

Unresolved Tensions After World War I

The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom, but has debased it economically, politically, culturally, and spiritually.

—Indian National Congress, Declaration of Purna Swaraj
(Independence Day Resolution, January 26, 1930)

Essential Question: How did continuities and changes in territorial holdings create tensions after World War I?

As economic crises beset countries after World War I, unresolved disputes over the control of land continued to fester. The victors in the war, European powers and Japan, generally kept or expanded control over colonial territories. However, anti-imperial resistance was growing throughout Asia and Africa. In a larger context, the spread of nationalism in these regions was part of the same global trend that included the breakup of empires in Europe, the success of communism in Russia, and the spread of anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States. The example of Turkey’s push for self-determination was already discussed in Topic 7.1. Similarly, events such as the May 4th Movement in China and groups such as the Indian National Congress demonstrated how nationalism was spreading throughout the world.

Effects of the War

The effects of World War I varied around the world. The United States prospered because of all the war materials and agricultural products it sold to Britain and the other Allies. By contrast, the European countries that suffered the greatest damage in the war were economically devastated.

Effects on Colonial Lands While nationalist movements had been brewing for decades in colonies in South Asia and West Africa, the war renewed the hopes of people in these regions for independence. African and Asian colonial troops contributed thousands of soldiers to the Allied war effort. In addition, this disastrous war showed colonial peoples that imperial powers such as Britain and France were not invincible.

German propaganda during the war had predicted that colonial soldiers’ experience in the war would lead to a great uprising against colonial rule.

This did not materialize, although there were several local rebellions. Between November 1915 and September 1916, a large group of villages in French West Africa, between the Volta and Bani rivers in what later became Burkina Faso, united in an effort to drive out the French. It was only with a great effort and loss of life on both sides that the French managed to put down the revolt. The rebellion forced the French to recognize that they had an obligation to the people they colonized. After World War I, many war veterans from the French colonies assisted in colonial administration after they returned home.

Colonized people's war experiences raised their expectations. They thought that the principle of self-determination, as expressed in Wilson's Fourteen Points, would get them closer to self-rule. Nationalists in Africa and Asia hoped that the blood they had shed for their "home countries" would earn them some respect from Western Europe and thus begin a **decolonization** process.

However, the peace conference's **Big Three**—David Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson, and Georges Clemenceau (after Italy left)—were not interested in freeing the colonies. After World War I, European powers granted self-determination only to white countries in Eastern Europe. Middle Eastern lands that had been a part of the Ottoman Empire came under the control of France and Britain in the League of Nations mandate system. Former German colonies in Africa had the same fate. German territories and spheres of influence in East Asia and the Pacific were transferred to various victorious nations of World War I. India and nearly every nation in Africa—as well as most of the Middle East—continued to be controlled by European nations.

Wilson even refused to meet with a group of Vietnamese nationalists, including a young Ho Chi Minh, who asked to speak with him about self-determination for Vietnam. This rejection fueled stronger nationalist movements in colonies scattered across the southern rim of Asia and in parts of Africa. The seeds of African, Arab, and Asian nationalism were sown largely in the aftermath of World War I, although they did not come to fruition until much later.

