Decolonization after 1900

From its inception, South Vietnam was only considered to be an outpost in the war against communism.

—Nguyen Cao Ky (1930–2011)

Essential Question: How did people pursue independence after 1900?

In the 20th century, nationalist groups and leaders challenged colonial rule not only through land reform but also through political negotiation, as in India, and armed struggle, as in Angola (See Topic 8.3.) Struggles for independence after World War I and the failure of many independence movements added to anticolonial sentiments during World War II. Empires became politically unacceptable. European powers struggled to hold onto their colonies. Notions of freedom born of World War II rhetoric helped speed up decolonization. That process coincided with the Cold War and the development of the United Nations. Nguyen Cao Ky, a South Vietnamese military and political leader, noted (above) that his country's war was part of the Cold War.

Movements for Autonomy: India and Pakistan

The drive for Indian self-rule began in the 19th century with the foundation of the Indian National Congress. Its leader in 1920 was Mohandas Gandhi. Hindu and Muslim groups, united by their desire to get rid of the British, supported the independence movement in South Asia. The National Congress's tactics included mass civil disobedience, and it remained a powerful governmental force after Indian independence. The **Muslim League**, founded in 1906, advocated a separate nation for Indian Muslims.

Not all Indian leaders agreed with Gandhi's nonviolent, noncooperation movement or his call for unity between Muslims and Hindus. However, they put aside their differences until after World War II. Then leaders again demanded independence.

After the war, Britain grew weaker as India's fighting abilities grew stronger. When Britain failed to follow through on promises for more rights for Indians, Indian people increased their protests for full independence from British rule. The Royal Indian Navy Revolt in 1946 was instrumental in bringing Britain to the realization it could no longer rule India. As a result of

economic pressures from India and from its own sluggish postwar recovery, Britain was ready to negotiate independence in South Asia.

Division and Conflict Muslims feared living in an independent India dominated by Hindus. Distrust between Muslims and Hindus dated back centuries to the 8th century, when Muslims invaded Hindu kingdoms in northern India. Muslims campaigned for an independent Muslim country—Pakistan. India and Pakistan both gained independence in 1947.
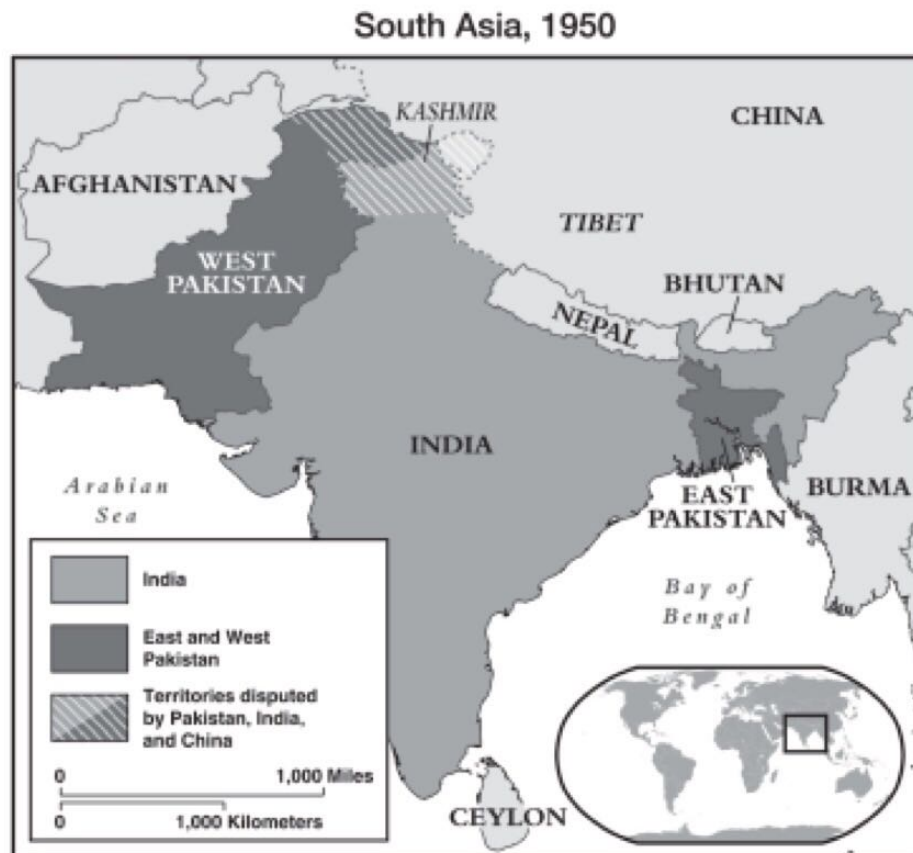
South Asia, 1950

