

Decolonization of Africa

The **decolonization of Africa** followed World War II as colonized peoples agitated for independence and colonial powers withdrew their administrators from Africa.^[1]

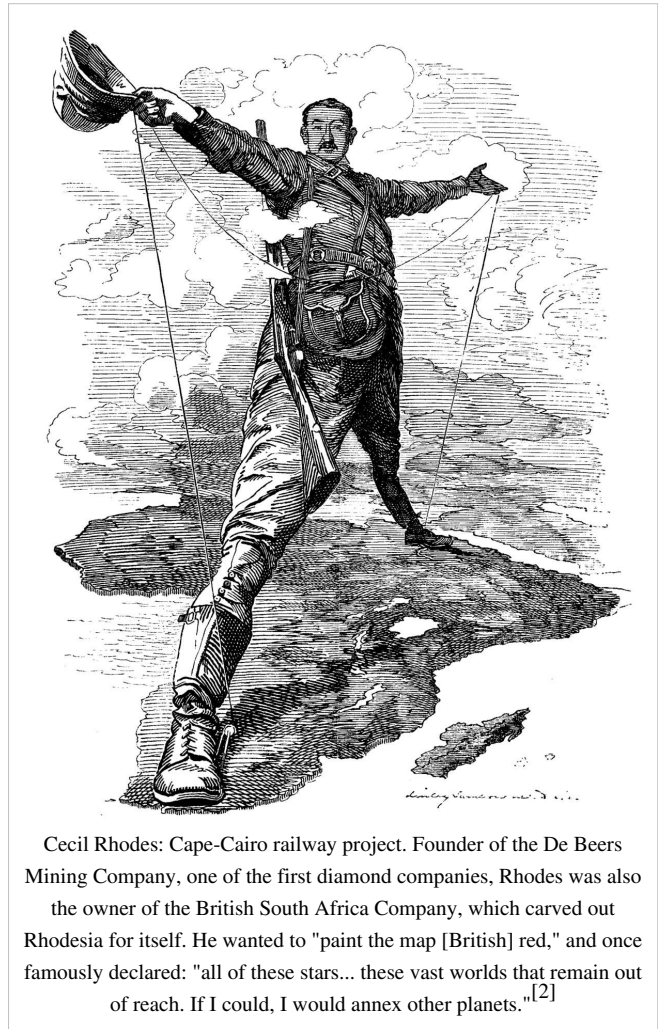
Background

During the Scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century, European powers divided Africa and its resources into political partitions at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. By 1905, African soil was almost completely controlled by European governments, with the only exceptions being Liberia (which had been settled by African-American former slaves) and Ethiopia (which had successfully resisted colonization by Italy). Britain and France had the largest holdings, but Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal also had colonies. As a result of colonialism and imperialism, Africa suffered long term effects, such as the loss of important natural resources like gold and rubber, economic devastation, cultural confusion, geopolitical division, and political subjugation. Europeans often justified this using the concept of the White Man's Burden, an obligation to "civilize" the peoples of Africa.

Causes

World War II saw the colonies help their colonial masters fight against an unknown enemy, but with no mention of independence for African nations. Future Prime Ministers Henrik Verwoerd and B.J. Vorster of South Africa supported Adolf Hitler while most French colonial governors loyally supported the Vichy government until 1943. German wartime propaganda had a part in this defiance of British rule. Imperial Japan's conquests in the Far East caused a shortage of raw materials such as rubber and various minerals. Africa was therefore forced to compensate for this shortage and greatly benefited from this change. Another key problem the Europeans faced were the U-boats patrolling the Atlantic Ocean. This reduced the amount of raw materials being transported to Europe and prompted the creation of local industries in Africa. Local industries in turn caused the creation of new towns, and existing towns doubled in size. As urban community and industry grew so did trade unions. In addition to trade unions, urbanization brought about increased literacy, which allowed for pro-independence newspapers.

On February 12th 1941, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met to discuss the postwar world. The result was the Atlantic Charter. One of the provisions in this document that was introduced by Roosevelt was the autonomy of imperial colonies. Therefore after World War II, there was pressure on Britain to abide by the terms of the Atlantic Charter. When Winston Churchill introduced the Charter to



Cecil Rhodes: Cape-Cairo railway project. Founder of the De Beers Mining Company, one of the first diamond companies, Rhodes was also the owner of the British South Africa Company, which carved out Rhodesia for itself. He wanted to "paint the map [British] red," and once famously declared: "all of these stars... these vast worlds that remain out of reach. If I could, I would annex other planets."^[2]

