

CHAPTER  
**18**

## TELESCOPING THE TIMES

# The Colonies Become New Nations, 1945–Present

## Summary

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** *India and its neighbors won independence from Great Britain, but their histories have been spoiled by conflict. Many new nations arose in Southeast Asia and in Africa after World War II as colonial empires collapsed. In the late 1940s, Jewish people were given their own country in the Middle East, where fighting between Jews and Arabs has erupted many times.*

## 1 The Indian Subcontinent Gains Independence

**KEY IDEA** *A number of new nations emerged from the British colony of India.*

Many Asians served in the armies of the colonial powers during World War II. The fight for freedom from Nazi tyranny deepened their desire for independence from colonial control. Also, the Japanese victories over European powers made Asian nationalists realize that the colonial rulers could be defeated. At the same time, people in Europe began to wonder if it was right for one nation to have another as a colony.

In the 1920s, Mohandas Gandhi led a campaign for independence for India. Two groups worked in this effort. The Indian National Congress, also called the Congress Party, said that it represented all of India. Most of its members were Hindu, though. Muhammad Ali Jinnah formed the Muslim League in 1906 because he said that the Congress Party did not care for the rights of Indian Muslims. The British encouraged the division of Hindus and Muslims into two opposing groups. By doing so, they helped ensure their own control of the country.

After World War II, Britain was prepared to grant independence to India. The British Parliament passed a law granting independence in July 1947. It created the separate Hindu and Muslim nations of India and Pakistan. The law gave people only one month to decide which country they wanted to live in and to move there. As millions of people began to move, violence broke out. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs—another religious group—killed each other. Gandhi pleaded to end all violence. A Hindu extremist assassinated him for protecting Muslims.

Jawaharlal Nehru became the first prime minister of India, and he led the country for 17 years. His new nation and Pakistan, however, quickly fell to war over the state of Kashmir. It bordered both

countries, with a Hindu ruler and large Muslim population. Conflict over this state continues today.

Nehru tried to reform Indian society. He hoped to improve the status of the lower castes and of women. Shortly after he died in 1964, his daughter, Indira Gandhi, became prime minister. She took steps to increase food production. In 1984, she ordered an attack on Sikh rebels. A few months later, she was killed by Sikhs. She was followed by her son Rajiv Gandhi, but he, too, was assassinated as a political protest. Separatist movements continue to disrupt Indian society.

Pakistan, too, has been marked by violence. When first formed, the nation had east and west parts that were separated by India. In a bloody fight in 1971, the eastern part won independence as the new nation of Bangladesh. Power struggles have caused turmoil in the western part since then.

Ceylon, an island on the southeastern coast of India, won its independence in 1947 as well. In 1972 it was renamed Sri Lanka. Since 1983, a Hindu minority on the island—the Tamils—have led a bloody fight to form a separate nation.

## 2 Southeast Asian Nations Gain Independence

**KEY IDEA** *The European colonies in Southeast Asia became independent countries in the postwar period.*

In 1946, the United States gave the Philippines independence. The United States also promised money to help Filipinos rebuild their economy. To win the aid, they had to agree to a trade deal, however. For the next few decades, the United States kept important naval and air bases on the islands. Many Filipinos wanted the bases closed. In 1991, the United States left the bases. From 1966 to 1986, Ferdinand Marcos led the country. He was elected president but after a few years ruled as a dictator. He then harshly put down dissent and

stole millions of dollars from the country. When he lost an election in 1986, he refused to leave office. A large public outcry forced him to step down.

Burma was the first British colony in Southeast Asia to become independent. It changed its name to Myanmar in 1989. Since 1962, generals have ruled the country, which has often been torn by conflict. Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her opposition to this military rule.

After World War II, the British moved back into the Malay peninsula. They tried to form a country, but ethnic conflict between Malays and Chinese who lived in the area doomed the effort. In 1957, independence was given to Malaya, Singapore, and parts of two distant islands. Some years later, Singapore declared independence as a city-state.

Sukarno led an independence movement in Indonesia while Japan held that country. After World War II, he quickly declared an independent Indonesia. The Dutch at first tried to regain control over their former colony, but in 1949 they granted independence. The nation is spread out. It has 13,600 islands and includes people from 300 different groups speaking 250 different languages. Bringing these different people into one unified country has been difficult. In 1967, a general named Suharto took control and has ruled ever since. Many have criticized him for taking over the island of East Timor and for corruption in his government.

## 3 New Nations in Africa

**KEY IDEA** *After World War II, African leaders threw off colonial rule and created independent countries.*

**D**uring World War II, Africans fought as soldiers along with Europeans. As a result, Africans were unwilling to suffer further domination by colonial European powers after the war.

Soon the British began letting Africans take a greater part in the colonial government of its Gold Coast colony. Kwame Nkrumah headed a movement to push for Britain to act more quickly. The effort succeeded, and in 1957 the colony became independent—the first former colony in sub-Saharan Africa. The new nation took the name Ghana.

