Ethnicity

Few humans live in total isolation. People are members of groups with which they share important attributes. If you are a citizen of the United States of America, you are identified as an American, which is a type of nationality.

Many Americans further identify themselves as belonging to an ethnicity, a group with which they share cultural background. One-fifth of Americans identify their ethnicity as African American or Hispanic. Other Americans identify with ethnicities tracing back to Europe or Asia.

Ethnicity is a source of pride to people, a link to the experiences of ancestors and to cultural traditions, such as food and music preferences. The ethnic group to which one belongs has important measurable differences, such as average income, life expectancy, and infant mortality rate. Ethnicity also matters in places with a history of discrimination by one ethnic group against another.

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?

**KEY ISSUES**

1. Where are ethnicities distributed?
2. Why have ethnicities been transformed into nationalities?
3. Why do ethnicities clash?
4. What is ethnic cleansing?
CASE STUDY

Ethnic Conflict in Rwanda

Samuel Ntawiniga, Helene Mukabutera, and their five children had a comfortable life in Rwanda, a small central African country about the size of Maryland. The family lived in the capital, Kigali, in a three-bedroom house with a modern kitchen and a television with a videocassette recorder.

The Ntawiniga/Mukabutera family's comfortable life was shattered in 1994 when a missile brought down the airplane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and neighboring Burundi. The death of the two presidents in the plane crash destroyed a peace accord being negotiated at the time between Rwanda's two ethnicities, Hutu and Tutsi. The presidents were Hutus, the ethnicity of 85 percent of the people of Rwanda, and the missiles were allegedly fired by members of the minority Tutsis.

The next day Hutu soldiers broke into the Ntawiniga/Mukabutera house and took their money after threatening to shoot them. Family members living elsewhere in the city were killed that night. The day after that, the family was ordered to leave their house or risk being shot. They walked for a week, until they reached the border town of Cyangugu, 130 kilometers (80 miles) away.

Hutu leaders who took over the Rwandan government after the president's death ordered the killing not only of all Tutsis, but also all Hutus who did not cooperate in the killing. During the 3 months immediately following the plane crash, between 500,000 and 800,000 Rwandans were murdered, around 10 percent of the country's population. Several hundred thousand others, like the Ntawiniga/Mukabutera family, fled to nearby countries. Samuel Ntawiniga and Helene Mukabutera were classified as Hutus, because their fathers were both Hutus, but their mothers were both Tutsis, and they looked like Tutsis, so they were targets.

Belgium, which controlled Rwanda and several other central African colonies between 1916 and 1962, had issued everyone an ethnic identity card. Although they were in the minority, Tutsis received favorable treatment from the Belgians, and Hutus were discriminated against. After independence from Belgium, Rwanda naturally elected leaders drawn from the Hutu majority and imposed quotas on Tutsis. As they constituted 9 percent of the population, Tutsis were allowed only 9 percent of school admissions and top-paying jobs. Resentful Tutsis formed an army that ousted the Hutu leadership, took over the government, and killed a quarter-million Hutus who had participated in the killing of the half-million Tutsis.

After Tutsi rebels defeated the Hutu army and gained control of Rwanda, the Ntawiniga/Mukabutera family was forced to flee again, this time to a refugee camp at Nyarushishi. They joined millions of other Rwandans—Hutu and Tutsi—huddling together under blue plastic tarpaulins in a vain attempt to stay warm and dry. Many died in the camps from tuberculosis, pneumonia, malaria, and dysentery.

Ethnicity is identity with a group of people who share the cultural traditions of a particular homeland or hearth. Ethnicity comes from the Greek word *ethnikos*, which means “national.” Ethnicity is distinct from race, which is identity with a group of people who share a biological ancestor. Race comes from a middle-French word for generation.

Geographers are interested in where ethnicities are distributed across space, like other elements of culture. An ethnic group is tied to a particular place, because members of the group—or their ancestors—were born and raised there. The cultural traits displayed by an ethnicity derive from particular conditions and practices in the group’s homeland.

The reason why ethnicities have distinctive traits should by now be familiar. Like other cultural elements, ethnic identity derives from the interplay of connections with other groups and isolation from them.

Ethnicity is an especially important cultural element of local diversity because our ethnic identity is immutable. We can deny or suppress our ethnicity, but we cannot choose to change it in the same way we can choose to speak a different language or practice a different religion. If our parents come from two ethnic groups or our grandparents from four, our ethnic identity may be extremely diluted, but it never completely disappears.

The study of ethnicity lacks the tension in scale between preservation of local diversity and globalization observed in other cultural elements. Despite efforts to preserve local languages, it is not farfetched to envision a world in which virtually all educated people speak English. And universalizing religions
continue to gain adherents around the world. But no ethnicity is attempting or even aspiring to achieve global dominance, although ethnic groups are fighting with each other to control specific areas of the world.

Ethnicity is especially important to geographers, because in the face of globalization trends in culture and economy, ethnicity stands as the strongest bulwark for the preservation of local diversity. Even if globalization engulfs language, religion, and other cultural elements, regions of distinct ethnic identity will remain.

**KEY ISSUE 1**

Where Are Ethnicities Distributed?

- Distribution of ethnicities in the United States
- Differentiating ethnicity and race

An ethnicity may be clustered in specific areas within a country, or the area it inhabits may match closely the boundaries of a country. This section of the chapter examines the clustering of ethnicities within countries, and the next key issue looks at ethnicities on the national scale.

### Distribution of Ethnicities in the United States

The two most numerous ethnicities in the United States are Hispanics (or Latinos), at 14 percent of the total population, and African Americans at 12 percent. In addition, about 4 percent are Asian American and 1 percent American Indian.

#### Clusterings of Ethnicities

Within a country, clustering of ethnicities can occur on two scales. Ethnic groups may live in particular regions of the country, and they may live in particular neighborhoods within cities.

**REGIONAL CONCENTRATIONS OF ETHNICITIES.** On a regional scale, ethnicities have distinctive distributions within the United States. African Americans are clustered in the Southeast, Hispanics in the Southwest, Asian Americans in the West, and American Indians in the Southwest and Plains states.

African Americans comprise at least one-fourth of the population in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, and South Carolina, and more than one-third in Mississippi (Figure 7–1). Concentrations are even higher in selected counties. At the other extreme, nine states have fewer than 1 percent African Americans, including the upper New England states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as the Plains states of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

About 14 percent of Americans identify themselves as being of Hispanic or Latino/Latina ethnicity. Hispanic or Hispanic American is a term that the U.S. government chose in 1973 to describe the group because it was an inoffensive label that could be applied to all people from Spanish-speaking countries. Some Americans of Latin American descent have instead adopted the terms Latino (males) and Latina (females). A 1995 U.S. Census Bureau survey found that 58 percent of Americans of Latin American descent preferred the term Hispanic and 12 percent Latino/Latina.

Most Hispanics identify with a more specific ethnic or national origin. The largest number of Hispanics, about 64 percent, come from Mexico and are sometimes called Chicanos (males) or Chicanas (females). Originally the term was considered insulting, but in the 1960s Mexican American youths in Los Angeles began to call themselves Chicanos and Chicanas with pride. Puerto Ricans comprise the second-largest group of Hispanics, 10 percent, followed by Cubans, 4 percent.

