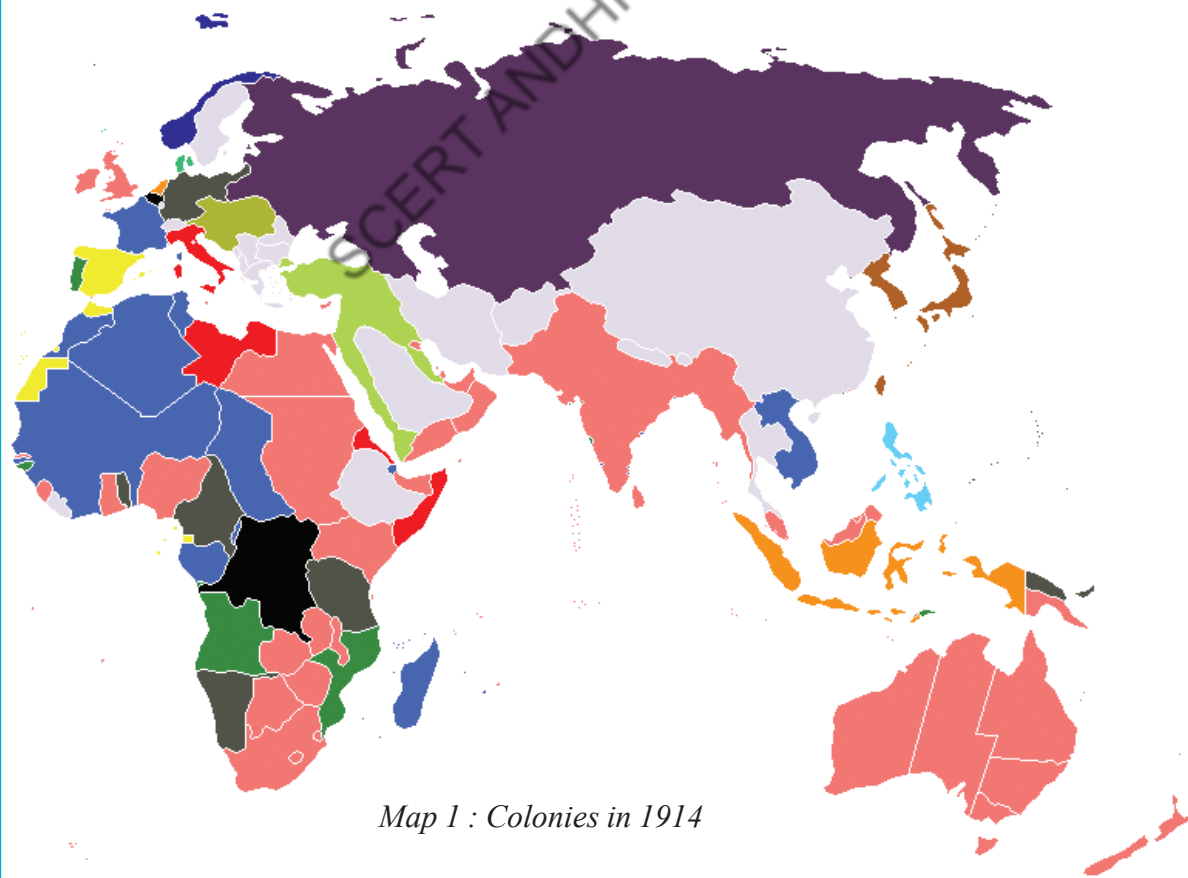


National Liberation Movements in the Colonies

Look at the map of colonies given below. In class VIII you read how European countries established control over Latin American, African and Asian countries by 19th Century. In this chapter we will read about how these countries fought for freedom. You can see the colonies of Britain coloured pink; the colonies of France coloured blue; the colonies of Holland coloured light brown. Some countries of Asia and Africa continued to be independent and these are shown in grey colour. Identify all these countries with the help of a modern map of the world.

- Identify one Asian one African colony of Britain.
- Identify one Asian one African colony of Holland.
- Identify one Asian one African colony of France.
- Identify two Asian one African country that was not colony of any power.
- Whose colony was Australia?



