

Independence and Development in the Global South

1914—PRESENT

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“During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”¹

Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s nationalist leader, first uttered these words in 1964 at his trial for treason, sabotage, and conspiracy to overthrow the apartheid government of his country. Convicted of those charges, he spent the next twenty-seven years in prison, sometimes working at hard labor in a stone quarry. Often the floor was his bed, and a bucket was his toilet. For many years, he was allowed one visitor a year for thirty minutes and permitted to write and receive one letter every six months. When he was finally released from prison in 1990 under growing domestic and international pressure, he concluded his first speech as a free person with the words originally spoken at his trial. Four years later in 1994, South Africa held its first election in which blacks and whites alike were able to vote. The outcome of that election made Mandela the country’s first black African president, and it linked South Africa to dozens of other countries all across Africa and Asia that had thrown off European rule or the control of white settlers during the second half of the twentieth century.

VARIOUSLY CALLED THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE OR DECOLONIZATION, that process carried an immense significance

Nelson Mandela: In April 1994, the long struggle against apartheid and white domination in South Africa came to an end in the country’s first democratic and nonracial election. The symbol of that triumph was Nelson Mandela, long a political prisoner, head of the African National Congress, and the country’s first black African president. He is shown here voting in that historic election. (Peter Turnley/Corbis)

for the history of the twentieth century. It marked a dramatic change in the world's political architecture, as nation-states triumphed over the empires that had structured much of African and Asian life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It mobilized millions of people, thrusting them into political activity and sometimes into violence and warfare. Decolonization signaled the declining legitimacy of both empire and race as credible bases for political or social life. It promised not only national freedom but also personal dignity, abundance, and opportunity.

What followed in the decades after independence was equally significant. Political, economic, and cultural experiments proliferated across these newly independent nations, which during the cold war were labeled as the third world and now are often referred to as developing countries or the Global South. Their peoples, who represented the vast majority of the world's population, faced enormous challenges: the legacies of empire; their own deep divisions of language, ethnicity, religion, and class; their rapidly growing numbers; the competing demands of the capitalist West and the communist East; the difficult tasks of simultaneously building modern economies, stable politics, and coherent nations; and all of this in a world still shaped by the powerful economies and armies of the wealthy, already industrialized nations. The emergence of the developing countries onto the world stage as independent and assertive actors has been a distinguishing feature of world history in this most recent century.

Toward Freedom: Struggles for Independence

In 1900, European colonial empires in Africa and Asia appeared as permanent features of the world's political landscape. Well before the end of the twentieth century, they were gone. The first major breakthroughs occurred in Asia and the Middle East in the late 1940s, when the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Israel achieved independence. The period from the mid-1950s through the mid-1970s was the age of African independence as colony after colony, more than fifty in total, emerged into what was then seen as the bright light of freedom.

The End of Empire in World History

■ Comparison

What was distinctive about the end of Europe's African and Asian empires compared to other cases of imperial disintegration?

At one level, this vast process was but the latest case of imperial dissolution, a fate that had overtaken earlier empires, including those of the Assyrians, Romans, Arabs, and Mongols. But never before had the end of empire been so associated with the mobilization of the masses around a nationalist ideology; nor had these earlier cases generated a plethora of nation-states, each claiming an equal place in a world of nation-states. More comparable perhaps was that first decolonization, in which the European colonies in the Americas threw off British, French, Spanish, or Portuguese rule during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (see Chapter 17). Like their twentieth-century counterparts, these new nations claimed an international

status equivalent to that of their former rulers. In the Americas, however, many of the colonized people were themselves of European origin, sharing much of their culture with their colonial rulers. In that respect, the African and Asian struggles of the twentieth century were very different, for they not only asserted political independence but also affirmed the vitality of their cultures, which had been submerged and denigrated during the colonial era.

The twentieth century witnessed the demise of many empires. The Austrian and Ottoman empires collapsed following World War I, giving rise to a number of new states in Europe and the Middle East. The Russian Empire also unraveled, although it was soon reassembled under the auspices of the Soviet Union. World War II ended the German and Japanese empires. African and Asian movements for independence shared with these other end-of-empire stories the ideal of national self-determination. This novel idea—that humankind was naturally divided into distinct peoples or nations, each of which deserved an independent state of its own—was loudly proclaimed by the winning side of both world wars. The belief in national self-determination gained a global following in the twentieth century and rendered empire illegitimate in the eyes of growing numbers of people.

Empires without territory, such as the powerful influence that the United States exercised in Latin America and elsewhere, likewise came under attack from highly nationalist governments. An intrusive U.S. presence was certainly one factor stimulating the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. One of the outcomes of that upheaval was the nationalization in 1937 of Mexico's oil industry, much of which was owned by American and British investors. Similar actions accompanied Cuba's revolution of 1959–1960 and also occurred in other places throughout Latin America and elsewhere. National self-determination likewise lay behind the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the last of the major territorial empires of the twentieth century came to an inglorious end with the birth of fifteen new states. Although the winning of political independence for Europe's African and Asian colonies was perhaps the most spectacular challenge to empire in the twentieth century, that achievement was part of a larger pattern in modern world history (see Map 23.1).

Explaining African and Asian Independence

As the twentieth century closed, the end of European empires seemed an almost “natural” phenomenon, for colonial rule had lost any credibility as a form of political order. What could be more natural than for people to seek to rule themselves? Yet at the beginning of the century, few observers were predicting the collapse of these empires, and the idea that “the only legitimate government is self-government” was not nearly so widespread as it subsequently became. This situation has presented historians with a problem of explanation—how to account for the fall of European colonial empires and the emergence of dozens of new nation-states.



What international circumstances and social changes contributed to the end of colonial empires?

But why did this “fatal flaw” of European colonial rule lead to independence in the post–World War II era rather than earlier or later? In explaining the timing of the end of empire, historians frequently use the notion of “conjuncture,” the coming together of several separate developments at a particular time. At the international level, the world wars had weakened Europe, while discrediting any sense of European moral superiority. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, the new global super-powers, generally opposed the older European colonial empires. Meanwhile, the

United Nations provided a prestigious platform from which to conduct anticolonial agitation. All of this contributed to the global illegitimacy of empire, a transformation of social values that was enormously encouraging to Africans and Asians seeking political independence.

At the same time, social and economic circumstances within the colonies themselves generated the human raw material for anticolonial movements. By the early twentieth century in Asia and the mid-twentieth century in Africa, a second or third generation of Western-educated elites, largely male, had arisen throughout the colonial world. These young men were thoroughly familiar with European culture, were deeply aware of the gap between its values and its practices, no longer viewed colonial rule as a vehicle for their peoples' progress as their fathers had, and increasingly insisted on independence now. Moreover, growing numbers of ordinary people also were receptive to this message. Veterans of the world wars; young people with some education but no jobs commensurate with their expectations; a small class of urban workers who were increasingly aware of their exploitation; small-scale traders resentful of European privileges; rural dwellers who had lost land or suffered from forced labor; impoverished and insecure newcomers to the cities—all of these groups had reason to believe that independence held great promise.

A third approach to explaining the end of colonial empires puts the spotlight squarely on particular groups or individuals whose deliberate actions brought down the colonial system. Here the emphasis is on the “agency”—the deliberate initiatives—of historical actors rather than on impersonal contradictions or conjunctures. But which set of actors were most important in this end-of-empire drama?

Particularly in places such as West Africa or India, where independence occurred peacefully and through a negotiated settlement, the actions of colonial rulers have received considerable attention from historians. As the twentieth century wore on, these rulers were increasingly on the defensive and were actively planning for a new political relationship with their Asian and African colonies. With the colonies integrated into a global economic network and with local elites now modernized and committed to maintaining those links, outright colonial rule seemed less necessary to many Europeans. It was now possible to imagine retaining profitable economic interests in Asia and Africa without the expense and bother of formal colonial government. Deliberate planning for decolonization included gradual political reforms; investments in railroads, ports, and telegraph lines; the holding of elections; and the writing of constitutions. To some observers, it seemed as if independence was granted by colonial rulers rather than gained or seized by nationalist movements.

