**Chapter 7: Ethnicities**

**Key Issue 1: Where Are Ethnicities Distributed?**

The meaning of *ethnicity* is often confused with the definition of *race* and *nationality*. **Ethnicity** is identity with a group of people who share cultural traditions of a particular homeland or hearth. Ethnicity is often confused with **race**, which is identity with a group who are perceived to share a physiological trait, such as skin color. The traits that characterize race are those that can be transmitted genetically from parents to children. **Nationality** is identity with a group of people who share legal attachment to a particular country.

**Introducing Ethnicities** Ethnicity is a crucial cultural element of local diversity because our ethnic identity is unchangeable. Ethnicity may be complex: our parents come from two ethnic groups or our grandparents from four. Geographers are interested in the distribution of ethnicities. The significance of ethnic diversity is controversial in the United States:

* To what extent does discrimination persist against minority ethnicities, especially African Americans and Hispanics?
* Should preferences be given to minority ethnicities to correct past patterns of discrimination?
* To what extent should the distinct cultural identity of ethnicities be encouraged or protected?

Ethnicity is especially of interest to geographers due to its position as an anchor for the preservation of local diversity in the face of globalization trends in culture and economy. While language and religion are expanding globalizing forces, ethnicity is not attempting to achieve global dominance. Despite this, ethnicities compete with one another to control particular places.

**Ethnicities in the United States** The three ethnicities with the largest number of people are Hispanic American, African American, and Asian American. Hispanic Americans comprise 17 percent of the American population, while African Americans and Asian Americans make up 12 percent and 5 percent, respectively. American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaskan Natives encompass 2 percent of the U.S. population.

**Hispanic Americans** A Hispanic or Hispanic American is a person who has migrated to (or whose ancestors have migrated) to the United States from a Spanish-speaking country in Latin America. The terms Latino (for males) and Latina (for females) are used interchangeably with Hispanic. Rather than using the terms Hispanic, Latino, or Latina, most Americans of Latin American descent prefer to identify with a more specific ethnicity or national origin. Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic Americans come from Mexico, and one-quarter from the Caribbean islands.

**Asian Americans** The term Asian American includes Americans who trace their heritage to various countries in Asia. Only 19 percent of Asian Americans identify with the Asian American ethnicity, while 62 percent prefer to identify with their ethnicity as the country of origin of themselves of their ancestors.

**African Americans** The precise ethnic origins of African Americans are relatively unclear. 300 years ago, some Africans were forcibly taken from lands in Africa that were not yet organized into sovereign countries, and records of the ethnic origin of those taken as slaves were not kept. DNA testing has narrowed down the ethnic heritage of most African Americans to three areas in West Africa (present-day Senegal, Mali, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia; Southern Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria and southeastern Cȏte d’Ivoire; and Western Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola).

**Descendants of Indigenous Peoples** Three principal ethnic identities are used to group people who lived in North America prior to European colonization: Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian. The indigenous ethnic identities with the largest numbers are Native Hawaiians, Cherokee, Navajo, Chippewa, Sioux, and Choctaw. However, the largest numbers of Native Americans cannot be encapsulated in a group. Canada’s aboriginals are grouped into three main ethnic identities: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

**Ethnicity and Race** Racial features were once conceptualized to be scientifically classifiable into a few groups. The biological basis of classifying humans into a handful of races is now categorically rejected by contemporary geographers and other scientists. These biological features are so highly variable among members of a race that any prejudged categorization is totally insignificant. The color of skin is of interest to geographers because it is one characteristic by which people in many societies determine where they reside, attend school, spend their leisure time, and perform many other activities of daily life. Classification by race is the basis for **racism**, which is the belief that race is the primary determent of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. A **racist** is a person who subscribes to the beliefs of racism.

