosnian Muslims from intervening areas, Bosnian Serbs created one continuous area of Bosnian Serb domination rather than several discontinuous ones.

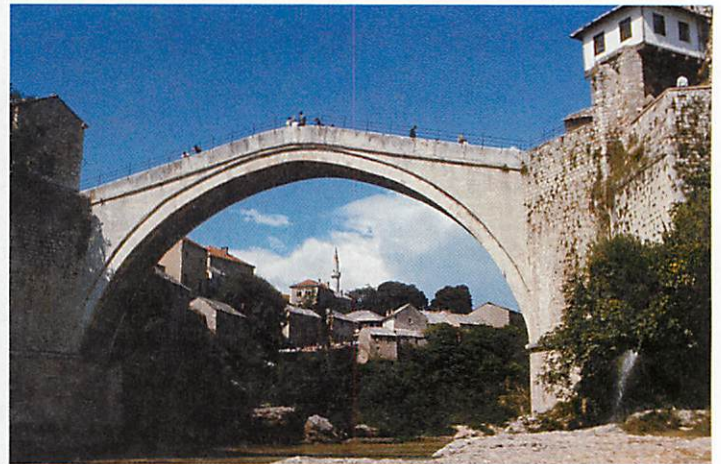
Accords reached in Dayton, Ohio, in 1996 by leaders of the various ethnicities divided Bosnia & Herzegovina into three regions, one each dominated, respectively, by the Bosnian Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. The Bosnian Croat and Muslim regions were combined into a federation, with some cooperation between the two groups, but the Serb region has operated with almost complete independence in all but name from the others. In recognition of the success of their ethnic cleansing, Bosnian Serbs received nearly half of the country, although they comprised one-third of the population, and Bosnian Croats got one-fourth of the land, although they comprised one-sixth of the population. Bosnian Muslims, one-half of the population before the ethnic cleansing, got one-fourth of the land (Figure 7-43).

### Pause and Reflect 7.4.2

In which regions within Bosnia & Herzegovina did Serbs gain most of their territory?

## ETHNIC CLEANSING IN KOSOVO

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia remained a multiethnic country. Particularly troubling was the province of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians comprised 90 percent of

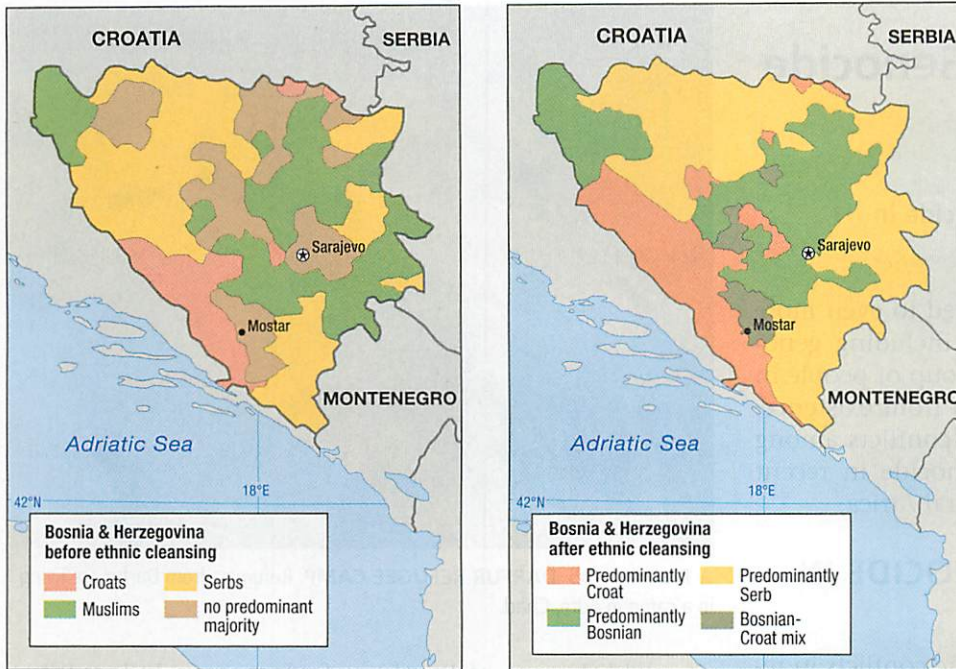


▲ **FIGURE 7-42 ETHNIC CLEANSING IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA** (top) The Stari Most (old bridge), built by the Turks in 1566 across the Neretva River, was an important symbol and tourist attraction in the city of Mostar. (middle) The bridge was blown up by Croats in 1993, in an attempt to demoralize Bosnian Muslims as part of ethnic cleansing (bottom). With the end of the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the bridge was rebuilt in 2004.

the population. Under Tito, ethnic Albanians in Kosovo received administrative autonomy and national identity.

