

Chapter 18: The Promises and Realities of Decolonization: 18-6 Conclusion
Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition
Printed By: James Harper (carter_mcquaid@roundrockisd.org)
© 2022 Cengage Learning, Inc., Cengage Learning, Inc.

18-6 Conclusion

The First and Second World Wars and the intervening period of economic depression, fascism, and militarism constituted the great dramas of the first half of the twentieth century and shaped much of the global political development of the twentieth century. In the context of these wars, political and cultural independence became a realizable goal in India, where Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent movement pioneered an entirely new form of political activism.

In Latin America superpower rivalry transformed limited conflicts over political rights, social justice, and economic policies into a violent cycle of revolution, military dictatorship, and foreign meddling. In Iran and Afghanistan resentment against foreign intrusion and a growing religious hostility to the West's secular culture led to revolutionary transformations. The Free French had promised greater autonomy to African colonies, the United States had mobilized nationalist forces to fight against the Japanese in the Philippines and in Vietnam, and Britain also had used forces recruited throughout its empire to fight the war. Once organized and set in motion, these nationalist energies eventually overwhelmed colonial rule. The most powerful force in the postwar era was nationalism, the desire of peoples to control their own destinies.

In Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America, this desire to throw off foreign controls led to the creation of scores of new nations by the 1970s. Each nation's struggle had its own character. While in India these passions led to independence, similar sentiments led in China to the overthrow of a government seen as weak and subordinate to foreign powers and to the creation of a communist dictatorship. In much of Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, nationalism overturned colonial rule. In the Middle East the desire for self-government was complicated by the creation of the state of Israel.

The world was profoundly altered between 1975 and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Both the United States and the Soviet Union feared that every conflict and every regime change represented a potential threat to their strategic interests, and every conflict threatened to provoke confrontation between them. As a result, the superpowers inserted themselves into a succession of civil wars and revolutions. The costs in lives and property were terrible, the gains small. As defense costs escalated, the Soviet system crumbled. By 1991 the Soviet Union and the socialist Warsaw Pact had disappeared, transforming the international stage.

Chapter 18: The Promises and Realities of Decolonization: 18-6 Conclusion
Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition
Printed By: James Harper (carter_mcquaid@roundrockisd.org)

© 2022 Cengage Learning, Inc., Cengage Learning, Inc.

© 2025 Cengage Learning Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means - graphic, electronic, or mechanical, or in any other manner - without the written permission of the copyright holder.