

CHAPTER 4

Internationalism, Empire, and Autarchy, 1919–1929

On March 1, 1919, Koreans gathered on the streets of Seoul, both to pay their final respects to the last Korean king, Kojong, who had been forced to abdicate by the Japanese in 1907, and to remind the world leaders meeting in Versailles of Korea's claims to nationhood. The draft Treaty of Versailles left Korea under the control of Japan, which had annexed the peninsula in 1910. There was little prospect that this provision would be altered. Japan had won control over Korea through its wars with China (1895) and Russia (1904–1905) and was bringing it administrative reforms that were widely admired in the West. When leaders of the demonstrators publicly signed a Korean declaration of independence, Japanese troops cracked down. Hundreds of Koreans were killed and thousands imprisoned during the weeks following the March 1 demonstration. Korea would remain a Japanese colony until 1945.

The massacres in Korea exemplify some of the key tensions of the postwar years. The crowds in the streets of Seoul were marking the end of a dynasty that had presided over a “hermit kingdom”—an inward-looking state that sought to maintain independence through self-sufficiency. Some lamented the passing of that kingdom and may have hoped for its return. However, the leaders of the protests, many of them young and foreign-educated, were committed to a new Korea that would enjoy the benefits of modern commerce and take a place in the League of Nations. They looked to Woodrow Wilson, the Allied powers, and international public opinion for help in attaining independence and security. The country's Japanese occupiers also wanted to bring Korea into the twentieth century, but under Japanese management, with Korea supplying raw materials to Japan's growing economy and Japan supplying Korea with capital, manufactured goods, and political guidance.

Three visions of the future intersected here: one of autarchy, or independence through isolation; a second of national development through integration into a global community; and a third of development through empire.

Different as these visions were, they all expressed aspects of nationalism. The Japanese considered themselves agents of an enlightened empire that was redeeming an ancient province from a history of misrule. The mourners for Kojong were turning a corrupt and incompetent king into a symbol of centuries of independent cultural development. The signers of the declaration of independence were splicing together a sense of ethnic identity with Western ideas about popular sovereignty and universal human rights to fashion a program for independence, political reform, and economic regeneration.

Nationalism was swelling in the early twentieth century, not just among Koreans and Japanese but among other peoples who had been mute in earlier times. Mass movements that made the nation a primary reference point were taking shape in Mexico, Egypt, Turkey, India, China, and elsewhere. These movements differed greatly but all reflected trends that had begun in the late nineteenth century: the spread of literacy, the extension of railroads and modern forms of communication, and the integration of larger and larger regions into the global economy.

Most of these movements also benefited from the war. Wartime propaganda had relentlessly celebrated the nation as the hub of human loyalty and hopes. That message, confirmed by the spectacle of collective self-sacrifice, reached audiences around the world, including peoples whose nations had not as yet been formed. Not only had the war glorified nationhood, it had loosened the grip of the European powers on their colonies and informal empires. The war had consumed Europe's wealth, demoralized its citizens, and vacated its claims to superior civilization.

Tensions between national and supranational commitments, between the ambitions of empires and imperial colonies, and, within nations, between isolationism and outward-looking programs of development run through the history of the twentieth century. But tensions were especially pronounced in the wake of a war that left Europe so weakened. The new balance hardly stripped Europe of all its advantages, but it opened the way to hopes for new forms of international integration, as well as to dreams of vigorous national development largely independent of external constraint.

Internationalism

Woodrow Wilson's program for lasting peace rested on two ideas that he saw as complementary: self-determination and international law. All peoples, he maintained, have a right to govern themselves. And nations have common interests, such as preventing aggression, maintaining peace, and fostering conditions of prosperity, which are best protected by lawful authority. Wilson's principles owed much to the American experience of federal union, in which a national

government coordinated and checked the behavior of states that had their own institutions and interests. The U.S. system protected minorities through the application of laws. It guaranteed rights to every state under a universal charter or constitution, but it also gave the nation as a whole the means to preserve itself, by force if necessary, under that same charter. It was a way to integrate local and regional ambitions into a commonwealth, and Wilson hoped it would be a model for the world.

The treaties ending World War I were stamped with an imperfect imprint of Wilson's vision. Redrawn borders could neither segregate the scrambled peoples of Eastern Europe one from another nor ignore promises made to regional allies like Serbia and Italy. The settlement thus created a host of "minority" problems, similar to those of the old Austrian and Ottoman empires. Outside Europe, self-interest consistently trumped self-determination. The victors refused to consider the wishes of minorities—whether in the shattered Ottoman Empire, of Chinese under Japanese control in coastal China, or of subjects in Germany's former colonies—for fear of losing their own empires. The principle of self-determination itself could not withstand scrutiny in the absence of commonly accepted criteria for nationhood. Wilson had urged the satisfaction of "all well-defined national aspirations" consistent with the preservation of peace. The vagueness of his phrase gave the victors wide latitude to play favorites as they redrew international borders and gave nationalists ample cause for disappointment.