The Mandate System

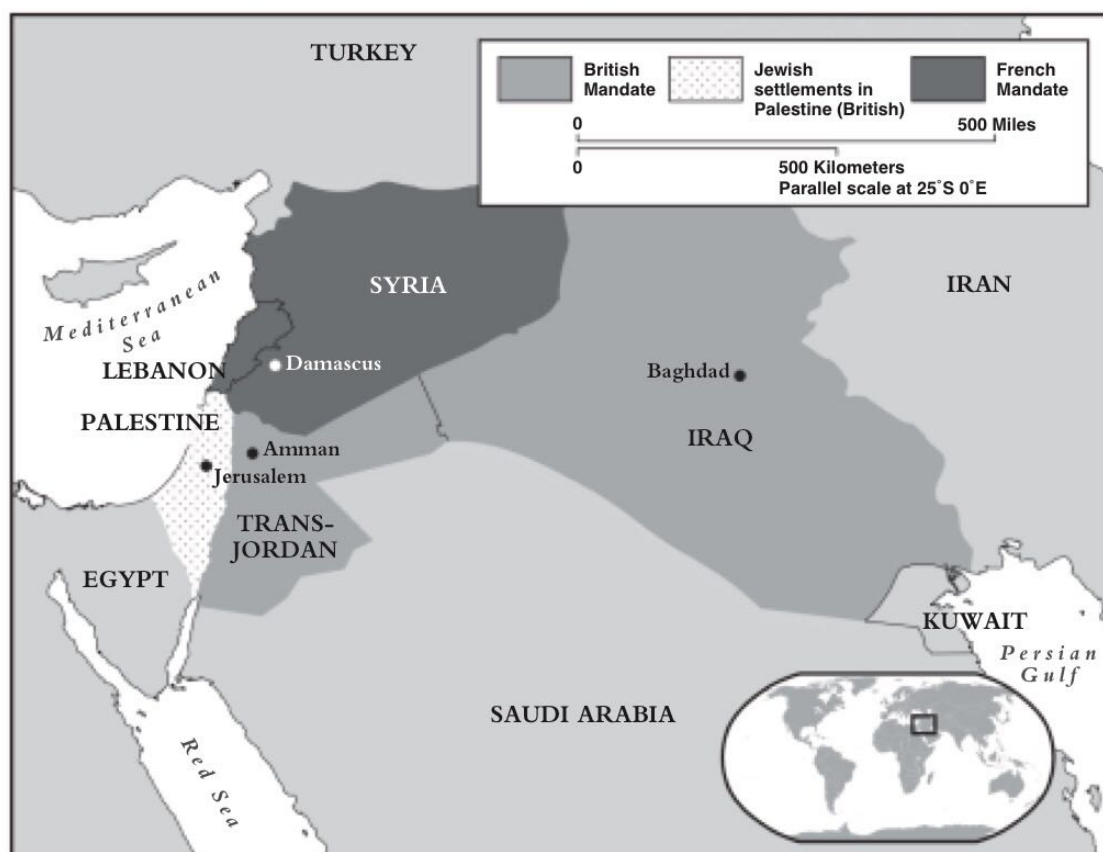
Arab rebels of the former Ottoman Empire were especially insulted by the results of the peace conference. They had been promised self-rule if they fought with the Allies. Instead, the Allies forgot all of their promises and, through the League of Nations, established a **mandate system** to rule the colonies and territories of the Central Powers. Article 22 of the League of Nations charter stated that colonized people in Africa and Asia required "tutelage" from more "advanced" nations in order to survive. Thus, the Allied countries—including France, Great Britain, and Japan—were able to increase their imperial holdings through a new form of colonization. For example, Cameroon, which had been a German colony, was divided and transferred to France and Britain as separate mandates. Japan seized the German-held islands of the Western Pacific.



The Middle East experienced enormous upheaval because of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq all became League of Nations mandates. These Arab states were not yet sovereign lands but virtual colonies of Great Britain and France. This infuriated the Arabs who lived in these lands and set the stage for a nationalist movement known as **Pan-Arabism**—an ideology that called for the unification of all lands in North Africa and the Middle East.

Another source of conflict arose in 1917, when the British government issued the **Balfour Declaration**, which stated that **Palestine** should become a permanent home for the Jews of Europe. Those who supported a Jewish homeland were known as **Zionists**. After the Allied victory in the Great War, European Jews moved in droves to Palestine, which Britain controlled.

Mandates in the Middle East After World War I



Anti-Colonialism in South Asia

The setback presented by the Paris Conference inspired anticolonial activists to redouble their efforts. In South Asia, the **Indian National Congress** formed in the late 19th century to air grievances against the colonial government. By the end of World War I in 1918, it had become a strong voice for independence.

Massacre at Amritsar In the spring of 1919, a group of Indian nationalists gathered in a public garden in Amritsar, Punjab, to protest the arrest of two freedom fighters. The protest took place during a Sikh festival, which had attracted thousands of villagers to the city, which Sikhs considered



holy. Although the throngs were peaceful, the British colonial government had recently made such public gatherings illegal. Armed colonial forces fired hundreds of shots into the unarmed crowd, killing an estimated 379 people and wounding 1,200 more.