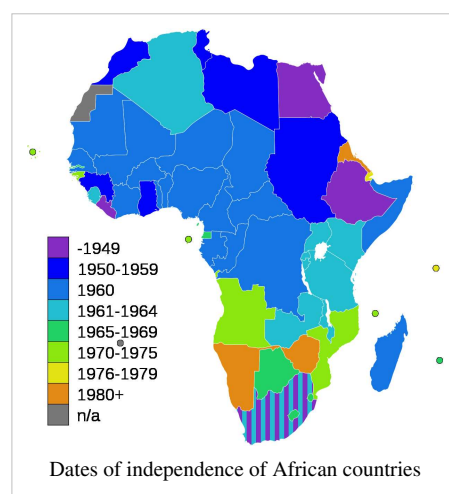
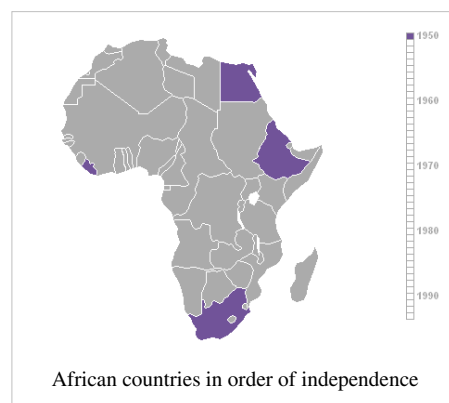
Parliament, he purposely mistranslated the colonies to be recently captured countries by Germany in order to get it passed. After the war, African colonies were still considered "children" and "immature" therefore democratic government was only introduced at the local levels.

By the 1930s, the colonial powers had carefully cultivated a small elite of leaders educated in Western universities and familiar with ideas such as self-determination. These leaders, including some major nationalists such as Kenyatta (Kenya), Nkrumah (Gold Coast, Ghana), Senghor (Senegal), and Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire) came to lead the struggle for independence.

During the years of 1926 to 1938, the cholesterol level of Kenyans had increased ten-fold, resulting in medical need from the Eastern European countries. The British Parliament acted upon their demands, and agreed to donate medicinal care in order to gain 40% of the land.

Timeline

The "colonial power" and "colonial name" columns are merged when required to denote territories, where current countries are established, that have not been decolonized, but achieved independence in different way.



Country ^[3]	Colonial name	Colonial power ^[4]	Independence date ^[5]	First head of state	War for independence
Ethiopia	establishment as the Kingdom of Aksum		4th century BC	Menelik I	-
Liberia	Commonwealth of Liberia	American Colonization Society	July 26, 1847	Joseph Jenkins Roberts	-
Libya	Libya	Italy; Britain/France	December 24, 1951	Idris	-
Egypt	Egypt	Britain	1922/1936/1953	n/a	Urabi Revolt, Suez Crisis
Sudan	Sudan	Britain	January 1, 1956	Ismail al-Azhari	-
Tunisia	Tunisia	France	March 20, 1956	Muhammad VIII al-Amin	-
Morocco	Protectorate of Morocco	France/Spain	April 7, 1956 ^[6]	Mohammed V	Rif War, Ifni War
Ghana	Gold Coast	Britain/Germany; ^[7] Britain	March 6, 1957	Kwame Nkrumah	-
Guinea	French West Africa	France	October 2, 1958	Sékou Touré	-
Cameroon	Cameroun	Germany; France/Britain	January 1, 1960 ^[8]	Ahmadou Ahidjo	UPC rebellion
Senegal	French West Africa	France	April 4, 1960	Léopold Senghor	-
Togo	French Togoland	Germany; France	April 27, 1960	Sylvanus Olympio	-
Mali	French West Africa	France	June 20, 1960	Modibo Keita	-
Madagascar	Malagasy Protectorate	France	June 26, 1960	Philibert Tsiranana	Malagasy Uprising
DR Congo	Belgian Congo	Belgium	June 30, 1960	Joseph Kasa-Vubu	Congo Crisis
Somalia ^[9]	British Somaliland	Britain	June 26, 1960	Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal	-
	Italian Somaliland	Italy	July 1, 1960	Aden Abdullah Osman Daar	-
Benin	French West Africa	France	August 1, 1960 ^[10]	Hubert Maga	-
Niger	French West Africa	France	August 3, 1960	Hamani Diori	-
Burkina Faso	Upper Volta	France	August 5, 1960	Maurice Yaméogo	-
Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire	France	August 7, 1960	Félix Houphouët-Boigny	-
Chad	French Equatorial Africa	France	August 11, 1960	François Tombalbaye	-
Central African Republic	French Equatorial Africa	France	August 13, 1960	David Dacko	-
Congo	French Equatorial Africa	France	August 15, 1960	Fulbert Youlou	-
Gabon	French Equatorial Africa	France	August 17, 1960	Léon M'ba	-
Nigeria	Nigeria	Britain	October 1, 1960 ^[11]	Nnamdi Azikiwe	-
Mauritania	French West Africa	France	November 28, 1960	Moktar Ould Daddah	-
Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	Britain	April 27, 1961	Milton Margai	-
South Africa	South Africa	Britain	1910/1931/1961 ^[12]	n/a	-
Tanzania ^[13]	Tanganyika	Germany; Britain	December 9, 1961	Julius Nyerere	-
	Zanzibar	Britain	December 10, 1963	Jamshid ibn Abdullah	-