The League of Nations

The peace negotiations resulted in a League of Nations that embodied some of Wilson's cherished ideas about international law and collective security. The charter or covenant of the League, which was approved at Versailles and eventually signed by sixty nations, established a permanent body with the trappings of government: a General Assembly of all member states; an executive Council of five permanent members (the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) and four rotating members chosen in the General Assembly; a Secretary-General commanding an international civil service; and an International Court of Justice. Members committed themselves to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and renounced secret alliances. They also agreed to take economic and military action against states that went to war in violation of the covenant. The League thereby gave a voice to states without large armies or rich treasuries and established precedents that were to shape diplomacy throughout the rest of the century.

Despite appearances, however, the League of Nations was not an international government. Governments both make and police laws, but the League lacked the unambiguous power to coerce. Its covenant provided for action against aggressors but neither defined aggression nor mechanisms to gather and apply force. The League had no standing army, no command over the soldiers of member states, and no staff to plan a war. The gap between rhetoric and reality reflected the ambivalence of the League's authors. They were caught between the desire to give the League some teeth and the need to write a charter that was acceptable

to member states protective of their sovereignty. The solution was an organization with some moral authority but little command over other instruments of power.

Not only did the League lack the clout of a true government, it also failed to represent large parts of the globe. Roughly half of its members were European nations, and the twenty republics of Latin America constituted another third. The only votes from sub-Saharan Africa belonged to Ethiopia and South Africa, the latter a British dominion governed by a white minority. Only six Asian states ever held membership, two of which—India and Iraq—were largely controlled by the British. Nor did the League enroll all the powers of Europe and the Americas. The United States never took a seat, in part because of a long-standing reluctance to become embroiled in European quarrels and in part because of fears about League interference in the Western Hemisphere. Germany was excluded from membership by intention and secured membership only in 1926; by then many Germans had come to see the League as a thinly veiled anti-German alliance. Soviet Russia, despite occasional overtures, refused to join the League until 1934. Its avowed goal of overthrowing other governments and its repudiation of its huge debts to Western lenders made it a pariah among nations. Its ruling Communist Party had embraced this role, finding it convenient for domestic purposes to depict the League as a capitalist conspiracy aimed at strangling Soviet communism.

German and Russian critics had a point when they charged that the League was a tool of Britain and France. As holders of permanent seats on the Council, Britain and France enjoyed veto power over most crucial decisions; as victors in the recent war, they had leverage over other states in the General Assembly. Their trade and empires gave them security interests that were as global as the peace-keeping mandate of the League. Whenever a threat to world peace emerged, their calculations of self-interest would inevitably affect judgments about where and when the League should act.

Even so, the League was hardly a veiled tool of an Anglo-French condominium. For one thing, French and British aims often diverged. Britain's interest in rebuilding trade with Germany, for example, undercut France's interest in keeping Germany weak. Furthermore, even when France and Britain could agree, the structure of the League often frustrated action. Neither great power wished to handle delicate matters in the open deliberations of the General Assembly. The Council gave greater latitude for secrecy, but each of its nine members held veto power over important decisions. In any case, the absence of the United States, Russia, and Germany from the League often made diplomacy at the highest levels impossible. As a result, Britain, France, and the other great powers resorted to smaller, more secretive gatherings for their serious business, much as they had before the war.

The Washington Naval Conference and Treaty of Locarno

Most of the noteworthy international agreements of the postwar era took shape at ad hoc conferences rather than under League auspices. In late 1921, for example, the United States hosted a meeting of the former Entente partners in Washington to discuss the balance of power in the Pacific and limits on naval forces. Britain



GLOBAL Technologies

Radio

Citizens of Buenos Aires, London, or New York could keep informed about events such as the Washington and Locarno conferences by means of a technology that some thought might change the world: radio.

Radio communication by encoded signals such as Morse code was, of course, nothing new. Within a decade of Heinrich Hertz's 1885 discovery that electrical energy could be transmitted across distance without wires, entrepreneurial engineers such as Guglielmo Marconi were selling radio apparatus to shipping companies and governments. By the first years of the twentieth century, hobbyists in many parts of the world were tinkering with batteries, spark generators, and

crystal receivers—the basic equipment necessary to send and receive radio signals.