The Amritsar massacre radicalized many Indians. It convinced moderate members of the Indian National Congress that independence from Britain was the only way forward.

Gandhi By the 1920s, **Mohandas Gandhi** had brought the congress's cause to the Indian masses and caught the attention of the world. His **satyagraha** (“devotion-to-truth”) **movement** embarked on a campaign of **civil disobedience** that encouraged Indians to break unjust laws and serve jail time. These actions, he believed, would stir the consciousness of the empire and the international community and expose the injustice of Britain's imperial system.

Gandhi, who came to be known by Indians as **Mahatma**, or “the great soul,” led a boycott against British goods. After returning to India from South Africa, Gandhi wore the traditional cotton Hindu *dhoti* rather than the Western-style suits he had worn as a lawyer in Natal. Wearing homespun clothes was a form of protest against British fabrics made from Indian cotton and sold to Indians at inflated prices.

One of Gandhi's first campaigns became known as the **Salt March**. British authorities had made it illegal for Indians to produce their own sea salt. The commodity was easy to make in the tropical country, but Britain wanted a monopoly on salt. In 1930, Gandhi led thousands of Indians to the Arabian Sea and simply picked up a few grains of salt, in defiance of Britain's unjust edict.



Source: GandhiServe Foundation. Wikimedia Commons

Gandhi (shirtless) and his followers during the Salt March of 1930

The Two-State Solution While anticolonial sentiment was building, leaders of the independence movement disagreed about how India should define its national identity. Muslim leader **Muhammad Ali Jinnah**, a member of the Muslim minority in the largely Hindu Indian National Congress, originally favored Muslim-Hindu unity but later proposed a two-state plan for South Asian independence. He was concerned that Muslim interests would be overwhelmed by Hindu concerns in an independent India. He proposed creating a separate state, **Pakistan**, that would include the heavily Muslim western and eastern parts of South Asia. This proposal made several leaders, including Gandhi and **Jawaharlal Nehru**, who eventually became India's first prime minister, anxious about the region's future. Although independence did not come for India and Pakistan until after World War II, the interwar years were critical times for the anticolonial movement. (Connect: Write a paragraph connecting 20th century tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India with India's earlier religious history. See Topic 1.3.)

Nationalism in East Asia

Korea, China, and Japan had not been formally colonized by Europe, but they did suffer from European domination. These countries also demonstrated the spread of the desire for self-determination.

The March First Movement in Korea The small country of Korea had suffered under increasing Japanese influence since the 1890s. In 1910, Japan took control of Korea. After World War I, Japan expected to expand its role in East Asia, just as European states did in the Middle East. The prospect of European support for a stronger Japan, and the mysterious death of the Korean emperor, caused Korean resentment to explode. On March 1, 1919, Koreans began a series of protests that involved as many as 2 million Koreans out of a population of 17 million. The occupying Japanese forces cracked down harshly, killing several thousand Koreans. But the **March First Movement** demonstrated the power of Korean nationalism.

The May Fourth Movement in China During World War I, China supported the Allies. Britain and France hired nearly 150,000 Chinese to work in factories, dig trenches and do other support work. China hoped that the victorious Allies would support China's desire to reclaim German-controlled land on the Shandong Peninsula in northeast China. However, Japan wanted the same land. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Great Britain and France sided with Japan. Infuriated, Chinese intellectuals and workers staged anti-Japanese demonstrations beginning on May 4, 1919. The **May Fourth Movement** symbolized China's growing nationalism and demand for democracy. Angered by Europe's support for Japan, many Chinese rejected Western-style government. They turned toward the Marxist model of the Soviet Union. Several May Fourth leaders joined the Chinese Communist

Party. In the years after the May Fourth protests, two main groups fought for power: the communists and the nationalists.