Within the United States, Hispanics are heavily clustered in the three southwestern states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, where they constitute more than one-third of the population, plus California, where Hispanics exceed one-fourth of the population (Figure 7–2). California is home to 30 percent of all Hispanics, Texas to 20 percent, and Florida and New York to 15 percent.

Asian Americans make up about 4 percent of the U.S. population. Chinese account for 23 percent of Asian Americans, Indians 19 percent, Filipinos 18 percent, Korean and Vietnamese 10 percent each, Japanese 7 percent, and others 13 percent. The largest concentration of Asian Americans is in Hawaii, where they comprise more than 40 percent of the population. One-half of all Asian Americans live in California, where they comprise 12 percent of the population (Figure 7–3).

American Indians and Alaska Natives make up about 1 percent of the U.S. population. Within the 48 continental United States, American Indians are most numerous in the Southwest and the Plains states (Figure 7–4).

**CONCENTRATION OF ETHNICITIES IN CITIES.** African Americans are highly clustered within cities. About one-fourth of all Americans live in cities, whereas more than half of African Americans live in cities.

The contrast is greater at the state level. For example, African Americans comprise 85 percent of the population in the city of
Detroit and only 7 percent in the rest of Michigan. Otherwise stated, Detroit contains less than one-tenth of Michigan's total population, but more than one-half of the state’s African American population. Similarly, Chicago is more than one-third African American, compared to one-twelfth in the rest of Illinois. Chicago has less than one-fourth of Illinois’ total population and more than one-half of the state’s African Americans.

The distribution of Hispanics is similar to that of African Americans in large northern cities. For example, New York City is more than one-fourth Hispanic, compared to one-sixteenth in the rest of New York State, and New York City contains two-fifths of the state's total population and three-fourths of its Hispanics.

In the states with the largest Hispanic populations—California and Texas—the distribution is mixed. In California, Hispanics comprise nearly half of Los Angeles's population, but the percentage of Hispanics in California's other large cities is less than or about equal to the overall state average. In Texas, El Paso and San Antonio—the two large cities closest to the Mexican border—are more than one-half Hispanic, but the state's other large cities have percentages below or about equal to the state's average of around one-third.

The clustering of ethnicities is especially pronounced on the scale of neighborhoods within cities. In the early twentieth century, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and other midwestern cities attracted ethnic groups primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe to work in the rapidly growing steel, automotive, and related industries. For example, in 1910, when Detroit's auto production was expanding, three-fourths of the city's residents were immigrants and children of immigrants. Southern and Eastern European ethnic groups clustered in newly constructed neighborhoods that were often called for their predominant ethnicities, such as Detroit's Greektown and Poletown.

The children and grandchildren of European immigrants moved out of most of the original inner-city neighborhoods during the twentieth century. For descendants of European immigrants, ethnic identity is more likely to be retained through religion, food, and other cultural traditions rather than through location of residence. A visible remnant of early twentieth-century European ethnic neighborhoods is the clustering of restaurants in such areas as Little Italy and Greektown.

Ethnic concentrations in U.S. cities increasingly consist of African Americans who migrate from the South, or immigrants from Latin America and Asia. In cities such as Detroit, African Americans now comprise the majority and live in neighborhoods originally inhabited by European ethnic groups. Chicago has extensive African American neighborhoods on the south and west sides of the city, but the city also contains a mix of neighborhoods inhabited by European, Latin American, and Asian ethnicities (Figure 7-5).

In Los Angeles, which contains large percentages of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans, the major ethnic groups are clustered in different areas (Figure 7-6). African Americans are located in south-central Los Angeles and Hispanics in the east. Asian Americans are located to the south and west, contiguous to the African American and Hispanic areas.
The proximity of Asian American ethnic groups to African Americans proved volatile in Los Angeles in 1992. After white police officers were acquitted—despite videotaped evidence—of beating an African American (Rodney King), unrest broke out in African American southside neighborhoods. Many of the stores that were looted or burned were owned by Asian Americans.

### African American Migration Patterns

The clustering of ethnicities within the United States is partly a function of the same process that helps geographers to explain the regular distribution of other cultural factors, such as language and religion—namely migration. The migration patterns of African Americans have been especially distinctive. Three major migration flows have shaped the current distribution of African Americans within the United States:

- Immigration from Africa to the American colonies in the eighteenth century
- Immigration from the U.S. South to northern cities during the first half of the twentieth century
- Immigration from inner-city ghettos to other urban neighborhoods during the second half of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first centuries
FORCED MIGRATION FROM AFRICA. Most African Americans are descended from Africans forced to migrate to the Western Hemisphere as slaves. Slavery is a system whereby one person owns another person as a piece of property and can force that slave to work for the owner’s benefit.

The first Africans brought to the American colonies as slaves arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, on a Dutch ship in 1619. 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 an estimated 250,000 were illegally imported during the next half-century.

Slavery was widespread during the time of the Roman Empire, about 2,000 years ago. During the Middle Ages, slavery was replaced in Europe by a feudal system, in which laborers working the land (known as serfs) were bound to the land and not free to migrate elsewhere. Serfs had to turn over a portion of their crops to the lord and provide other services as demanded by the lord.

Although slavery was rare in Europe, Europeans were responsible for diffusing the practice to the Western Hemisphere. This large-scale slave trade was a response to a shortage of labor in the sparsely inhabited Americas. Europeans who owned large plantations in the Americas turned to African slaves as a cheap and abundant source of labor.

At the height of the slave trade between 1710 and 1810, at least 10 million Africans were uprooted from their homes and sent on European ships to the Western Hemisphere for sale in the slave market. During that period, the British and Portuguese each shipped about 2 million slaves to the Western Hemisphere, with most of the British slaves going to Caribbean islands, and the Portuguese on ships to Brazil.

The forced migration began when people living along the east and west coasts of Africa, taking advantage of their superior weapons, captured members of other groups living farther inland and sold the captives to Europeans. Europeans in turn shipped the captured Africans to the Americas, selling them as slaves either on consignment or through auctions. The Spanish and Portuguese first participated in the slave trade in the early sixteenth century, and the British, Dutch, and French joined in during the next century.

Different European countries operated in various regions of Africa, each sending slaves to different destinations in the Americas (Figure 7–7, right). The Portuguese shipped slaves primarily from their principal African colonies—Angola and Mozambique—to their major American colony, Brazil. Other European countries took slaves primarily from a coastal strip of West Africa between Liberia and the Congo, 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) long and 160 kilometers (100 miles) wide. The majority of these slaves went to Caribbean islands and most of the remainder to Central and South America. Fewer than 5 percent of the slaves ended up in the United States.

At the height of the eighteenth-century slave demand, a number of European countries adopted the triangular slave trade, an efficient triangular trading pattern (Figure 7–7, left). Ships left Europe for Africa with cloth and other trade goods, used to buy the slaves. They then transported slaves and gold from Africa to the Western Hemisphere, primarily to the Caribbean islands. To complete the triangle, the same ships then carried sugar and molasses from the Caribbean on their return trip to Europe. Some ships added another step, making a rectangular trading pattern, in which molasses was carried from the Caribbean to the North American colonies, and rum from the colonies to Europe.