Decolonization in Ghana and Algeria

Britain agreed to negotiate independence for its West African colony of the Gold Coast, just as it had for its colonies in South Asia. The Gold Coast combined with the former British Togoland to form Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence in the 20th century. (The new country of Ghana was smaller in area than the historic kingdom of the same name.) Negotiations led by the United Nations helped bring about Ghana's independence in 1957. Its first president, **Kwame Nkrumah**, took office in 1960.

Ideas from modern nation-states influenced Ghanaian nationalism. Nkrumah emulated nationalistic traditions he learned during his time in the United States and Britain. For example, Nkrumah constructed a national narrative that centered on having a historical past of glory and rich tradition, founding fathers, a currency, a flag, an anthem, museums, and monuments. He was responsible for numerous public works and development projects, such

as hydroelectric plants. However, some critics accused him of running the country into debt and allowing widespread corruption—an economic pattern that often happened in later African dictatorships. In 1964, Nkrumah claimed dictatorial powers when the voters agreed to a **one-party state**, with him as party leader.

Nkrumah strongly advocated Pan-Africanism, a term with multiple meanings. In the 19th century, American and British abolitionists called their plans to return former slaves to their homes in Africa Pan-Africanism or Africa for Africans. The country of Liberia was founded on this vision. In the second half of the 20th century, for some Africans, the term Pan-Africanism meant a celebration of unity of culture and ideas throughout the continent. These Pan-Africanists rejected intervention by former colonial powers.

In keeping with his vision of Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah founded the **Organization of African Unity (OAU)** in 1963. However, three years later, a military coup overthrew Nkrumah's government and expelled many foreigners from the country. Not until 2000 would Ghana witness a peaceful transfer of civilian power from one elected president to another.

Algeria In northern Africa, the French colony of Algeria endured far more violence than Ghana before becoming independent. Mounting social, political, and economic crises in Algeria resulted in political protests. The French government responded with restrictive laws and violence.

Many Algerians, driven by feelings of nationalism, campaigned for independence after World War II. The **Algerian War for Independence** began in 1954, and it involved many groups. Because so many French people lived in Algeria as settlers, the French government considered Algeria a part of France and was adamant that it could not become a separate country. The FLN (National Liberation Front) led the Algerian movement for independence. The FLN sought self-determination through guerrilla techniques against half a million French forces sent to Algeria. While French military casualties were relatively low, hundreds of thousands of Algerians died in the war, often in violent street-by-street battles. French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet confessed that there were "hundreds of thousands of instances of torture" by the French military in Algeria.

The Algerian conflict caused sharp divisions in France. The French Communist Party, powerful at the time, favored Algerian independence. Violence broke out in cities throughout France. In 1958, French President **Charles de Gaulle** had a new mandate for expanded presidential power under the constitution of the new Fifth Republic. De Gaulle planned the steps through which Algeria would gain independence. He then went straight to the people of France and Algeria to gain approval of his plan in a referendum, thereby bypassing the French National Assembly.

However, with the coming of independence in 1962, war broke out again in Algeria. Thousands of pro-French Algerians and settlers fled the country. The influx of these refugees into France created housing and employment

problems as well as increased anti-immigration sentiment. Violence in Algeria left between 50,000 and 150,000 dead at the hands of FLN and lynch mobs.

The first president of the new Algerian Republic was overthrown in 1965 in a military coup led by his former ally. The National Liberation Front continued in power under different leadership, making Algeria a single-party state for a number of years. The FLN maintained a socialist authoritarian government that did not tolerate dissent. Meanwhile, the government led a drive for modernization of industry and collectivization of agriculture.

