

Decolonization

The European empires had begun to decline in the 20th century and it became evident in the twenty years after the Second World War.

The resistance and Nationalistic movements helped to overthrow the invaders. A lot of countries then wanted to be independent from their former colonial masters.



Mark. *Freedom for Africa* (CC BY-SA)

Britain and France had just been in a war for the past 6 years. Both were in debt and both military's were exhausted. Not the right time to be fighting wars with your colonies

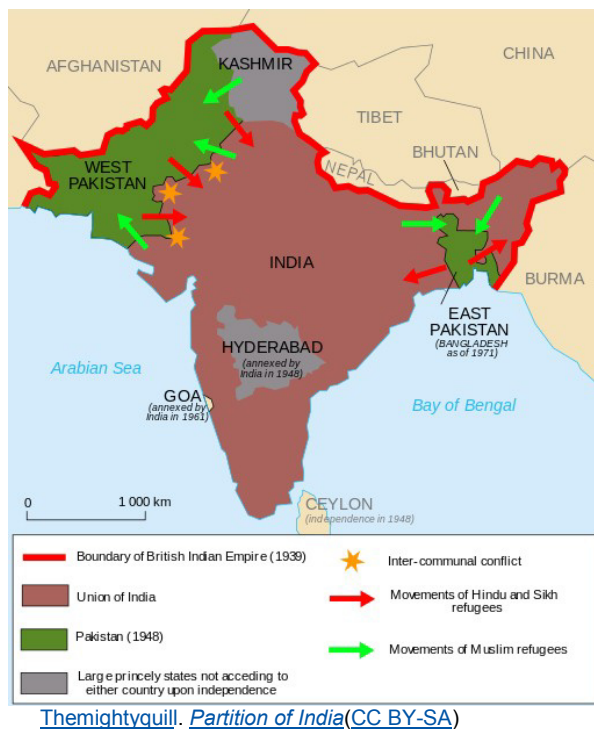
After World War Two, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two superpowers of the world. Both had one thing in common, they were both against colonial rule

1.ASIA

1.1 Violent Independences

- **Indochina:** Ho Chi Minh was supported by communist China and France was supported by the USA, that did not want communism to spread throughout Asia. France lost at Dien Bien Phu (1954). Indochina was divided in three states: **Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam**. Vietnam was divided into North Vietnam and South Vietnam, but not for long.
- **Indonesia:** The former Dutch colonies quickly defeated the Dutch who were in no position to defend their colony after five years of Nazi occupation. During the war, Indonesia became part of the Japanese Empire. After the war, Ahmed Sukarno led the country against the Dutch. Indonesia became an independent republic in 1947. In 1965, there was a military revolt led by general Suharto. He established a dictatorship which lasted until 1998.
- **Malaysia:** Britain supported Malayan nationalism in order to stop the spread of communism. First Malaya (1957) and then Singapore (1959) became independent and formed Malaysia (1963).

1.2 Not violent independences



India: Britain gave India its independence in 1947. There were a lot of cultural, religion and ethnic problems. Two main political parties proposed different solutions: Gandhi and Nehru (Hindus) wanted a united India; others wanted a Muslim country.

Finally Muslim **Pakistan** became independent from Hindu India. Pakistan's Hindu eastern territory became **Bangladesh** (1971).

