

Ethnic Conflicts in History

Yugoslavia / Balkans

Before the siege of Sarajevo and the death camps of Kosovo, the Balkan region experienced the brutality of ethnic wars.

Bosnia, once part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), is no stranger to ethnic violence. Inhabited by several different people, including Serbs, Croats and Muslim Slavs (Bosniaks), Bosnia was one of six autonomous republics created after World War II.

When Josip Broz Tito re-created Yugoslavia into six Communist-ruled republics in 1945, the beginnings of ethnic disparity unraveled. Five of the republics were "homelands" of nations officially recognized by the Yugoslav government and who names they bore: Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. Bosnia had no singular nation, but under Tito's rule, ethnic conflict was kept on the back burner.



When Tito died in 1980, the Yugoslav republics dealt with economic crisis. The long-mounting tensions between nations in Bosnia simmered more intensely. In 1988, president of the Serbian League of Communists Slobodan Milosevic rallied supporters to re-establish Communist rule and Serbian dominance in Bosnia.

Thomas Mockaitis, a history professor at DePaul University and expert on ethnic relations in Bosnia, said that people like Milosevic were very powerful during the region's most distressful time after the SFRY split in 1991 and 1992.

"Cynical politicians who exploited people's fears during economically difficult times manipulated ethnic differences," Mockaitis said.

After the separation of the SFRY, the former six republics began declaring their independence - a move that would entice the Serbian majority to wage ethnic war against the republics.

The four wars that ensued from 1991 to 1995 and later in 1999 are known as the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. At the epicenter of the most brutal and deadly genocides in history, Milosevic launched an offensive against Kosovar Albanians, bashing 1.5 million people from their homes and murdering nearly 3,000 people in mass numbers, acts deemed by NATO as ethnic cleansing.

The turbulent history of the Balkans gave way to one of the most horrific demonstrations of ethnic hatred resulting in massive loss and quality of life. Although the wars are over, the consequences of the past will linger over present and future generations of citizens in the Balkans.

Rwanda

Genocides do not happen suddenly. Ethnic hate must begin and develop before genocide.

For Rwanda, Belgian colonists first planted seeds of ethnic hate when they distinguished the two ethnicities, minority Tutsi and majority Hutu, by the number of cows each owned, according to the official Rwandan government Web site.

However, it was the Rwandan government itself that perpetuated the ethnic hate since its 1962 independence, which eventually led to the killing of 500,000 to 1 million Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu in 1994.

“The 1994 genocide was the result of 30 years of teaching the ideology of division by all regimes that were in power since 1962,” said Michel Masozera, a Rwandan Tutsi who was in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the genocide.

The extremist Hutu dictatorships initiated seven massacres of political opponents and Tutsi between independence and the 1994 genocide, according to an International Media Support report. IMS promotes and strengthens press freedom and professional journalism in conflicted areas.

Meanwhile, exiled minority Tutsi who numbered around 600,000 organized multiple failed attacks on the dictatorships. Tutsi living in Rwanda were persecuted after every attempt, according to the Rwandan government's Web site.



Finally in 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a group of exiled Tutsi in Uganda, north of Rwanda, invaded Rwanda and demanded democratic change to the one-party, Hutu-extremist political system.

By 1992, the Hutu dictatorship accepted a transitional government and a peace agreement under the Arusha Accords, according to the IMS report.

However, democratization threatened the ruling Hutu elite and they ignored the agreement. Death squads and militias began killing political opponents who were targeted by the government and the hate media in 1992.

Hours after the Rwandan president died in a plane crash on April 6, 1994, the genocide began: during the first week, 20,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were murdered. Three months later, between 500,000 and 1 million were murdered. More than 2 million fled.

The RPF won the war in July 1994 and the genocide stopped.

However, Masozera, a University of Florida graduate, still struggles to understand how a government could deliberately kill its own population.

He said the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda helps Rwanda reconcile with its people.

“Of course, it will take some time to heal survivors of the genocide,” Masozera said.