Algerian Civil War In 1991, violence again surfaced in Algeria, this time in reaction to one-party rule. The Islamic Salvation Front won the first round in an election that was then canceled. A bloody **Algerian Civil War** followed (1991–2002), during which the FLN continued in control. The army chose President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999. In his second term, he attempted to be more inclusive of insurgents, although suicide bombings continued. In 2011, the military state of emergency, in place since 1992, was finally lifted in response to protests in the wake of major uprisings in nearby states, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

Comparing Ghana and Algeria Both Ghana and Algeria experienced growing pains under military rule. The main struggles were between those who favored multiparty states and those who favored single-party socialism. Ghana created a new constitution in 1992, easing the transfer of power between elected governments. One point of national pride was that a Ghanaian leader, Kofi Annan, became UN Secretary General in 1997. In Algeria, by contrast, religious tensions grew worse. As in other countries in North Africa and the Middle East, a growing right-wing Islamist movement that was willing to use violence challenged the power of mainstream Muslims. In 1992, an Islamist assassinated Algeria's president. As in Egypt and Turkey, the military responded by repressing Islamic fundamentalists. In 1997, Algeria banned political parties that were based on religion.

Negotiated Independence in French West Africa

As Britain negotiated independence with its African colonies, France did the same with its colonies in French West Africa. These included Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta, and other territories. France had controlled them since the late 1800s with small military forces. France used indirect rule, which relied on local chiefs, existing governments, and other African leaders to maintain stability.

Over the years, France invested in West Africa, building railroads, advancing agricultural development, and benefitting in trade revenue that grew substantially. But by the mid-1950s, various African political parties (democratic, socialist, and communist) and leaders arose in French West Africa. By 1959, many of the French West African countries had negotiated their independence from France.

Nationalism and Division in Vietnam

World War II interrupted France's long colonial rule in Indochina, but France reoccupied the southern portion of Vietnam when the war ended. A bloody struggle began against the forces of **Ho Chi Minh**, the communist leader of North Vietnam. He appealed to nationalist feelings to unite the country under a single communist government.

France responded by attempting to reestablish its colonial rule, sparking a Vietnamese war of independence that lasted until 1954. The peace treaty split the country into North and South Vietnam, with elections planned for 1956 that would reunite the country. However, many in South Vietnam, along with the United States, opposed the Communists and feared Ho would win the election. No election took place.

War broke out between the communist North and the South. U.S. military troops supported the South. South Vietnamese who supported the Communists, known as **Viet Cong**, fought a guerrilla war against U.S. troops.

As the Vietnam War worsened, American military involvement and casualties grew. In response, the antiwar movement became more vocal. President Richard Nixon began to withdraw U.S. troops in 1971; the last troops left in 1975. North Vietnam quickly gained control of South Vietnam. It is estimated that the Vietnam War resulted in between one million and two million deaths, including about 58,000 Americans. It also destabilized Southeast Asia. Communists soon won control of Laos and Cambodia, but the spread of communism stopped there.

Beginning in the 1980s, Vietnam introduced some market-based economic reforms. In following years, Vietnam and the United States reestablished trade and diplomatic relations. (Connect: Write an outline connecting Vietnam's fight for independence with the Vietnam War. See Topics 6.2 and 8.4.)

Struggles and Compromise in Egypt

Having long been under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt became a nominally independent kingdom in 1922. However, the British retained some of the same treaty rights there that they had held under their mandate following World War I. A 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty allowed more Egyptian autonomy. Still, it also allowed the British to keep soldiers in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal. The British army continued to influence Egyptian internal affairs.

Nasser Following World War II, Egypt became one of six founding members of the Arab League, which grew to 22 member states. In 1952, General **Gamal Abdel Nasser**, along with Muhammad Naguib, overthrew the king and established the Republic of Egypt. Naguib became its first president; Nasser its second. Nasser was a great proponent of Pan-Arabism, a movement promoting the cultural and political unity of Arab nations. Similar transnational movements would attempt to unite all Africans (Pan-Africanism) and all working people (communism).