But these reforms and, ultimately, independence itself occurred only under considerable pressure from mounting nationalist movements. Creating such movements was no easy task. Political leaders, drawn from the ranks of the educated few, organized political parties, recruited members, plotted strategy, developed an ideology, and negotiated with one another and with the colonial state. The most prominent among them became the “fathers” of their new countries as independence dawned—Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Sukarno in Indonesia, Ho Chi

■ Description

What obstacles confronted the leaders of movements for independence?

Minh in Vietnam, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. In places where colonial rule was particularly intransigent—settler-dominated colonies and Portuguese territories, for example—leaders also directed military operations and administered liberated areas.

Agency within nationalist movements was not limited to leaders and the educated few. Millions of ordinary people decided to join Gandhi's nonviolent campaigns; tens of thousands of freedom fighters waged guerrilla warfare in Algeria, Kenya, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe; workers went on strike; market women in West Africa joined political parties, as did students, farmers, and the unemployed. In short, the struggle for independence did not happen automatically. It was deliberately made by the conscious personal choices of innumerable individuals across Asia and Africa.

In some places, that struggle, once begun, produced independence within a few years, four in the case of the Belgian Congo. Elsewhere it was measured in decades. But everywhere it was a contested process. Those efforts were rarely if ever cohesive movements of uniformly oppressed people. More often they were fragile alliances of conflicting groups and parties representing different classes, ethnic groups, religions, or regions. Beneath the common goal of independence, they struggled with one another over questions of leadership, power, strategy, ideology, and the distribution of material benefits, even as they fought and negotiated with their colonial rulers. The very notion of “national self-government” posed obvious but often contentious questions: What group of people constituted the “nation” that deserved to rule itself? And who should speak for it?

Comparing Freedom Struggles

Two of the most extended freedom struggles—in India and South Africa—illustrate both the variations and the complexity of this process, which was so central to twentieth-century world history. India was among the first colonies to achieve independence and provided both a model and an inspiration to others, whereas South Africa, though not formally a colony, was among the last to throw off political domination by whites.

The Case of India: Ending British Rule

■ Change

How did India's nationalist movement change over time?

Surrounded by the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean, the South Asian peninsula, commonly known as India, enjoyed a certain geographic unity. But before the twentieth century few of its people thought of themselves as “Indians.” Cultural identities were primarily local and infinitely varied, rooted in differences of family, caste, village, language, region, tribe, and religious practice. In earlier centuries—during the Mauryan, Gupta, and Mughal empires, for example—large areas of the subcontinent had been temporarily enclosed within a single political system, but always these were imperial overlays, constructed on top of enormously diverse Indian societies.

So too was British colonial rule, but the British differed from earlier invaders in ways that promoted a growing sense of Indian identity. Unlike previous foreign rulers, the British never assimilated into Indian society because their acute sense of racial and cultural distinctiveness kept them apart. This served to intensify Indians' awareness of their collective difference from their alien rulers. Furthermore, British railroads, telegraph lines, postal services, administrative networks, newspapers, and schools as well as the English language bound India's many regions and peoples together more firmly than ever before and facilitated communication among its educated elite. Early-nineteenth-century cultural nationalists, seeking to renew and reform Hinduism, registered this sense of India as a cultural unit.

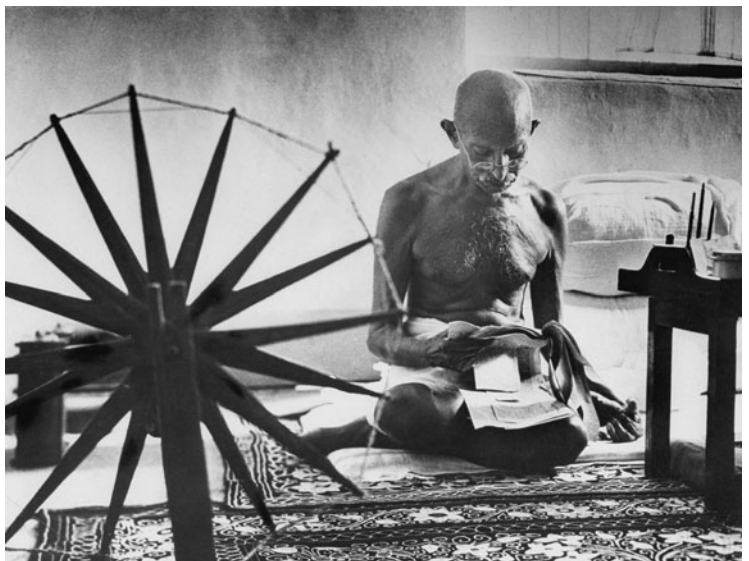
The most important political expression of an all-Indian identity took shape in the Indian National Congress (INC), which was established in 1885. This was an association of English-educated Indians—lawyers, journalists, teachers, businessmen—drawn overwhelmingly from regionally prominent high-caste Hindu families. Its founding represented the beginning of a new kind of political protest, quite different from the rebellions, banditry, and refusal to pay taxes that had periodically erupted in the rural areas of colonial India. The INC was largely an urban phenomenon and quite moderate in its demands. Initially, its well-educated members did not seek to overthrow British rule; rather they hoped to gain greater inclusion within the political, military, and business life of British India. From such positions of influence, they argued, they could better protect the interests of India than could their foreign-born rulers. The British mocked their claim to speak for ordinary Indians, referring to them as “babus,” a derogatory term that implied a semiliterate “native” with only a thin veneer of modern education.

Even in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the INC remained largely an elite organization; as such, it had difficulty gaining a mass following among India's vast peasant population. That began to change in the aftermath of World War I. To attract Indian support for the war effort, the British in 1917 had promised “the gradual development of self-governing institutions,” a commitment that energized nationalist politicians to demand more rapid political change. Furthermore, British attacks on the Islamic Ottoman Empire antagonized India's Muslims. The end of the war was followed by a massive influenza epidemic, which cost the lives of millions of Indians. Finally, a series of repressive actions antagonized many, particularly the killing of some 400 people who had defied a ban on public

Mahatma Gandhi

The most widely recognized and admired figure in the global struggle against colonial rule was India's Mahatma Gandhi. In this famous photograph, he is sitting cross-legged on the floor, clothed in a traditional Indian garment called a *dhobi*, while nearby stands a spinning wheel, symbolizing the independent and nonindustrial India that Gandhi sought.

(Margaret Bourke-White/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)



■ Change

What was the role of Gandhi in India's struggle for independence?

meetings to celebrate a Hindu festival in the city of Amritsar. This was the context in which Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) arrived on the Indian political scene and soon transformed it.

Gandhi was born in the province of Gujarat in western India to a pious Hindu family of the Vaisya, or business, caste. He was married at the age of thirteen, had only a mediocre record as a student, and eagerly embraced an opportunity to study law in England when he was eighteen. He returned as a shy and not very successful lawyer, and in 1893 he accepted a job with an Indian firm in South Africa, where a substantial number of Indians had migrated as indentured laborers during the nineteenth century. While in South Africa, Gandhi personally experienced overt racism for the first time and as a result soon became involved in organizing Indians, mostly Muslims, to protest that country's policies of racial segregation. He also developed a concept of India that included Hindus and Muslims alike and pioneered strategies of resistance that he would later apply in India itself. His emerging political philosophy, known as *satyagraha* (truth force), was a confrontational, though nonviolent, approach to political action. As Gandhi argued,

Non-violence means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant.... [I]t is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul.²

Returning to India in 1914, Gandhi quickly rose within the leadership ranks of the INC. During the 1920s and 1930s, he applied his approach in periodic mass campaigns that drew support from an extraordinarily wide spectrum of Indians—peasants and the urban poor, intellectuals and artisans, capitalists and socialists, Hindus and Muslims. The British responded with periodic repression as well as concessions that allowed a greater Indian role in political life. Gandhi's conduct and actions—his simple and unpretentious lifestyle, his support of Muslims, his frequent reference to Hindu religious themes—appealed widely in India and transformed the INC into a mass organization. To many ordinary people, Gandhi possessed magical powers and produced miraculous events. He was the Mahatma, the Great Soul.