**Race and Ethnicity in the United States** The U.S. census shows difficulty in distinguishing between ethnicity and race. Most census categories relate to ethnicity, such as Japanese or Asian Indian, because they derive from places. However, the census also offers three race-related categories—black, white, and other race. African American is an ethnicity and black is a race, though the 2010 census combines the two. Most black Americans are descended from African immigrants, but there are some black Americans that trace their cultural heritage to regions other than Africa.

**Distribution of U.S. Ethnicities** Clustering of ethnicities can occur on two scales within a country. Ethnic groups may reside in specific regions within the country or a state at the regional scale. At the local scale, ethnic groups may reside in specific communities within urban areas. At the regional scale in the United States, ethnicities have distinctive distributions. Hispanics are clustered in the Southwest, while African Americans are clustered in the Southeast. Asian Americans are clustered in the West (including Hawaii), and Native Americans are clustered in the southwest, north-central regions of the continental U.S., and Alaska.

**Ethnic Enclaves** A location with a high concentration of an ethnic group that is distinct from those in the surrounding area is known as an ethnic enclave. Most ethnic enclaves are neighborhoods in large cities. Ethnic enclaves generally form through migration. Cultural features, such as language, religions, and art help define ethnicities and inform the places characteristic of these ethnicities. The geographic concept of chain migration is used to conceptualize the formation of ethnic enclaves, whereby new migrants are offered economic support that may not be as easily accessible as in other areas.

**Urban Ethnic Enclaves** The clustering of ethnicities is notably apparent at the local, neighborhood scale. In major metropolises across the world, specific ethnicities primarily reside in distinct neighborhoods. In Paris, the Goutte d’Or neighborhood is emblematic of an ethnic enclave, with immigrants from former African colonies occupying the area. In London, South Asia Indians have clustered in the west, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have clustered in the northeast, African blacks in the east, and Caribbean blacks in the north and south. In the United States, the City of Chicago is illustrative of the variety of ethnic enclaves that may be present in an urban area, with whites clustered on the North Side, African Americans on the South and West sides, and Hispanics on the Northwest and Southwest sides.

**Changing Urban Ethnic Enclaves** The areas inhabited by ethnicities have shifted over time. In the early to mid-twentieth century, emigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe traveled to Midwestern U.S. cities to find work in the expanding industrial base. Neighborhoods took names based on the predominant ethnicity present in the area, such as Chicago’s Ukrainian Village. By the late twentieth century, many children and grandchildren of these immigrants moved from urban enclaves to suburbs, sometimes forming ethnoburbs. An **ethnoburb** is a suburban area with a cluster of a specific ethnic population.

**Ethnically Complex Brazil** Brazil struggles with characterizing its population by race or ethnicity. Brazil is a “melting pot” like the United States, with the ancestors of the current population emigrating from many places. The majority of immigrants came to Brazil from Portugal and West Africa, but European countries, Japan, Southwest Asia and others are also places of origin. Many indigenous people in Brazil make up their vibrant diversity, also.

**Brazil’s Races and Ethnicities** Brazil’s census categorizes people based on skin color. Five races are available as options on the census: branco (white), pardo (brown), preto (black), amarelo (yellow), and indigenous. More than 90 percent of the country’s population are brancos and pardos. Many Brazilians, however, do not self-identify using this classification scheme. According to genetic surveys, approximately 70 percent of Brazilians have predominantly Europeans ancestry, 20 percent predominantly African, and 10 percent predominantly Native American. Despite this breakdown, most Brazilians have a mixed of backgrounds.

**Clustering of Races in Brazil** Distinct regional variation can be seen in the distribution of races in Brazil. Whites are predominantly clustered in the south. In Brazil’s interior north, with the Amazon tropical rain forest as a backdrop, indigenous people mostly make up the population, categorized by the Brazilian census as brown. In the northeast along Brazil’s coast, people classified as brown also are the majority race. The largest number of Blacks forced to migrate to Brazil from Africa in the slave trade also inhabit the northeast. The west-central region of Brazil is occupied by a mix of white- and brown-classified populations.