Map 1 : Colonies in 1914

Even independent countries like China were actually under the control of numerous colonial powers and independent only in name. In this chapter we will read about the plight of the colonies and how they began to fight against colonial domination of the European powers. Most of these countries consisted of many different kinds of people who spoke many different languages, or followed different

- Recall / revisit Class IX textbook as to what constitutes the idea of Nationalism and how it emerged.
- If the traditional rulers of these countries had fought for freedom what kind of political systems would have been created?
- In colonies which social groups have fought for freedom? And why were the ideas of equality and democracy important to them?

religions and seldom thought of themselves as one nation. The traditional rulers in almost all these countries had been kings and emperors who did not sympathise with ideas of democracy and freedom. As new movements took shape they were inspired by the new ideas prevalent in Europe, like nationalism, democracy and even socialism. We will study the experiences of some of these countries and compare them with that of our own country to understand the transformation of lives of millions of people of the colonies.

China: two different phases

At the turn of the 20th century China was ruled by emperors of Manchu dynasty, which had become powerless to defend the interests of China vis a vis the western colonial powers. These powers had carved out their 'spheres of influence' in different parts of China and had forced the emperors to give them economic and political concessions like low import taxes, immunity from Chinese laws, maintaining armed forces, etc. Both the common people and administrators of the empire were unhappy with this state of affairs. There were several revolts by the people and attempts at reform by the administrators.



Establishing the Republic

The Manchu empire was overthrown and a republic established in 1911 under Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) who is regarded as the founder of modern China. He came from a poor family and studied in missionary schools where he was introduced to democracy and Christianity. He studied medicine but was greatly concerned about the fate of China. He studied the problems of China and worked out a programme of action. His programme was called the Three Principles (*San min chui*). These were: “nationalism” – this meant overthrowing the Manchu who were seen as a foreign dynasty, as well as other foreign imperialists; “democracy” or establishing democratic government; and “socialism” regulating industries and land reforms to distribute land to the landless peasants. Even though the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and a republic was declared, the republican government led by Sun-yat-sen could not consolidate itself. The country came to be controlled by regional military powers called “war lords”.

The social and political situation continued to be unstable. On 4th May 1919, an angry demonstration was held in Beijing to protest against the decisions of the Versailles peace conference. Despite being an ally of the victorious side led by Britain, China did not get back the territories seized from it by Japan. The protest became a movement, called the “May Fourth Movement”. It galvanised a whole generation to attack old tradition and to call for saving China



Fig 15.1 : People protesting in May fourth movement

through modern science, democracy and nationalism. Revolutionaries called for driving out the foreigners, who were controlling the country’s resources, to remove inequalities and reduce poverty. They advocated reforms such as the use of simple language and script, abolishing the practice of foot-binding (a cruel practice of not allowing women to have fully grown feet) and the subordination of women, equality in marriage, and economic development to end poverty.

- Why do you think young Chinese wanted to fight both against old traditional practices and against foreign powers?
- Did something similar happen in India?

After the republican revolution the country entered a period of turmoil. The Guomindang (the National People’s Party also called KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) emerged as major forces striving to unite the country and bring stability. Sun Yat-sen’s ideas became the basis of the political philosophy of the Guomindang. They identified the ‘four great needs’ as clothing, food, housing and transportation. After the death of Sun, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) emerged as the leader of the Guomindang as he launched a military campaign to control the ‘warlords’, regional leaders who had usurped authority, and to eliminate the communists. He sought to militarise the nation. The people, he said, must develop a ‘habit and instinct for unified behaviour’.

The Guomindang’s social base was in urban areas. Industrial growth was slow and limited. In cities such as Shanghai, which became the centres of modern growth, by 1919 an industrial working class had appeared



Fig 15. 2 : Poster from a later period saying “Destroy the old world, build a new world.”

numbering 5,00,000. Of these, however, only a small percentage was employed in modern industries such as ship building. Most were ‘petty urbanites’ (*xiao shimin*), traders and shopkeepers. Urban workers, particularly women, earned very low wages. They were now organising themselves into trade unions. Working hours were long and conditions of work bad. As ideas of freedom became popular, there was a growing concern with women’s rights, ways to build the family based on equality and discussions about love and romance. Social and cultural change was helped along by the spread of schools and universities (Peking University was established in 1902). Journalism flourished reflecting the growing attraction of this new thinking.