His was a radicalism of a different kind. He did not call for social revolution but sought the moral transformation of individuals. He worked to raise the status of India's untouchables (the lowest and most ritually polluting groups within the caste hierarchy), although he launched no attack on caste in general and accepted support from businessmen and their socialist critics alike. His critique of India's situation went far beyond colonial rule. "India is being ground down," he argued, "not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization"—its competitiveness, its materialism, its warlike tendencies, its abandonment of religion.³ Almost alone among nationalist leaders in India or elsewhere, Gandhi opposed a modern industrial future for his country, seeking instead a society of harmonious self-sufficient villages drawing on ancient Indian principles of duty and morality. (See Document 20.5, pp. 957–59, for a more extended statement of Gandhi's thinking.)

Gandhi and the INC or Congress Party leadership had to contend with a wide range of movements, parties, and approaches, whose very diversity tore at the national unity that they so ardently sought. Whereas Gandhi rejected modern industrialization, his own chief lieutenant, Jawaharlal Nehru, thoroughly embraced science, technology, and industry as essential to India's future. Nor did everyone accept Gandhi's nonviolence or his inclusive definition of India. A militant Hindu organization preached hatred of Muslims and viewed India as an essentially Hindu nation. To some in the Congress Party, movements to improve the position of women or untouchables seemed a distraction from the chief task of gaining independence from Britain. Whether to participate in British-sponsored legislative bodies without complete independence also became a divisive issue. Furthermore, a number of smaller parties advocated on behalf of particular regions or castes. India's nationalist movement, in short, was beset by division and controversy. (For an image that illustrates these divisions, see Visual Source 23.1, p. 1124.)

By far the most serious threat to a unified movement derived from the growing divide between the country's Hindu and Muslim populations. As early as 1906, the formation of an All-India Muslim League contradicted the Congress Party's claim to speak for all Indians. As the British allowed more elected Indian representatives on local councils, the League demanded separate electorates, with a fixed number of seats on local councils for Muslims. As a distinct minority within India, some Muslims feared that their voice could be swamped by a numerically dominant Hindu population, despite Gandhi's inclusive philosophy. Some Hindu politicians confirmed those fears when they cast the nationalist struggle in Hindu religious terms, hailing their country, for example, as a goddess, *Bande Mataram* (Mother India). When elections in 1937 gave the Congress Party control of many provincial governments, some of those governments began to enforce the teaching of Hindi in schools and to protect cows from slaughter, both of which antagonized Muslims.

As the movement for independence gained ground, the Muslim League and its leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, increasingly argued that those parts of India that had a Muslim majority should have a separate political status. They called it Pakistan, the land of the pure. In this view, India was not a single nation, as Gandhi had long argued. Jinnah put his case succinctly:

The Muslims and Hindus belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They neither intermarry nor interdine [eat] together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations.⁴

With great reluctance and amid mounting violence, Gandhi and the Congress Party finally agreed to partition as the British declared their intention to leave India after World War II.

Thus colonial India became independent in 1947 as two countries—a Muslim Pakistan, itself divided into two wings 1,000

Description

What conflicts and differences divided India's nationalist movement?

The Independence of British South Asia



miles apart, and a mostly Hindu India governed by a secular state. Dividing colonial India in this fashion was horrendously painful. A million people or more died in the communal violence that accompanied partition, and some 12 million refugees moved from one country to the other to join their religious compatriots. Gandhi himself, desperately trying to stem the mounting tide of violence in India’s villages, refused to attend the independence celebrations. He was assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu extremist. The great triumph of independence, secured from the powerful British Empire, was shadowed by an equally great tragedy in the violence of partition.

■ Comparison
Why was African majority rule in South Africa delayed until 1994, whereas the overthrow of European colonialism had occurred much earlier in the rest of Africa and Asia?

The Case of South Africa: Ending Apartheid

The setting for South Africa’s freedom struggle was very different from the situation in India. In the twentieth century, that struggle was not waged against an occupying European colonial power, for South Africa had in fact been independent of Great Britain since 1910. That independence, however, had been granted to a government wholly controlled by a white settler minority, which represented less than 20 percent of the total population. The country’s black African majority had no political

Snapshot Key Moments in South African History	
Earliest humans in South Africa	by 50,000 years ago
Arrival of iron-using, Bantu-speaking agricultural peoples	by 500 C.E.
First Dutch settlement	1652
Shaka and creation of a Zulu state	early 19th century
British takeover of South Africa	1806
Great Trek: Afrikaner migration to the interior to escape more liberal British rule	1830s
European conquest of interior African societies	mid- to late 19th century
Gold and diamond mining begins	late 19th century
Great Britain defeats Afrikaners in Boer War	1899–1902
South Africa independent under white minority government	1910
African National Congress established	1912
National Party comes to power; apartheid formally established	1948
Sharpsville massacre	1960
ANC launches armed struggle	1961
Black Consciousness movement; urban insurrection	1970s
Nelson Mandela released from prison	1990
ANC comes to power following first all-race elections	1994

rights whatsoever within the central state. Black South Africans' struggle therefore was against this internal opponent rather than against a distant colonial authority, as in India. Economically, the most prominent whites were of British descent. They or their forebears had come to South Africa during the nineteenth century, when Great Britain was the ruling colonial power. But the politically dominant section of the white community, known as Boers or Afrikaners, was descended from the early Dutch settlers, who had arrived in the mid-seventeenth century. The term "Afrikaner" reflected their image of themselves as "white Africans," permanent residents of the continent rather than colonial intruders. They had unsuccessfully sought independence from a British-ruled South Africa in a bitter struggle (the Boer War, 1899–1902), and a sense of difference and antagonism lingered. Despite a certain hostility between white South Africans of British and Afrikaner background, both felt that their way of life and standard of living were jeopardized by any move toward black African majority rule. The intransigence of this sizable and threatened settler community helps explain why African rule was delayed until 1994, while India, lacking any such community, had achieved independence almost a half century earlier.

Unlike a predominantly agrarian India, South Africa by the early twentieth century had developed a mature industrial economy, based initially in gold and diamond mining, but by midcentury including secondary industries such as steel, chemicals, automobile manufacturing, rubber processing, and heavy engineering. Particularly since the 1960s, the economy benefited from extensive foreign investment and loans. Almost all black Africans were involved in this complex modern economy, working in urban industries or mines, providing labor for white-owned farms, or receiving payments from relatives who did. The extreme dependence of most Africans on the white-controlled economy rendered individuals highly vulnerable to repressive action, but collectively the threat to withdraw their essential labor also gave them a powerful weapon.

A third unique feature of the South African situation was the overwhelming prominence of race, expressed most clearly in the policy of apartheid, which attempted to separate blacks from whites in every conceivable way while retaining Africans' labor power in the white-controlled economy. An enormous apparatus of repression enforced that system. Rigid "pass laws" monitored and tried to control the movement of Africans into the cities, where they were subjected to extreme forms of social segregation. In the rural areas, a series of impoverished and overcrowded "native reserves," or Bantustans, served as ethnic homelands that kept Africans divided along tribal lines. Even though racism was present in colonial India, nothing of this magnitude developed there.