Radio spawned possibilities and problems—many similar to those that would accompany the emergence of the Internet toward century's end. Enthusiasts imagined that it would decentralize power by weakening the monopoly of states and publishers on news, improve life by linking rural farmhouses with medical doctors and schoolteachers, and build international understanding by establishing direct contacts between private citizens across borders. Some of this indeed happened as ham operators developed their own community and chatted with other operators in Morse code. But chatting was not always so easy amidst the unregulated babble of signals that soon filled the radio bandwidth. By World War I, the chaotic conditions were prompting governments to claim jurisdiction over the air waves by licensing operators and regulating the strength and frequencies of transmitters.

and the United States, the world's largest naval powers, were eager to avert an expensive naval race with Japan and to restrain growing Japanese influence in China, which threatened their access to Chinese markets. Japan, for its part, wanted assurances that it would continue to enjoy naval supremacy in East Asia and effective control over resource-rich Manchuria, where it had extensive rail, mining, and agricultural enterprises.

A bargain was struck that accomplished these aims. Britain, the United States, and Japan agreed to limits on tonnage of large naval vessels in the ratio of 5:5:3, with France and Italy signing on to even lower limits. In return, Britain and the United States agreed to refrain from fortifying new bases in the Pacific and signed a mutual security agreement guaranteeing the status quo. In addition, Japan agreed to grant China control of the Shantung Peninsula, which Japan had seized from Germany in World War I, and the United States and Britain tacitly acknowledged Japan's special interests in Manchuria. The Washington Conference thus achieved arms control, but only by carving the Pacific up into spheres of influence,

The electromagnetic spectrum was on the way to becoming property.

As ham radio boomed, engineers and inventors improved radio technology. Continuous wave transmitters that sent out signals on a single frequency replaced the spark transmitters whose noise spilled across many. New ideas in circuitry extended transmission into higher parts of the radio spectrum and improved control over tuning and filtering signals. And vacuum tubes were introduced that could serve as emitters, receivers, and amplifiers of signals. Together these improvements made it possible to transmit voice or music as well as code and to transmit clear signals at modest cost over hundreds of miles.

Beginning about 1920, broadcasting stations began to appear, first in the United States, Argentina, England, and Germany, and then in many other countries as well. Launched by amateurs, educators, and companies seeking to build a market for radio equipment, the stations played music, broadcast speeches, and relayed weather

reports and news. The response exceeded all expectations. As sales of “radio music boxes” boomed, businessmen realized that airtime itself was something that could be sold. Companies began to sponsor regularly scheduled programs and to advertise their products with commercials. Nor did it take long for governments to recognize a powerful new means of communicating with, and influencing, listeners.

By the mid-1930s, radio had evolved into forms that remain familiar today: a hobby for the technically proficient, a tool of education and emergency communication, and powerful medium to reach the masses. Where dominated by commercial programming, as in the United States and much of Latin America, radio shaped popular culture and consumer tastes. Where state-run broadcasting agencies dominated, as in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, it sometimes became a tool to mold political opinion and rally listeners behind the leaders of state and party.

with Britain supreme in the southern waters around Singapore and Australia, Japan near its home islands and along the north coast of China, and the United States in the seas from California to the Philippines.

In 1925, a meeting among representatives of the European powers at Locarno, Switzerland, led to similarly sweeping agreements regarding Europe. Here the problem was finding a way to restore Germany to the community of European powers without reversing the outcome of World War I. The reintegration of Germany was a problem largely because the Allies had made it one. By excluding Germany from the League of Nations and from normal diplomatic relations, they had pushed it into closer relations with the other international pariah, Soviet Russia, thereby raising the specter of an alliance that would shift the center of power in Europe eastward.

The solution reached at Locarno was a framework of alliances and guarantees that elicited German commitment to the territorial status quo in exchange for a restoration of its position in world diplomacy. In a treaty with France and

Belgium, Germany agreed to accept the western borders imposed at Versailles as permanent, with Britain and Italy agreeing to act should any signatory violate those borders. Germany further agreed to maintain the Rhineland as a demilitarized zone and to renounce force as a tool for altering its borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. In return, Germany gained admittance to the League of Nations, a permanent seat on the League Council, and informal assurances that Allied troops would evacuate the occupied Rhineland according to the schedule outlined in the Treaty of Versailles. France, in turn, promised Poland and Czechoslovakia assistance should Germany violate its promise.

