

# Africa, the Middle East, and Asia in the Era of Independence

## The Challenges of Independence

- Nationalism continued to be a force in newly independent nations, often used by leaders against departing Europeans. Yet when the latter did leave, improvements were not as great as many expected. Distribution of goods already in short supply often led to difficulties. Struggles for independence had often brought about unity, which could disappear when the foreign regimes departed. When artificial boundaries established between rival peoples disappeared, conflict often broke out. **Bangladesh** established its independence following years of conflict arising from the partition of India. The work of just keeping countries together absorbed a great deal of energy
- Rapidly growing populations were a problem in all of the developing countries. New crops, especially those from the New World, led to population growth, as did better infrastructures under colonial rule. Moreover, since the early 20th century, health care has added to population growth. The problem has been most obvious in Africa, where population growth rates have been extremely high, in spite of the AIDS epidemic. Developing countries, behind in industrialization, had trouble feeding or employing their growing populations. Cultural attitudes have prevented birth control from becoming popular, in particular in areas where religion or society requires sons. Infant mortality has also dropped.
- The move from rural to urban areas that occurred in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries occurred also in developing nations, with the difference that industrialization is generally absent, leaving newcomers unemployed and destitute. Urban poor are often a volatile political force. Urban sprawl includes large unplanned shantytowns. Overpopulation in rural areas has had a profound environmental impact.
- Women's suffrage was often incorporated into new constitutions, although women's roles have often expanded only slowly. The example of such powerful women as **Indira Gandhi**—daughter of **Jawharlal Nehru**—or **Corazon Aquino** is misleading, because they came to prominence through their husbands or fathers. **Benazir Bhutto**, prime minister of Pakistan, was preceded in the office by her father. Early marriages and large families leave the majority of women in

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developing countries little time for other pursuits. Malnourishment among women is high because of the tradition of giving the best food to their children and husbands. Rights granted by law are often severely limited by **religious revivalism** in many countries.

- Nationalist leaders hoped to industrialize, but were hampered by insufficient capital. Cash crops and mineral resources are key in many nations. These **primary products** have been subject to price swings, leaving nations vulnerable to market forces. Leaders in Africa and the Middle East have often blamed the **neo-colonial economy**, but other factors play a part. In many countries, a tiny minority absorbs a disproportionate amount of revenue. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have aided industry in developing nations, but the aid often required economic restructuring.

### Paths to Economic Growth and Social Justice

- Leaders of new nations are still seeking solutions to the problems of development.
- Authoritarian rule has been a common, but largely unsuccessful, response. The example of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana illustrates the point. Genuinely wishing for reform, he finally opted for Soviet support, alienating Western powers. Crucial revenue from cocoa exports dropped when cocoa prices fell. To stay in power, Nkrumah resorted to oppression and to the celebration of what he called a unique version of socialism. He accepted comparisons with Confucius and Mohammad, increasing opposition. Suppressed dissenters rose up during his brief absence in 1966 and deposed him. Military regimes have succeeded Nkrumah.
- Military leaders have often used the force at their disposal to impose control after order has broken down. Western governments tended to support these military leaders because they are generally anti-communist. Military dictatorships have varied considerably, from the rule of Idi Amin in Uganda, to that of **Gamal Abdul Nasser** in Egypt. The Egyptian **Free Officers Movement** had its roots in the 1930s, beginning with a nationalist agenda. It was founded by Egyptian officers opposed to Turkish rule and influence. It was allied for a time to the **Muslim Brotherhood**, founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. The latter movement focused on social reform. The murder of al-Banna in 1949 failed to stop the movement. Egypt's defeat in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and anger over British occupation of the Suez Canal led to a coup in 1952. The Free Officers took control, and Nasser emerged as leader. The state was used as a tool to bring about land reforms and to establish an educational system. The regime controlled foreign investment and managed to gain control of the Suez Canal zone. Land reform was flawed by corruption and by the maneuvers of large landowners. The Aswan Dam project created significant, unforeseen problems. **Anwar Sadat** succeeded Nasser, reversing many of the latter's programs. Private initiative was favored over state-run projects. Sadat also reversed the policy of hostility to Israel. His successor, **Hosni Mubarak**, has generally followed Sadat's course. The problems of population growth and massive poverty continue.