As in India, various forms of opposition—resistance to conquest, rural rebellions, urban strikes, and independent churches—arose to contest the manifest injustices of South African life. There too an elite-led political party provided an organizational umbrella for many of the South African resistance efforts in the twentieth century. Established in 1912, the African National Congress (ANC), like its Indian predecessor, was led by educated, professional, and middle-class Africans who sought not to overthrow the existing order, but to be accepted as "civilized men" within it. They

■ Change

How did South Africa's struggle against white domination change over time?

appealed to the liberal, humane, and Christian values that white society claimed. For four decades, its leaders pursued peaceful and moderate protest—petitions, multi-racial conferences, delegations appealing to the authorities—even as racially based segregationist policies were implemented one after another. By 1948, when the Afrikaner-led National Party came to power on a platform of apartheid, it was clear that such “constitutional” protest had produced nothing.

During the 1950s, a new and younger generation of the ANC leadership, which now included Nelson Mandela, broadened its base of support and launched non-violent civil disobedience—boycotts, strikes, demonstrations, and the burning of the hated passes that all Africans were required to carry. All of these actions were similar to and inspired by the tactics that Gandhi had used in India twenty to thirty years earlier. The government of South Africa responded with tremendous repression, including the shooting of sixty-nine unarmed demonstrators at Sharpville in 1960, the banning of the ANC, and the imprisonment of its leadership. This was the context in which Mandela was arrested and sentenced to his long prison term.

At this point, the freedom struggle in South Africa took a different direction than it had in India. Its major political parties were now illegal. Underground nationalist leaders turned to armed struggle, authorizing selected acts of sabotage and assassination, while preparing for guerrilla warfare in camps outside the country. Active opposition within South Africa was now primarily expressed by student groups that were part of the Black Consciousness movement, an effort to foster pride, unity, and political awareness among the country’s African majority. Such young people were at the

Independence in Kenya, East Africa

Almost everywhere in the colonial world, the struggle for independence climaxed in a formal and joyful ceremony in which power was transferred from the colonial authority to the leader of the new nation. Here a jubilant Jomo Kenyatta takes the oath of office in 1964 as Kenya’s first president, while a dour and bewigged British official looks on.

(Bettmann/Corbis)



center of an explosion of protest in 1976 in a sprawling, segregated, impoverished black neighborhood called Soweto, outside Johannesburg, in which hundreds were killed. The initial trigger for the uprising was the government’s decision to enforce education for Africans in the hated language of the white Afrikaners rather than English. However, the momentum of the Soweto rebellion persisted, and by the mid-1980s, spreading urban violence and the radicalization of urban young people had forced the government to declare a state of emergency. Furthermore, South Africa’s black labor movement, legalized only in 1979, became increasingly active and political. In June 1986, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising, the Congress of South African Trade Unions orchestrated a general strike involving some 2 million workers.

Beyond this growing internal pressure, South Africa faced mounting international demands to end apartheid as well. Exclusion from most international sporting events, including the Olympics; the refusal of many artists and entertainers to perform in South Africa; economic boycotts; the withdrawal of private investment funds—all of this isolated South Africa from a Western world in which its white rulers claimed membership. This was another feature of the South African freedom movement that had no parallel in India.

The combination of these internal and external pressures persuaded many white South Africans by the late 1980s that discussion with African nationalist leaders was the only alternative to a massive, bloody, and futile struggle to preserve white privileges. The outcome was the abandonment of key apartheid policies, the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the legalization of the ANC, and a prolonged process of negotiations that in 1994 resulted in national elections, which brought the ANC to power. To the surprise of almost everyone, the long nightmare of South African apartheid came to an end without a racial bloodbath (see Map 23.2).



Map 23.2 South Africa after Apartheid

Under apartheid, all black Africans were officially designated as residents of small, scattered, impoverished Bantustans, shown on the inset map. Many of these people, of course, actually lived in white South Africa, where they worked. The main map shows the new internal organization of the country as it emerged after 1994, with the Bantustans abolished and the country divided into nine provinces. Lesotho and Swaziland had been British protectorates during the colonial era and subsequently became separate independent countries, although surrounded by South African territory.

As in India, the South African nationalist movement that finally won freedom was divided and conflicted. Unlike India, though, these divisions did not occur along religious lines. Rather it was race, ethnicity, and ideology that generated dissension and sometimes violence. Whereas the ANC generally favored a broad alliance of everyone opposed to apartheid (black Africans, Indians, “coloreds” or mixed-race people, and sympathetic whites), a smaller group known as the Pan Africanist Congress rejected cooperation with other racial groups and limited its membership to black Africans. During the urban uprisings of the 1970s and 1980s, young people supporting the Black Consciousness movements and those following Mandela and the ANC waged war against each other in the townships of South African cities. Perhaps most threatening to the unity of the nationalist struggle were the separatist tendencies of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party. Its leader, Gatsha Buthelezi, had cooperated with the apartheid state and even received funding from it. As negotiations for a transition to African rule unfolded in the early 1990s, considerable violence between Inkatha followers, mostly Zulu migrant workers, and ANC supporters broke out in a number of cities. None of this, however, approached the massive killing of Hindus and Muslims that accompanied the partition of India. South Africa, unlike India, acquired its political freedom as an intact and unified state.

Experiments with Freedom

Africa’s first modern nationalist hero, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, paraphrased a biblical quotation when he urged his followers, “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all these other things will be added unto you.” However, would winning the political kingdom of independence or freedom from European rule really produce “all these other things”—opportunity for political participation, industrial growth, economic development, reasonably unified nations, and a better life for all? That was the central question confronting the new nations emerging from colonial rule. They were joined in that quest by already independent but nonindustrialized countries and regions such as China, Thailand, Ethiopia, Iran, Turkey, and Central and South America. Together they formed the bloc of nations known variously as the third world, the developing countries, or the Global South (see Map 23.3). In the second half of the twentieth century, these countries represented perhaps 75 percent of the world’s population. They accounted for almost all of the fourfold increase in human numbers that the world experienced during the twentieth century. That immense surge in global population, at one level a great triumph for the human species, also underlay many of the difficulties these nations faced as they conducted their various experiments with freedom.

Almost everywhere, the moment of independence generated something close to euphoria. Having emerged from the long night of colonial rule, free peoples had the opportunity to build anew. The developing countries would be laboratories for fresh approaches to creating modern states, nations, cultures, and economies. In the decades that followed, experiments with freedom multiplied, but the early optimism was soon tempered by the difficulties and disappointments of those tasks.