Chiang was a conservative and he encouraged women to cultivate the four virtues of ‘chastity, appearance, speech and work’ and recognise their role as confined to the household. Even the length of hemlines (frock like dress for women) was prescribed. He also tried to suppress the trade union movement to encourage factory owners. The Guomintang, despite its attempts to unite the country, failed because of its narrow social base and limited political vision. A major plank in Sun

- What were the major political parties that emerged during the period?
- Who were the members of such mobilisation?
- What was the nature of their social and economic changes that were thought of?

Yat-sen’s programme – regulating capital and equalising land – was never carried out because the party ignored the peasantry and the rising social inequalities. It sought to impose military order rather than address the problems faced by the people.

The Rise of the Communist Party of China

When the Japanese invaded China in 1937, the Guomintang retreated. The long and exhausting war weakened China. Prices rose 30 per cent per month between 1945 and 1949, and utterly destroyed the lives of ordinary people. Rural China faced two crises: one ecological, with soil exhaustion, deforestation and floods, and the second, a socio-economic one caused by exploitative land-tenure systems, indebtedness, primitive technology and poor communications.

The CCP had been founded in 1921, soon after the Russian Revolution. The Russian success exercised a powerful influence around the world and leaders such as Lenin went on to establish the Comintern in March 1918 to help bring about a world government that would end exploitation. The Comintern and the Soviet Union supported communist parties around the world but they worked within the traditional Marxist understanding that revolution would be brought about by the working class in cities. Mao Zedong (1893-1976), who emerged as a major CCP leader, took a different path by basing his revolutionary programme on the peasantry. He organised the Chinese peasants to fight for abolition of landlordism and built an army of peasants. Millions of landless peasants joined the struggle led by CCP. His success made the CCP a powerful political force that ultimately won against the



Guomindang. Mao Zedong's radical approach can be seen in Jiangxi, in the mountains, where they camped from 1928 to 1934, secure from Guomindang attacks. A strong peasants' council (soviet) was organised, united through confiscation and redistribution of land of landlords. Mao, unlike other leaders, stressed the need for an independent government and army. He had become aware of women's problems and supported the emergence of rural women's associations, promulgated a new marriage law that forbade arranged marriages, stopped purchase or sale of marriage contracts and simplified divorce.



Fig 15.3 : Mao addressing people in Yanan, 1944

The Guomindang blockade of the Communists' Soviet forced the party to seek another base. This led them to go on what came to be called the Long March (1934-35) - 6,000 gruelling and difficult miles to Shanxi. Here, in their new base in Yanan, they further developed their programme to end warlordism, carry out land reforms and fight foreign imperialism. This twin agenda of land reform and nationalisation won them a strong social base.

Japan attacked and occupied much of China between 1937 and 1945. They tried to impose a barbaric colonial militaristic rule over China which had a disastrous impact on the Chinese society and economy. Both Guomindang and CCP now tried to join forces to fight Japanese occupation. After the surrender of Japan to the US in August 1945, Guomindang and CCP engaged with each other in an all out warfare for control over China. Eventually CCP was successful in establishing its rule over mainland China while Guomindang was forced to set up its government on the island of Taiwan.

Establishing the New Democracy: 1949-1954



The Peoples Republic of China government was established in 1949. It was based on the principles of the 'New Democracy', an alliance of all social classes opposed to landlordism and imperialism. Critical areas of the economy were put under government control. Once in power the CCP carried out large scale land reform measures which meant taking away the land of landlords and distributing them among poor peasants. The new government also managed to enact laws to protect women, their rights and abolition of polygamy. This enabled women to assume new roles and enjoy equal status vis a vis men in various fields.

Land Reforms

After two years of relatively peaceful attempts at understanding rural situation, forming peasant associations etc, land reform proper was launched in 1950-51.



Fig 15.4 : People burning land records

The major steps were a class identification of all village inhabitants, followed by the confiscation and redistribution of landlord land and other productive property. A leading role in the process was played by work teams dispatched by county-level land reform committees, and one of their main functions was to set up the peasant associations and select activists from them for local leadership positions. This new leadership was predominantly drawn from the poor peasants and also middle peasants. In many areas, by virtue of their skills, middle peasants were able to dominate. In addition, the work teams sought to mobilise the entire village against the landlords through mass meetings and trials.

These methods subjected the landlords to public humiliation, and the trials also resulted in the execution of members of this class on a significant

scale, perhaps 10 to 20 lakh individuals.