The Washington and Locarno conferences stabilized international relations, but in neither did the League of Nations play a direct role. Nor did the entry of Germany strengthen the League, as some internationalists had hoped. Germany's addition to the Council enlarged the number of states that enjoyed a veto over Council actions. More important, Germany negotiated a revision in the League charter as the price of its entry. Reluctant to become embroiled in any future war because of treaty obligations, Germany insisted that members be freed of the obligation to participate in sanctions against aggressors. In short, the Locarno Conference further undermined the League's already weak peacekeeping authority.

The League at Work

National interests prevailed over internationalism throughout the history of the League. Even so, the organization managed to fulfill some of its promise, largely by acting in disputes where the interests of the major powers converged. In Eastern Europe, for example, the League adjudicated numerous border conflicts between the new states that had been carved out of the empires of Austria-Hungary and tsarist Russia (Map 4.1). It also oversaw the negotiations that resolved a potentially explosive dispute between Poland and Germany over the control of the rich mines and industries of Upper Silesia. Here and throughout Eastern Europe, the Western powers were eager to muffle conflict and restore order. A stable and prosperous Eastern Europe would check the expansion of Soviet communism from the east and German militarism from the west.

The League also undertook a range of social and humanitarian activities that restored some of the international cooperation that had existed before the war. Working with the International Health Office, which had been set up in Paris in 1908, the League's Health Organization intervened to check the spread of epidemic diseases. Its Refugee Organization helped arrange for the resettlement of nearly two million Russians fleeing the Soviet Union and nearly a million Greeks and Armenians expelled from Turkey. Its Communications and Transport Organization established conventions governing the operations of ports, the transmission of electricity across state borders, and the administration of passports and visas.

These achievements testified to both the usefulness of the League and the tragedy of the war. The war had generated the conditions that made epidemic disease

and refugees such urgent problems and had ushered in an era of state-imposed restrictions on immigration that made passports and visas necessary for international travel. The League was not so much reforming the world as undertaking damage control and restoration.

Other Internationalisms: Comintern and Pacifism

The enormous suffering and waste of the war stimulated expressions of internationalism other than the League of Nations, most notably pacifist organizations and political movements such as international communism. Pacifist groups, which were especially popular in Britain and the United States, tended to view weapons themselves as a spur to militarism. They labeled arms manufacturers “merchants of death” who prospered by promoting conflict among nations and maintained that politicians engaged in provocative behavior because they had the means to wage war. For pacifists, disarmament was the key to ending war, and public pressure was the way to bring governments behind this goal. Communist groups, organized into a Russian-sponsored Communist International, or Comintern, in 1919, expressed many of the same ideas, although they saw little hope of disarmament in a world dominated by capitalism. Communists thought that states organized around capitalist systems of production would inevitably fall into conflict with one another over resources and markets. An end to war, in their view, would await a social revolution that struck down both arms makers and all privately held industry.

Both pacifists and communists echoed the wartime propaganda campaigns that had decried German militarism and the real and imagined power of large German arms makers such as Krupp. Neither group was able to translate the widespread revulsion against the war into a firm repudiation of defense spending, but the pacifist organizations helped keep disarmament on the agenda of postwar governments in both Britain and the United States. Hopeful observers saw this as a sign that pacifism could make some headway in the rough and tumble of politics. Skeptics pointed out that neither Britain nor the United States had land borders with hostile powers or need of large armies.

The war stimulated the growth of several forms of internationalism, but loyalties to nation ran deep and had been intensified by years of combat and propaganda. When push came to shove, the interests of nation prevailed over those of international cooperation, which became abundantly clear in the 1930s when governments brushed aside pacifist objections to escalating arms spending and Soviet Russia purged the Comintern of dissenters from the Soviet party line. The failures of the League of Nations were particularly conspicuous. Incapable of preventing Japanese expansion in China or the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, the League became irrelevant to the diplomacy of the major powers. Some historians, focusing on the spectacular failures of the League in the 1930s, have gone so far as to implicate it in the creation of a dangerous illusion of peace. By fostering false confidence in collective security, this argument runs, the League led governments that sought a lasting peace to lower their guard and thereby invited more

aggressive regimes to seize opportunities for expansion. A new world war thus was a result of the idealism of the covenant.

This view may attribute both too much and too little to the League and its sponsors. Confidence in the League was neither deep nor broad in the 1920s. Far from enjoying too much influence, the League possessed too little. Nor does this view acknowledge the roles that the League was able to play despite its limited means. Unable to make a perfect world, it nevertheless made a modestly better one, as millions of refugees and victims of disease could have testified. And, through both its successes and its failures, it established precedents that would continue to have influence long after the League itself dissolved in the tragedy of a new world war.