The large-scale forced migration of Africans obviously caused them unimaginable hardship, separating families and destroying villages. Traders generally seized the stronger and younger villagers, who could be sold as slaves for the highest price. The Africans were packed onto ships at extremely high density, kept in chains, and provided with minimal food and sanitary facilities. Approximately one-fourth died crossing the Atlantic.

In the 13 colonies that later formed the United States, most of the large plantations in need of labor were located in the South, primarily those growing cotton as well as tobacco. Consequently, nearly all Africans shipped to the 13 colonies ended up in the Southeast.

Attitudes toward slavery dominated U.S. politics during the nineteenth century. During the early 1800s, when new states were carved out of western territory, anti-slavery northeastern states and pro-slavery southeastern states...
bitterly debated whether to permit slavery in the new states. The Civil War (1861–65) was fought to prevent 11 pro-slavery Southern states from seceding from the Union. In 1863, during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the 11 Confederate states. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted 8 months after the South surrendered, outlawed slavery.

Freed as slaves, most African Americans remained in the rural South during the late nineteenth century 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. To obtain tools, food, and living quarters, a sharecropper gets a line of credit from the landowner and repays the debt with yet more crops. The sharecropper system burdened poor African Americans with high interest rates and heavy debts. Instead of growing food that they could eat, sharecroppers were forced by landowners to plant extensive areas of crops such as cotton that could be sold for cash.

**IMMIGRATION TO THE NORTH.** Sharecropping declined in the early twentieth century as the introduction of farm machinery and decline in land devoted to cotton reduced demand for labor. At the same time sharecroppers were being pushed off the farms, they were being pulled to the prospect of jobs in the booming industrial cities of the North.

African Americans migrated out of the South along several clearly defined channels (Figure 7–8). Most traveled by bus and car along the major two-lane long-distance U.S. roads that were paved and signposted in the early decades of the twentieth century and have since been replaced by interstate highways:

- From the Carolinas and other South Atlantic states north to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and other northeastern cities, along U.S. Route 1 (parallel to present-day I-95)
- From Alabama and eastern Tennessee north to either Detroit, along U.S. Route 25 (present-day I-75), or Cleveland, along U.S. Route 21 (present-day I-77)
- From Mississippi and western Tennessee north to St. Louis and Chicago, along U.S. routes 61 and 66 (present-day I-55)
- From Texas west to California, along U.S. routes 80 and 90 (present-day I-10 and I-20)

Southern African Americans migrated north and west in two main waves, the first in the 1910s and 1920s before and after World War I and the second in the 1940s and 1950s before and after World War II. The world wars stimulated expansion of factories in the 1910s and 1940s to produce war material, while the demands of the armed forces created shortages of factory

**Slave ship.** The diagrams show the extremely high density by which Africans were transported to the Americas to be sold as slaves. The bottom two images show human figures packed into the hold of the ship lying next to each with no room to move.

**Sharecroppers.** Many African Americans became sharecroppers after slavery was abolished. Fields were rented from a landowner, and rent was paid in crops, in this case cotton.
workers. After the wars, during the 1920s and 1950s, factories produced steel, motor vehicles, and other goods demanded in civilian society.

For example, only 5,741 of Detroit’s 465,766 inhabitants were African American in 1910. With the expansion of the auto industry during the 1910s and 1920s, the African American population increased to 120,000 in 1930, 300,000 in 1950, and 500,000 in 1960.

**Expansion of the Ghetto.** When they reached the big cities, African American immigrants clustered in the one or two neighborhoods where the small numbers who had arrived in the nineteenth century were already living. These areas became known as ghettos, after the term for neighborhoods in which Jews were forced to live in the Middle Ages (see Chapter 6). A half-million African Americans jammed into Chicago’s 8 square-kilometer (3-square-mile) South Side ghetto.

In 1950 most of Baltimore’s quarter-million African Americans lived in a 3-square-kilometer (1-square-mile) neighborhood northwest of downtown. The remainder were clustered east of downtown or in a large isolated housing project on the south side built for black wartime workers in port industries (Figure 7–9).

Densities in the ghettos were high, with 40,000 inhabitants per square kilometer (100,000 per square mile) common. Contrast that density with the current level found in typical American suburbs of 2,000 inhabitants per square kilometer (5,000 per square mile). Because of the shortage of housing in the ghettos, families were forced to live in one room. Many dwellings lacked bathrooms, kitchens, hot water, and heat.

African Americans moved from the tight ghettos into immediately adjacent neighborhoods during the 1950s and 1960s. In Chicago, African Americans pushed south from the old South Side neighborhood at the rate of 3 square kilometers (1 square mile) per year. In Baltimore, the West Side African American area expanded from 3 square kilometers (1 square mile) in 1950 to 25 square kilometers (10 square miles) in 1970, and a 5-square-kilometer (2-square-mile) area on the East Side became mainly populated by African Americans. Expansion of the ghetto continued to follow major avenues to the northwest and northeast in subsequent decades.

**Differentiating Ethnicity and Race**

Race and ethnicity are often confused. In the United States, consider three prominent ethnic groups—Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. All three ethnicities display distinct cultural traditions that originate at particular hearths, but the three are regarded in different ways:

- Asian is recognized as a distinct race by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, so Asian as a race and Asian American as an ethnicity encompass basically the same group of people. However, the Asian American ethnicity lumps together people with ties to many countries in Asia.
- African American and black are different groups, although the 2000 census combined the two. Most black Americans are descended from African immigrants and therefore also belong to an African American ethnicity. Some American blacks, however, trace their cultural heritage to regions other than Africa, including Latin America, Asia, or Pacific islands.
• Hispanic or Latino is not considered a race, so on the census form members of the Hispanic or Latino ethnicity select any race they wish—white, black, or other.

The traits that characterize race are those that can be transmitted genetically from parents to children. For example, lactose intolerance affects 95 percent of Asian Americans, 65 percent of African Americans and Native Americans, and 50 percent of Hispanics, compared to only 15 percent of Americans of European ancestry. Nearly everyone is born with the ability to produce lactase, which enables infants to digest the large amount of lactose in milk. Lactase production typically slackens during childhood, leaving some with difficulty in absorbing a large amount of lactose as adults. A large percentage of persons of Northern European descent have a genetic mutation that results in lifelong production of lactase.

Biological features of all humans, such as skin color, hair type and color, blood traits, and shape of body, head, and facial features, were once thought to be scientifically classifiable into a handful of world races. At best, however, biological features are so highly variable among members of a race that any prejudiced classification is meaningless. Perhaps many tens or hundreds of thousands of years ago, early “humans” (however they emerged as a distinct species) lived in such isolation of other early “humans” that they were truly distinct genetically. But the degree of isolation needed to keep biological features distinct genetically vanished when the first human crossed a river or climbed a hill.

At worst, biological classification by race is the basis for racism, which is the belief that race is the primary determinant 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.

