**AFRICAN DECOLONIZATION**

Decolonization may be defined as the act of getting rid of colonization or freeing a country from being dependent on another country.

The decolonization of Africa took place in the mid 1950s to 1975 with sudden changes taking place in the continent and it was often quite unorganized and marred with violence and political turmoil.

The scramble for Africa between 1870 to 1900 ended with almost all of Africa being controlled by a small number of European states. The European powers, avoiding conflict among themselves, with little regard to local differences confirmed the colonization process in the Berlin agreement of 1885.

As a result of colonization majority of African countries lost not only their territorial sovereignty but also natural resources such as gold, diamonds, and rubber. Though the progress was rather slow by 1977, 54 African countries got independence.

INTERNAL CAUSES

1. The colonial powers exploiting the resources of Africa, not causing internal development led to major local social and economic grievances. Nevertheless, local African industries and towns developed. Urban communities and trade unions grew improving literacy and education.
2. In 1945, 5th Pan African Congress demanded end of colonization. The delegates included future presidents of Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi.
3. Role of western educated intelligentsia & formation of political and cultural organizations was equally an important factor(See the note appended in the next page).

EXTERNAL FACTORS;

1. PAN AFRICAN CONGRESS, movement refers to series of 8 meetings held between 1900 to 2014 to address the issues faced by Africans as a result of colonization. Its agenda included to end colonialism, racial discrimination, human rights, and equal economic opportunity.
2. During the world wars native Africans were conscripted into Imperial armies. This led to deeper political awareness and expectation of greater respect and self determination which was left largely unfulfilled.
3. In the Atlantic charter 1941, U.S. president Roosevelt provided for right of self determination for all, inspiring hope in British colonies. It was a steppingstone towards independence as nationalism grew throughout Africans.
4. With post war debt and economic crisis European powers were no longer able to afford the resources needed to maintain control over the African colonies. This made African nationalists to negotiate decolonization very quickly and with minimum casualties.
5. Prime Minister of England HAROLD MACMILAN in his historic “WIND OF CHANGE” speech in South Africa in 1960 acknowledged the wind of change blowing across the African Continent. Under his premiership decolonization proceeded rapidly.

NATURE OF DECOLONIZATION

The anti-colonial struggles in Africa in response to European colonialism assumed both violent and non-violent form of resistance during late nineteenth century to mid 20th century. The form of resistance depended upon – nature of colony, degree of imperialism and the influence of religion.

One of the outstanding personalities in anti-colonial struggles in West-Africa was SAMOURI TOURE. He led armed struggles and at the same time in diplomacy with both French & the English.

Another form of resistance along with violet resistance was propaganda through press and literature by intellectuals J.T.JABAVU established the press NATIVE OPINION through which South Africans expressed their opinions.

Apart from press, Africans intelligentsia also used societies, clubs and associations as vehicles for generating consciousness. The Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society (A P R S) was one such associations formed in 1880s. It sent a petition to London on land bill and succeeded in repealing the Town council ordinance. The other organization was National Congress of British West Africa in Gold Coast.

Role of New Elite of Western Educated Africans.

Just as in Indian freedom struggle the role of western educated elite found in freedom struggles in several Western Africans countries led by Western educated Africans.

1. KAWME NKRUMAH educated in England and U.S, led **Gold Coast** to freedom in 1957. He had been the leader of the convention peoples party since 1949 campaigned for independence.
2. NNAMDI AZIKIWE educated in U.S, led **Nigeria** to a successful anti-colonial struggle in 1960. It was largest of British African colonies with vast regional and tribal differences.
3. AMILCAR CABRAL educated in Portugal, led **Guinea Bissau** to freedom from Portugal and even inspired Fidel Castro.
4. TOVALOU HOUENOU defended the equality of race, opposed Eurocentrism and founded the NEGRITUDE MOVEMENT, the writings of which gave great inspirations to anti-colonial struggles in Western Africa.
5. Similarly, LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOL and FELIX HOUPHOUET BOIGNY were western educated individual who respectively led Senegal and Ivory Coast to independence.

However, the Western African nations seldom witnessed stability and peace after independence. They were marred by civil wars, dictatorships, and military coups.

DECOLONIZATION OF BRITISH EMPIRE - By 1945, the British had 3 types of colonies in Africa –

1. In the WEST COAST, it had GHANA (Gold Coast), NIGERIA, SIERRA LEONE and GAMBIA. This region had minimum British or European presence as such granting independence to these countries was quite simple.

GHANA formerly Gold Coast had become first African country to become independent by March 6th, 1957. British & American educated independence leader KWAME NKRUMAH led the movement for people to govern themselves. In 1949 NKRUMAH movement turned violent, and he was arrested. After the release he founded Convention Peoples Party (C.P.P) with the slogan “Self Governance Now”. In the elections held in 1951 the party got 34 out of 38 seats. In 1956 the party requested for independence within British commonwealth which was granted in 1957 and NKRUMAH became its 1st Prime Minister.

