the Sinhalese-dominated government and have received support for a rebellion that began in 1983 from Tamils living in other countries. The long war between the ethnicities ended in 2009 with the defeat of the Tamil. With their defeat, the Tamil fear that the future of Sri Lanka as a multinational state is jeopardized. Back in 1956, Sinhalese leaders made Buddhism the sole official religion and Sinhala the sole official language of Sri Lanka. The Tamil fear that their military defeat jeopardizes their ethnic identity again.

KEY ISSUE 4
What Is Ethnic Cleansing?

■ Ethnic Cleansing in Europe
■ Ethnic Cleansing in Central Africa

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.

Ethnic Cleansing in Europe

The largest forced migration came during World War II (1939–1945) because of events leading up to the war, the war itself, and postwar adjustments (Figure 7-28). 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.

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 and 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.

Creation of Multiethnic Yugoslavia

The Balkan Peninsula, a complex assemblage of ethnicities, has long been a hotbed of unrest (Figure 7-29). Northern portions were incorporated into the Austro-Hungary Empire; southern portions were ruled by the Ottomans. Austria-Hungary extended its rule farther south in 1878 to include Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the majority of the people had been converted to Islam by the Ottomans.

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 7-30). 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 7-31). 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 nationalities—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.)

- **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 the Bosni- and Montenegrens 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 for 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 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 Montenegrens.

**Destruction of Multiethnic Yugoslavia**

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 (Figure 7-31). 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.

**ETHNIC CLEANSING IN BOSNIA.** The creation of a viable country proved especially difficult in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The population of Bosnia & Herzegovina consisted of 48 percent Bosnian Muslim, 37 percent Serb, and 14 percent Croat. Bosnian Muslim was considered an ethnicity rather than a nationality. Rather than live in an independent multiethnic country 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 7-32). 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 other two regions.
The Cultural Landscape

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 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 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 (see Figure 7-33 in Contemporary Geographic Tools box). 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, Western 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 in Central Africa

Ethnic conflict is widespread in Africa largely because the present-day boundaries of states do not match the boundaries of ethnic groups (Figure 7-34). 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 5-19 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.

Long-standing conflicts between two ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, lie at the heart of a series of wars in central Africa. The 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. The Tutsi 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. The Tutsi took control of the kingdom of Rwanda and turned the Hutu into their serfs, although Tutsi comprised only about 15 percent of the population.

Rwanda, as well as Burundi, became a colony of Germany in 1899, and after the Germans were defeated in World War I, the League of Nations gave a mandate over the two small colonies to Belgium. Colonial administrators permitted a few Tutsis to attend university and hold responsible government positions, while excluding the Hutu altogether.

Shortly before Rwanda gained its independence in 1962, Hutus killed or ethnically cleansed most of the Tutsis out of fear that the Tutsis would seize control of the newly independent country. Those fears were realized in 1994 after the airplane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi back from peace talks was shot down, probably by a Tutsi. Descendants of the ethnically cleansed Tutsis, most of whom lived in neighboring Uganda, poured back into Rwanda, defeated the Hutu army, and killed a half-million Hutus, while suffering a half-million casualties of their own. Through ethnic cleansing, 3 million of the country’s 7 million Hutus fled to Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda, and Burundi.

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 had the world’s deadliest war since the end of World War II in 1945. An estimated 5.4 million have died in Congo civil wars as of 2009.

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 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 back 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.
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.

The process of ethnic cleansing involved four steps. A series of three photographs taken by NATO air reconnaissance over the village of Glodane, in western Kosovo, illustrated the four steps. The first step was to move a large amount of military equipment and personnel into a village with no strategic value. Figure 7-33 shows the village’s houses and farm buildings clustered together and surrounded by fields rather than in isolated, individual farms typical of North America. The red circles in Figure 7-33 show the location of Serb armored vehicles along the main street of the village.

The second step in ethnic cleansing was to 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.

In the photograph of Glodane, 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.

The third step in ethnic cleansing was to force the people to leave the village. This step appeared dramatically in the second photograph of the sequence, depicting the same location a short time later. The second photograph showed one major change: The people and vehicles massed in the field in the first photograph were gone—no people and no vehicles. The villagers were forced into a convoy—some in the vehicles, others on foot—heading for the Albanian border 16 kilometers (10 miles) to the west.

The fourth step in ethnic cleansing was to destroy the vacated village. The third photograph of the sequence 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 7-33](image-url) Evidence of ethnic cleansing. 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.
Line up five Hutus and five Tutsis, and the ethnic origin of perhaps half of them would be plain. 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. Yet Hutus and Tutsis have engaged in large-scale ethnic cleansing.

Line up five Sinhalese and five Tamils, and their ethnic origin would not be visible. When they open their mouths they speak different languages, and when they pray they adhere to different beliefs. They too have engaged in large-scale ethnic cleansing as they try to share an island nation.

For many ethnicities, sharing space with other ethnicities is difficult, if not impossible. Grievances real and imagined, extending back hundreds of years, prevent peaceful coexistence. Here again are the key issues for Chapter 7:

**SUMMARY**