Ethnicity is important to geographers because its characteristics derive from the distinctive features of particular places on Earth. In contrast, contemporary geographers reject the entire biological basis of classifying humans into a handful of races because these features are not rooted in specific places. Geographers stress the heterogeneity of the human population, and an examination of biological differences among people does not explain why people live as they do.

However, one feature of race does matter to geographers—the color of skin. The distribution of persons of color matters to geographers because it is the fundamental basis by which people in many societies sort out where they reside, attend school, recreate, and perform many other activities of daily life.

The term African American identifies a group with an extensive cultural tradition, whereas the term black in principle denotes nothing more than dark skin. Because many Americans make judgments about the values and behavior of others simply by observing skin color, black is substituted for African American in daily language.

**Race in the United States**

Every 10 years the U.S. Bureau of the Census asks people to classify themselves according to the race with which they most closely identify. Americans were asked in 2000 to identify themselves by checking the box next to one of the following fourteen races:

- White
- Black, African American, or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Other Asian
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander
- Other race

If American Indian, Other Pacific Islander, Other Asian, or Other race were selected, the respondent was asked to write in the specific name.

In 2000 about 75 percent of Americans checked that they were white, 12 percent black, 4 percent Asian (Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese), 1 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (including Guamanian and Samoan), and 6 percent some other race. The 2000 census permitted people to check more than one box, and 2 percent of the respondents did that.

**“SEPARATE BUT EQUAL” DOCTRINE.** In explaining spatial regularities, geographers look for patterns of spatial interaction. A distinctive feature of race relations in the United States has been the strong discouragement of spatial interaction—in the past through legal means, today through cultural preferences or discrimination.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 upheld a Louisiana law that required black and white passengers to ride in separate railway cars. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court stated that Louisiana’s law was constitutional because it provided separate, but equal, treatment of blacks and whites, and equality did 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 comprehensive set of laws to segregate blacks from whites as much as possible. These were called “Jim Crow” laws, named for a nineteenth-century song-and-dance act that depicted blacks offensively. Blacks had to sit in the back of buses, and shops, restaurants, and hotels could choose to serve only whites. Separate schools were established for blacks and whites. After all, white southerners argued, the bus got blacks sitting in the rear to the destination at the same time as the whites in the front, some commercial establishments served only blacks, and all of the schools had teachers and classrooms.

Throughout the country, not just in the South, house deeds contained restrictive covenants that prevented the owners from
Segregation in the United States. Until the 1960s in the U.S. South, whites and blacks had to use separate drinking fountains, as well as separate restrooms, bus seats, hotel rooms, and other public facilities.

sells to blacks, as well as to Roman Catholics or Jews in some places. Restrictive covenants kept blacks from moving into an all-white neighborhood. And because schools, especially at the elementary level, were located to serve individual neighborhoods, most were segregated in practice, even if not legally mandated.

“White Flight.” Segregation laws were eliminated during the 1950s and 1960s. The landmark Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, in 1954, found that having separate schools for blacks and whites was unconstitutional, because no matter how equivalent the facilities, racial separation branded minority children as inferior and therefore was inherently unequal. A year later the Supreme Court further ruled that schools had to be desegregated “with all deliberate speed.”

Rather than integrate, whites fled. The expansion of the black ghettos in American cities was made possible by “white flight,” the emigration of whites from an area in anticipation of blacks immigrating into the area. Detroit provides a clear example. Black immigration into Detroit from the South subsided during the 1950s, but as legal barriers to integration crumbled, whites began to emigrate out of Detroit. Detroit’s white population dropped by about 1 million between 1950 and 1975 and by another half million between 1975 and 2000. While whites fled, Detroit’s black population continued to grow, but at a more modest rate, as a result of natural increase.

In sum, Detroit in 1950 contained about 1.7 million whites and 300,000 blacks. The black population increased to 500,000 in 1960, 700,000 in 1970, and 800,000 in both 1990 and 2000, while the white population declined from 1.7 million in 1950 to 1.3 million in 1960, 900,000 in 1970, 500,000 in 1980, 300,000 in 1990, and 200,000 in 2000.

White flight was encouraged by unscrupulous real estate practices, especially blockbusting. 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. The agents then sold the houses at much higher prices to black families desperate to escape the overcrowded ghettos. Through blockbusting, a neighborhood could change from all-white to all-black in a matter of months, and real estate agents could start the process all over again in the next white area.

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission, wrote in 1968 that U.S. cities were divided into two separate and unequal societies, one black and one white. Four decades later, despite serious efforts to integrate and equalize the two, segregation and inequality persist.

Division by Race in South Africa

Discrimination by race reached its peak in the late twentieth century in South Africa. While the United States was repealing laws that segregated people by race, South Africa was enacting them. The cornerstone of the South African policy was the creation of a legal system called apartheid. Apartheid was the physical separation of different races into different geographic areas. Although South Africa’s apartheid laws were repealed during the 1990s, it will take many years to erase the impact of past policies.

Apartheid System. In South Africa, under apartheid, a newborn baby was classified as being one of four races—black, white, colored (mixed white and black), or Asian. According to the most recent census, blacks constitute about 75 percent of South Africa’s population, whites 14 percent, colored 8 percent, and Asians 3 percent.

Under apartheid, each of the four races had a different legal status in South Africa. The apartheid laws determined where different races could live, attend school, work, shop, and own land. Blacks were restricted to certain occupations and were paid far lower wages than were whites for similar work. Blacks could not vote or run for political office in national elections.

The apartheid system was created by descendants of whites who arrived in South Africa from Holland in 1652 and settled in Cape Town, at the southern tip of the territory. They were known either as Boers, from the Dutch word for farmer, or Afrikaners, from the word “Afrikaans,” the name of their language, which is a dialect of Dutch.

The British seized the Dutch colony at Cape Town for military reasons in 1795. To escape British administration and the freeing of slaves in 1833, about 12,000 Boers trekked northeast into the interior of South Africa and settled in the regions known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State (Figure 7-10). After diamonds and gold were discovered in the Transvaal during the 1860s and 1870s, the British followed the Boers into South Africa’s interior. A series of wars between the British and the Boers culminated in a British victory in 1902, and all of South Africa became part of the British Empire.

British descendants continued to control South Africa’s government until 1948, when the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party won elections. The Afrikaners gained power
at a time when colonial rule was being replaced in the rest of Africa by a collection of independent states run by the local black population. The Afrikaners vowed to resist pressures to turn over South Africa’s government to blacks, and the Nationalist Party created the apartheid laws in the next few years to perpetuate white dominance of the country.

Because they opposed apartheid, other countries cut off most relations with South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. Foreign companies such as Ford and General Motors stopped operating factories in South Africa, and foreign athletes and teams refused to play in the country. However, neighboring countries felt compelled to maintain economic ties with South Africa because they needed to ship their goods through South African ports. South Africa also played an important economic role in the entire southern Africa region because it provided jobs for unemployed people from the much poorer neighboring countries, and it supplied the more developed countries with mineral resources critical for manufacturing and chemical processes, including chromium, platinum, and manganese.
To ensure further geographic isolation of different races, the South African government designated ten so-called homelands for blacks. The white minority government expected every black to become a citizen of one of the homelands and to move there. More than 99 percent of the population in the ten homelands was black.