Serbia had a historical claim to Kosovo, having controlled it between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. Serbs fought an important—though losing—battle in





◀ **FIGURE 7-43 ETHNICITIES IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA BEFORE AND AFTER ETHNIC CLEANSING** The territory occupied by Bosnian Muslims (left) was considerably reduced as a result of ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs and Croats (right).

Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire in 1389. In recognition of its role in forming the Serb ethnicity, Serbia was given control of Kosovo when Yugoslavia was created in the early twentieth century.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia took direct control of Kosovo and launched a campaign of ethnic cleansing of the Albanian majority. The process of ethnic cleansing involved four steps:

1. Move a large amount of military equipment and personnel into a village that has no strategic value (see the Contemporary Geographic Tools feature).
2. Round up all the people in the village. In Bosnia, Serbs often segregated men from women, children, and old people. The men were placed in detention camps or “disappeared”—undoubtedly killed—and the others were forced to leave the village. In Kosovo, men were herded together with the others rather than killed.
3. Force the people to leave the village. The villagers were typically forced into a convoy—some in the vehicles, others on foot—heading for the Albanian border.
4. Destroy the vacated village by setting it on fire.

At its peak in 1999, Serb ethnic cleansing had forced 750,000 of Kosovo’s 2 million ethnic Albanian residents from their homes, mostly to camps in Albania. Outraged by the ethnic cleansing, the United States and Western European countries, operating through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), launched an air attack against Serbia. The bombing campaign ended when Serbia agreed to withdraw all of its soldiers and police from

Kosovo. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008. Around 60 countries, including the United States, recognize Kosovo as an independent country, but Serbia and Russia oppose it.

## BALKANIZATION

A century ago, the term **Balkanized** was widely used to describe a small geographic area that could not successfully be organized into one or more stable states because it was inhabited by many ethnicities with complex, long-standing antagonisms toward each other. World leaders at the time regarded **Balkanization**—the process by which a state breaks down through conflicts among its ethnicities—as a threat to peace throughout the world, not just in a small area. They were right: Balkanization led directly to World War I because the various nationalities in the Balkans dragged into the war the larger powers with which they had alliances.

After two world wars and the rise and fall of communism during the twentieth century, the Balkans have once again become Balkanized in the twenty-first century. Will the United States, Europe, and Russia once again be drawn reluctantly into conflict through entangled alliances in the Balkans? If peace comes to the Balkans, it will be because in a tragic way ethnic cleansing “worked.” Millions of people were rounded up and killed or forced to migrate because they constituted ethnic minorities. Ethnic homogeneity may be the price of peace in areas that once were multiethnic.



## Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Learning Outcome 7.4.3

Identify the principal episodes of genocide in northeastern Africa.

In some places, ethnic competition has led to even more extreme actions than ethnic cleansing, including genocide. **Genocide** is the mass killing of a group of people in an attempt to eliminate the entire group from existence. Sub-Saharan Africa has been plagued by conflicts among ethnic groups that have resulted in genocide in recent years, especially in northeastern and central Africa.

### ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE IN NORTHEASTERN AFRICA

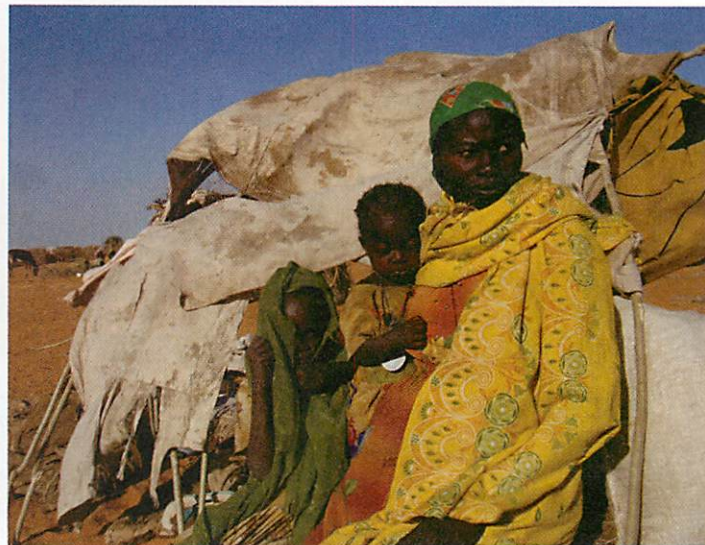
In northeastern Africa, three distinct ethnic conflicts in recent years have taken place in Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