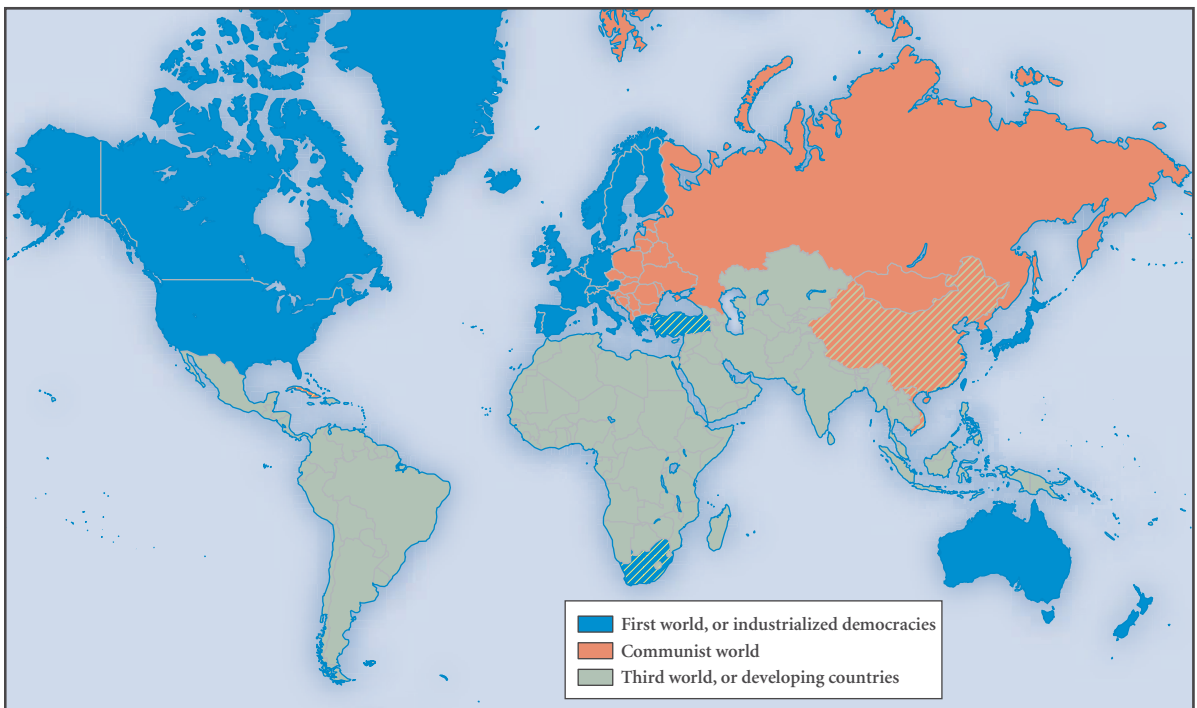
Experiments in Political Order: Comparing African Nations and India

All across the developing world, efforts to create political order had to contend with a set of common conditions. Populations were exploding. Expectations for independence ran very high, often exceeding the available resources. Most developing countries were culturally diverse, with little loyalty new to the central state. Nonetheless, public employment mushroomed as the state assumed greater responsibility for economic development. In conditions of widespread poverty and weak private economies, groups and individuals sought to capture the state, or parts of it, both for the salaries and status it offered and for the opportunities for private enrichment that political office provided.

This was the formidable setting in which developing countries had to hammer out their political systems. The range of that effort was immense: Communist Party control in China, Vietnam, and Cuba; multiparty democracy in India and South Africa; one-party democracy in Tanzania and Senegal; military regimes for a time in much of Latin America and Africa; personal dictatorships in Uganda and the Philippines. In many places, one kind of political system followed another in kaleidoscopic succession. The political evolution of postindependence Africa illustrates the complexity and the difficulty of creating a stable political order in developing countries.

Map 23.3 The “Worlds” of the Twentieth Century

During the cold war, the term “third world” referred to those countries not solidly in either the Western or the Communist bloc of nations. Gradually it came to designate developing countries, those less wealthy and less industrialized societies seeking to catch up to the more developed countries of Europe, North America, and Japan. China, Vietnam, and Cuba, although governed by communist regimes, have been widely regarded as part of the developing world as well.



Although colonial rule had been highly authoritarian and bureaucratic with little interest in African participation, during the 1950s the British, the French, and the Belgians attempted, rather belatedly, to transplant democratic institutions to their colonies. They established legislatures, permitted elections, allowed political parties to operate, and in general anticipated the development of constitutional, parliamentary, multiparty democracies similar to their own. It was with such institutions that most African states greeted independence.

By the early 1970s, however, few such regimes were left among the new states of Africa. Many of the apparently popular political parties that had led the struggle for independence lost mass support and were swept away by military coups. When the army took power in Ghana in 1966, no one lifted a finger to defend the party that had led the country to independence only nine years earlier. Other states evolved into one-party systems, sometimes highly authoritarian and bureaucratic and sometimes more open and democratic. Still others degenerated into personal tyrannies or dictatorships. Freedom from colonial rule certainly did not automatically generate the internal political freedoms associated with democracy.

■ Comparison

Why was Africa's experience with political democracy so different from that of India?

The contrast between Africa's political evolution and that of India has been particularly striking. In India, Western-style democracy, including regular elections, multiple parties, civil liberties, and peaceful changes in government, has been practiced almost continuously since independence. The struggle for independence in India had been a far more prolonged affair, thus providing time for an Indian political leadership to sort itself out. Furthermore, the British began to hand over power in a gradual way well before complete independence was granted in 1947. Thus a far larger number of Indians had useful administrative or technical skills than was the case in Africa. In sharp contrast to most African countries, the nationalist movement in India was embodied in a single national party (the Congress Party), which encompassed a wide variety of other parties and interest groups. Its leadership was genuinely committed to democratic practice. Even the tragic and painful partition of colonial India into two countries eliminated a major source of internal discord as independent India was born. Moreover, Indian statehood could be built on cultural and political traditions that were far more deeply rooted than in most African states.

■ Change

What accounts for the ups and downs of political democracy in postcolonial Africa?

Explaining the initial rejection of democracy in Africa has been a major concern of politicians and scholars alike. Some have argued, on the basis of paternalistic or even racist assumptions, that Africans were not ready for democracy or that they lacked some crucial ingredient for democratic politics—an educated electorate, a middle class, or perhaps a thoroughly capitalist economy. Others suggested that Africa's traditional culture, based on communal rather than individualistic values and concerned to achieve consensus rather than majority rule, was not compatible with the competitiveness of party politics.

Furthermore, some argued, Western-style democracy was simply inadequate for the tasks of development confronting the new states. Creating national unity was certainly more difficult when competing political parties identified primarily with particular ethnic or "tribal" groups, as was frequently the case in Africa. Similarly, the

immense problems that inevitably accompany the early stages of modern economic development were compounded by the heavy demands of a political system based on universal suffrage. Certainly Europe did not begin its modernizing process with such a system. Why, many Africans asked, should they be expected to do so?

Beyond these general considerations, more immediate conditions likewise undermined the popular support of many postindependence governments in Africa and discredited their initial democracies. One was widespread economic disappointment. By almost any measure, African economic performance since independence has been the poorest in the developing world. This has translated into students denied the white-collar careers they expected, urban migrants with little opportunity for work, farmers paid low prices for their cash crops, consumers resentful about shortages and inflation, and millions of impoverished and malnourished peasants pushed to the brink of starvation. These were people for whom independence was unable to fulfill even the most minimal of expectations, let alone the grandiose visions of a better life that so many had embraced in the early 1960s. Since modern governments everywhere staked their popularity on economic performance, it is little wonder that many Africans became disaffected and withdrew their support from governments they had enthusiastically endorsed only a few years earlier.

Nevertheless, economic disappointment did not affect everyone to the same extent, and for some, independence offered great opportunities for acquiring status, position, and wealth. Unlike the situation in Latin America and parts of Asia, those who benefited most from independence were not large landowners, for most African societies simply did not have an established class whose wealth was based in landed estates. Rather they were members of the relatively well-educated elite who had found high-paying jobs in the growing bureaucracies of the newly independent states. The privileges of this dominant class were widely resented. Government ministers in many countries earned the title “Mr. Ten Percent,” a reference to the bribes or “gifts” they received from private contractors working for the state. This kind of resentment broke out in Zaire between 1964 and 1968 in the form of a widespread peasant rebellion calling for a “second independence” against the “new whites” of the elite class.

Frequently, however, the resentments born of inequality and of competition for jobs, housing, educational opportunities, development projects, and political position found expression in ethnic conflict, as Africa’s immense cultural diversity became intensely politicized. In many places, a judicious balancing of appointments and budgetary allocations among major ethnic groups contained conflict within a peaceful political process. Elsewhere it led to violence. An ethnically based civil war in Nigeria during the late 1960s cost the lives of millions, while in the mid-1990s ethnic hatred led Rwanda into the realm of genocide.