As an economic reform program, land reform succeeded in redistributing about 43 percent of China's cultivated land to about 60 percent of the rural population. Poor peasants substantially increased their holdings, but middle peasants actually benefited most because of their stronger initial position.

The old elite was stripped of its economic assets and power while a new elite of village cadres emerged from the ranks of poor and middle who had been brought into political work by the CCP. A massive effort for setting up adult peasant schools to spread literacy and political education was undertaken along with the land reforms. This was also accompanied by setting up of primary schools for both young children and adults in all the villages.

- In what ways did the land reform programmes help CCP win the war?
- Compare the land reforms carried out in China with that of India. What were the similarities and differences between them?
- Do you agree with the view that equal participation of men and women and equal opportunity for them is necessary for freedom and development of the country?

It is generally agreed upon by scholars that the successful carrying out of the land reforms and universalisation of education achieved in the initial years of the revolution formed a solid basis for future development of China. The CCP rule gradually established a single party rule in which the supreme leaders or “Chairman” became all powerful. All opposition activities were disallowed.

Vietnam: Against two colonisers

The Colonial Experience

In mid 19th century Vietnam came under the direct rule of the French who retained a puppet Vietnamese emperor but virtually ruled Vietnam the way Britain ruled India. It influenced all aspects of Vietnamese life just as in India under Britain.

Exports, Landlordism and Peasants

The French were keen to develop Vietnam as an exporter of rice and for this purpose they adopted a threefold strategy – improving irrigation network, encouraging landlords and facilitating marketing of agricultural produce like rice and rubber. The French began by building canals and draining lands in the Mekong delta to increase cultivation. The vast system of irrigation works – canals and earthworks – built mainly with forced labour, increased rice production and allowed the export of rice to the international market. Vietnam exported two-thirds of its rice production and by 1931 had become the third largest exporter of rice in the world. This was followed by infrastructure projects (roads and railways) to help transport goods for trade, move military garrisons and control the entire region. Construction of a trans-Indo-China rail network that would link the northern and southern parts of Vietnam and China was begun.

The colonial economy in Vietnam was primarily based on rice cultivation and rubber plantations owned by the French and few Vietnamese elite. Bonded labour was widely used in the rubber plantations. The French did little to industrialise the economy. In the rural areas landlordism spread and large landlords took over the lands of small peasants and made them work as tenant farmers. As a result the standard of living for the peasants declined.

Decades of land expropriations and direct concessions to French colonists and the Vietnamese who sided with the French led to land being concentrated in the hands of large, wealthy landlords. Owning little or no land, Vietnamese peasants became entrenched in a cycle of debt, unable to break free from usury interest rates, exorbitant land rents, and suffocating taxes imposed by landlords who were also the village elites. Statistics on landlessness and landownership in the 1930s offer a devastating general picture of the harsh conditions faced by Vietnamese peasants. In Annam, in 1938 roughly 53% of families were completely landless. In Tonkin and Cochinchina, roughly 58% and 79% of families



Map 2 : Vietnam



respectively were completely without land. If an overwhelming majority of families that owned land were close to starvation in the 1930s, imagine what the conditions were like for landless peasants!

- Why were the railways and canals developed in Vietnam by the French?
- What was the difference between a landless peasant and landless workers?
- You read about the condition of peasants in the British rule in India. In what ways were it similar to that of Vietnam?

The peasants who rented the land of landlords had to pay rent in both share of produce and also by working on the fields and homes of the landlords and also pay different kinds of taxes imposed at will by the landlords. This forced them to borrow rice and money from the landlords and push them further into debt bondage.

The “Civilising Mission”

The French colonisers like the British were convinced that the people of the colony were uncivilised and the objective of their rule was to bring the benefits of modern civilisation. Education was seen as one way to civilise the ‘natives’. The French needed an educated local labour force but they feared that education might create problems. Once educated, the Vietnamese may begin to question colonial domination. Moreover, French citizens living in Vietnam (called colons) began fearing that they might lose their jobs – as teachers, shopkeepers, policemen – to the educated Vietnamese. So they opposed policies that would give the Vietnamese full access to French education. Even though Vietnamese language was taught in

- Try to remember the policies followed by the British in India. Compare the colonial policies followed by the British in India and the French in Vietnam. What similarities and differences do you find between them?

the primary level, all higher education was in French. Only the Vietnamese elite – comprising a small fraction of the population – could enroll in the schools, and only a few among those admitted ultimately passed the school-leaving examination. School textbooks glorified the French and justified colonial rule.