The first four homelands designated by the government were called Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, and Venda (Figure 7–10). Bophuthatswana included six discontinuous areas, Transkei three discontinuous areas, and Venda two discontinuous areas. South Africa declared Bophuthatswana, Transkei, and Venda to be independent countries during the 1970s, but no other government in the world recognized the claim.

The first four homelands comprised about 9 percent of South Africa’s land area and 19 percent of the population; if the government policy had been fully implemented, the ten black homelands together would have contained approximately 44 percent of South Africa’s population on only 13 percent of the land.

**Dismantling of Apartheid.** The white-dominated government of South Africa repealed the apartheid laws in 1991, including restrictions on property ownership and classification of people at birth by race. The principal anti-apartheid organization, the African National Congress, was legalized, and its leader, Nelson Mandela, was released from jail after more than 27 years of imprisonment. When all South Africans were permitted to vote in national elections for the first time, in 1994, Mandela was overwhelmingly elected the country’s first black president. Whites were guaranteed representation in the government during a 5-year transition period, until 1999. South Africa no longer considered the four homelands to be independent countries.

Now that South Africa’s apartheid laws have been dismantled and the country is governed by its black majority, other countries have reestablished economic and cultural ties. However, the legacy of apartheid will linger for many years: South Africa’s blacks have achieved political equality, but they are much poorer than white South Africans. Average income among white South Africans is about ten times higher than that of blacks.

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**KEY ISSUE 2**

**Why Have Ethnicities Been Transformed into Nationalities?**

- Rise of nationalities
- Multinational states
- Revival of ethnic identity

Ethnicity and race are distinct from nationality, another term commonly used to describe a group of people with shared traits. Nationality is identity with a group of people who share legal attachment and personal allegiance to a particular country. It comes from the Latin word nasci, which means “to have been born.”

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**Rise of Nationalities**

A nation or nationality is a group of people tied together to a particular place through legal status and cultural tradition. Nationality and ethnicity are similar concepts in that membership in both is defined through shared cultural values. In principle, the cultural values shared with others of the same ethnicity derive from religion, language, and material culture, whereas those shared with others of the same nationality derive from voting, obtaining a passport, and performing civic duties.

In the United States, the term nationality is generally kept reasonably distinct from ethnicity and race in common usage. The American nationality identifies citizens of the United States of America, including those born in the country and those who immigrated and became citizens. Ethnicity identifies groups with distinct ancestry and cultural traditions, such as African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Chinese Americans, or Polish Americans. Race distinguishes blacks and other persons of color from whites.

Thus every citizen living in the United States is a member of the American nationality, and every American is a member of a race, though only some Americans identify with an ethnicity. A Moroccan living in the United States (perhaps attending a university or working at the United Nations) could be distinct from an American by all three features at the same time—dark skin color would distinguish by race, birth and citizenship in Morocco would distinguish by nationality, and following the Islamic religion and speaking the Arabic language would distinguish by ethnicity.

Descendants of nineteenth-century immigrants to the United States from central and Eastern Europe identify themselves today by ethnicity rather than by nationality. When most Czechs, Germans, Poles, and Slovenes migrated to the United States, there were no countries called Czech Republic (or Czechoslovakia), Germany, Poland, or Slovenia. These ethnicities lived in Europe as subjects of the Austrian emperor, Russian czar, or Prussian kaiser.

U.S. immigration officials recorded the nationality of immigrants—that is, the place of birth and departure from Europe—and U.S. data concerning the origin of immigrants is organized by nationality. But immigrants considered ethnicity more important than nationality, and that is what they have preserved through distinctive social customs.

The United States forged a nation in the late eighteenth century out of a collection of ethnic groups gathered primarily from Europe and Africa, not through traditional means of issuing passports (Afro-Americans weren’t considered citizens then) or voting (women and African Americans couldn’t vote then), but through sharing the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. To be an American meant believing in the "unalienable rights" of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

In Canada the Québécois are clearly distinct from other Canadians in language, religion, and other cultural traditions. But do the Québécois form a distinct ethnicity within the Canadian nationality or a second nationality separate altogether from Anglo-Canadian? The distinction is critical,
because if Québécois is recognized as a separate nationality from Anglo-Canadian, the Québec government would have a much stronger justification for breaking away from Canada to form an independent country (refer to Figure 5–18).

Outside North America, distinctions between ethnicity and nationality are even muddier. We have already seen in this chapter that confusion between ethnicity and race can lead to discrimination and segregation. Confusion between ethnicity and nationality can lead to violent conflicts.

Nation-States

Ethnic groups have been transformed into nationalities because desire for self-rule is a very important shared attitude for many of them. To preserve and enhance distinctive cultural characteristics, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without interference. The concept that ethnicities have the right to govern themselves is known as self-determination.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, political leaders have generally supported the right of self-determination for many ethnicities and have attempted to organize Earth’s surface into a collection of nation-states. A nation-state is a state whose territory corresponds to that occupied by a particular ethnicity that has been transformed into a nationality. Yet despite continuing attempts to create nation-states, the territory of a state rarely corresponds precisely to the territory occupied by an ethnicity.

NATION-STATES IN EUROPE. Ethnics were transformed into nationalities throughout Europe during the nineteenth century. The French nationality fused together French ethnic cultural traditions, including the French language and the Roman Catholic religion, with a belief in the values of the French Revolution of 1789, expressed in the phrase “liberté, égalité, fraternité” (liberty, equality, brotherhood). When France was ruled by kings, the French people went to war out of loyalty to the king. Under Napoleon Bonaparte, the French people went to war for the principles of the nation of France.

Most of Western Europe was made up of nation-states by 1900. They disagreed over their boundaries and competed to control territory in Africa and Asia. Eastern Europe included a mixture of empires and states that did not match the distribution of ethnicities. Following their defeat in World War I, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires were dismantled, and many European boundaries were redrawn according to the principle of nation-states.

During the 1930s, German National Socialists (Nazis) claimed that all German-speaking parts of Europe constituted one nationality and should be unified into one state. They pursued this goal forcefully, and other European powers did not attempt to stop the Germans from taking over Austria and the German-speaking portion of Czechoslovakia, known as the Sudetenland. Not until the Germans invaded Poland (clearly not a German-speaking country) in 1939 did England and France try to stop them, marking the start of World War II.

DENMARK: THERE ARE NO PERFECT NATION-STATES. Denmark is a fairly good example of a European nation-state, because the territory occupied by the Danish ethnicity closely corresponds to the state of Denmark. The Danes have a strong sense of unity that derives from shared cultural characteristics and attitudes and a recorded history that extends back more than 1,000 years. Nearly all Danes speak the same language—Danish—and nearly all the world’s speakers of Danish live in Denmark.

But even Denmark is not a perfect example of a nation-state. The country’s 80-kilometer (50-mile) southern boundary with Germany does not divide Danish and German nationalities precisely. The border region, known as Schleswig-Holstein, historically was part of Denmark. Denmark lost the region to Germany during the nineteenth century, but after the German defeat in World War I, the people in North Schleswig voted to rejoin Denmark. As a result, some German speakers live in Denmark, and some Danish speakers live in Germany.

