

# CHAPTER 13: RELIGION, CULTURE, AND CONFLICT

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
  - A. Language and religion
    1. Two of the most powerful forces shaping the geography of culture
    2. Religious beliefs and histories can bitterly divide peoples who speak the same language
  - B. Religious conflicts usually involve more than differences in spiritual practices and beliefs
- II. Interfaith boundaries
  - A. Boundaries between the world's major faiths
    1. Some countries lie entirely within realms of individual world religions
    2. Other countries straddle *interfaith boundaries*—the boundaries between the world's major faiths
  - B. Nigeria
    1. Multilingual country with about 110 million inhabitants
    2. The north is a Muslim zone
    3. The south is a domain where Christianity prevails, along with local traditional religions (Figure 13-1)
    4. North and south ethnic groups have considerable disdain for each other
    5. In the past decade, fundamental religious division began to threaten the future of the state
    6. Northern Muslim preachers are calling for an “Islamic Republic” (Figure 13-2)
    7. Calls for secession are growing in the Christian south
    8. In the late 1990s, Nigeria was OPEC's fourth largest oil producer
    9. Breakup of Nigeria would have far-reaching implications
  - C. Sudan
    1. Muslim north and Christian south
    2. Constant conflict between the two
    3. *Sharia religious laws* were being imposed over the entire country
    4. The war has devastated the south
      - a) Millions have been dislocated
      - b) Hundreds of thousands have starved
    5. In the early twenty-first century, the war raged on
  - D. The African Horn
    1. Religious map of Ethiopia is more complicated than that of Nigeria or Sudan
      - a) Heart of the former mountain kingdom contains the cultural core area of Amharic (Coptic) Christians
      - b) Islam won some adherents at base of mountains, but Christian rulers maintained control
      - c) Military dictatorship was overthrown in 1991
      - d) Contains a large Muslim population of Somalis in its eastern zone
      - e) Problems still continue between the different religions
  - E. South Asia
    1. Part of Britain's colonial empire
      - a) Extended from Pakistan in the west to Bangladesh in the east
      - b) Included Kashmir to Sri Lanka
      - c) Astride a deep and divisive interfaith boundary
    2. In 1947 a political boundary was established between Islamic Pakistan and multicultural India

- a) Produced one of the largest human migrations of modern times
- b) Millions of Muslims crossed into Pakistan and Hindus moved into India
- 3. India proclaimed itself a secular federation and sporadic religious conflict followed for 30 years
- 4. In India during the 1980s, several events occurred that led to more intense conflict
  - a) The Sikhs campaigned for greater or outright independence (Figure 13-3)
    - (1) Demanded a separate state in the Punjab
    - (2) Indian army raided the Sikhs' holiest shrine causing more than 1000 deaths
    - (3) India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated by Sikh members of her bodyguard
  - b) Second development occurred during the late 1980s when the site of a holy shrine claimed by both Muslims and Hindus became a battleground
    - (1) Muslims regained control of the site
    - (2) In late 1992 a mob of Hindu fundamentalists stormed the mosque and demolished it
    - (3) In early 2002 the mosque was to be rebuilt, but new waves of violence erupted
  - c). Hinduism began to exhibit the sort of fundamentalism and militancy that had been associated with other faiths
    - (1) Beginnings can be traced to 1983
    - (2) On-going conflict with anti-Indian militants from Pakistan has helped fuel fundamentalist movement
  - d) Hindu fundamentalists have caused conflicts with Christianity as well
  - e) Surge in fundamentalism is reflected on the map
- 5. The rise of fundamentalism is affecting virtually all religions today
- F. The former Soviet Union
  - 1. Makeup of the Soviet Union when it was first formed
    - a) Fifteen Soviet Republics and other territories of lesser rank
    - b) Russia, the largest republic, was divided into 70 territories
    - c) Soviets inherited more than one hundred ethnic groups plus their:
      - (1) Languages, beliefs, and lifeways
      - (2) Parts of two great religious realms—the Eastern Orthodox Church and Islam
  - 2. The Soviets discouraged religious practice throughout the country
  - 3. Created a boundary to separate Christian and Muslim ethnic domains in Armenia and Azerbaijan (Figure 13-4)
  - 4. When the USSR collapsed, Soviet Republics became independent states, and ethnic strife broke out almost immediately
    - a) Christians and Muslims fought
    - b) Islam quickly revived in the central Asian republics
    - c) The Russian Orthodox Church is experiencing a resurrection
  - 5. Kazakhstan poses the most serious potential spatial problem
    - a) Islamic-Christian interfaith boundary runs right across the state
    - b) Virtually all Christians live in the north
    - c) Almost all Muslims live in the south
    - d) Unless the interfaith border becomes a political border a major problem could arise
- G. Europe
  - 1. Yugoslavia (Figure 13-5)
    - a) When the political system failed, the Muslims were attacked by Christians
    - b) *Ethnic cleansing* was also undertaken between the Christian factions
    - c) All Yugoslavians are of Slavic ancestry; what divides them is culture
  - 2. The history of Yugoslavia's beginnings through World War II is discussed