**SUDAN.** In Sudan, several civil wars have raged since the 1980s between the Arab-Muslim dominated government in the north and other ethnicities in the south, west, and east (Figure 7-44):

- **South Sudan.** Black Christian and animist ethnicities resisted government attempts to convert the country from a multiethnic society to one nationality tied to Muslim traditions. A north–south war between 1983 and 2005 resulted in the death of an estimated 1.9 million Sudanese, mostly civilians. The war ended with the



▲ FIGURE 7-44 SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN South Sudan became an independent country in 2011.



▲ FIGURE 7-45 DARFUR REFUGEE CAMP Refugees from Darfur are living in a camp in Adré, Chad.

establishment of Southern Sudan as an independent state in 2011. However, fighting resumed as the governments of Sudan and South Sudan could not agree on boundaries between the two countries.

- **Darfur.** As Sudan's religion-based civil war was winding down, an ethnic war erupted in Sudan's westernmost region, Darfur. Resenting discrimination and neglect by the national government, Darfur's black Africans launched a rebellion in 2003. Marauding Arab nomads, known as janjaweed, with the support of the Sudanese government, crushed Darfur's black population, made up mainly of settled farmers; 480,000 have been killed and another 2.8 million have been living in dire conditions in refugee camps in the harsh desert environment of Darfur (Figure 7-45). Actions of Sudan's government troops, including mass murders and rape of civilians, have been termed genocide by many other countries, and charges of war crimes have been filed against Sudan's leaders.
- **Eastern front.** Ethnicities in the east fought Sudanese government forces between 2004 and 2006, with the support of neighboring Eritrea. At issue was disbursement of profits from oil.

**ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA.** Eritrea, located along the Red Sea, became an Italian colony in 1890. Ethiopia, an independent country for more than 2,000 years, was captured by Italy during the 1930s. After World War II, Ethiopia regained its independence, and the United Nations awarded Eritrea to Ethiopia (Figure 7-46). The United Nations expected Ethiopia to permit Eritrea considerable authority to run its own affairs, but Ethiopia dissolved the Eritrean legislature and banned the use of Tigrinya, Eritrea's major local language. The Eritreans rebelled, beginning a 30-year fight for independence (1961–1991). During this civil war, an estimated 665,000 Eritrean refugees fled to neighboring Sudan.

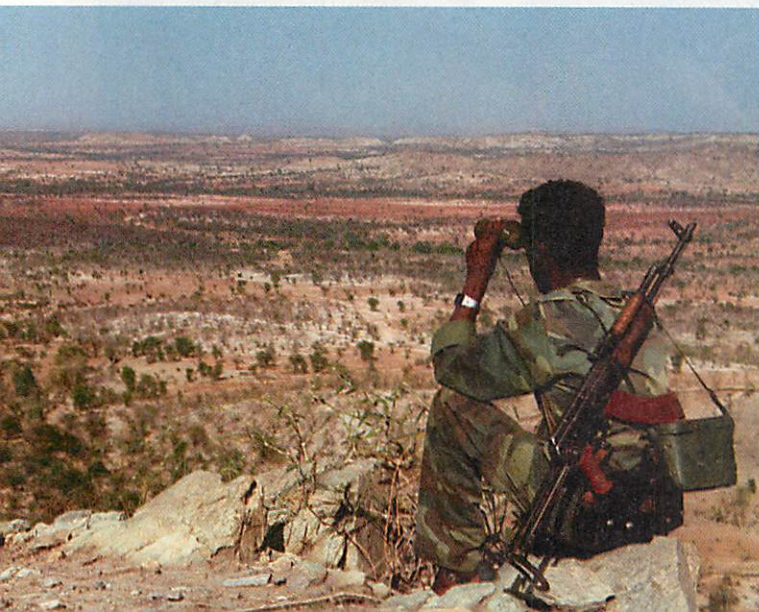




▲ **FIGURE 7-46 HORN OF AFRICA** Eritrea broke away from Ethiopia to become an independent country in the early 1990s. Somalia is divided into several territories controlled by various ethnic groups.