**Distribution of Ethnicities in Guyana** Despite its relatively small population of 800,000, the country of Guyana reflects the stark geographic division of ethnicities. Approximately 30 percent of the population are descended from Africans brought to the area as slaves in the seventeenth century, when it was colonized by the Dutch. Roughly 43 percent are descended from indentured servants brought to the country from India in the nineteenth century when it was a British colony. 9 percent of the population is of indigenous descent, and 17 percent is comprised by those of mixed ethnicity. East Indians are clustered along the coast, black and mixed black populations are clustered in the interior north, and the far west is occupied by indigenous peoples.

**Key Issue 2: Why Do Ethnicities Have Distinctive Distributions?**

**International Migration of Ethnicities** Most African Americans are descended from Africans compelled to migrate to the Western Hemisphere as slaves in the eighteenth century. In contrast to this forced migration, most Asian Americans and Hispanics are descended from voluntary immigrants to the United States during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (excluding those who felt they were forced to emigrate from their homelands, such as Vietnamese and Cubans that came to the United States).

**Forced Migration from Africa** During the eighteenth century, the British shipped about 400,000 Africans to the 13 colonies that later formed the United States. In 1808, the United States banned bringing in additional Africans as slaves, but 250,000 were illegally imported during the next half-century. The forced migration began when people living along the east and west coasts of Africa, taking advantage of superior weapons, captured members of other groups living farther inland and sold the captives to the Europeans. Many European ships transported slaves from Africa to the Caribbean islands, molasses from the Caribbean to Europe, and trade goods from Europe to Africa—this was known as the **triangular slave trade**.

**Voluntary Migration from Latin America and Asia** Quota laws limited the number of people who could immigrate to the United States from Latin America and Asia. After the immigration laws were changed during the 1960s and the 1970s, the population of Hispanic and Asian Americans in the United States increased rapidly. The rapid growth of Hispanics in the United States beginning in the 1970s was fueled primarily by immigration from Mexico and Puerto Rico. Chinese comprised the largest group of Asian Americans, followed by Indians, Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese.

**Internal Migration of African Americans** In the twentieth century, African Americans exhibited two distinctive migration patterns within the United States. In the first half of the twentieth century, interregional migration from the U.S. South to northern urban areas was undertaken. In the second half of the twentieth century, African Americans migrated interregionally from inner-city ghettos to outer-city and inner suburban neighborhoods.

**Interregional Migration** At the close of the Civil War, most African Americans were concentrated in the rural South working as **sharecroppers**. A sharecropper works fields rented from a landowner and pays the rent by turning over to the landowner a share of the crops. Sharecropping became less common in the twentieth century, as the introduction of farm machinery and a decline in land devoted to cotton reduced the demand for labor. At the same time sharecroppers were being pushed off the farms, they were being pulled by the prospect of jobs booming in industrial cities in the North and West. Southern African Americans migrated north and west in two main waves, the first in 1910s and 1920s before and after World War I, and the second in the 1940s and 1950s before World War II.

**Intraregional Migration** African Americans clustered in one or two neighborhoods in big cities. These neighborhoods became known as ghettos, after the term for neighborhoods in which Jews were forced to live in the Middle Ages.

**Expansion of the Ghetto** During the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans moved from the compact ghettoes into immediately adjacent neighborhoods, following major avenues that radiated out from the center of the city. In Baltimore, for example, the west-side African American ghetto expanded from 1 square mile in 1950 to 10 square miles by 1970, along with a 2-square-mile area on the east-side becoming a predominantly African American-inhabited area.

**“White Flight”** The expansion of black neighborhoods in American cities was made possible by the emigration of whites from a neighborhood in anticipation of blacks immigrating into the area. Rather than integrate, whites fled. “White Flight” was encouraged by unscrupulous real estate practices. Under **blockbusting**, real estate agents convinced white homeowners living near a black area to sell their houses at low prices, preying on their fears that black families would soon move into the neighborhood and cause property values to decline.