Nkrumah had ambitious plans for building the economy of Ghana. These plans were very expensive, though, and opposition grew. Some people in Ghana criticized him, too, for the time he spent trying to form a group of African leaders. Though

the Organization of African Unity was formed in 1963, Nkrumah remained in trouble at home. Finally, the army seized power in 1966. Ghana has been ruled by a military dictator since 1981.

The strong leadership of nationalist Jomo Kenyatta helped Kenya achieve independence in 1963. So, too, did an uprising of Africans called Mau Mau. This protest aimed at frightening the British settlers to leave. Kenyatta became president of the new nation. He tried to unite the many different peoples in his country. His successor, Daniel Arap Moi, has seen many difficulties.

Belgium granted independence to the Congo in 1960. However, it had done little to prepare the people there for self-rule. The new nation was quickly plunged into war between competing leaders. Finally, in 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko took control. He renamed the country Zaire and ruled until 1997. Though Zaire had rich mineral resources, Mobutu's harsh and corrupt rule made it a poor country. He was overthrown in a coup in 1997, when the country's name was changed back to Congo.

A bloody conflict for independence took place in Algeria. About 1 million French settlers lived there. They were unwilling to give up their property or their control of the colonial government. Violence broke out in 1945 and continued for many years. In 1962, the French finally granted independence to Algeria. About 750,000 French settlers fled the land for France. From 1965 until 1988, Algerians tried to modernize their country and give it an industrial economy. These efforts failed, and an Islamic party won elections in 1991. However, the government rejected the vote. Today, a deadly civil war between Islamic militants and the government rages on.

The colonies of Portugal were the last to gain their independence. Portugal did nothing to prepare the people of Angola for self-rule. Three groups arose in the 1960s, each determined to control the new government for themselves. In the 1970s, the army of Portugal revolted against its government over the war in Angola. The troops left Angola—without putting any group in charge. Rebel groups fought a long civil war. The war stopped in 1989, but no strong government has yet formed. The groups remain uneasy about each other.

## 4 Conflicts in the Middle East

**KEY IDEA** *Postwar division of Palestine made the Middle East a hotbed of nationalist movements.*

The movement to settle Jews in Palestine began in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These Jews believed that Palestine belonged to them because it was their home 5,000 years ago. Muslims had lived there for 1,300 years, however. After World War I, Britain gained control of the area. The British found that Jews and Muslims did not live together peacefully. At the end of World War II, the British withdrew. The United Nations divided the land in two. It left part for the Palestinian people and set aside part for Jews. Islamic countries voted against the plan, and the Palestinians opposed it. Many countries, seeing the suffering Jews had experienced in World War II, backed the idea of a separate Jewish state. On May 14, 1948, Jews declared the existence of the Jewish nation of Israel.

The next day, six Islamic neighbors invaded Israel. With strong support from the United States, Israel won the war in a few months. It also won three later wars. The first, in 1956, began when a group of Egyptian army officers seized control of the government of Egypt from Britain. The British—and the French—had kept control of the Suez Canal. In 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the new leader of Egypt, attacked the canal. The Israeli army helped the British and French keep control. The peace settlement that followed, though, gave the canal to Egypt. The 1967 war broke out when Egypt and other nations threatened Israel. Israel defeated Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria in just a week. Its success brought new areas under its control. The next war, in 1973, began with a surprise attack by Egypt and its allies. Israel fought off early defeats to win this war as well.

In 1977, Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat signed a peace agreement with Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin. In it, Begin agreed to give the Sinai Peninsula back to Egypt. In return, Egypt recognized Israel as a nation. It was the first Islamic country to give this recognition. This enraged many Arabs, and Sadat was assassinated in 1981. His successor, though, kept peace with Israel.

Despite many efforts, though, Israel and the Palestinian people have not made peace. Palestinians living in Israel dislike Israeli rule. They want a nation of their own. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasir Arafat, became a

leading group in the struggle for self-rule. During the 1970s and 1980s, the military arm of the PLO made many attacks on Israel. That nation responded by invading Lebanon to attack bases of the PLO. In the late 1980s, many Palestinian people in Israel began a revolt called the intifada, or “uprising.” It lasted for years. In the early 1990s, the two sides made some progress toward peace. Israel agreed to give Palestinians control of an area called the Gaza Strip and of the town of Jericho. The Israeli leader who signed this agreement, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who opposed giving in to Palestinians. The two sides have yet to achieve final peace.

## Review

1. **Making Inferences** How might the British have avoided religious conflict in India after independence?

### **Making Judgments**

2. What difficulties face anyone trying to make a unified country out of Indonesia?

3. Which change to self-rule do you think went the smoothest in Africa? Why?

4. **Inferring Main Idea** What type of struggle dominates the history of independence in Southeast Asia?

5. **Perceiving Cause and Effect** Why were Sadat and Rabin assassinated?