To dilute the concept of a nation-state further, Denmark controls two territories in the Atlantic Ocean that do not share Danish cultural characteristics. One is the Faeroe Islands, a group of 21 islands ruled by Denmark for more than 600 years. The nearly 50,000 inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands speak Færoese (see red area in Figure 5–6).

Denmark also controls Greenland, the world’s largest island, which is 50 times larger than Denmark proper. Only 13 percent of Greenland’s 57,000 residents are considered Danish; the remainder are native-born Greenlanders, primarily Inuit. In 1979 Greenlanders received more authority from Denmark to control their own domestic affairs. One decision was to change all place names in Greenland from Danish to the local Inuit language. Greenland is now officially known as Kalaallit Nunaat, and the capital city was changed from Godthaab to Nuuk.

Nationalism

A nationality, once established, must hold the loyalty of its citizens to survive. Politicians and governments try to instill loyalty through nationalism, which is loyalty and devotion to a nationality. Nationalism typically promotes a sense of national consciousness that exalts one nation above all others and emphasizes its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations. People display nationalism by supporting a state that preserves and enhances the culture and attitudes of their nationality.

For many states, the mass media are the most effective means of fostering nationalism. Americans regard independent news media as a strength and a watchdog over government. But most countries regard an independent source of news as more of a risk than a benefit to the stability of their government. Consequently, only a few states permit mass media to operate without government interference. Nearly all countries control, or at least regulate, most forms of communications, including mail, telephone, telegraph, television, radio, and satellite transmissions. The government either owns or controls newspapers in many countries.

States foster nationalism by promoting symbols of the nation-state, such as flags and songs. The symbol of the hammer and sickle on a field of red was long synonymous with the beliefs of communism. After the fall of communism, one of the first acts in a number of Eastern European countries was
to redesign flags without the hammer and sickle. Legal holidays were changed from dates associated with Communist victories to those associated with historical events that preceded Communist takeovers. One of the strongest forms of political protest is to burn a state’s flag, and there is wide support in the United States for laws to make burning the Stars and Stripes illegal.

Nationalism is also instilled through the creation of songs extolling the country’s virtues. Nearly every state has a national anthem, which usually combines respect for the state with references to the nation’s significant historic events or symbols of unity:

Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

The unifying force of such a song is very powerful, especially to older people and to those who have served in a country’s armed forces.

Nationalism can have a negative impact. The sense of unity within a nation-state is sometimes achieved through the creation of negative images of other nation-states. Travelers in southeastern Europe during the 1970s and 1980s found that jokes directed by one nationality against another recurred in the same form throughout the region, with only the name of the target changed. For example, “How many [fill in the name of a nationality] are needed to change a lightbulb?” Such jokes seemed harmless but in hindsight reflected the intense dislike for other nationalities that led to conflict in the 1990s.

Nationalism is an important example of a centripetal force, which is an attitude that tends to unify people and enhance support for a state. (The word centripetal means “directed toward the center”; it is the opposite of centrifugal, which means to spread out from the center.) Most nation-states find that the best way to achieve citizen support is to emphasize shared attitudes that unify the people.

Multinational States

A state that contains more than one ethnicity is a multi-ethnic state. In some multi-ethnic states, ethnicities all contribute cultural features to the formation of a single nationality. Belgium is a good example of a multi-ethnic state. As discussed in Chapter 5, Belgium is divided among the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons. Both groups consider themselves as belonging to the Belgian nationality.

Other multi-ethnic states, known as multinational states, contain two ethnic groups with traditions of self-determination that agree to coexist peacefully by recognizing each other as distinct nationalities. A multinational state contains two or more nationalities with traditions of self-determination. Relationships among nationalities vary in different multinational states. In some states, one nationality tries to dominate another, especially if one of the nationalities is much more numerous than the other, whereas in other states nationalities coexist peacefully. The people of one nation may be assimilated into the cultural characteristics of another nation, but in other cases, the two nationalities remain culturally distinct.

One example of a multinational state is the United Kingdom, which contains four main nationalities—England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The four display some ethnic differences, but the main reason for considering them as distinct nationalities is that each had very different historical experiences. Wales was conquered by England in 1282 and formally united with England through the Act of Union of 1536. Welsh laws were abolished, and Wales became a local government unit. English became the official language of Wales, although Welsh is still spoken and is now being preserved (see Chapter 5).

Scotland was an independent country for nearly a thousand years, until 1603 when Scotland’s King James VI also became King James I of England, thereby uniting the two countries. The Act of Union in 1707 formally merged the two governments, although Scotland was allowed to retain its own systems of education and local laws. England, Wales, and Scotland together comprise Great Britain, and the term British refers to the combined nationality of the three groups.

Northern Ireland, along with the rest of Ireland, was ruled by the British until the 1920s, as discussed in Chapter 6. The 1801 Act of Union created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. During the 1920s most of Ireland became a separate country, but the northern portion—with a majority of Protestants—remained under British control. The official name of the country was changed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Today the four nationalities hold little independent political power, although Scotland and Wales now have separately elected governments. The main element of distinct national identity comes from sports. England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland field their own national soccer teams and compete separately in major international tournaments, such as the World Cup. The most important annual rugby tournament, known as the Five Nations’ Cup, includes teams from England, Scotland, and Wales, as well as Ireland and France. The history of English conquest, the other nationalities typically root against England when it is playing teams from other countries.

Former Soviet Union: The Largest Multinational State

The Soviet Union was an especially prominent example of a multinational state until its collapse in the early 1990s. When the Soviet Union existed, its 15 republics were based on the 15 largest ethnicities. Less numerous ethnicities were not given the same level of recognition. With the breakup of the Soviet Union into 15 independent countries, a number of these less numerous ethnicities are now divided among more than one state. The 15 republics that once constituted the Soviet Union are now independent countries (Figure 7–11).

These 15 newly independent states consist of five groups:

- Three Baltic: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
- Three European: Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine
- Five Central Asian: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
- Three Caucasus: Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia
- Russia
Reasonably good examples of nation-states have been carved out of the Baltic, European, and some Central Asian states. On the other hand, peaceful nation-states have not been created in any of the small Caucasian states, and Russia is an especially prominent example of a state with major difficulties in keeping all of its ethnicities centered.

NEW BALTIC NATION-STATES. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are known as the Baltic states for their location on the Baltic Sea. They had been independent countries between the end of World War I in 1918 and 1940, when the former Soviet Union annexed them under an agreement with Nazi Germany.

Of the three Baltic states, Lithuania most closely fits the definition of a nation-state, because ethnic Lithuanians comprise 83 percent of its population. In Estonia, ethnic Estonians comprise only 68 percent of the population; in Latvia, only 58 percent are ethnic Latvians. Russians comprise 6 percent of the population in Lithuania, 26 percent in Estonia, and 30 percent in Latvia. Those percentages have declined since independence in the early 1990s, as ethnic Russians emigrated from the Baltic states back into nearby Russia.