- The **Chinese Communist Party (CCP)** was founded in 1921. It was eventually led by **Mao Zedong** (or Mao Tse-tung), the son of a prosperous peasant, who was inspired by the communist revolution in Russia. Instead of energizing the working classes of Chinese cities, however, Mao believed that China's communist revolution could be based on the revolt of peasants, who made up the vast majority of China's population.
- The Chinese Nationalist Party, or **Kuomintang**, was led by Sun Yat-sen. He was devoted to full independence and industrialization, and he allied with Mao's forces to free China from foreign domination and overthrow the warlords. Following Sun's death in 1925, **Chiang Kai-shek** took control of the Nationalist Party. Chiang was a conservative and had a deep-seated distrust of communism. In 1927, Chiang's forces attacked and nearly annihilated Mao's forces, initiating the Chinese Civil War.

The Long March Mao and remnants of the Chinese Communist Party retreated into China's interior, where for several years they trained in hiding. In 1934, Chiang's forces again attacked Mao's army in the rural areas of Jiangxi. After the attack, Mao's forces began the **Long March**, a year-long, 6,000-mile long retreat. It traversed treacherous mountains, deep marshes, and extremely dry deserts. Of the 80,000 or more who began the Long March, only 10,000 remained to assemble in 1935 in northern China.

The Chinese Communist Party was weak after the Long March. However, peasants admired Mao and his army's tremendous stamina and their commitment to their ideals. This support among peasants would later be important for the success of the Communists in winning control of the country.

While the Communists were retreating on the Long March, the Nationalist Kuomintang continued to rule much of China during the 1930s. Chiang, however, had alienated many. Old traditions were losing support, but he advocated Confucianism. When opponents criticized him, he suppressed free speech. When people accused the Nationalists of corruption, he did not stop it.

China, Japan, and Manchukuo In 1935, the Nationalists and Communists in China suspended their civil war to unite against a more pressing danger: Japan. Seeking access to natural resources on the Asian mainland, Japan had invaded Manchuria in northern China in September 1931. Tensions increased when someone, either Chinese dissidents or Japanese soldiers, attacked a railway owned by Japan near Mukden. When the League of Nations condemned Japan's actions in Manchuria, Japan gave up its membership in the League and seized more land. In 1932, the Japanese set up a puppet state called **Manchukuo**. To make Manchukuo seem like an independent Chinese



state, it selected the last Chinese emperor to sit on its throne. (Connect: Create a timeline showing the steps Japan took as it moved from isolation to imperialism. See Topic 5.6.)

Japan continued to expand its empire until 1945, the year World War II ended. It seized the Philippines (under partial U.S. control at the time), the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya, Burma, and numerous Pacific islands. Japan termed these territories the **Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere**. Although Japan claimed to be liberating people from Western imperialism, people in the region experienced Japan as a conqueror.

Resistance to French Rule in West Africa

As in South Asia, people all over Africa were disappointed that their colonies did not achieve independence after World War I. Pro-independence movements in Africa began with European-educated intellectuals. For example, the future leader of Kenya, **Jomo Kenyatta**, studied in London. **Léopold Senghor**, the future leader of Senegal, studied in Paris. In Europe, African intellectuals learned to recognize the racial discrimination taking place in their homelands. Most members of the educated elite worked for the colonial government, if they were not self-employed attorneys or doctors.

Africans under colonial rule resisted the colonizers. Black workers in French West Africa staged a series of strikes, including a strike of railway workers in 1917 and a general strike in 1946. Some of these actions spread throughout French West Africa (Senegal, Benin, Ivory Coast, and Guinea). Strikers protested discriminatory wage and benefit policies and in some cases won a number of their demands through a compromise settlement.

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>GOVERNMENT: Policies decolonization mandate system Balfour Declaration civil disobedience</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: Leaders Big Three Mohandas Gandhi Muhammad Ali Jinnah Jawaharlal Nehru Mao Zedong Chiang Kai-shek</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Movements Pan-Arabism Indian National Congress satyagraha (devotion-to-truth) movement Salt March March First Movement May Fourth Movement Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Kuomintang Long March</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Countries Palestine Pakistan</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: Imperialism Amritsar Manchukuo Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere</p> <p>CULTURE: People Zionists Mahatma Jomo Kenyatta Léopold Sédar Senghor</p>