



**Macedonia:** Since the fifteenth-century conquest of much of southeastern Europe by the Turkish Ottoman Empire, conflict in the Balkan region has been precipitated by ethnic and religious enmity between Orthodox Christians and Muslims. An area of particular concern has been the interface between predominantly Orthodox Macedonia and predominantly Muslim Albania, particularly in the border region the two share with the former Yugoslav republic of Kosovo. Tensions between the Macedonian government and its Albanian (Muslim) minority were heightened by the fallout from the conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s between the Serbs and the Kosovar Albanians, backed by Albania. The resolution of this conflict by a NATO-led force in favor of the Kosovars led to emboldened feelings of Albanian patriotism in the region. Several sporadic incidents occurred along the Macedonian-Albanian border in late 2000, with more protracted and heavier combat between rebels and the Macedonian government forces occurring in the northern part of Macedonia (near the capital of Skopje) throughout 2001. The rebel forces assert they are only seeking to revise the Macedonian constitution and attain better rights for the Albanian minority in Macedonia. The Macedonian government is concerned that the Albanian minority centered in northern and western Macedonia wishes to secede and merge (along with Kosovo) into a Greater Albania, and suspects that Albania itself has encouraged this objective.



**Chechnya:** The area in southern Russia known as the Caucasus Region is home to a large variety of non-Russian ethnic groups; many are Muslim and resent centuries of Russian domination and Soviet-era totalitarianism. After the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, several of these ethnic groups began agitating for more autonomy from Moscow or for outright independence. One of the more vocal groups with a history of opposition to Moscow's rule were the Chechens. The Chechens declared themselves a sovereign nation in 1991 and by 1994 relations between the breakaway government in Chechnya and the Russian government had drastically deteriorated. In December of that year, Russian forces attacked Chechnya, beginning the first of two (1994–96 and 1999–present) full-scale military conflicts that have also crept into the neighboring Russian autonomous area of Dagestan, itself largely Muslim. In the mid- and late 1990s Russia experienced several terrorist attacks in cities throughout the nation which the Russian government attributed to Islamic extremists supporting Chechen independence. As a result, a second round of the conflict began in August 1999 with a full-scale Russian military assault on Dagestan and Chechnya. This assault is ongoing and continues to face intense resistance, with heavy casualties on both sides.



**Israel and Its Neighbors:** The modern state of Israel was created out of the former British Protectorate of Palestine, inhabited primarily by Muslim Arabs, after the Second World War. Conflict between Arabs and Israeli Jews has been a constant ever since. Much of the present tension revolves around the West Bank area, not part of the original Israeli state but taken from Jordan, an Arab country, in the Six-Day War of 1967. Many Palestinians had settled this part of Jordan after the creation of Israel and remain as a majority population in the West Bank region today. Israel has established many agricultural settlements within the region since 1967, angering Palestinian Arabs. For Israel, the West Bank is the region of ancient Judea and this region, won in battle, will not be ceded back to Palestinian Arabs without protracted or severe military action.

**Iraq and Kurdistan:** Where Turkey, Iran, and Iraq meet in the high mountain region of the Taurus and Zagros mountains, a nation of 25 million people exists. This nation is the Kurds, the occupants of this area for over 3,000 years but having no state, and receiving considerably less attention than other stateless nations like the Palestinians. Following the 1991 Gulf War between Iraq and a U.S.-led coalition of European and Arabic states, the United Nations demarcated a Kurdish “security zone” in northern Iraq. Continually under attack from Iraq to the south and beset internally by militant extremist groups like the Kurdish Workers party, the security zone is anything but. Unless three powerful states —Turkey, Iran, and Iraq—could be persuaded to give up major portions of their territory for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan, the security zone arrangement may be the closest the Kurds come to their ambition of territorial integrity and independence.



**Jammu and Kashmir:** When Britain withdrew from South Asia in 1947, the former states of British India were asked to decide whether they wanted to become part of a new Hindu India or a Muslim Pakistan. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the rulers were Hindu and the majority population was Muslim. The maharajah (prince) of Kashmir opted to join India, but an uprising of the Muslim majority precipitated a war between India and Pakistan over control of this high mountain region. In 1949 a cease-fire line was established by the UN, leaving most of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir in Indian hands. Since then Pakistan and India have waged intermittent skirmishes over the disputed territory that holds the headwaters of the Indus River, a life-giving stream to desert Pakistan. In 1999 extremist Muslim groups demanding independence escalated the periodic battles into a full-fledged, if small, war between two of Asia's major powers—both possessing nuclear weapons.

**Afghanistan (Taliban and Al-Qaeda):** In the aftermath of the tragic September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States (backed to varying degrees by its allies) has declared a massive and global “war on terrorism” and any states that may provide “safe harbor” to terrorists. To date, the most prominent target of this U.S. declaration of war has been the Taliban regime of Islamic extremists who controlled about 95 percent of the territory of the beleaguered nation of Afghanistan. International observers believe that the Taliban regime has welcomed and provided a base for the Al-Qaeda terrorist network dominated by Saudi expatriate and millionaire Osama bin Laden since the late 1990s. As a result of this intelligence, the U.S. and Britain have pursued a daily bombardment of key Al-Qaeda and Taliban installations inside Afghanistan and are poised to commit forces to a ground assault on that country (and possibly elsewhere) as this publication goes to press.



**Sri Lanka:** The island state of Sri Lanka, historically known as Ceylon, is potentially one of the most agriculturally productive regions of Asia. Unfortunately, two quite different peoples have occupied the island country: The Buddhist Sinhalese originally from northern India and long the dominant population in Sri Lanka, and the minority Hindu Tamil, a Dravidian people from south India. Since independence from Britain, Sri Lankan governments have sought to “resettle” the Tamil population in south India, actions that finally precipitated an armed rebellion by Tamils against the Sinhalese-dominated government. The Tamils at present are demanding a complete separation of the state into two parts, with a Tamil homeland in the north and along the east coast. At one time viewed as an island paradise, Sri Lanka is now a troubled country with an uncertain future.



**Congo:** The war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) has preoccupied the United Nations and African diplomats since 1999. Troops from Zimbabwe, Angola, Sudan, Chad and Namibia are now joined with the Congo’s President Laurent Kabila against his former allies Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, who each back several separate Congolese rebel groups. The origins of the conflict lie in the overthrow of long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko by Kabila’s army in May 1997 after a year of civil war. Kabila’s failure to call elections or stabilize the country’s economy led to further rounds of rebellion in the huge but fractious nation, rebellion supported by the economic and military assistance of neighboring Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Diplomats have called the conflict “Africa’s first world war”, and fear that it may destabilize the southern half of the continent, leading to massive refugee flows and abject poverty.