These three small neighboring Baltic countries have clear cultural differences and distinct historical traditions. Most Estonians are Protestant (Lutherans), most Lithuanians are Roman Catholics, and Latvians are predominantly Lutheran with a substantial Roman Catholic minority. Estonians speak a Uralic language related to Finnish, whereas Latvians and Lithuanians speak languages of the Baltic group within the Balto-Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family.

NEW EUROPEAN NATION-STATES. To some extent, the former Soviet republics of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine now qualify as nation-states. Belarusians comprise 81 percent of the population of Belarus, Moldovans comprise 78 percent of the population of Moldova, and Ukrainians comprise 78 percent of the population of Ukraine.

The ethnic distinctions among Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Russians are somewhat blurred. The three groups speak similar East Slavic languages, and all are predominantly Eastern Orthodox Christians (some western Ukrainians are Roman Catholics).

Belarusians and Ukrainians became distinct ethnicities because they were isolated from the main body of Eastern Slavs—the Russians—during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was the consequence of Mongolian invasions and conquests by Poles and Lithuanians. Russians conquered the Belarusian and Ukrainian homelands in the late 1700s, but after five centuries of exposure to non-Slavic influences, the three Eastern Slavic groups displayed sufficient cultural diversity to consider themselves as three distinct ethnicities.

Russians actually constitute two-thirds of the population in the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine. The Crimean Peninsula had been part of Russia until 1954, when the Soviet government turned over its administration to Ukraine, as a gift in honor of the 300th anniversary of Russian-Ukrainian friendship.

As long as both Russia and Ukraine were part of the Soviet Union, the Russians living in the Crimea were not concerned about the republic to which they were attached. After Russia and Ukraine became separate countries, a majority of the Crimeans voted to become independent of Ukraine. Control of the Crimean Peninsula was also important to both Russia and Ukraine because one of the Soviet Union's largest fleets was stationed there. The two countries agreed to divide the ships and to jointly maintain the naval base at Sevastopol.

Compounding the problem in the Crimea, 166,000 Tatars have migrated there from Central Asia in recent years. The Tatars once lived in the Crimea, but the Soviet leadership, suspecting them of sympathizing with the Germans during World War II, deported them to Central Asia. The Tatars prefer to be governed by Ukraine because of long-standing suspicion of the Russians, who dominated the government of the Soviet Union.

The situation is different in Moldova. Moldovans are ethnically indistinguishable from Romanians, and Moldova (then called Moldavia) was part of Romania until the Soviet Union seized it in 1940. When Moldova changed from a Soviet republic back to an independent country in 1992, many Moldovans pushed for reunification with Romania, both to reunify the ethnic group and to improve the region's prospects for economic development.

But it was not to be that simple. When Moldova became a Soviet republic in 1940, its eastern boundary was the Dniester.
River. The Soviet government increased the size of Moldova by about 10 percent, transferring from Ukraine a 3,000-square-kilometer (1,200-square-mile) sliver of land on the east bank of the Dniester. The majority of the inhabitants of this area, known as Trans-Dniestria, are Ukrainian and Russian. They, of course, oppose Moldova’s reunification with Romania.

**NEW CENTRAL ASIAN STATES.** The five states in Central Asia carved out of the former Soviet Union display varying degrees of conformance to the principles of nation-state. Together the five provide an important reminder that multinational states can be more peaceful than nation-states.

In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the leading ethnic group has an overwhelming majority—85 percent Turkmen and 80 percent Uzbek, respectively. Both ethnic groups are Muslims who speak an Altaic language. They were conquered by Russia in the nineteenth century, but Russians comprise only 4 percent of the population in Turkmenistan and 6 percent in Uzbekistan. Turkmen and Uzbeks are examples of ethnicities split into more than one country, the Turkmen between Turkmenistan and Russia, and Uzbeks among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Kyrgyzstan is 65 percent Kyrgyz, 14 percent Uzbek, and 13 percent Russian. The Kyrgyz—also Muslims who speak an Altaic language—resent the Russians for seizing the best farmland when they colonized this mountainous country early in the twentieth century.

In principle, Kazakhstan, twice as large as the other four Central Asian countries combined, is a recipe for ethnic conflict. The country is divided between Kazakhs, who comprise 53 percent of the population, and Russians, at 30 percent. Kazakhs are Muslims who speak an Altaic language similar to Turkish, whereas the Russians are Eastern Orthodox Christians who speak an Indo-European language. Tensions exist between the two groups, but Kazakhstan has been peaceful, in part because it has a somewhat less depressed economy than its neighbors.

In contrast, Tajikistan—79 percent Tajik, 15 percent Uzbek, and only 1 percent Russian—would appear to be a stable country, but it suffers from a civil war among the Tajik people, Muslims who speak a language in the Indic group of Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European language. The civil war has been between Tajiks who are former Communists and an unusual alliance of Muslim fundamentalists and Western-oriented intellectuals. Fifteen percent of the population has been made homeless by the fighting.

**Russia: Now the Largest Multinational State**

Russia officially recognizes the existence of 39 nationalities, many of which are eager for independence. Russia’s ethnicities are clustered in two principal locations (Figure 7–12). Some are located along borders with neighboring states, including Buryats and Tuvinian near Mongolia, and Chechen, Dagestan, Kabardin, and Ossetian near the two former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Overall, 20 percent of the country’s population is non-Russian.

Other ethnicities are clustered in the center of Russia, especially between the Volga River basin and the Ural Mountains. Among the more numerous in this region are Bashkirs, Chuvash, and Tatars, who speak Altaic languages similar to Turkish, and Mordvins and Udmurts, who speak Uralic languages similar to Finnish. Most of these groups were conquered by the Russians in the sixteenth century under the leadership of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible).

Independency movements are flourishing because Russia is less willing to suppress these movements forcibly than the Soviet Union had once been. Particularly troublesome for the Russians are the Chechens, a group of Sunni Muslims who speak a Caucasian language and practice distinctive social customs.

Chechnya was brought under Russian control in the nineteenth century only after a 50-year fight. When the Soviet Union broke up into 15 independent states in 1991, the Chechens declared their independence and refused to join the newly created country of Russia. Russian leaders ignored the declaration of independence for 3 years but then sent in the Russian army in an attempt to regain control of the territory.

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**FIGURE 7–12** Ethnicities in Russia. Russians are clustered in the western portion of Russia, and the percentage declines to the south and east. The largest numbers of non Russians are found in the center of the country between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains and near the southern boundaries.
Russia fought hard to prevent Chechnya from gaining independence because it feared that other ethnicities would follow suit. Chechnya was also important to Russia because the region contained deposits of petroleum. Russia viewed political stability in the area as essential for promoting economic development and investment by foreign petroleum companies.

RUSSIANS IN OTHER STATES. Decades of Russian domination left a deep reservoir of bitterness among other ethnicities once part of the Soviet Union. Because Russians were the dominant ethnicity in the Soviet Union, they were blamed for confiscating property and prohibiting the use of local languages in schools, hospitals, and factories.

Years after the demise of the Soviet Union, Russian soldiers have remained stationed in other countries, in part because Russia cannot afford to rehouse them. Other ethnicities fear that the slow withdrawal of Russian troops indicates that the Russians are trying to reassert the dominance over the economies and governments of other countries that they once exercised as the dominant ethnicity in the Soviet Union.