3. Conflicts in the 1990s
  4. The uneasy peace of today
  - H. Other interfaith boundaries
    1. Bangladesh—growing unrest between Muslims and Hindus
  - I. Sri Lanka—ongoing problems between Buddhists and Hindus
  - J. Southeast and Southwest Asia,
    1. Catholics and a minority of Muslim
    2. Israel's conflict with its neighbors
      - a) Conflict with the Palestinians has been going on since 1937-1938
      - b) UN created Israel after World War II
      - c) Conflicts in 1967 when Jews occupied Palestinian lands in Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights
      - d) Continuing discussion about the present-day conflict
- III. Intrafaith boundaries
- A. Europe
    1. A number of countries have *intrafaith boundaries*
    2. In the early 2000s majority do now have religious or ethnic conflicts
  - B. Northern Ireland
    1. The single most intractable problem in Western Europe
    2. Catholic and Protestant conflict
    3. Ireland partitioned by the British (Figure 13-7)
    4. Conflict over access to opportunities, civil rights, and political influence is actually the real issue
  - C. In the Islamic realm
    1. Conflict between Sunni and Shiite branches
    2. The Iran-Iraq conflict of the 1980s
    3. After the Gulf War, the Sunni-controlled army of defeated Iraq moved against the Shiite communities of the south (Figure 11-1)
    4. Conflict in Lebanon
  - D. Sense of Scale box: The Geography of Religious Diversity
- IV. Religious fundamentalism
- A. A worldwide drive by millions back to the basics of religious faith
    1. Often born out of frustration seen as:
      - a) Breakdown of society's mores and values
      - b) The loss of religious authority
      - c) Failure to achieve economic goals
      - d) The corruption of political systems
    2. People in one society see it and fear it in other societies without recognizing it in their own
    3. September attacks on the United States in September of 2001 reinforced American tendency to equate extreme fundamentalism with Islam
    4. Fundamentalism and extremism are closely related
    5. Today, all religions are affected by the forces of globalization
      - a) Some churches have changed with the times
      - b) Other churches have reaffirmed fundamental dogma and obstructed the influences of modernization
    6. This drive toward fundamentalism is creating a climate of mistrust
  - B. Christian fundamentalism
    1. The Catholic church
      - a) Issues giving rise to disputes—birth control and family planning

- b) Few women have managed to enter the hierarchy
  - c) Sought to ally itself with Islamic countries against advocates of population control
- 2. Christian fundamentalism most often associated with Protestant faiths
  - a) Preach a doctrine of strict adherence to literal precepts of the Bible
  - b) Have become increasingly active in political and social arenas
  - c) Gained considerable influence
- C. Looking Ahead box: The Changing Place of Religion
- D. Islamic fundamentalism
  - 1. The strict laws of Islam are not equally applied throughout the Muslim religious realm
  - 2. Affected by the modernization of the world
  - 3. Inconsistency leads to reaction among the masses of believers
  - 4. Even in "moderate" wings of Islam, fundamentalism is raising its head
  - 5. When the former Shah of Iran tried to modernize the state he provoked a religious movement that eventually overthrew his throne
  - 6. Shah replaced by an *ayatollah*—a supreme religious leader, whose rules and practices become law
  - 7. Events in Iran during the 1970s and 1980s were perhaps the most significant manifestation of the fundamentalist trend in organized religion
  - 8. Afghanistan under the Taliban
    - a) Sought to promote against the west a *jihad*—an Islamic holy war
    - b) Osama bin Laden one of the key figures in the extreme Islamic fundamentalist movement
    - c) Beliefs are a form of Islam known as Wahhabi Islam from the eighteenth century
  - 9. Extreme Islamic fundamentalists who resort to violence are relatively small in number
- E. Like religion generally, fundamentalism can constitute both a unifying and a divisive force
  - 1. In the United States fundamentalist “preachers” have divided the Protestant churches
  - 2. Conflict between Islamists and secularists in Algeria
  - 3. When the rise of fundamentalism is added to divisions created by interfaith and intrafaith boundaries, religion can plunge entire societies into conflict
  - 4. Religious feelings can quickly be translated into hostility and conflict