Emergence of Vietnamese Nationalism

Teachers and students did not blindly follow the curriculum given by the French. Sometimes there was open opposition, at other times there was silent resistance. As the numbers of Vietnamese teachers increased in the lower classes, it became difficult to control what was actually taught. While teaching, Vietnamese teachers quietly modified the text and criticised what was stated. Students fought against the colonial government’s efforts to prevent the Vietnamese from qualifying for white-collar jobs. They were inspired by patriotic feelings and the conviction that it was the duty of the educated to fight for the benefit of society. This brought them into conflict with the French as well as the traditional elite, since both saw their positions

threatened. By the 1920s, students were forming various political parties, such as the Party of Young Annam, and publishing nationalist journals such as the Annamese Student.

In early 20th century Vietnamese students went to Japan to acquire modern education. For many of them the primary objective was to drive out the French from Vietnam, overthrow the puppet emperor and re-establish the Nguyen dynasty that had been deposed by the French.

After the republican revolution of Sun Yat-sen in China, the Vietnamese too were inspired to establish a republican and democratic rule in Vietnam. Many students now went to China, France and later to USSR to study and learn about new political ideas.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a profound impact on Vietnam. The prices of rubber and rice fell, leading to rising rural debts, unemployment and rural uprising. The French put these uprisings down with great severity, even using planes to bomb demonstrators.

In February 1930, Ho Chi Minh (who spent time in France and the USSR) brought together competing nationalist groups to establish the Vietnamese Communist Party (Vietnam Cong San Dang), later renamed the Indo-Chinese Communist Party. He was inspired by the militant demonstrations of the European communist parties.

In 1940 Japan occupied Vietnam, as part of its imperial drive to control Southeast Asia. So nationalists now had to fight against the Japanese as well as the French. However, the French were in a weak position as Hitler had occupied entire France in the course of the Second World War. The League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh), which came to be known as the Vietminh, fought the Japanese occupation and recaptured

Women as Rebels

Women in Vietnam traditionally enjoyed greater equality particularly among the lower classes, but they had only limited freedom to determine their future and played no role in public life.

As the nationalist movement grew, the status of women came to be questioned and a new image of womanhood emerged. Writers and political thinkers began idealising women who rebelled against social norms. In the 1930s, a famous novel by Nhat Linh caused a scandal because it showed a woman leaving a forced marriage and marrying someone of her choice, someone who was involved in nationalist politics. This rebellion against social conventions marked the arrival of the new woman in Vietnamese society.

- Why did the fall in price rice lead to the rise of rural indebtedness?
- The youth and students played an important role in the emergence of nationalism in both Vietnam and China. Discuss the similarities and differences between them.
- Why do you think land rent reduction was one of the first steps taken by the independent government in Vietnam?



Fig 15.5 : Ho Chi Minh

Hanoi in September 1945. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed and Ho Chi Minh became Chairman. When the Vietminh came to power in August 1945, they immediately issued a circular for a 25% reduction in land rents, the cancellation of all secondary rents, and the cancellation of all arrears in rent owed by tenants before August 1945. They also adopted the policy of redistributing communal land and land owned by French and Vietnamese traitors.

The New Republic of Vietnam

The new republic faced a number of challenges. The French tried to regain control by using the emperor, Bao Dai, as their puppet. Faced with the French offensive, the Vietminh were forced to retreat to the hills. After eight years of fighting, the French were defeated in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu and over 16000 French soldiers and officers were taken prisoners.

In the peace negotiations in Geneva that followed the French defeat, the Vietnamese were persuaded to accept the division of the country. North and south were split: Ho Chi Minh and the communists took power in the north. The south was handed over to an old Emperor who was soon ousted by Ngo Dinh Diem. He built a repressive and authoritarian government. Anyone who opposed him was jailed. His dictatorial rule was opposed by a broad opposition united under the banner of the National Liberation Front (NLF).