Eritrean rebels defeated the Ethiopian army in 1991, and 2 years later Eritrea became an independent state. But war between Ethiopia and Eritrea flared up again in 1998 because of disputes over the location of the border. Eritrea justified its claim through a 1900 treaty between Ethiopia and Italy, which then controlled Eritrea, but Ethiopia cited a 1902 treaty with Italy. Ethiopia defeated Eritrea in 2000 and took possession of the disputed areas. Battles along the border have continued (Figure 7-47).

▼ **FIGURE 7-47 ERITREA–ETHIOPIA BORDER** The border between Eritrea (background) and Ethiopia (foreground) is unmarked here.



A country of 5 million people split evenly between Christian and Muslim, Eritrea has two principal ethnic groups: Tigrinya and Tigre. At least in the first years of independence, a strong sense of national identity united Eritrea's ethnicities as a result of shared experiences during the 30-year war to break free of Ethiopia.

Even with the loss of Eritrea, Ethiopia remained a complex multiethnic state. From the late nineteenth century until the 1990s, Ethiopia was controlled by the Amharas, who are Christians. After the government defeat in the early 1990s, power passed to a combination of ethnic groups. The Oromo, who are Muslim fundamentalists from the south, are the largest ethnicity in Ethiopia, at 34 percent of the population. The Amhara, who comprise 27 percent of the population, had banned the use of languages other than Amharic, including Oromo.

**SOMALIA.** On the surface, Somalia should face fewer ethnic divisions than its neighbors in the Horn of Africa. Somalis are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims and speak Somali. Most share a sense that Somalia is a nation-state, with a national history and culture.

Somalia's 9 million inhabitants are divided among several ethnic groups known as clans, each of which is divided into a large number of subclans. Traditionally, the major clans occupied different portions of Somalia. In 1991, a dictatorship that ran the country collapsed, and various clans and subclans claimed control over portions of the country. Clans have declared independent states of Somaliland in the north, Puntland in the northeast, Galmudug in the center, and Southwestern Somalia in the south.

The United States sent several thousand troops to Somalia in 1992, after an estimated 300,000 people, mostly women and children, died from famine and from warfare among clans. The purpose of the mission was to protect delivery of food by international relief organizations to starving Somali refugees and to reduce the number of weapons in the hands of the clan and subclan armies. After peace talks among the clans collapsed in 1994, U.S. troops withdrew.

Islamist militias took control of much of Somalia between 2004 and 2006. Neighboring countries were drawn into the conflict, Eritrea on the side of the Islamists and Ethiopia against them. Claiming that some of the leaders were terrorists, the United States also opposed the Islamists and launched air strikes in 2007. The fighting generated several hundred thousand refugees. Islamist militias withdrew from most of Somalia in 2006 but have since returned and again control much of the country. The ongoing conflict worsened the impact of a recent drought (see the Sustainability and Inequality in Our Global Village feature and Figure 7-48).

#### Pause and Reflect 7.4.3

Which countries with ethnic conflicts described in Key Issues 3 and 4 have had U.S. troops sent to try to restore the peace?



## ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

### Learning Outcome 7.4.4

Identify the principal episodes of genocide in central Africa.

Long-standing conflicts between two ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, lie at the heart of a series of wars in central Africa. The two ethnicities speak the same language, hold similar beliefs, and practice similar social customs, and intermarriage has lessened the physical differences between the two groups. Yet Hutus and Tutsis have engaged in large-scale ethnic cleansing and genocide:

- Hutus were settled farmers, growing crops in the fertile hills and valleys of present-day Rwanda and Burundi, known as the Great Lakes region of central Africa.
- Tutsis were cattle herders who migrated to present-day Rwanda and Burundi from the Rift Valley of western Kenya beginning 400 years ago.

Relations between settled farmers and herders are often uneasy; this is also an element of the ethnic cleansing in Darfur described earlier in the chapter.

**RWANDA.** Genocide in Rwanda in 1994 involved Hutus murdering hundreds of thousands of Tutsis (as well as Hutus sympathetic to the Tutsis). The genocide began after an airplane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi—both Hutus—was shot down by a surface-to-air missile. The attacker was never identified, but most international intelligence organizations—including those of the United States and France—concluded that it was a Hutu unhappy with the presidents' attempts to seek peace between Hutus and Tutsis.

Hutus constituted a majority of the population of Rwanda historically, but Tutsis controlled the kingdom of Rwanda for several hundred years and turned the Hutus into their serfs. Rwanda became a colony of Germany in 1899, and after the Germans were defeated in World War I, the League of Nations turned over control to Belgium. Belgian administrators permitted a few Tutsis to attend university and hold responsible government positions, while excluding the Hutus altogether. Separate identity cards were issued to the two ethnicities.