**Segregation by Race** The intense discouragement of spatial interaction through legal means, known as segregation, colors a stretch of troubled history in the United States and South Africa. While these segregation laws are no longer on the books in the United States and South Africa, their legacy endures as a feature of the geography of ethnicity in both countries.

**United States: “Separate but Equal”** In *Plessy v. Ferguson,* the Supreme Court stated that blacks and whites should be treated equally, but equality does not mean that whites had to mix socially with blacks. Once the Supreme Court permitted “separate but equal” treatment of the races, Southern states enacted a set of laws to separate blacks from whites as much as possible. These “Jim Crow” laws made blacks sit in the back of buses and restaurants. Throughout the country, house deeds contained restrictive covenants that prevented owners from selling to blacks. Schools were also segregated. U.S. segregation laws were eliminated in the 1950s and 1960s through the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954. The Civil Rights Acts during the 1960s outlawed racial discrimination, as well. Despite these efforts, cities are still subject to racial segregation.

**South Africa: Apartheid** While the United States was repealing laws that segregated people by race, South Africa was enacting them. **Apartheid** is a legal system that separates different races into different geographic areas. In South Africa, a newborn baby was classified as being one of four races—black, white, colored (mixed white and black), and Asian. Each four races had different legal status. The apartheid laws determined where different races could live, attend school, work, shop, and own land. Blacks could not vote or run for political office. The apartheid laws were repealed in 1991. In 1994, Nelson Mandela was elected the country’s first black president.

**Key Issue 3: Why Might Ethnicities Face Conflicts?**

**Ethnicities and Nationalities** Sorting out ethnicity and nationality can be a challenging and complex effort.

**Ethnicity and Nationality in North America** Nationality is typically kept reasonably distinct from ethnicity and race in common usage in the United States. Nationality classifies citizens of the United States, including those born in the country and those who immigrated and became naturalized citizens. Ethnicity identifies groups with distinct ancestry and culture, such as African Americans and Mexican Americans. These distinctions are not as clear and controversial in Canada. Québecois are easily distinguishable from other Canadians vis-à-vis cultural traditions, especially language. However, it can be contested whether Québecois constitute a distinct ethnicity within the Canadian nationality or a second French-speaking nationality separate altogether from English-speaking Canadian.

**Ethnicity and Nationality in the United Kingdom** Distinctions between ethnicity and nationality become confusing in many places. The United Kingdom contains four principle ethnicities and two nationalities. A strong element of ethnic identity in the United Kingdom comes from sports. Even though they are not separate countries, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland field their own national soccer and rugby teams. They even compete separately in international tournaments, such as the World Cup.

**Nationalism** A nationality must hold the loyalty of its citizens to survive. **Nationalism** is loyalty and devotion to a particular nationality. States foster nationalism by promoting symbols of the country, such as flags and songs. Nationalism is an example of **centripetal force**, which is an attitude that tends to unify people and enhance support for the state. Most countries find that the best way to achieve citizen support is to emphasize shared attitudes that unify the people. Loyalty to a particular state can be beneficial to the state’s internal governance but can also lead to intolerance of differences.

**Dividing Ethnicities** Few ethnicities occupy an area that reflects the territory of a nationality. Ethnicities are sometimes divided among more than one nationality. Several examples are apparent in Asia.

**Ethnicities in South Asia** When the British ended their colonial rule of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, they divided the country into the two irregularly shaped countries—India and Pakistan. Pakistan comprises two noncontiguous areas, West Pakistan and East Pakistan, which are a thousand miles apart, separated by India. East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh in 1971. The people living in the two areas of Pakistan were predominantly Muslim; those in India were predominately Hindu. In modern India, with its hundreds of languages and ethnic groups, Hinduism has become the cultural trait shared by the largest percentage of the population.