Thus economic disappointment, class resentments, and ethnic conflict eroded support for the transplanted democracies of the early independence era. The most common alternative involved government by soldiers, a familiar pattern in Latin America as well. By the early 1980s, the military had intervened in at least thirty of Africa’s forty-six independent states and actively governed more than half of them.

Usually, the military took power in a crisis, after the civilian government had lost most of its popular support. The soldiers often claimed that the nation was in grave danger, that corrupt civilian politicians had led the country to the brink of chaos, and that only the military had the discipline and strength to put things right. And so they swept aside the old political parties and constitutions and vowed to begin anew, while promising to return power to civilians and restore democracy at some point in the future.

Since the early 1980s, a remarkable resurgence of Western-style democracy has brought popular movements, multiparty elections, and new constitutions to a number of African states, including Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, and Zambia. It was part of a late-twentieth-century democratic revival of global dimensions that included Southern and Eastern Europe, most of Latin America, and parts of Asia and the Middle East. How can we explain this rather sudden, though still fragile, resumption of democracy in Africa? Perhaps the most important internal factor was the evident failure of authoritarian governments to remedy the disastrous economic situation. Disaffected students, religious organizations, urban workers, and women's groups joined in a variety of grassroots movements to demand democratic change as a means to a better life. This pressure from below for political change reflected the growing strength of civil society in many African countries as organizations independent of the state provided a social foundation for the renewal of democracy.

Such movements found encouragement in the demands for democracy that accompanied the South African struggle against apartheid and the collapse of Soviet and Eastern European communism. The end of the cold war reduced the willingness of the major industrial powers to underwrite their authoritarian client states. For many Africans, democracy increasingly was viewed as a universal political principle to which they could also aspire rather than an alien and imposed system deriving from the West. None of this provided an immediate solution for the economic difficulties, ethnic conflicts, and endemic corruption of African societies, but it did suggest a willingness to continue the political experiments that had begun with independence.

Experiments in Economic Development: Changing Priorities, Varying Outcomes

■ Change

What obstacles impeded the economic development of third-world countries?

At the top of the agenda everywhere in the Global South was economic development, a process that meant growth or increasing production as well as distributing the fruits of that growth to raise living standards. This quest for development, now operating all across the planet, represented the universal acceptance of beliefs unheard of not many centuries earlier—that poverty was no longer inevitable and that it was possible to deliberately improve the material conditions of life for everyone. Economic development was a central promise of all independence struggles, and it was increasingly the standard by which people measured and granted legitimacy to their governments.

Achieving economic development, however, proved immensely difficult. It took place in societies sharply divided by class, religion, ethnic group, and gender and in

the face of explosive population growth. In many places, colonial rule had provided only the most slender foundations for modern development to these newly independent nations, which had low rates of literacy, few people with managerial experience, a weak private economy, and transportation systems oriented to export rather than national integration. Furthermore, the entire effort occurred in a world split by rival superpowers and economically dominated by the powerful capitalist economies of the West. Despite their political independence, most developing countries had little leverage in negotiations with the wealthy nations of the Global North and their immense transnational corporations. It was hardly an auspicious environment in which to seek a fundamental economic transformation.

Beyond these structural difficulties, it was hard for leaders of developing countries to know what strategies to pursue. The academic field of “development economics” was new; its experts disagreed and often changed their minds; and conflicting political pressures, both internal and international, only added to the confusion. All of this resulted in considerable controversy, changing policies, and much experimentation. (See Documents: Debating Development in Africa, pp. 1110–21, for various African views about development.)

One fundamental issue lay in the role of the state. All across the developing world and particularly in newly independent nations, most people expected that state authorities would take major responsibility for spurring the economic development of their countries. After all, the private economy was weakly developed; few entrepreneurs had substantial funds to invest; the example of rapid Soviet industrialization under state direction was hopeful; and state control held the promise of protecting vulnerable economies from the ravages of international capitalism. Some state-directed economies had real successes. China launched a major industrialization effort and massive land reform under the leadership of the Communist Party. A communist Cuba, even while remaining dependent on its sugar production, wiped out illiteracy and provided basic health care to its entire population, raising life expectancy to seventy-six years by 1992, equivalent to that of the United States. Elsewhere as well—in Turkey, India, South Korea, and much of Africa—the state provided tariffs, licenses, loans, subsidies, and overall planning, while most productive property was owned privately.

Yet in the last several decades of the twentieth century, an earlier consensus in favor of state direction largely collapsed, replaced by a growing dependence on the market to generate economic development. This was most apparent in the abandonment of much communist planning in China and the return to private farming (see pp. 1052–54). India and many Latin American and African states privatized their state-run industries and substantially reduced the role of the state in economic affairs. In part, this sharp change in economic policies reflected the failure, mismanagement, and corruption of many state-run enterprises, but it also was influenced by the collapse in the Soviet Union of the world’s first state-dominated economy. Western pressures, exercised through international organizations such as the World Bank, likewise pushed developing countries in a capitalist direction. In China and India, the new approach generated rapid economic growth, but also growing inequalities and social conflict. As the new millennium dawned, a number of Latin American countries—Venezuela,

■ Change

In what ways did thinking about the role of the state in the economic life of developing countries change? Why did it change?

Snapshot Economic Development in the Global South by the Early Twenty-first Century⁵

This table samples the economic performance of fourteen developing countries and five major regions of the Global South by the early twenty-first century. Similar data for the United States, Japan, and Russia are included for comparative purposes. Which indicators of development do you find most revealing? What aspects

Regions/Countries	Population Growth Rate Average Annual 2000–2007 (%)	Gross National Income per Capita, 2007 (U.S. \$)	Purchasing Power per Capita, 2007 (U.S. \$)
East Asia	0.8	2,180	4,937
China	0.6	2,360	5,370
Philippines	2.0	1,620	3,370
Latin America	1.3	5,540	9,321
Mexico	1.0	8,340	12,580
Brazil	1.4	5,910	9,370
Guatemala	2.5	2,440	4,520
Middle East and North Africa	1.8	2,794	7,385
Egypt	1.8	1,580	5,400
Turkey	1.3	8,020	12,090
Iran	1.5	3,470	10,800
Saudi Arabia	2.3	15,440	22,910
South Asia	1.6	880	2,537
India	1.4	950	2,470
Indonesia	1.3	1,650	3,580
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.5	952	1,870
Nigeria	2.4	930	1,770
Congo	3.0	140	290
Tanzania	2.5	400	1,200
For comparison			
High-income countries	0.7	37,566	36,100
United States	0.9	46,040	45,850
Japan	0.1	37,670	34,600
Russia	−0.5	7,560	14,400

of development does each of them measure? Based on these data, which countries or regions would you consider the most and the least successful? Does your judgment about “success” vary depending on which measure you use?

Life Expectancy in years, 2003–2006		Adult Literacy (%) 2005	Infant Mortality (Deaths under Age 5 per 1,000)		CO ₂ Emission per Capita, 2004 (Metric Tons)
MALE	FEMALE		1990	2006	
69	73	91	56	29	3.3
70	74	91	45	24	3.9
69	74	93	62	32	1.0
70	76	90	55	20	2.7
72	77	92	53	35	4.3
69	76	89	57	20	1.8
66	74	69	82	41	1.0
68	72	73	78	42	4.2
69	73	71	91	35	2.2
69	74	87	82	26	3.2
69	72	82	72	34	6.4
71	75	83	44	25	13.7
63	66	58	123	83	1.1
63	66	61	115	76	1.2
66	70	90	91	34	1.7
49	52	59	184	157	0.9
46	47	69	230	191	0.8
45	47	67	205	205	0.0
51	53	69	161	118	0.1
76	82	99	12	7	13.1
75	81	99	11	8	20.6
79	86	99	6	4	9.8
59	73	99	27	16	10.6



Microloans

Bangladesh's Grameen Bank pioneered an innovative approach to economic development by offering modest loans to poor people, enabling them to start small businesses. Here a group of women who received such loans meet in early 2004 to make an installment payment to an officer of the bank. (Rafiqur Rahman/Reuters/Corbis)

Brazil, and Bolivia, for example—once again asserted a more prominent role for the state in their quests for economic development and social justice.