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- India, since it gained independence, has managed to avoid military rule. Rulers such as Nehru have pursued social reform and economic development, while protecting civil rights in a democratic state. Nehru mixed public with private investment. The **Green Revolution** has increased agricultural yields. High-tech industry has also been an important part of the economy. Yet India's overpopulation problem is immense, and in spite of a growing middle class, a large part of the nation has not benefited from development.
  - Among postcolonial nations, Iran underwent a revolution under the **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**. Iran had never been colonized, but had come under Western influence. Modernization under the Pahlavi shahs was briefly stopped by a coup, but they were returned to power with the CIA's support. The shah alienated both the ayatollahs and the mullahs. Attempts at land reform angered the landowners. A drop in oil prices brought the country to revolution in 1979. Khomeini's promises of purification and a return to the golden age of the prophet were aimed at removing the shah and the Pahlavi dynasty. Like the Mahdi, Khomeini claimed to be divinely led. Iran was purged of Western influence, and moderate and leftist Iranians were condemned. Secularism was eliminated from the law. The new government planned land reforms, but Saddam Hussein led Iraq's seizure of Iranian territory, leading the two nations to war. The Iran-Iraq war resulted in devastation for Iran, which finally signed an armistice in 1988. Without regime change, the country did experience some easing of restrictions, and more open elections took place in the 1990s.
  - Several African countries, including Angola and Mozambique, were still under colonial powers into the 1970s. South Africa stood out, however, as by far the largest country still under white rule. The Afrikaners had imposed white rule in their system of **apartheid**. Blacks and whites were kept strictly segregated. Overpopulated **homelands** were reserved for "tribal" groups. The Afrikaners ruled a police state. The **African National Congress** and other black organizations were declared illegal. **Walter Sisulu** and **Nelson Mandela** were two of many African leaders imprisoned. Another, **Steve Biko**, part of the Black Consciousness movement, was killed in custody. From the 1960s, African guerillas emerged, countered by suppression. International pressure coupled with exhausting wars against Namibia and Angola led to a change in attitude in the South African government. **F. W. de Klerk** and fellow moderate Afrikaners began to undo apartheid. All adult South Africans were allowed to vote in the 1994 elections, which brought Nelson Mandela and the ANC to power. Ethnic hostility still plagues the country, in spite of the peaceful ending of apartheid.
  - Some patterns emerge when examining the new nations. India was particularly successful in creating a democratic state, partly because modern India continues prequest traditions on the subcontinent. In the Middle East, Islam continues to be a dominant factor. In Africa as in India, the impacts of colonization have merged with older traditions. In the case of Africa, this often means a tendency toward "Big Man" rule.

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### Multiple-Choice Questions

- The boundaries of many contemporary states, especially African nations,
  - generally conform to elements of physical geography such as rivers.
  - have been rearranged since independence.
  - are subject to frequent change.
  - are representative of ethnic realities in the region or continent.
  - were set by colonial rivalries irrespective of ethnic or cultural realities.
- In order to rule their colonies, Europeans frequently
  - established a parliamentary system and allowed their subjects to vote.
  - used one group to rule and played groups against each other.
  - brought in foreign bureaucrats.
  - failed to utilize traditional native elites.
  - encouraged land reform and industrialization.
- All of these modern African problems resulted from or were exacerbated by European colonial policies EXCEPT:
  - intertribal warfare based on linguistic, cultural, and religious differences.
  - wars of independence and secession by excluded ethnic groups.
  - lack of loyalties to the nation-state.
  - widespread reliance on the military and generals to rule nations.
  - privileged economic and social elites ruling without mass support.
- Most problems affecting modern states in postcolonial Africa and Asia can be traced to
  - overpopulation.
  - industrialization.
  - continuing neo-colonialism.
  - linguistic, cultural, and religious differences.
  - international warfare.
- The most destabilizing aspect of the 20th-century demographic transition in Africa and Asia has been the
  - rapid growth of the older segment of the population, especially the elderly.
  - international migration by productive populations to richer nations.
  - decrease in poverty.
  - increase of the productive portion of the population, especially those between 15 and 50.
  - extreme urbanization with its accompanying urban problems that drain most national resources.
- Which statement BEST describes women's situation in postcolonial Africa and Asia?
  - While women have legal equality, they are rarely afforded equal opportunity for jobs, education, and politics.
  - Upper-class educated women have established rights and exercise considerable power.
  - Women's life spans in the developing world are longer than their male counterparts.
  - Women are allowed to vote and encouraged to participate in the political process.
  - As religious and cultural traditions erode and secularism spreads, women are acquiring rights.
- The army has become an important institution in many nations since 1950 for all of these reasons EXCEPT:
  - army units are usually disciplined and loyal to officers.
  - it has a monopoly on force and power within society.
  - soldiers and officers are often more educated and technically trained.
  - the army is less susceptible to religious and ethnic rivalries.