Muslims have long fought with Hindus for control of territory in South Asia. The partition of South Asia into two states resulted in massive migration because the two boundaries did not correspond precisely to the territory inhabited by the two ethnicities. Approximately 17 million people caught on the wrong side of the boundary felt compelled to migrate during the late 1940s. Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were killed by the rival religions. Pakistan and India never agreed on the location of the boundary separating the two countries in the northern region of Kashmir. The religious unrest in India is further complicated by the 23 million Sikhs in the country, who have long resented that they were not ceded their own independent country when India was partitioned.

**Dividing the Kurds** When an ethnic group’s distribution spans a national boundary, conflict can result as the ethnic group on one side may wish to reunify with the group on the other side.The Kurds are an ethnic group whose homeland straddles the border between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The Kurds are Muslims who speak a distinctive language in the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family and have their own literature, dress, and other cultural traditions. Many Kurds would like an independent homeland, but the countries in which they are the minority are unwilling to let go of that territory, and have historically restricted aspects of Kurdish culture. Until 1991, the use of the Kurdish language in Turkey was banned, and is still illegal to use in broadcasts and classrooms across the country. In recent years, the Turkish government has permitted Kurds to practice more of their cultural traditions.

**Ethnic Diversity in Asia** The lack of communication among territories inhabited by ethnicities and by nationalities is particularly prevalent in areas of Southwest Asia and Central Asia. If national boundaries reflected ethnic backgrounds of populations, the map of western Asia would look vastly different.

**Ethnicities in Turkey** Ethnic Turks constitute roughly three-quarters of the population of Turkey. Turks are descended from migrants to present-day Turkey about 1,000 years ago. The most numerous minority is the aforementioned Kurds, making up 18 percent of the population.

**Ethnic Competition in Lebanon** Lebanon is 54 percent Muslim, 41 percent Christian, and 9 percent Druze. Lebanon’s most numerous Christians are Maronites, who consider themselves Roman Catholic. Muslims in Lebanon are about equally split between Sunnis and Shiites. The Druze are sometimes categorized as Muslim, but they do not follow the Five Pillars of Islam and do not self-identify as Muslim. Lebanon’s religious groups have tended to live in different regions of the country. There was a civil war between the two religious groups in 1975 and 1990, with each group forming its own militia to control its territory.

**Ethnicities in Syria** While Syria is 90 percent Arab, this segment of the population is divided among Sunni Muslims, Alawi Muslims, Christians, Druze, and other Muslim denominations. Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic are the most numerous Christian denominations. The Alawi, led by the Assad family, have held power in Syria since 1970. A civil war has ravaged the country since 2011, fought between the Assad government and its opponents.

**Ethnicities in Iraq** The most abundant ethnicities in Iraq encompass 55 percent Shiite Muslim Arabs, 21 percent Kurds, and 19 percent Sunni Arabs. Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States and the fall of Saddam Hussein, the country has been entangled in a complex and violent struggle among its ethnicities.

**Ethnicities in Iran** The majority of Iranians are Persians, thought to have descended from Indo-European tribes that migrated from Central Asia into what is present-day Iran several thousand years ago. Persians make up the world’s most numerous ethnicity adhering to Shiite Islam. Azeri and Baluchi are other significant ethnicities present in Iran.

**Ethnicities in Afghanistan** Pashtun, Tajik, and Hazara ethnicities are the most abundant in Afghanistan. The current conflicts in Afghanistan stem from a 1979 rebellion by several ethnic groups against the Afghan government. In 1995, a Pashtun faction called the Taliban took control of most of Afghanistan, with their governance informed by their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam doctrine. The Taliban was overthrown in 2001 by invading U.S.-led forces, leading to further instability among the country’s ethnicities.

**Ethnicities in Pakistan** The Punjabi have been the most abundant ethnicity of present-day Pakistan for thousands of years. The montane territory separating Pakistan from Afghanistan is predominantly Baluchi and Pashtun. The Punjabi are predominantly Sunni Muslims, while the Pashtun adhere to Shiite Islam.