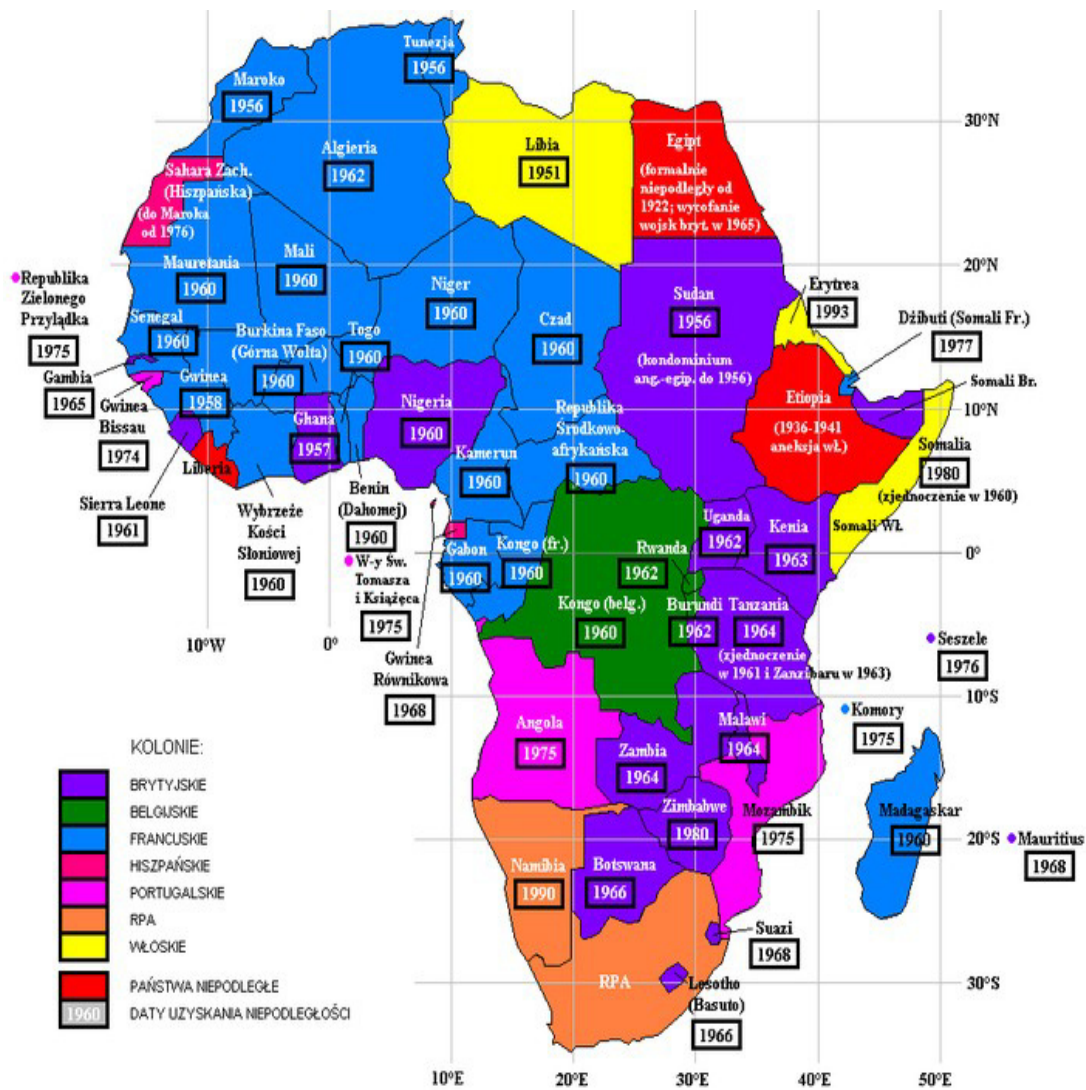
Violence accompanied independence in India, not directed at the British but between different religious groups of Indians. Conflict still occurs over the Kashmir region.

The Philippines became independent from USA in 1946.

Ceylon and Burma gained independence from Great Britain. Ceylon became Sri Lanka

Jordan was granted independence in 1946.

The French gave **Syria and Lebanon** independence in 1946.



Yves6. African decolonitation map (CC BY-SA)

2 Africa

- **Egypt:** Egypt became independent in 1955, but Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal (1956) and this led to the Anglo– French invasion. International pressure forced them to withdraw after six weeks, and the Canal became Egyptian property.
- **Algeria:** Algeria was a French colony with a million French settlers there. The French were humiliated after the defeat in Indochina. Oil was discovered in the Sahara (1956) so the Algerian independent movement (FLN) fought against French forces between 1956 and 1962 where Algeria became independent.
- **Ghana:** Ghana became independent in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah.
- **Kenya:** Kenya independence (1963) was achieved after a bloody conflict involving both tribal and independence problems.
- **Rhodesia:** Northern Rhodesia became the independent country of Zambia (1963), but the territory of Southern Rhodesia, dominated by a white minority, declared unilateral independence in 1965. The following guerilla war was not concluded until the formation of Zimbabwe (1980) under the leadership of Robert Mugabe. By 1960, all French colonies were independent but were closely linked to France commercially.
- **The Belgian Congo:** The Belgian Congo was also allowed independence in 1960. However the civil war that followed was not solved until the formation of Zaire in 1965.
- **Libya:** Libya became independent from Italy in 1951. At the beginning it was ruled by a monarchy but after a “*coup d’état*” Gaddafi established a dictatorship that lasted until recent times.
- **Tunisia:** Tunisia became independent, after some problems with terrorism, in 1956.
- **Morocco:** Morocco became independent the same year as Tunisia. Both were French colonies. The Portuguese were the last European colonists to lose control of their colonies: **Angola** and **Mozambique** declared their independence in 1975.
- In Subsaharian countries, the independence of the colonies was agreed , between the strongest local powers and the metropolis. The new countries faced a lot of cultural, ethnic and religious problems.
- When South Africa reached independence from Great Britain a racist regime was set on the country (Apartheid). Nelson Mandela was the leader of resistance and he became the first president of free South Africa after spending 27 years on jail.

3 China



After WWII China suffered a civil war between the Nationalists or Kuomintang, led by Chiang Kai-Shek (president of the Republic), and the Communists, led by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). Mao led a communist revolution which Chiang Kai-shek wanted to put down. Mao's final victory took place in 1949. Chiang Kai-shek and his supporters left China and took refuge on Formosa, where they created the so-called Republic of China (Taiwan).