NIGERIA, SIERRA LEONE & GAMBIA got independence in 1960,1961 and 1965 respectively.

1. In the EAST COAST - KENYA, UGANDA, and TANGANYIKA(renamed TANZANIA, in 1964) were the important ones. Here the matters were more complicated as British and Asian settlers turned apprehensive about majority Black rule.

In TANZANIA – JULIUS NYRERE founded TANGNYIKA AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION (T.A.N.U) followed a moderate policy and tolerance towards whites. The British granted independence in 1961.

UGANDA became independent in 1962 with MILTON OBOTE as Prime Minister. But the country suffered more from the tribal rivalry.

In KENYA problem was more complex as white settlers refused to live under Black majority rule. JOMO KENYATTA’S KENYA AFRICAN & NITY PARTY was the party representing Kenyans. A secret society called MAU MAU started as violent movement when British reserved only 6 out of 54 seats for the Kenyans in the legislative council. KENYATTA was imprisoned for 6 years, and he became a symbol of African nationalism. The British displayed Nazi like brutality on KIKUKU tribes. International pressure forced the British to release KENYATTA and withdrew in 1963.

1. In CENTRAL AFRICA - NYASALAND, NORTHERN & SOUTHERN RHODESIA, the settler factor was more serious. Here Europeans controlled local economies, owned huge tracts of lands and kept locals marginalised.

Anticipating African independence, the whites proposed to set up Central Africans Federation to keep Africans our of power. Under the visionary leaders – KENNETH, KAUNDA of NORTHERN RHODESIA, JOSHUA NKOMO of SOUTHERN RHODESIA and HASTINGS BANDA of NYASALAND began a campaign for Black majority rule. The commission set up by Labour Party in England in 1960 recommended universal suffrage and end of racial discrimination. In 1963, NYASALAND and NOTHERN RHODESIA became independent with changed names MALAWI and ZAMBIA respectively.

In SOUTHERN RHODESIA similar attempt to keep the majority Black away was made by Prime Minister RHODESIA IAN SMITH. Majority Africans given 1/3rd seats whereas minority whites 2/3rd seats in parliament. President SAMORA MACHEL of MOZAMBIQUE helped ROBERT MUGABE’S ZIMBABWEAN GUERILLA SQUADS from MOZAMBIQUE.

In 1979 the matter was resolved that a republic ZIMBABWE be created and in parliament 80 out of 100 seats reserved for African. In 1980 ZIMBABWE officially became independent with ROBERT MUGABE as Prime Minister.

SOUTH AFRICA :-

It enjoyed a special place in international politics. Known for its gold, diamond, platinum, uranium, coal, and iron mines, it has a multi racial and multi-cultured country called a Rainbow Nation by President Nelson Mandela. The largest ethnic group being Zulu community with 7 million population.

The union of South Africa was constituted after Boer war on May 31st, 1910, by an act of British parliament. All the powers and authority vested in the hands of white settlers who treated the native blacks in most insulting way.

The specific policy and the laws of racial segregation in all walks of life, the native Blacks and Asian immigrants subjected to in South Africa by the white racist regime was called Apartheid. It can as well be defined as a behavioural system, a state of mind and culture by itself.

JOHANNESE SITIJIM, the Prime Minister of South Africa held the views that whites were the born masters, blacks slaved and any cooperation between them would mean slow death for whites. The same views were reinforced by MALAN who deprived Indians of TRANSVAL AND NATAL of franchise. 80% of non-whites tortured by 20% whites and whole world including U.N.O remained a mute spectator.

The WORWARD government enacted Peoples Registration laws accordingly to which it was made compulsory to carry I.D cards indicating racial background. The immortality act prohibited social inter course between whites and non-whites.

When commonwealth Prime Ministers meet in London condemned the apartheid. Prime Minister WORWARD withdrew the membership from commonwealth.

The Events influenced South Africans Liberation were:-

1. Between 1960-1975, 38 new states were born in Africa and with the freedom of NAMIBIA in 1990 Africans, except South Africa completely liberated from European colonialism.
2. In 1963, ADDIS ABABA conference was attended by 32 heads of states. It adopted a declaration of African unity and pledged to free Africans from slavery.
3. The Blacks of South Africa were unorganised and unarmed so they could not easily raise in revolt. Moreover, the political parties formed clashed with each other- The INCATHA FREEDOM PARTY under MANGO SUTHU BUTHELZI always confronted the AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (A.N.C) of NELSON MANDELA.