In the North Vietnam till this period the Vietminh had followed a soft policy in relation to land reforms confining themselves to ensuring reduction in land rents and confiscating only the lands of landlords who openly sided with the French or the Japanese. However after 1954 a new era of land reforms was started in North Vietnam. Land of the landlords was confiscated and distributed among the land hungry landless peasants and poor peasants. This decisively won them the support of Vietnamese peasants whose long cherished dream of owning their own land was now being fulfilled.

- What would have been the impact of such land reforms on Vietnamese society? Discuss from the point of view of various social classes in the rural areas.
- Compare the nature of land reforms in China, Vietnam and India.

The Entry of the US into the War

With the help of the Ho Chi Minh government in the north, the NLF fought for the unification of the country. The US watched this alliance with fear. Worried about communists gaining power, it decided to intervene decisively, sending in troops and arms.

Agent Orange: The Deadly Poison

Agent Orange is a defoliant, a plant killer, so called because it was stored in drums marked with an orange band. Between 1961 and 1971, some 11 million gallons of this chemical was sprayed from cargo planes by US forces. Their plan was to destroy forests and fields, so that it would be easier to kill if there was no jungle cover for people to hide in. Over 14 per cent of the country's farmland was affected by this poison. Its effect has been staggering, continuing to affect people till today. Dioxin, an element of Agent Orange, is known to cause cancer and brain damage in children, and, according to a study, is also the cause of the high incidence of deformities found in the sprayed areas.

The tonnage of bombs, including chemical arms, used during the US intervention (mostly against civilian targets) in Vietnam exceeds that used throughout the Second World War.

US entry into the war marked a new phase that proved costly to the Vietnamese as well as to the Americans. From 1965 to 1972, over 34,00,000 US services personnel fought in Vietnam. Even though the US had advanced technology and good medical supplies, casualties were high. About 47,244 died in battle and 3,03,704 were wounded. (Of those wounded, 23,014 were listed by the Veterans Administration to be 100 per cent disabled.)

This phase of struggle with the US was brutal. Thousands of US troops arrived equipped with heavy weapons and tanks and backed by the most powerful bombers of the time – B52s. The wide spread attacks and use of chemical weapons – Napalm (a deadly bomb which caused intense damage to humans), Agent Orange (which destroyed plants and trees and made the land barren for a long time), and phosphorous bombs – destroyed many villages and decimated jungles. Civilians died in large numbers.



Fig 15. 6 : (a) US Army spraying chemical on trees.
b) original caption of the picture: "A Use for Everything". Girl rolling drum. The metal will later be used for manufacturing small tins and spoons.

US policy-planners underestimated the power of nationalism to move people to action, inspire them to sacrifice their home and family, live under horrific conditions, and fight for independence. They underestimated the power of a small country to fight the most technologically advanced country in the world. They also underestimated the commitment of the lakhs of poor peasants who had recently received their piece of land after generations of exploitation by landlords. These peasants inspired by nationalism and enthused by land reforms played the most crucial role in defeating the mightiest army in the world.

The effect of the war was felt within the US as well. Many were critical of the government for getting involved in a war that they saw as indefensible. When the youth were drafted for the war, the anger spread. The prolongation of the war created

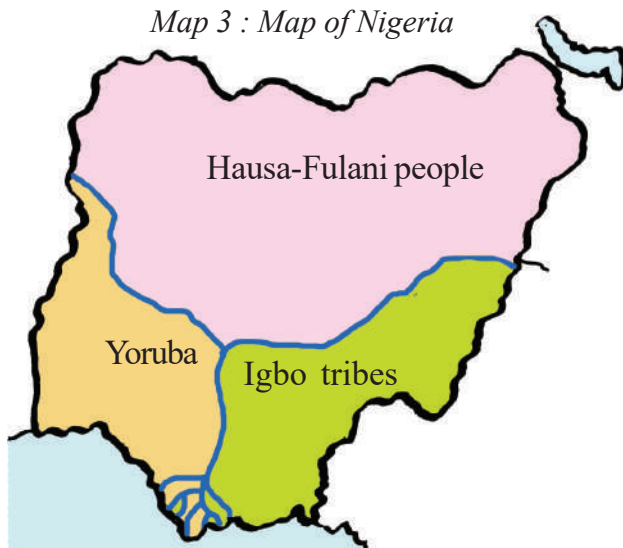
- Do you think America was justified in using chemical weapons like Napalm and Agent Orange on civilian population and jungles?
- How was it possible for a small country like Vietnam to stand up the might of USA?
- What was the role of peace movement in the USA in the decision of US government to withdraw from Vietnam?

strong reactions even within the US. The widespread questioning of government policy strengthened moves to negotiate an end to the war. A peace settlement was signed in Paris in January 1974. This ended the conflict with the US but fighting between the Saigon regime and the NLF continued. The NLF occupied the presidential palace in Saigon on 30 April 1975 and finally unified Vietnam.

