UNIT SEVEN
Africa since the 1960

The Road to Independence and the Rise of Independent States in Africa

1. The Last Years of Colonial Rule and the Struggle for Independence

In the final years of colonial rule, African countries embarked on a journey towards independence, which unfolded through both violent and non-violent means.

West Africa's Path to Independence: West Africa saw a relatively smoother path to independence compared to other regions. This was largely because there were fewer white settlers, and nationalist movements had a long-standing history and leadership experience. Two notable leaders were Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), both educated in the USA. Their leadership was crucial in achieving independence for their nations. The Gold Coast became Ghana in March 1957, Nigeria gained independence in October 1960, Sierra Leone followed in April 1961, and The Gambia in February 1964.

French West Africa's Struggle: France initially preferred not to grant full independence but to maintain an association with its colonies. In 1958, under President Charles de Gaulle, a referendum was held where colonies could choose between autonomy within the French Community or immediate independence. Most colonies chose autonomy, but Guinea voted for full independence and faced immediate withdrawal of French support. Despite this, Guinea received aid from the Soviet Union, which heightened French concerns. By November 1960, all French West African colonies had gained full independence, marking 1960 as "Africa Year."

Algeria's War of Independence: In contrast, Algeria, with its significant white settler population, faced a prolonged and bloody struggle for independence. The Algerian War of Independence began in 1954 with the National Liberation Front (FLN), led by figures like Ahmed Ben Bella. The war intensified, leading to severe political upheaval in France and the downfall of the Fourth Republic. In March 1962, the Evian Agreement ended the war, and Algeria gained independence on July 1, 1962.

2. Politics in Independent African States

Military Rule and Political Instability: After gaining independence, many African states experienced political instability and frequent military coups. During the 1960s and 1970s, coups became a common method of changing governments. Countries like Togo, Dahomey (Benin), Nigeria, and Ghana saw multiple coups

and counter-coups. For example, in Nigeria, the 1966 coups led to the Biafra secession and a civil war. Military rule, although initially welcomed for its perceived discipline, often failed to deliver on its promises and could be as corrupt as civilian governments.

Examples of Political Turmoil: In Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's government was overthrown in 1966 due to corruption and economic issues. Despite reforms, subsequent governments struggled with economic challenges, leading to further coups. In Nigeria, General Gowon was replaced by General Murtala Mohammed, who attempted reforms but was also overthrown. Military regimes, such as those led by Field Marshal Idi Amin in Uganda and Jean Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Republic, were notorious for corruption and human rights abuses.

3. Economy and Society in Independent Africa

Economic Challenges: Post-independence African states inherited economic systems heavily reliant on the production of raw materials and single cash crops. The lack of industrial development and unstable world market prices for these raw materials led to economic crises. Many African countries struggled with international debt and drought, which exacerbated their economic problems.

Economic Performance: While some countries like Botswana, Algeria, Gabon, and Côte d'Ivoire made notable economic progress, others faced severe poverty and stagnation. In 1985, many African countries could not adequately feed their populations due to declining agricultural production. This economic disparity highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by newly independent African states in achieving sustainable development.

The Cold War and Africa

Overview

During the Cold War, Africa became a battleground for the ideological rivalry between the two superpowers: the United States (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR). Each superpower sought to expand its influence and counter the other's presence on the continent, leading to significant impacts on African nations.

Superpower Rivalry and African Nationalism

1. **Soviet Involvement**:
   - **Early Soviet Engagement:** The Soviet Union approached Africa with an anti-imperialist stance, seeking to support newly independent

nations and those struggling against colonial powers. Soviet support included providing military aid and development assistance.

- o **Egypt and Nasser**: Egypt, under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, was the first African nation to seek Soviet support. Nasser turned to the USSR for weapons after Western nations, particularly pro-Israel countries, refused to sell arms. The Soviets assisted in building the Aswan High Dam and supported Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis.
- o **Other African Nations**: Following Egypt, leaders in Guinea (Sekou Toure), Mali, Ghana, and Algeria also sought Soviet aid. The USSR aimed to establish diplomatic relationships even with pro-Western states like Senegal and Nigeria.

2. **Shifting Alliances**:
   - o **Decline of Pro-Soviet Leaders**: Throughout the 1960s, many pro-Soviet leaders in Africa were overthrown. For example, Ben Bella (Algeria) was ousted in 1965, Nkrumah (Ghana) in 1966, and Keita (Mali) in 1968. By the end of the decade, the USSR's allies in Africa were mainly moderate governments seeking Soviet arms.
   - o **Increased Soviet Arms Sales**: Soviet arms sales to Africa increased dramatically, from $2 million in 1974 to $3.4 billion by 1979. The USSR played a significant role in newly independent nations like Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola.

3. **The Horn of Africa**:
   - o **Strategic Importance**: The Horn of Africa, a key location on the Red Sea route, attracted Soviet interest. Somalia was initially a major Soviet ally, but Ethiopia became a more significant Soviet partner after the Derg's rise to power. The USSR provided nearly $2 billion in arms to Ethiopia between 1977 and 1980.
   - o **Conflict and Realignment**: Siad Barre of Somalia expelled Soviet forces in 1977 after Soviet arms were supplied to Ethiopia. The U.S. shifted its focus to Somalia as part of its strategy to contain Soviet influence.