Other issues as well inspired debate. In many places, an early emphasis on city-based industrial development, stirred by visions of a rapid transition to modernity, led to a neglect or exploitation of rural areas and agriculture. This “urban bias” subsequently came in for much criticism and some adjustment in spending priorities. A growing recognition of the role of women in agriculture led to charges of “male bias” in development planning and to mounting efforts to assist women farmers directly (see Document 23.4). Women also were central to many governments’ increased interest in curtailing population growth. Women’s

access to birth control, education, and employment, it turned out, provided powerful incentives to limit family size. Another debate pitted the advocates of capital- and technology-driven projects (dams and factories, for example) against those who favored investment in “human capital,” such as education, technical training, health care, and nutrition. The benefits and drawbacks of foreign aid, investment, and trade have likewise been contentious issues. Should developing countries seek to shield themselves from the influences of international capitalism, or are they better off vigorously engaging with the global economy?

Economic development was never simply a matter of technical expertise or deciding among competing theories. Every decision was political, involving winners and losers in terms of power, advantage, and wealth. Where to locate schools, roads, factories, and clinics, for example, provoked endless controversies, some of them expressed in terms of regional or ethnic rivalries. It was an experimental process, and the stakes were high.

The results of those experiments have varied considerably, as the Snapshot on pages 1100–01 indicates. East Asian countries in general have had the strongest record of economic growth. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong were dubbed “newly industrialized countries,” and China boasted the most rapid economic growth in the world by the end of the twentieth century, replacing Japan as the world’s second-largest economy. In the 1990s, Asia’s other giant, India, opened itself more fully to the world market and launched rapid economic growth with a powerful high-tech sector and an expanding middle class. Oil-producing countries reaped a bonanza when they were able to demand much higher prices for that essential commodity in the 1970s

and after. Several Latin American states (Chile and Brazil, for example) entered the world market vigorously and successfully with growing industrial sectors. Limited principally to Europe, North America, and Japan in the nineteenth century, industrialization had become a global phenomenon in the twentieth century.

Elsewhere, the story was very different. In most of Africa, much of the Arab world, and parts of Asia—regions representing about one-third of the world’s population—there was little sign of catching up and frequent examples of declining standards of living since the end of the 1960s. Between 1980 and 2000, the average income in forty-three of Africa’s poorest countries dropped by 25 percent, pushing living standards for many below what they had been at independence.

Scholars and politicians alike argue about the reasons for such sharp differences. Variables such as geography and natural resources, differing colonial experiences, variations in regional cultures, the degree of political stability and social equality, state economic policies, population growth rates, and varying forms of involvement with the world economy have been invoked to explain the widely diverging trajectories among developing countries.

Experiments with Culture: The Role of Islam in Turkey and Iran

The quest for economic development represented the embrace of an emerging global culture of modernity—with its scientific outlook, its technological achievements, and its focus on material values. It also exposed developing countries to the changing culture of the West, including feminism, rock and rap, sexual permissiveness, consumerism, and democracy. But the peoples of the Global South also had inherited cultural patterns from the more distant past—Hindu, Confucian, or Islamic, for example. A common issue all across the developing world involved the uneasy relationship between these older traditions and the more recent outlooks associated with modernity and the West. This tension provided the raw material for a series of cultural experiments in the twentieth century, and nowhere were they more consequential than in the Islamic world. No single answer emerged to the question of how Islam and modernity should relate to each other, but the experience of Turkey and Iran illustrate two quite different approaches to this fundamental issue.

In the aftermath of World War I, modern Turkey emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, led by an energetic general, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), who fought off British, French, Italian, and Greek efforts to dismember what was left of the old empire. Often compared to Peter the Great in Russia (see p. 844), Atatürk then sought to transform his country into a modern, secular, and national state. Such ambitions were not entirely new, for they built upon the efforts of nineteenth-century

■ Comparison

In what ways did cultural revolutions in Turkey and Iran reflect different understandings of the role of Islam in modern societies?

Iran, Turkey, and the Middle East





Westernization in Turkey

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, often appeared in public in elegant European dress, symbolizing for his people a sharp break with traditional Islamic ways of living. Here he is dancing with his adopted daughter at her high-society wedding in 1929. (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Ottoman reformers, who, like Atatürk, greatly admired European Enlightenment thinking and sought to bring its benefits to their country.

To Atatürk and his followers, to become modern meant “to enter European civilization completely.” They believed that this required the total removal of Islam from public life, relegating it to the personal and private realm. In doing so, Atatürk argued that “Islam will be elevated, if it will cease to be a political instrument.” In fact, he sought to broaden access to the religion by translating the Quran into Turkish and issuing the call to prayer in Turkish rather than Arabic.

Ataturk largely ended, however, the direct political role of Islam. The old sultan or ruler of the Ottoman Empire, whose position had long been sanctified by Islamic tradition, was deposed as Turkey became a republic. Furthermore the caliphate, by which Ottoman sultans had claimed leadership of the entire Islamic world, was abolished. Various Sufi organizations, sacred tombs, and religious schools were closed and a number of religious titles abolished. Islamic courts were likewise dissolved, while secular law codes, modeled on those of Europe, replaced the *sharia*. In history textbooks, pre-Islamic Turkish culture was cele-

brated as the foundation for all ancient civilizations. The Arabic script in which the Turkish language had long been written was exchanged for a new Western-style alphabet that made literacy much easier but rendered centuries of Ottoman culture inaccessible to these newly literate people. (See Document 24.1, pp. 1167–68, for an example of Atatürk’s thinking.)

The most visible symbols of Atatürk’s revolutionary program occurred in the realm of dress. Turkish men were ordered to abandon the traditional headdress known as the *fez* and to wear brimmed hats. According to Atatürk,

A civilized, international dress is worthy and appropriate for our nation, and we will wear it. Boots or shoes on our feet, trousers on our legs, shirt and tie, jacket and waistcoat—and of course, to complete these, a cover with a brim on our heads.⁶

Although women were not forbidden to wear the veil, many elite women abandoned it and set the tone for feminine fashion in Turkey.

In Atatürk’s view, the emancipation of women was a cornerstone of the new Turkey. In a much-quoted speech, he declared:

If henceforward the women do not share in the social life of the nation, we shall never attain to our full development. We shall remain irremediably backward, incapable of treating on equal terms with the civilizations of the West.⁷

Thus polygamy was abolished; women were granted equal rights in divorce, inheritance, and child custody; and in 1934 Turkish women gained the right to vote and hold public office, a full decade before French women gained that right. Public beaches were now opened to women as well.

These reforms represented a “cultural revolution” unique in the Islamic world of the time, and they were imposed against considerable opposition. After Atatürk’s death in 1938, some of them were diluted or rescinded. The call to prayer returned to the traditional Arabic in 1950, and various political groups urged a greater role for Islam in the public arena. In 1996, a moderate Islamic political party came to power, and in early 2008 the Turkish parliament voted to end the earlier prohibition on women wearing headscarves in universities. Nevertheless, the essential secularism of the Turkish state, backed by a powerful military establishment, remained an enduring legacy of the Atatürk revolution. But elsewhere in the Islamic world, other solutions to the question of Islam and modernity took shape.