- (E) no other local or native institutions survived the colonial era.
8. India differs from other ex-colonial 20th-century nations such as Pakistan, Egypt, Burma, and Nigeria in that
- (A) its army constantly intervenes in national politics.
  - (B) it has avoided overpopulation.
  - (C) it preserved civilian and democratic rule of law and government since independence.
  - (D) it has failed to develop an important industrial and business sector.
  - (E) it has avoided sectarian religious strife.
9. In the contemporary world economic system, ex-colonial Asian and African nations have
- (A) developed industrialized, free market economies.
  - (B) built considerable infrastructures to support industry and commerce.
  - (C) attracted foreign developmental capital and industries from wealthier nations.
  - (D) remained largely sources for exportable raw minerals and cash crops.
  - (E) relied on tourism to develop.
10. During the last decades of the 20th century, the event that has most determined Iranian development has been the
- (A) autocratic reign of the shah, Reza Pahlavi.
  - (B) religious revolution of the ayatollahs.
  - (C) alliance with the United States.
  - (D) war with Iraq.
  - (E) discovery and development of oil.

### Free-Response Question

*Compare and contrast nationalism in 20th-century Africa with 19th-century European nationalism.*

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## ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS

### Multiple-Choice Questions

- **1. (E) is correct.** This has meant that countries often contain a number of hostile ethnicities.
- **2. (B) is correct.** For instance, the British in India often worked with native princes.
- **3. (D) is correct.** Military rule emerged in the postcolonial era.
- **4. (A) is correct.** Overpopulation is the root of many problems, straining resources and exacerbating the effects of industrialization, ethnic hostility, and other problems.
- **5. (E) is correct.** Urban areas have grown enormously, creating large areas of poverty and, often, volatile groups.
- **6. (A) is correct.** In spite of great expansion of women's roles around the world, actual opportunity generally lags behind legal guarantees.
- **7. (E) is correct.** Other traditions have survived, but the monopoly on force and its relative neutrality have often led to military takeovers.
- **8. (C) is correct.** In spite of the hostilities following the partition of the subcontinent, and in spite of continuing ethnic tension, India has preserved a civilian democratic government.
- **9. (D) is correct.** Although moving toward industrialization, most of these nations have relied on primary products.

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- **10. (B) is correct.** The regime of the ayatollahs has affected Iran's economy, government, culture, and international relations.

***Free-Response Essay Sample Response***

*Compare and contrast nationalism in 20th-century Africa with 19th-century European nationalism.*

Nationalism in both was both unifying and destructive, an effective tool for bringing peoples together in opposition to some real or perceived menace. In both cases, nationalism brought nations together, to make them stronger vis-à-vis enemies. In the case of Europe, these were generally neighbors, while in Africa, initially at least, the enemies were colonial powers. In both, some ethnicities were excluded from power, with important differences. In Europe, nations defined themselves, creating boundaries and nationalities at the same time. Yet ethnic minorities often existed and were marginalized. In Africa, on the contrary, borders were the largely artificial creations of colonizers. The result was countries that were often not nations, in spite of attempts to rally nationalist feelings. While both patterns featured repressed ethnicities, the problems were greater in Africa because opposition ethnic groups were larger.