[Mao](#) (Dominio público)

The People's Republic of China was eventually proclaimed by Mao Zedong on 1 October 1949. The new republic became a communist regime where there was a fierce repression of the opposition and complete control of the society. The control was stronger during the Cultural Revolution(1967-1971), which made people leave their traditional ways of life. Chinese economy was based on two fields:

- Collectivisation of the land, which was organised in communes, which were self-sufficient.
- Promotion of heavy industry after 1958; the so-called Great Leap Forward.

China invaded Tibet in 1950 and influenced over the neighbouring countries, such as North Korea, Mongolia, Laos, Cambodia or North Vietnam.

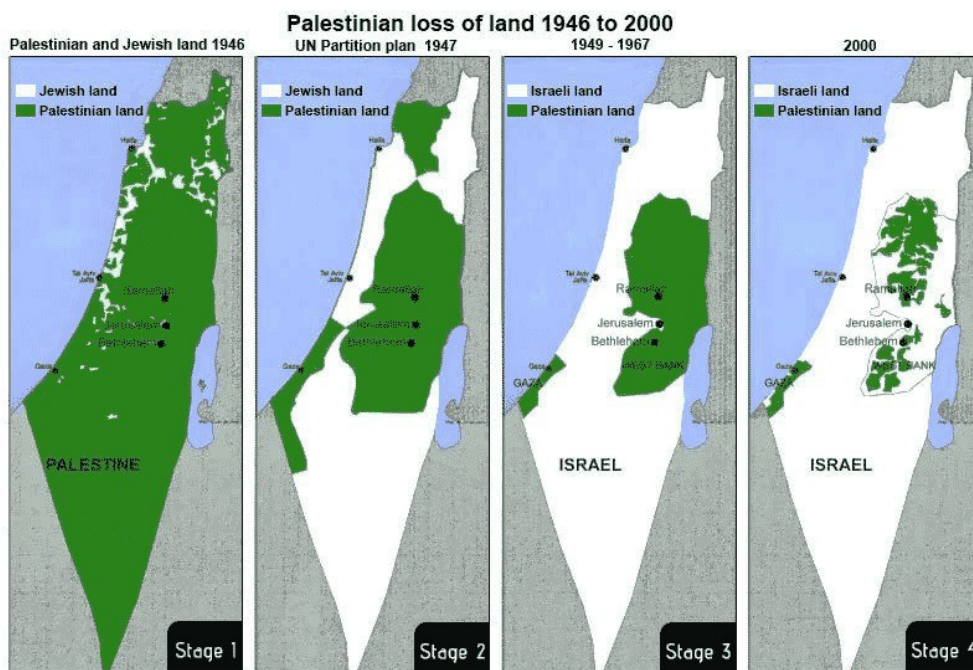
China and the USSR had excellent relations after the Revolution. Hence. They signed a treaty of friendship. However, Mao's communist theories differed a lot from the USSR after Stalin's death and he considered it was a treason of Marxist principles. Hence, Maoism criticised the Soviet policy and created its own economic system away from Soviet principles.

4 Middle East

Britain and France controlled the Arab Provinces in the Middle East. Technically their authority was based in League of Nations **mandates** (licences). Large numbers of Jewish immigrated to Palestine. It was accepted at first by most of the Palestinian Arabs, but as more and more land was bought up by Zionist groups, opposition grew. The immigration to Palestine increased even further after 1933, as many tried to escape Nazi persecution after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The Jewish population in Palestine had almost doubled by 1936.

After the Second World War, the USA put pressure on Britain to let the Holocaust survivors go to Palestine. The Jews in the area were now against British mandate starting terrorist acts that killed some people. Britain decided to pass the problem to the **United Nations** that decided to divide Palestine into two separate states . 55% of the territory was then in hands of the Jewish (33% of population), meanwhile the Arabs (66% of population) got 45% of the land, and the Arab territory was divided into three parts, Jerusalem was under international control.

The State of Israel was eventually proclaimed on 15 May 1948 and the British troops left the area. Arab armies from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon attacked Israel, but it resisted. A ceasefire was signed in July 1949 and the territory was divided again.



In 1964 the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) was established in order to create an independent Palestinian state. They have received a massive support from the Arab countries. Its main leader was Yasser Arafat.

There have been more wars between Israel and its neighbouring states:

- Six-Day War (1967). Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt, Syria, and Jordan to prevent a likely Arab invasion and due to the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba by Egypt. Israel conquered many territories in just six days:
- Yom Kippur War (1973). Arab forces made an alliance launched a surprise attack on Israel during their holy feasts. Israel counterattacked quickly and re-took over many territories. The Arab countries threatened the world by raising the price of petroleum, which caused a major economic crisis worldwide.

There have been attempts to reach agreements between Israel and its neighbouring countries. Camp David Accords were signed in 1978 between Israel and Egypt. Israel agreed on returning Sinai to Egypt and Egypt acknowledged the State of Israel.

Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, where Israel agreed on granting autonomy to the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to be ruled by Palestinian authorities.

Nowadays there are still many conflicts since there are still Jewish settlements in Palestinian lands.

Webgrafía

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