Russia/Chechnya

In Russia’s North Caucas region, the federal subject of Chechnya has been the scene of conflict between separatists and the government of Russia for decades. Originally a [nationalist movement](#) wanting to separate from the former Soviet Union’s unyielding communist control, the rebels of Chechnya later on become more defined by Islam. After World War II, Joseph Stalin deported many of the Chechen ethnicity to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The uncle of the Tsarnaev Brothers [said](#) that they were both born in Kyrgyzstan.

Chechnya is part of the [Caucasus region](#), which is neighbor to and encompasses part of Russia.

Geopolitical map of the Caucasus Region (2008)



Two key military interventions on Russia's behalf make up their rather violent history. In 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent troops into Chechnya to rid of its separatist leader, [Dzhokhar Dudayev](#) who was killed two years later after being targeted by two laser-guided missiles. The war also took the lives of many Chechen citizens as well as Russian troops. A peace agreement in 1996 brought an end to the war and gave Chechnya autonomy.

The [Invasion of Dagestan](#) in 1999 by the Islamic International Brigade (IIB) based in Chechnya was led by [Shamil Basayev](#) and [Ibn al-Khattab](#). The IIB have been said to hold ties with the likes of Al-Qaeda. Their troops invaded Dagestan in favor of the separatist movement forming there. The victory of Russian in halting the progress of the militant Islamists brought about the Second Chechnya War in 1999. The war lasted for over nine years, overseen by President Vladimir Putin. Casualties of Chechen civilians have been estimated to be up to 50,000 with Russian numbers over 5,000.

In 2001, Russia tied its efforts of defeating Chechen rebels to that of the grand scale "war on terrorism." However, the names of Iraq and Afghanistan circulated the media more so by comparison.

The current leader of the Chechnya Republic, [Ramzan Kadyrov](#), was a former rebel is said to now be [pro-Moscow](#) and responsible for the relative inactivity of the Chechen separatists. His counter-terrorism has been [criticized](#) as harsh and [violating](#) human rights.

Spain

Spain has 5 ethnic regions . Galicia, Basque (Navarre, Catalonia, Castille), and Andalusia. Plain is pluralistic society. Basques try to separate. The ETA are a group carting out violence in Basque areas.

The present **Basque conflict**, also known as the **Spain-ETA conflict**, is an armed and political conflict between the [Spanish state](#), [France](#) and the [Basque National Liberation Movement](#), a group of social and political [Basque](#) organizations which sought [independence](#) from [Spain](#) and [France](#). The movement was built around the separatist organization [ETA](#)^{[4][5]} which since 1959 launched a campaign of attacks against Spanish administrations.



Darfur, Sudan

In 2003, two Darfuri rebel movements- the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)- took up arms against the Sudanese government, complaining about the marginalization of the area and the failure to protect sedentary people from attacks by nomads. The government of Sudan responded by unleashing Arab militias known as Janjaweed, or “devils on horseback”. Sudanese forces and Janjaweed militia attacked hundreds of villages throughout Darfur. Over 400 villages were completely destroyed and millions of civilians were forced to flee their homes.

In the ongoing genocide, African farmers and others in Darfur are being systematically displaced and murdered at the hands of the Janjaweed. The genocide in Darfur has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people. More than one hundred people continue to die each day; five thousand die every month. The Sudanese government disputes these estimates and denies any connection with the Janjaweed.



South Africa

After the National Party gained power in South Africa in 1948, its all-white government immediately began enforcing existing policies of racial segregation under a system of legislation that it called apartheid. Under apartheid, nonwhite South Africans (a majority of the population) would be forced to live in separate areas from whites and use separate public facilities, and contact between the two groups

would be limited. Despite strong and consistent opposition to apartheid within and outside of South Africa, its laws remained in effect for the better part of 50 years. In 1991, the government of President F.W. de Klerk began to repeal most of the legislation that provided the basis for apartheid.

East Timor (Indonesia)

Indonesian Occupation of 1975

Within days of East Timor being declared independent, on December 7, 1975 Indonesian military forces began operations to annex East Timor. Indonesia claimed that the East Timorese leaders had requested their assistance and protection. Within 4 years, all armed resistance had been quashed and Indonesia declared East Timor a province of Indonesia. It was not until after approximately a quarter of a century of deliberate torture and extrajudicial executions of the East Timorese by the Indonesian government and its military that East Timor finally voted in favor of independence in 1999. In 2002 East Timor became an independent nation.