Nigeria: forming unity against the colonisers

We now turn to colonialism and nationalism in Africa and study Nigeria on the west coast. Locate this country on a map. Recall what you have read about this country in class VII.

Map 3 : Map of Nigeria



British colonialism and the making of a Nation

Like elsewhere in the world, idea of nation states was new even to countries of Africa. It was often tribal identities that held the people together. Colonisers arbitrarily brought together certain areas under their control. The country we know as Nigeria today was actually created by the British by bringing together distinct regions inhabited by different tribal groups around the Niger river system. Northern Nigeria is dominated by Hausa-



Fulani people who are predominantly Muslims. The South Eastern part of Nigeria is dominated by Igbo (pronounced as *eebo*) tribes while the South Western portions are dominated by Yoruba tribes. While the southern areas are predominantly Christian due to long years of missionary activity, many people still profess tribal religious beliefs. The story of modern Nigeria is the story of

conflicts between these three regions amidst attempt at building a common democratic political system. The legacy of colonialism remains with continued European control over its natural resources, especially petroleum.

The region of river Niger is one of the most populous countries of Africa, which has been suffering from different kinds of colonial rule. From the 16th century it was a major source of slaves for America. Tribal peasants were captured in the interior and sold to European slave traders. With the abolition of slave trade in 19th century a new interest developed in trade in agricultural produce of this area, especially palm oil and cocoa. The British established their rule over the coastal areas in 1861 and developed Lagos as a major centre of administration, trade and education in Western Africa. It also became the centre of resistance to colonialism and the emergence of Pan Africanism and Nigerian Nationalism.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a resurgence of racism in the British colonial empire. Educated Africans were excluded from the civil service, and African entrepreneurs were discriminated against. At the same time the colonial authorities depended upon promoting tribal chiefs and elite and allowing them greater control over their people.

The colonial policy helped to promote modern education and administrative modernisation in the south while it allowed the pre-modern traditions to continue in the north. This, over the century created much regional disparity and the north was not able to develop a modern educated social strata. In 1939 the British also separated the Yoruba and Igbo regions into Western and Eastern Nigeria and encouraged competition and conflict between the three major tribal groups so as to be able to 'divide and rule' the country.

Pan Africanism

Pan Africanism is an idea which promotes the unity of all African peoples irrespective of country or tribe. This unity was to be used not only to fight colonialism and racial discrimination, but also to build unity among tribes and communities inhabiting the continent based on principles of equality, social justice and human dignity. One key person in this regard was Kwame Nkrumah, a freedom fighter from Ghana

In response to it, a section of western educated intellectuals developed the idea of a common Nigerian nation and began to fight the British rule. Herbert Macaulay founded the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the first Nigerian political party, in 1923. The NNDP won all the seats in the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933. In the 1930s, Macaulay

also supported militant attacks on the British colonial government. In 1936. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe. It appealed to all Nigerians regardless of cultural background, and quickly grew to be a powerful



Fig 15.7 : Nnamdi Azikiwe

- Discuss how do you think the idea of pan-Africanism is different from nationalism. Do you think the idea of nationalism is limiting?
- Colonial rule led to uneven development of regions in a century. In India too under the British, coastal regions like Bengal, Madras and Bombay developed faster. Why do you think such uneven development takes place?

political movement. In 1944, Macaulay and NYM leader Azikiwe agreed to form the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Azikiwe increasingly became the dominant Nigerian nationalist leader, he supported pan-Africanism and a pan-Nigerian based nationalist movement.

Nigerian nationalism radicalised and grew in popularity and power in the post-World War II period as Nigerian economy faced difficult times. The backbone of this movement were the Nigerian soldiers who had returned from fighting for the British in the World War and the trade union leaders. In 1945 a national general strike was organised by radical nationalist trade unionists.