**Key Issue 4: Why Do Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide Occur?**

**Ethnic Cleansing** occurs when a more powerful group removes all the members of an ethnic group from an area to create more territory for the powerful group. 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 young. Ethnic cleansing may take the form of large-scale forced migration or genocide, where members of the ethnic group are targeted for extermination.

**Forced Migration in Europe** The largest forced migration occurred during World War II due to events preceding the war, the war itself, and postwar effects. The deportation of millions of Jews, Romani, and other ethnic groups by German Nazis to concentration camps is the most notorious forced migration in history. As a result of national boundary changes following World War II, millions of ethnic Germans, Poles, Russians, and other groups were forced to migrate.

**Multiethnic Yugoslavia** After World War I, the allies created Yugoslavia to unite several Balkans ethnicities that spoke similar South Slavic languages. The President of Yugoslavia, Josep Broz Tito, attempted to forge a national Yugoslav identity through acceptance of ethnic diversity in language and religion. The creation of Yugoslavia brought stability that lasted for most of the twentieth century. Rivalries among the different ethnicities resurfaced after the death of President Tito in 1980, leading to the breakup of the country into seven small countries. The borders of the new countries did not reflect the distribution of ethnicities, leading to several episodes of ethnic cleansing.

**Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia & Herzegovina** Ethnic cleansing generally follows four steps:

1. Move a large amount of military equipment and personnel into a village that has no strategic value.
2. Round up all the people in the village. Segregate men from women, children, and the elderly. Place men in detention camps or kill them.
3. Force the rest of the people to leave the village. March them in a convoy to a place outside the territory being ethnically cleansed.
4. Destroy the vacated village, such as by setting it on fire.

**Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia** When Yugoslavia’s republics were transformed from local government units into five separate countries, ethnicities fought to redefine the boundaries. Ethnic Serbs and Croats practiced ethnic cleansing of Bosniak Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina in hopes of unifying their regions with Serbia and Croatia. Ethnic cleansing ensured that areas did not merely have Serbs and Croats, but were ethnically homogeneous and therefore better candidates for union with Serbia and Croatia. Following the Accords reached in Dayton, Ohio, in 1996 by leaders of the various ethnicities, Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided into three regions, one each dominated by the Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks.

**Ethnic Cleansing Elsewhere in the Balkans** Kosovo and Croatia, also former Yugoslav republics, are locations of recent ethnic cleansings.

**Ethnic Cleansing in Kosovo** With the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia took direct control of Kosovo. The Serbs practiced ethnic cleansing in the province of Kosovo, where the large Albanian population was forced to migrate to Albania. At its peak in 1999, Serb ethnic cleansing had forced 750,000 of Kosovo’s two million ethnic Albanian residents from their homes. NATO launched an air attack against Serbia and the Serbs eventually agreed to withdraw from Kosovo. Kosovo became an independent state in 2008.

**Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia** Croat and other non-Serb ethnicities were also victims of ethnic cleansing by Serbs in Croatia. Following its declaration of independence in 1991, Croatia faced internal conflict between the aforementioned ethnic groups after its ethnic Serbs attempted to form an independent republic (Krajina) in eastern Croatia. The Serbs expelled roughly 170,000 Croats and other non-Serbs from the eastern part of Croatia. After a four-year war that resulted in a Croat victory, around 20,000 Serbs were expelled and 180,000 left Croatia voluntarily.

**Balkanization** The term **balkanized** is 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. **Balkanization** is a process by which a state breaks down through conflicts among ethnicities. Balkanization led directly to World War I because the various nationalities in the Balkans dragged the larger powers that they had alliances with into a war. The Balkans have become balkanized again because of the rise and fall of communism in the region.

**Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Africa** The mass killing of a group of people in an attempt to eliminate the entire group from existence is known as **genocide**. In recent years, several areas of Africa have been affected by conflicts among ethnicities that have led to genocide. Other countries have been either unable or unwilling to stop genocides from occurring.

**Ethnicities and Nationalities in Africa** Ethnicity was traditionally the most important element of cultural identity in Africa – nationality was considered secondary to ethnicity. Several thousand distinct ethnicities are present in Africa, each with their own languages, religions, and social customs. It is hard to precisely determine the number of ethnicities due to boundaries that may not accurately reflect their geographic distribution, and difficulties in classifying what constitutes a “distinct” ethnicity. Conflict today can be traced to the European colonization of Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which divided up the continent into countries with little regard for distribution of ethnicities.

**Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Sudan** In Sudan, several civil wars have ravaged the country since 1983, resulting in genocide and ethnic cleansing. Sudan’s conflicts with South Sudan and Darfur have affected the most victims. 70 percent of Sudan is Arab and 97 percent Muslim. The balance belong to a large number of other ethnicities descended from groups living in Sudan prior to the arrival of Arabs in the twelfth century. The non-Arab ethnicities are clustered in the west, south, and east of Sudan.

**Darfur** In response to discrimination and neglect by the Arab-led government in Khartoum, Darfur’s black African ethnicities launched a rebellion in 2003. Janjaweed, marauding Arab nomads, decimated Darfur’s black population. Roughly 450,000 people in Darfur have been victims of genocide and another 2.5 million victims of ethnic cleansing.

**South Sudan** South Sudan was established in 2011 following a war (lasting from 1983 until 2005) between Sudan’s northern and southern ethnicities. This war resulted in the death of an estimated 1.9 million Sudanese and the ethnic cleansing of approximately 700,000. South Sudan’s largest ethnicities are the Christian Dinka and the folk religionist Nuer. Despite gaining independence, the ethnicities of South Sudan have been unable to cooperate to create a stable government.

**Abeyi** An area along the border between Sudan and South Sudan known as Abeyi is now the center of conflict among the two groups. Abeyi contains ethnicities aligned with both Sudan and South Sudan. Its legal status as a part of either country was due to be settled by a referendum of its people although this referendum has since been canceled. In the meantime, a peacekeeping force from Ethiopia is preventing either country from seizing control of the territory.

**South Kordofan and Blue Nile** South Kordofan and Blue Nile are two other border areas containing large numbers of ethnicities aligned with both Sudan and South Sudan. A referendum was to be held in both territories for self-determination by its citizens, but both have been canceled.

**Eastern Front** Neighboring Eritrea have supported ethnicities in east Sudan in their conflict with Sudanese government forces. The disbursement of oil profits originating from resources in the area is the source of the conflict.

**Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Central Africa** Rwanda’s major groups of Hutus and Tutsis have practiced genocide against one another. The two ethnicities speak the same language, hold similar beliefs, and practice similar social customs. Intermarriage has even lessoned the physical differences between the two groups. The Hutus were farmers and the Tutsis were herders, and relations between settled farmers and herders are often uneasy. 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.

Belgium gained control of Rwanda after World War I. Belgium administrators permitted a few Tutsis to attend university and hold responsible government positions, while excluding the Hutus altogether. Hutus gained power when Rwanda became a country in 1962. The Hutus undertook ethnic cleansing and many Tutsis fled to Uganda. The Tutsis invaded in 1990. In 1993, an agreement to share power was signed. There have been several incidents of genocide between each group since then.

The conflict between Hutus and Tutsis spilled into neighboring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tutsis were instrumental in the successful overthrow of Congo’s president in 1997. The new president relied heavily on Tutsis and permitted them to kill some Hutus who had been responsible for atrocities against the Tutsis in the early 1990s. Later, Congo’s president, Laurent Kabila, split with the Tutsis and was assassinated in 2001. The president’s son took power and negotiated an accord with the Tutsis, although violence has persisted among the country’s many ethnicities.