Nasser's domestic policies blended Islam and socialism. He instituted land reform, transforming private farms into socialist cooperatives that would maintain the existing irrigation and drainage systems and share profits from crops. He nationalized some industries and businesses, including foreign-owned banks, taking them over and running them as state enterprises. However, Nasser touched off an international crisis when he nationalized the Suez Canal.

The Suez Crisis Built by Egyptian laborers—thousands of whom died while working on the project—with money from French investment between 1859 and 1869, the Suez Canal had been under lease to the French for 99 years. To the Egyptians, this lease symbolized colonial exploitation, which Nasser pledged to fight. In addition, the British owned interests in the canal, which they administered jointly with the French. In 1956, Nasser seized the canal, and Israel invaded Egypt at the behest of Britain and France. The two European countries then occupied the area around the canal, claiming they were enforcing a UN cease-fire. However, the United States and the Soviet Union opposed British and French actions and used the United Nations to broker a resolution to the **Suez Crisis**.

The removal of foreign troops was followed by an agreement for the canal to become an international waterway open to traffic of all nations under the sovereignty of Egypt. The UN deployed peacekeepers to the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Britain, France, and Israel were not happy with the interference of the United States in the Suez Crisis, but U.S. efforts led to a peaceful compromise. The incident also was an example of a nation maintaining a non-aligned position between the United States and the Soviet Union—the two superpowers in the Cold War.

Independence and Civil War in Nigeria

The western African country of Nigeria, the most populous state on the continent, gained independence from Britain in 1960. The **Biafran Civil War** began in 1967 when the Igbos, a Westernized, predominantly Christian tribe in the southeastern oil-rich Niger River Delta area, tried to secede from the northern-dominated government. The Igbos sought autonomy because of targeted attacks against them by the Hausa-Fulani Islamic group in the north. They declared themselves an independent nation called Biafra.

The Igbos' secession movement failed, and Biafra ceased to exist when the war ended, in 1970. Nigeria granted amnesty to a majority of Igbo generals, but civilian government did not return. A series of military coups with generals in command of the government continued until the 1999 election of Olusegun Obasanjo, who presided over a democratic civilian government called the Fourth Republic of Nigeria.

In an effort to prevent tribalism from destroying the country, the government established a federation of 36 states with borders that cut across ethnic and religious lines. However, friction continued between Christian Yoruba, Igbo groups in the south, and Islamic groups in the northern states.

The constitution of Nigeria permitted states to vote for a dual legal system of secular law and shariah. Eleven states voted for this option. In an additional effort to discourage ethnic strife, the constitution encouraged intermarriage among the ethnic groups.

Problems remained in the Niger River Delta, which had rich oil deposits. Citizens complained that the national government exploited oil resources without returning wealth to the region. Also, they contended that the oil companies had polluted their lands and rivers. Militants set fire to oil wells and pipelines in protest.

Canada and the "Silent Revolution" in Quebec

Quebec is the largest of Canada's provinces, and its history is deeply rooted in French culture. France's North American colonial territory in the early 1700s spanned from Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico. By the late 1700s, England controlled what was called New France, beginning a cultural and political divide in Quebec. People in New France were mainly Catholic, while the English-speaking parts of Britain's Canadian colony were mainly Protestant.

The Quebecois historically aligned themselves with France rather than England. Over the centuries, efforts to create a separate independent state have flared up—sometimes with violent results. The **Quiet Revolution** of the 1960s involved much political and social change in Quebec, with the Liberal Party gaining power and reforming economic policies that led to further desires for separation from the rest of British-controlled Canada. French Canadian nationalism expanded, and splinter groups adopted extreme tactics, including terrorist bombings that began in 1963. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, a native of Quebec, was able to preserve the country's unity. Later, in 1995, a referendum to make Quebec an independent nation failed by a narrow margin.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

GOVERNMENT: Leaders	GOVERNMENT: Wars, Conflicts, and Compromises	SOCIETY: Pro-Independence Organizations
Kwame Nkrumah	Algerian War for Independence	Muslim League
Charles de Gaulle	Algerian Civil War	Organization of African Unity (OAU)
Ho Chi Minh	Suez Crisis	
Gamal Abdel Nasser	Biafran Civil War	SOCIETY: Military-Political Organizations
GOVERNMENT: Structures	Quiet Revolution	Viet Cong
one-party state		