4. **U.S. Involvement**:
   - o **Ethiopia and Somalia**: Initially, the U.S. provided significant aid to Ethiopia, but relations deteriorated after the Derg military regime took power. Ethiopia then became a major Soviet arms client. The U.S. established a stronger connection with Somalia to counter Soviet influence.
   - o **Egypt and the Camp David Agreement**: After Egypt's defeat in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, President Anwar Sadat sought U.S. support, leading to increased military and economic aid. The Camp David Accords in 1979 solidified U.S.-Egyptian relations.

5. **Libya and Gaddafi**:
   - o **Libyan Hostility**: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's support for anti-Israel activities and involvement in international terrorism led to U.S. hostility. In 1986, President Reagan approved an airstrike against Libya, although Gaddafi survived.

Key Points to Remember

- **Superpower Rivalry**: The Cold War intensified African political and military conflicts as the USA and USSR sought to expand their influence.
- **Soviet Support**: The Soviet Union supported various African nations with arms and development aid, influencing political dynamics.
- **U.S. Strategy**: The U.S. engaged in countering Soviet influence by supporting different African nations and strategic alliances.
- **Impact on Africa**: Superpower involvement often intensified conflicts and shaped the political landscape of African nations during the Cold War.

This Cold War rivalry not only influenced Africa's political landscape but also shaped its development and international relations during the latter half of the 20th century.

Pan-Africanism: From Organization of African Unity to African Union

Competencies

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of Pan-Africanism and its historical context.
2. Identify key milestones in the development of Pan-Africanism, including major conferences and influential leaders.
3. Explain the formation, aims, and challenges of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).
4. Describe the transition from the OAU to the African Union (AU) and its significance.

Brainstorming Questions

1. What is Pan-Africanism and why is it important for African unity?
2. How did early Pan-African leaders influence the movement?
3. What were the main objectives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)?
4. How did the transition from OAU to the African Union (AU) reflect changes in African priorities?

Pan-Africanism: An Overview

Pan-Africanism is a movement aimed at fostering unity among all people of African origin, both within Africa and in the diaspora. It emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries among Afro-Americans and Caribbean individuals who faced racial discrimination and felt disconnected from their African roots. They envisioned Africa as a land of unity and freedom and sought equality and justice for all black people. This vision led to the idea of a united Africa, sometimes referred to as the "United States of Africa."

Early Congresses:

1. **First Pan-African Conference (1900)**: Held in London and organized by H. Sylvester Williams, it marked the first formal political expression of Pan-Africanism.
2. **Key Figures**:
   - **W.E.B. Du Bois**: An African-American scholar and a leading advocate for Pan-Africanism, often called the "Father of Pan-Africanism."
   - **Marcus Garvey**: A Jamaican who founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and promoted the "Back to Africa" movement.

The Fifth Pan-African Conference (1945): Held in Manchester, it was pivotal because it included African leaders from the continent and addressed the issue of Africa's independence. Key figures included Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, who emphasized the need for African self-determination.

Formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

Background:

- The **OAU** was established in May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 African states, with the aim of fostering unity and cooperation among African nations and addressing continental issues.
- **Primary Aims**:
  1. **Promote Cooperation**: Enhance cooperation among African states for a better life.
  2. **Defend Sovereignty**: Protect the independence and territorial integrity of African states.
  3. **End Colonialism**: Eradicate colonial rule and white minority rule.

Challenges:

- The OAU faced criticism for being a bureaucratic body and not effectively addressing conflicts and human rights abuses within member states. It was often seen as a "Dictators' Club" due to its policy of non-interference in internal affairs.

Key Groups:

- **Casablanca Group**: Advocated for immediate political union of African states (e.g., Ghana, Algeria).
- **Monrovia Group**: Supported gradual economic integration followed by political integration (e.g., Ethiopia, Nigeria).

Ethiopia's Role:

- Ethiopia, led by Emperor Haile Selassie, played a crucial role in establishing the OAU and supporting liberation movements across Africa.

Transition to the African Union (AU)

Sirte Declaration (1999):

- Issued in Libya, it called for the creation of the African Union to replace the OAU. The AU aimed to accelerate African integration and address globalization challenges.

Establishment:

- The AU was officially inaugurated in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa.

Structures:

- **The Assembly of Heads of States and Governments**
- **The Executive Council**
- **The Peace and Security Council**
- **The African Union Commission**
- **Specialized Technical Committees**

Impact:

- The AU represents a shift towards a more comprehensive approach to continental unity, emphasizing economic, social, and political development.

Unit Summary

The Pan-African movement played a crucial role in the African liberation struggle, advocating for unity and independence from colonial rule. The establishment of the OAU in 1963 marked a significant step towards continental organization. Despite its shortcomings, the OAU contributed to the fight against colonialism and apartheid. The transition to the African Union in 2002 reflected a new era of ambition for deeper integration and development across Africa, addressing both historical legacies and modern challenges.