When Rwanda became an independent country in 1962, Hutus gained power and undertook ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Tutsis, many of whom fled to neighboring Uganda.

Descendants of the ethnically cleansed Tutsis invaded Rwanda in 1990. An agreement to share power was signed

## SUSTAINABILITY AND INEQUALITY IN OUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

### Ethnic Cleansing and Drought

More than 2 million Somalis—one-fourth of the country's population—are classified as refugees or internally displaced persons. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, continued fighting among ethnic groups and the absence of a strong national government able to maintain order have contributed to the large number of refugees.

Adding to the woes of the Somali people, the worst drought in 60 years hit the country in 2010 and 2011, especially in the south (Figure 7-48). It is impossible to count the number of Somalis forced to migrate because of famine rather than civil war; both factors probably affect most Somalis. Because of the civil war, much of the food and water sent by international relief organizations could not get through to the people in need. Improved weather in 2012 resulted in a larger harvest, and more supplies were reaching people.



▲ FIGURE 7-48 SOMALIA Somali victims of fighting and famine line up for food and medical assistance in 2011.

International organizations distributed seeds and dug irrigation canals to help in the longer term, but

a renewal of fighting or a bit less rainfall could push the country back into famine.





▲ FIGURE 7-49 ETHNIC CLEANSING IN RWANDA Hutu refugees in Congo.

in 1993, but after the assassination of the president in 1994, Hutus launched genocide against Tutsis, killing an estimated 800,000. The Hutu genocide ended after three months, with Tutsis gaining control of the country. Two million Hutu fled to neighboring countries in the ethnic cleansing that followed the Tutsi victory (Figure 7-49).

**CONGO.** The conflict between Hutus and Tutsis spilled into neighboring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo. The region's largest and most populous country, the Congo is thought to have seen the world's deadliest war since the end of World War II in 1945. An estimated 5.4 million had died in Congo civil wars as of 2008, when the most heated fighting ceased.

Tutsis were instrumental in the successful overthrow of the Congo's longtime president, Joseph Mobutu, in 1997. Mobutu had amassed a several-billion-dollar personal fortune



▲ FIGURE 7-50 AFRICA'S MANY ETHNICITIES The territory occupied by ethnic groups in Africa rarely matches the boundaries of countries.

from the sale of minerals while impoverishing the rest of the country. After succeeding Mobutu as president, Laurent Kabila relied heavily on Tutsis and permitted them to kill some of the Hutus who had been responsible for atrocities against Tutsis in the early 1990s. But Kabila soon split with the Tutsis, and the Tutsis once again found themselves offering support to rebels seeking to overthrow Congo's government.

Kabila turned for support to Hutus, as well as to Mayi Mayi, another ethnic group in the Congo that also hated Tutsis. Armies from Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and other neighboring countries came to Kabila's aid. Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and succeeded by his son, who negotiated an accord with rebels the following year. Despite the accord, conflict among the country's many ethnicities has continued, and casualties have mounted.

**COLONIAL LEGACY.** Ethnic conflict is widespread in Africa largely because the present-day boundaries of countries do not match the boundaries of ethnic groups (Figure 7-50). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European countries carved up the continent into a collection of colonies, with little regard for the distribution of ethnicities.

Traditionally, the most important unit of African society was the tribe rather than independent states with political and economic self-determination. Africa contains several thousand ethnicities (usually referred to as tribes) with a common sense of language, religion, and social customs (refer to Figure 5-18 for a map of African languages). The precise number of tribes is impossible to determine because boundaries separating them are not usually defined clearly. Further, it is hard to determine whether a particular group forms a distinct tribe or is part of a larger collection of similar groups.

When the European colonies in Africa became independent states, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, the boundaries of the new states typically matched the colonial administrative units imposed by the Europeans. As a result, some tribes were divided among more than one modern state, and others were grouped with dissimilar tribes.

#### Pause and Reflect 7.4.4

Referring to Figure 7-50, are there any countries in Africa where the boundaries match those of ethnicities?

#### CHECK-IN: KEY ISSUE 4

##### Why Do Ethnicities Engage in Ethnic Cleansing?

- ✓ Ethnic cleansing is a process in which a more powerful ethnic group forcibly removes a less powerful one in order to create an ethnically homogeneous region.
- ✓ Genocide is the mass killing of a group of people in an attempt to eliminate the entire group from existence.