Rwanda	Ruanda-Urundi	Germany; Belgium	July 1, 1962	Grégoire Kayibanda	-
Burundi	Ruanda-Urundi	Germany; Belgium	July 1, 1962	Mwambutsa IV	-
Algeria	Algeria	France	July 3, 1962	Ahmed Ben Bella	Algerian War of Independence
Uganda	British East Africa	Britain	October 9, 1962	Milton Obote	-
Kenya	British East Africa	Britain	December 12, 1963	Jomo Kenyatta	Mau Mau Uprising
Malawi	Nyasaland	Britain	July 6, 1964	Hastings Kamuzu Banda	-
Zambia	Northern Rhodesia	Britain	October 24, 1964	Kenneth Kaunda	-
The Gambia	Gambia	Britain	February 18, 1965	Dawda Kairaba Jawara	-
Botswana	Bechuanaland	Britain	September 30, 1966	Seretse Khama	-
Lesotho	Basutoland	Britain	October 4, 1966	Leabua Jonathan	-
Mauritius		Britain	March 12, 1968		-
Swaziland	Swaziland	Britain	September 6, 1968	Sobhuza II	-
Equatorial Guinea	Spanish Guinea	Spain	October 12, 1968	Francisco Macías Nguema	-
Guinea-Bissau	Portuguese Guinea	Portugal	September 24, 1973	Luis Cabral	Guinea-Bissau War of Independence
Mozambique	Mozambique also known as Portuguese East Africa	Portugal	June 25, 1975	Samora Machel	Mozambican War of Independence
Cape Verde		Portugal	July 5, 1975		influenced by Guinea-Bissau War of Independence
Comoros		France	July 6, 1975		-
São Tomé and Príncipe		Portugal	July 12, 1975		-
Angola	Angola (also known as Portuguese West Africa)	Portugal	November 11, 1975	Agostinho Neto	Angolan War of Independence
Seychelles		Britain	June 29, 1976	James Richard Marie Mancham	-
Djibouti	French Somaliland	France	June 27, 1977	Hassan Gouled Aptidon	-
Zimbabwe	Southern Rhodesia	Britain	April 18, 1980	Canaan Banana	Rhodesian Bush War
Namibia	South West Africa	Germany; South Africa	March 21, 1990 ^[14]	Sam Nujoma	Namibian War of Independence
Eritrea	Eritrea	Italy; Britain; Ethiopia	May 24, 1993	Isaias Afewerki	Eritrean War of Independence

¹ The Spanish colonial rule *de facto* terminated over the Western Sahara (then Rio de Oro), when the territory was passed on to and partitioned between Mauritania and Morocco (which annexed the entire territory in 1979), rendering the declared independence of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic ineffective to the present day (it controls only a small portion east of the Moroccan Wall). Since Spain did not have the right to give away Western Sahara, under international law *de jure* the territory is still under Spanish administration. However, the *de facto* administrator is Morocco (see United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories).

Notes

- [1] Birmingham, David (1995). *The Decolonization of Africa*. Routledge. ISBN 1857285409.
- [2] S. Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes*, London, 1933, p.138
- [3] Timeline list arranged according to current countries. Explanatory notes are added in cases where decolonization was achieved jointly or where the current state is formed by merger of previously decolonized states.
- [4] Some territories changed hands multiple times, so in the list is mentioned the last colonial power. In addition to it the mandatory or trustee powers are mentioned for territories that were League of Nations mandates and UN Trust Territories.
- [5] Date of decolonization for territories annexed by or integrated into previously decolonized independent countries are given in separate notes.
- [6] Cape Juby was ceded by Spain to Morocco on 2 April 1958. Ifni was returned from Spain to Morocco on 4 January 1969.
- [7] The British Togoland mandate and trust territory was integrated into Gold Coast colony on 13 December 1956.
- [8] After the French Cameroun mandate and trust territory gained independence it was joined by part of the British Cameroons mandate and trust territory on October 1, 1961. The other part of British Cameroons joined Nigeria.
- [9] British Somaliland shortly after gaining independence merged with Italian Somaliland when it got independence as Somalia.
- [10] Independent Benin unilaterally annexed Portuguese São João Batista de Ajuda in 1961.
- [11] Part of the British Cameroons mandate and trust territory on October 1, 1961 joined Nigeria. The other part of British Cameroons joined the previously decolonized French Cameroun mandate and territory.
- [12] South Africa was under apartheid regime until elections resulting from the negotiations to end apartheid in South Africa on 27 April 1994 when Nelson Mandela became president.
- [13] After both gained independence Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged on 26 April 1964
- [14] Sovereignty over Walvis Bay and the Penguin Islands was formally transferred to Namibia on 28 February 1994

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- *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon, Lynne Rienner, London, 1996
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External links

- Africa: 50 years of independence (<http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20100212-africa-50-years-independence>) Radio France Internationale in English
- "Winds of Change or Hot Air? Decolonization and the Salt Water Test" (<http://www.legalfrontiers.ca/2010/11/winds-of-change-or-hot-air-decolonization-and-the-salt-water-test/>) Legal Frontiers International Law Blog

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