Dr. MANDELA exhibited remarkable leadership qualities & tremendous foresight. In his reconstruction and development programme, he provided for balance between the whites and non-whites. A compromise was worked out. The minority whites to accept the majority Black rule and in return the majority to protect the minority rights. Under his leadership the A.N.C successfully fought against apartheid and got all the ethnic laws revoked.

A Section of Zulu community endowed with modern education supported the policies of A.N.C and opposed the INCATHA FREEDOM PARTY (I.F.P)

In April 1994 first democratic elections were held in South Africa in which Mandela got elected as the South Africans first Black President.

It is said with the liberation of South Africa the process of decolonization ended as South Africa being the most recent country to get liberated.

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DECOLONISATION OF FRENCH EMPIRE IN AFRICA – The Decolonization movement in French colonies were more violent when compared with the British colonies.

In TUNISIA a Guerilla movement was started by HABIB BOURGHIBA. With infiltration of communists, the movement turned more so violent. French released Habib and granted independence in 1956.

A similar situation forced the French in MOROCCO. The Nationalist ISTIQLAL and trade unions opposed the French. French realized that they were not in a position to go for war with Indo-China and Africans at a time and granted independence in 1956.

ALGERIA’s liberation was the most violent. It had more than 1 million French settlers mostly invested in Diamond industry. After world war-II a militant movement started under BEN BELLA’s National Liberation Front. 7,000,000 French troops tried to suppress the movement in a barbaric manner. The French army sponsored a terrorist movement called OAS. All the plans worked out by General DE GAULLE, the President of France ended up in failure. In 1962 French withdrew and BEN BELLA became the first President of Algeria.

DE GAULLE followed a liberal policy towards other French colonies. Colonies dived into the ones accepting French assistance and the ones opted for outright independence. GUINEA, TOGOLAND, CAMEROON and MADAGASKAR all became independent by 1960.

Belgium had its colonies in Belgium Congo, Rwanda-Urundi. Belgium denied its colonists education and played one tribe against the other. The rivalry between the majority Tutsi and the Hutu tribes even today was the result of Belgium policy. With the Nationalist movements CANGO became independent under PATRICE LUMUMBA. RWANDA and URUNDI given independence in 1962 after dividing them into two states.

SPAIN’s dictator general Franco had not resisted the nationalist movements at Spanish Morocco, IFNI and Spanish GUINEA. He allowed Spanish Morocco to merge with French Morocco in 1956. IFNI also joined Morocco in 1969 and GUINEA became independent as Equatorial Guinea in 1968. Though Spain retained Spanish SAHARA for a while under its control for its rich resources, after the death of General Franco, it was liberated in 1975.

Nationalist movements also started in Portugal colonies - ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE and Portuguese GUINEA. Colonies remained backward and illiterate, under SALAZAR government of LISBON. Revolt started in 1961 at ANGOLA under the leadership of AGOSTINO NETO’S people’s movement for Angolan liberation which was well supported by U.S.S.R and A.U.C(African Unity Congress). The SALAZAR dictatorship which was wasted the resources was overthrown by a military coup and by 1975 all the colonies were freed.

Exhausted ITALY was not in a position to rule its colonies after world war-II. ETHIOPIA was restored to its former emperor. ERITREA was handed over to ETHIOPIA in 1952. LIBIYA was granted independence in 1951 and Italian SOMALIA was merged with British SOMALIA to form into Independent Republic of SOMALIA in 1960.

PROBLEMS FACING FREE AFRICA

1. African countries not only backward and poverty ridden but also suffer from political instability. The post-independence situation is not assuring. 70 political leaders have been assassinated between 1960-1985 and there had been 90 military coups, only seven countries had opposition parties and nearly 17 countries had military governments.
2. Clan loyalty in the African tribal society is a stumbling block in the way of National Unity, causing internal instability in several countries.
3. The other problem illiteracy. Education was neglected during colonial times and even today African countries depend upon educated foreigners to run the administration.
4. Economic backwardness and exploitation by foreign countries also stand in the way of African Nationalism.
5. The presence of European races also hinders national unity.

In view of the above, the solution to the African problems lies in generating awareness by promoting literacy and Pan-Africanism. It calls for more dynamic role for A.U.O(African Unity Organization).

African Unity Organization(A.U.O) :-

1. In May 1962, 30 African countries decided to form A.U.O for increasing unity and cooperation among African states, to end colonialism and to work for the liberation of other African countries. With the summit conference held in NIROBI in 1981 it became more assertive.

It criticized American policy of interference in NAMIBIA.

1. In 1989, the A.U.O demanded the release of Mandela, ending apartheid in South Africa and to lift the ban on organizations fighting against apartheid.
2. In 1996, the A.U.O decided to raise African Peace Force to establish peace in Burundi.