A very different answer emerged in Iran in the final quarter of the twentieth century. By that time all across the Islamic world, disappointments abounded with the social and economic results of political independence and secular development, while hostility to continuing Western cultural, military, and political intrusion grew apace. These conditions gave rise to numerous movements of Islamic revival or renewal that cast the religion as a guide to public as well as private life. If Western models of a good society had failed, it seemed reasonable to many people to turn their attention to distinctly Islamic solutions.

Iran seemed an unlikely place for an Islamic revolution. Under the government of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (ruled 1941–1979), Iran had undertaken what many saw as a quite successful modernization effort. The country had great wealth in oil, a powerful military, a well-educated elite, and a solid alliance with the United States. Furthermore, the shah’s so-called White Revolution, intended to promote the country’s modernization, had redistributed land to many of the Iran’s impoverished peasantry, granted women the right to vote, invested substantially in rural health care and education, initiated a number of industrial projects, and offered workers a share in the profits of those industries. But beneath the surface of apparent success, discontent and resentment were brewing. Traditional merchants, known as *bazaaris*, felt threatened by an explosion of imported Western goods and by competition from large-scale businesses. Religious leaders, the *ulama*, were offended by secular education programs that bypassed Islamic schools and by state control of religious institutions. Educated professionals found Iran’s reliance on the West disturbing. Rural migrants to the country’s growing cities, especially Tehran, faced rising costs and uncertain employment.

A repressive and often brutal government allowed little outlet for such grievances. Thus, opposition to the shah’s regime came to center on the country’s many

mosques, where Iran's Shi'ite religious leaders invoked memories of earlier persecution and martyrdom as they mobilized that opposition and called for the shah's removal. The emerging leader of that movement was the high-ranking Shia cleric Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini (1902–1989), who in 1979 returned from long exile in Paris to great acclaim. By then, massive urban demonstrations, strikes, and defections from the military had eroded support for the shah, who abdicated the throne and left the country.

What followed was also a cultural revolution, but one that moved in precisely the opposite direction from that of Atatürk's Turkey—toward, rather than away from, the Islamization of public life. The new government defined itself as an Islamic republic, with an elected parliament and a constitution, but in practice it represented the rule of Islamic clerics, in which conservative ulama, headed by Khomeini, exercised dominant power. The Council of Guardians, composed of leading legal scholars, was empowered to interpret the constitution, to supervise elections, and to review legislation—all designed to ensure compatibility with a particular vision of Islam. Opposition to the new regime was harshly crushed, with some 1,800 executions in 1981 alone for those regarded as “waging war against God.”⁸

Khomeini, whose ideas are illustrated more fully in Document 24.3 on pages 1171–73, believed that the purpose of government was to apply the law of Allah as expressed in the sharia. Thus all judges now had to be competent in Islamic law, and those lacking that qualification were dismissed. The secular law codes under which the shah's government had operated were discarded in favor of those based solely on Islamic precedents. Islamization likewise profoundly affected the domain of education and culture. In June 1980 the new government closed some 200 universities and colleges for two years while textbooks, curricula, and faculty were “purified” of un-Islamic influences. Elementary and secondary schools, largely secular under the shah, now gave priority to religious instruction and the teaching of Arabic, even as about 40,000 teachers lost their jobs for lack of sufficient Islamic piety. Pre-Islamic Persian literature and history were now out of favor, while the history of Islam and Iran's revolution predominated in schools and the mass media. Western loan words were purged from the Farsi language, replaced by their Arabic equivalents.

As in Turkey, the role of women became a touchstone of this Islamic cultural revolution. By 1983, all women were required to wear the modest head-to-toe covering known as *hijab*, a regulation enforced by roving groups of militants or “revolutionary guards.” Those found with “bad hijab” were subject to harassment and sometimes lashings or imprisonment. Sexual segregation was imposed in schools, parks, beaches, and public transportation. The legal age of marriage for girls, set at eighteen under the shah, was reduced to nine with parental consent and thirteen, later raised to fifteen, without it. Married women could no longer file for divorce or attend school. Yet, despite such restrictions, many women supported the revolution and over the next several decades found far greater opportunities for employment



and higher education than before. By the early twenty-first century, almost 60 percent of university students were women. And women's right to vote was left intact.

While Atatürk's cultural revolution of Westernization and secularism was largely an internal affair that freed Turkey from the wider responsibilities of the caliphate, Khomeini clearly sought to export Iran's Islamic revolution. He openly called for the replacement of insufficiently Islamic regimes in the Middle East and offered training and support for their opponents. In Lebanon, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and elsewhere, Khomeini appealed to Shi'ite minorities and other disaffected people, and Iran became a model to which many Islamic radicals looked. An eight-year war with Saddam Hussein's highly secularized Iraq (1980–1988) was one of the outcomes and generated enormous casualties. That conflict reflected the differences between Arabs and Persians, between Sunni and Shia versions of Islam, and between a secular Iraqi regime and Khomeini's revolutionary Islamic government.

After Khomeini's death in 1989, some elements of this revolution eased a bit. For a time enforcement of women's dress code was not so stringent, and a more moderate government came to power in 1997, raising hopes for a loosening of strict Islamic regulations. By 2005, however, more conservative elements were back in control and a new crackdown on women's clothing soon surfaced. A heavily disputed election

Women and the Iranian Revolution

One of the goals of Iran's Islamic Revolution was to enforce a more modest and traditional dress code for the country's women. In this photo from 2004, a woman clad in hijab and talking on her cell phone walks past a poster of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who led that revolution in 1979. (AP Images)

in 2009 revealed substantial opposition to the country's rigid Islamic regime. Iran's ongoing Islamic revolution, however, did not mean the abandonment of economic modernity. The country's oil revenues continued to fund its development, and by the early twenty-first century, Iran was actively pursuing nuclear power and perhaps nuclear weapons, in defiance of Western opposition to these policies.



Reflections: History in the Middle of the Stream

Historians are usually more at ease telling stories that have clear endings, such as those that describe ancient Egyptian civilization, Chinese maritime voyages, the collapse of the Aztec Empire, or the French Revolution. There is a finality to these stories and a distance from them that makes it easier for historians to assume the posture of detached observer, even if their understandings of those events change over time. Finality, distance, and detachment are harder to come by when historians are describing the events of the past century, for many of its processes are clearly not over. The United States' role as a global superpower and its war in Iraq, the fate of democracy in Latin America and Africa, the rise of China and India as economic giants, the position of Islam in Turkey and Iran—all of these are unfinished stories, their outcomes unknown and unknowable. In dealing with such matters, historians write from the middle of the stream, often uncomfortably, rather than from the banks, where they might feel more at ease.

In part, that discomfort arises from questions about the future that such issues inevitably raise. Can the spread of nuclear weapons be halted? Will democracy flourish globally? Are Islamic and Christian civilizations headed for a global clash? Can African countries replicate the economic growth experience of India and China? Historians in particular are uneasy about responding to such questions because they are so aware of the unexpectedness and surprising quality of the historical process. Yet those questions about the future are legitimate and important, for as the nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard remarked: "Life can only be understood backward, but it is lived forward." History, after all, is the only guide we have to the possible shape of that future. So, like everyone before us, we stumble on, both individually and collectively, largely in the dark, using analogies from the past as we make our way ahead.

These vast uncertainties about the future provide a useful reminder that although we know the outcomes of earlier human stories—the Asian and African struggles for independence, for example—those who lived that history did not. Such awareness can perhaps engender in us a measure of humility, a kind of sympathy, and a sense of common humanity with those whose lives we study. However we may differ from our ancestors across time and place, we share with them an immense ignorance about what the future holds.