Nigerian nationalism had the twin task of fighting the British and also welding the very diverse and conflicting ethnic groups. The national movement was stronger in the more developed south rather than in the north and this created a north-south divide. Even in the south, nationalism was plagued by ethnic conflict between the Yoruba and the Igbos. By the 1950s these three regions also had their own anti-colonial movements led by regional parties: the conservative Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the north; the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the east, and the Action Group (AG) in the west.

Independence and weak democracy

Considering the wave of nationalism, the British decided to hand over power to the Nigerians and worked out a complex federal system which recognised the autonomy of the three major regions. Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1963. Unfortunately a just and democratic balance could not be worked out and soon Nigeria slipped into civil war and military rule which largely reinforced the



domination of the north. Attempts were made repeatedly to bring in civilian and democratic governments but these failed again and again. Corruption and suppression of human rights went hand in hand with collaboration between the military regime and multinational Oil corporations which funded the corrupt rulers.



Fig 15.8 : Bifarian war

After a long haul of military dictatorship, Nigerians elected a democratic government in 1999. It remains to be seen how it faces the challenges of building a democratic Nigeria.

Oil, environment and politics

Oil was discovered in 1950s in the Niger Delta and soon various multinational companies headed by the Dutch Shell company acquired rights over oil drilling. Today it is the most important resource of Nigeria. Most of the oil wells are owned by these corporations which have extracted Nigerian oil and shared part of its profits with the military rulers. But the common people have benefitted little from this. In addition, reckless oil extraction without care for the environment by foreign oil companies has created havoc in coastal environment. Oil spillage from oil wells has a major impact on the ecosystem. Large tracts of the mangrove forests, which are especially susceptible to oil (this is mainly because it is stored in the soil and re-released annually with inundation), have been destroyed. An estimated 5–10% of Nigerian mangrove ecosystems have been wiped out either by clearing or oil. Spills destroy crops and aqua culture through contamination of the groundwater and soils. Drinking water is also frequently contaminated, and a sheen of oil is visible in many local bodies of water. If the drinking water is contaminated, even if no immediate health effects are apparent, it can cause in long term cancer. Offshore spills, which are usually much greater in scale, contaminate coastal environments and cause a decline in local fish production.



Fig 15.9 : Oil Spill



Fig 15.10 : Ken Saro Wiwa

Throughout the early 1990s popular unrest grew steadily, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where various ethnic groups began demanding compensation

for years of ecological damage as well as control over their land's oil resources.

- Most of the oil resources of Nigeria are in the South Eastern region. The Igbos think that they should get the maximum share of oil profits. They object to oil wealth being used for development of the North. What do you think will be the proper and just solution to this problem?

This unrest manifested itself at the outset as peaceful activist organisations that united their members on the basis of ethnicity. The situation came to a head in 1990 when an eminent human rights activist and environmentalist Ken Saro Wiwa was executed by the military government despite international protests.

Thus you can see that Nigeria is still making efforts to weld together a nation, work out a stable democratic system and gain control over its material resources.

Key words

Land reform Landlordism New Democracy Forced labour
Chemical arms Weak democracy Pan - Africanism



Improve your learning

1. Match the following. AS₁

o Sun Yat-sen	Militarised the nation
o Chiang Kaishek	Environmental movement
o Mao Zedong	Nationalism Democracy and Socialism
o Ken Saro Wiwa	Peasant revolution
2. Trace the changes in the role of women seen in China over the decades. Why is it similar or different from that of USSR and Germany? AS₁
3. After the overthrow of monarchy, China had two different types of regimes. How were they similar or different? AS₁
4. Countries discussed in the above chapter were all mostly dependent on agriculture. What were the measures taken in these countries to change these practices? AS₁
5. Who owned industries in countries discussed above and what policies were brought in to change the systems? Make a table to compare them. AS₁
6. Compare the national movement in India and Nigeria - can you explain why it was stronger in India? AS₁
7. What are the challenges faced by the independent Nigerian nation? In what ways is it similar or different from the challenges faced by independent India? AS₁
8. Unlike Vietnam or India, Nigeria did not have to struggle so hard for freedom. Can you find some explanations for this? AS₁
9. What role did schooling play in national movement of the countries discussed above? AS₆
10. Freedom struggle in these countries involved wars against the rulers. Briefly describe its impact. AS₁