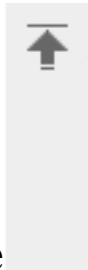


Roughly 25% or close to 200,000 of the East Timorese population had been eradicated during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. The war crimes that took place existed in numerous forms. The East Timorese were harassed, intimidated, detained, tortured, sexually assaulted, forced into resettlement camps, malnourished, starved, executed, and killed in combat. Civilian massacres, including the rape and murder of women and children, also took place. Women also faced sterilization and enforced marriages. Underlying all was a systematic and deliberate harmful mistreatment of the East Timorese by the Indonesians. The Indonesians justified this mistreatment as a response to the resistance to Indonesian occupation and rule by the East Timorese.



Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Updated: Wed, 12 Dec 2012



At A Glance

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in a seemingly intractable dispute over land claimed by Jews as their biblical birthright and by the Palestinians, who seek self-determination.

- **World's longest refugee crisis**
- **Humanitarian suffering in Gaza**

Despite repeated attempts to end the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, there is no peace settlement in sight.

Neither side has fulfilled the commitments it made under the 2003 roadmap - a phased timetable designed to lead to a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel put together by the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

Under that peace blueprint, the Palestinian Authority was to rein in militants, and it embarked on a U.S.-backed law-and-order campaign in the occupied West Bank. But Hamas, a militant group whose stated aim is the destruction of Israel, is in control of the Gaza Strip. Hamas has rejected Western calls to recognise Israel and renounce violence. Despite the roadmap's call for a halt to Israeli settlement activity, Israel continues to build within settlements in the West Bank and in Arab East Jerusalem.

Within the Palestinian Territories, a power struggle between rival Palestinian factions has led to the establishment of two administrations. Hamas controls Gaza, while the Fatah party controls the West Bank.

Fatah and Hamas signed a reconciliation agreement in May 2011, but it has not yet been implemented. The deal included an agreement to form a unity government, and to hold elections within a year. Israel said it would reject any government that included Hamas.

Nearly 50 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza – 2.1 million people – are refugees, many of whom live in crowded camps.

Life in the Palestinian territories has got worse in recent years and economic hardship has deepened.

Socio-economic conditions in Gaza, which is subject to the most severe Israeli restrictions, have deteriorated particularly sharply and the population is increasingly reliant on food aid.

At the end of 2008, Israel launched a major operation in Gaza with the declared aim of stopping Hamas militants from firing rockets into the Jewish state. The offensive, the biggest in four decades, killed hundreds including many civilians.

In November 2012, Israel launched an operation that began with the killing of Hamas's military chief Ahmed Al-Jaabari in a precision air strike on Nov. 14. It said the attack was in response to escalating missile strikes from Gaza. The following day two rockets from Gaza targeted Tel Aviv in the first attack on Israel's commercial capital in 20 years.

Israel followed up its attack by shelling Gaza from land, air and sea, and mobilised tens of thousands of military reservists along the border with Gaza.

The conflict lasted eight days, killing some 170 Palestinians and six Israelis, mostly civilians.

Israeli Palestinian Conflict

Today's tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians and their Arab neighbours date back to the early 20th century when Jews began migrating in significant numbers to Palestine, then under Ottoman Turkish rule.

The ensuing struggle for land and self-determination by both peoples led to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, a series of Israeli-Arab wars, two lengthy Palestinian uprisings and waves of Palestinian refugees.

Although modern Zionism - the idea of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine - began in the late 19th century, the land of Israel has been central to Jewish consciousness since Jewish exile in biblical times. Small Jewish communities lived peacefully in Palestine side by side with both Muslim and Christian Arabs for centuries.

In May 1948, Jews living in Palestine declared the establishment of the state of Israel.. Five Arab countries invaded immediately.

Many Jews saw the creation of Israel as the embodiment of their long-held aspiration for a land of their own, but for Palestinians the loss of their homes and land in 1948 became known as "Al Nakbar" - the catastrophe.