For their part, Russians claim that they are now subject to discrimination as minorities in countries that were once part of the Soviet Union. Some of the countries once part of the Soviet Union have passed laws making it difficult for Russians to vote or to qualify as citizens with full civil rights. Russians are being passed over for hiring and promotion unless they learn the local languages. Yet, despite local hostility, Russians living in other countries of the former Soviet Union feel that they cannot migrate to Russia, because they have no jobs, homes, or land awaiting them there.

Turmoil in the Caucasus
The Caucasus region, an area about the size of Colorado, is situated between the Black and Caspian seas and gets its name from the mountains that separate Russia from Azerbaijan and Georgia. The region is home to several ethnicities, with Azeris, Armenians, and Georgians the most numerous. Other important ethnicities include Abkhazians, Chechens, Ingush, and Ossetians. Kurds and Russians—two ethnicities that are more numerous in other regions—are also represented in the Caucasus.

When the entire Caucasus region was part of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government promoted allegiance to communism and the Soviet state and quelled disputes among ethnicities, by force if necessary. But with the breakup of the region into several independent countries, long-simmering conflicts among ethnicities have erupted into armed conflicts.

Each ethnicity has a long-standing and complex set of grievances against others in the region. But from a political geography perspective, every ethnicity in the Caucasus has the same aspiration—to carve out a sovereign nation-state. The region’s ethnicities have had varying success in achieving this objective, but none have fully achieved it.

AZERIS. Azeris (or Azerbaijanis) trace their roots to Turkish invaders who migrated from Central Asia in the eighth and ninth centuries and merged with the existing Persian population. An 1828 treaty allocated northern Azeri territory to Russia and southern Azeri territory to Persia (now Iran). In 1923 the Russian portion became the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union’s breakup in 1991, Azerbaijan again became an independent country.

More than 7 million Azeris now live in Azerbaijan, 91 percent of the country’s total population. Another 16 million Azeris are clustered in northwestern Iran, where they constitute 24 percent of that country’s population. Azeris hold positions of responsibility in Iran’s government and economy, but Iran restricts teaching of the Azeri language.

Azerbaijan is a good example of a fragmented state: the western part of the country, Nakhichevan (named for the area’s largest city), is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by a 40 kilometer (25-mile) corridor belonging to Armenia.

ARMENIANS. More than 3,000 years ago Armenians controlled an independent kingdom in the Caucasus. Converted to Christianity in 303, they lived for many centuries as an isolated Christian enclave under the rule of Turkish Muslims. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were killed in a series of massacres organized by the Turks. Others were forced to migrate to Russia, which had gained possession of eastern Armenia in 1828.

After World War I the allies created an independent state of Armenia, but it was soon swallowed by its neighbors. In 1921, Turkey and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Armenia between them. The Soviet portion became the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and then an independent country in 1991. Armenians comprise 98 percent of the population in Armenia, making it the most ethnically homogeneous country in the region.

Armenians and Azeris both have achieved long-held aspirations of forming nation-states, but the two have been at war with each other since 1988 over the boundaries between the two nationalities (Figure 7-13). The conflict concerns possession of Nagorno-Karabakh, a 5,000-square-kilometer
transferred from Georgia to Russia and united with North Ossetia, already part of Russia.

**Revival of Ethnic Identity**

Europeans thought that ethnicity had been left behind as an insignificant relic, such as wearing quaint costumes to amuse tourists. Karl Marx wrote that nationalism was a means for the dominant social classes to maintain power over workers, and he believed that workers would identify with other working-class people instead of with an ethnicity. But Europeans were wrong, because in the late twentieth century ethnic identity once again became more important than nationality, even in much of Europe.

**Ethnicity and Communism**

From the end of World War II in 1945 until the early 1990s, attitudes toward communism and economic cooperation were more important political factors in Europe than the nation-state principle. For example, the Communist government of Bulgaria repressed cultural differences by banning the Turkish language and the practice of some Islamic religious rites. The government took these steps to remove what it saw as obstacles to unifying national support for the ideology of communism. More than 1 million Bulgarian citizens of Turkish ancestry migrated to Turkey. The town of Bursa, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Istanbul, became the largest settlement of Turkish refugees from Bulgaria.

Until they lost power in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Communist leaders in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union used centripetal forces to discourage ethnicities from expressing their cultural uniqueness. Writers and artists were pressured to conform to a style known as “socialist realism,” which emphasized Communist economic and political values. Use of the Russian language was promoted as a centripetal device throughout the former Soviet Union. It was taught as the second language in other Eastern European countries. The role of organized religion was minimized, suppressing a cultural force that competed with the government.

The Communists did not completely suppress ethnicities in Eastern Europe: the administrative structures of the former Soviet Union and two other multi-ethnic Eastern European countries—Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia—recognized the existence of ethnic groups. In the Soviet Union, 15 republics were created as principal units of local government. Six local units were created in Yugoslavia, and two in Czechoslovakia. All were designed to coincide as closely as possible with the territory occupied by the most numerous ethnicities. Ten of the Soviet Union’s 15 republics and one in Yugoslavia were further divided into local government units to grant some autonomy to ethnicities that were too few to merit designation as republics.

**Rebirth of Nationalism in Eastern Europe**

Ethnic identity was effectively suppressed by Communists when they controlled the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. But nationalism is once again important in forming peoples’ cultural identities in the region.
In Eastern Europe the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia during the 1990s gave more numerous ethnicities the opportunity to organize nation-states. But the less numerous ethnicities found themselves existing as minorities in multinational states, or divided among more than one of the new states. Especially severe problems have occurred in the Balkans, a rugged, mountainous region where nation-states could not be delineated peacefully.

With the fall of the Communist government, Bulgaria's Turkish minority pressed for more rights, including permission to teach the Turkish language as an optional subject in school. But many Bulgarians opposed these efforts. Although communism declined in importance in Bulgaria—as well as in other former Communist countries in Eastern Europe—it was replaced by an ideology that encouraged traditional cultural features, such as language and religion.

The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia were dismantled largely because minority ethnicities opposed the long-standing dominance of the most numerous ones in each country—Russians in the Soviet Union, Serbs in Yugoslavia, and Czechs in Czechoslovakia. The dominance was pervasive, including economic, political, and cultural institutions.

No longer content to control a province or some other local government unit, ethnicities sought to be the majority in completely independent nation-states. Republics that once constituted local government units within the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia generally made peaceful transitions into independent countries—as long as their boundaries corresponded reasonably well with the territory occupied by a clearly defined ethnicity.

Slovenia is a good example of a nation-state that was carved from the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Slovenes comprise 93 percent of the population of Slovenia, and nearly all the world's 2 million Slovenes live in Slovenia. The relatively close coincidence between the boundaries of the Slovene ethnic group and the country of Slovenia has promoted the country's relative peace and stability, compared to other former Yugoslavian republics.

For new nation-states in Eastern Europe such as Slovenia, sovereignty has brought difficulties in converting from Communist economic systems and fitting into the global economy (see Chapters 9 and 11). But their problems of economic reform are minor compared to the conflicts that have erupted in portions of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where nation-states could not be created.