Old Empires and New Nationalisms

As diplomats integrated the new League of Nations into older patterns of statecraft and struggled to define spheres of influence among the shards of broken empires, other contests were under way in regions distant from the palaces of Versailles and the halls of Geneva. In growing numbers, people who were under colonial rule or dependent on imperial powers were asserting their own right to national self-determination.

The War and Independence Movements

The great powers repeatedly compromised the principles of democracy and self-determination in arranging the postwar borders of Eastern Europe. The gap between their rhetoric and behavior was even greater in their colonial policies. Phrases about the sacred rights of peoples to govern themselves through institutions of their own choosing clashed directly with imperial and trade interests. The contradiction was not lost on critics of empire, who gleefully turned these phrases, which had originally been aimed at adversaries in war, into tools for exposing the hypocrisy of imperialism.

But the war exposed the hypocrisy of empire in more than just words. The colonial troops that were dispatched to Europe saw firsthand a side of European civilization that had long been veiled from its colonial subjects. The imperial states were not lands of enormous wealth and enlightenment but rather places with poverty, injustice, and violence. European troops were capable of panic and cowardice, especially when facing adversaries with up-to-date arms and equipment. The imperial powers drew heavily on their colonies in the war, and many subjects believed that those powers had an obligation to make good on their debts after the war was over.

World War I stimulated independence movements in other ways as well. In the colonies, the war exacerbated social tensions between the agents of empire and their subjects. The expansion of industry and the high demand for commodities fed inflation, which in turn generated labor militancy. Businessmen, whose factories

had expanded to satisfy demands that could no longer be met from abroad, sought to protect their enterprises from imports after the war was over. Their interest in nurturing colonial industries threw them into conflict with imperial administrators and importers, who were eager to restore the prewar order. Taxes rose, putting new pressures on many members of colonial societies, but especially on the peasants, who paid the land taxes upon which most colonial governments subsisted. And the departure of European administrators, called away for service at home or in the field, threw open the doors of the civil service to natives and gave them a taste for authority. The net effect was the growth of coalitions united by a common interest in winning control over tax, tariff, land, and labor policies.

Britain and its colonies proved especially vulnerable to these tensions. Its empire was larger than any other, and its investments abroad, although shrunk by the war, remained deep and extensive. Some of its colonies, most notably Egypt and India, had the resources to sustain independence, and elites in those colonies had already been eyeing such a goal before the war. Britain's investments in colonial infrastructure, which tended to be more intensive than those of other imperial powers, inadvertently fostered such ambitions. Railroads built to transport goods and soldiers could also carry political organizers from one district to another. Laws and courts, established to preserve order and symbolize British power, also afforded some protection to journalists and political activists. Schools established to train clerks, surveyors, and lawyers exposed colonial subjects to ideas that were subversive of imperial authority. History books, for example, glowingly described the growth of individual liberties in England, America, and France, and the rights of individuals and nations to rise up against oppression. British notions of democratic government, fair play, and the rule of law, often deployed for propaganda purposes, could also become rallying cries for reformers who were conscious of the gap between their rulers' words and their actions.

By the time Britain went to war in 1914, independence or home rule movements not only were crystallizing in the colonies but had also found support in Britain itself. Idealists recognized the hypocrisy in denying liberties abroad that were deemed natural rights at home. Pragmatists saw little profit in retaining colonies by force against determined opposition, especially when that opposition was well organized and carried modern weapons. The war against the Boers of South Africa, concluded in 1902 after three years of intense fighting, had illustrated both the moral and the material hazards of imperialism. British armies had subdued the Boers, the descendants of Dutch settlers who had arrived in South Africa in the seventeenth century, but only after forcing tens of thousands of civilians into concentration camps and expending more wealth and lives than in any other colonial war in British history, with the possible exception of the American War of Independence. Despite the military victory, Britain ended up negotiating away much of its authority in the agreement of 1910 that established the Union of South Africa. That agreement, while preserving Britain's control of South Africa's ports and foreign policy, granted white South Africans control of South Africa's internal affairs. Ultimately this gave the Boers, who outnumbered the English settlers, political authority over a larger region than they had defended against Britain.

Britain had won the Boer War, but it wanted no more such costly and ambiguous victories. Consequently, the settlement of 1910 rather than the campaigns of 1899–1902 became the more common model for dealing with obstreperous colonials. Faced with powerful opposition, Britain would try to trade home rule, meaning control of internal administration, for continued management of a colony's defense and foreign policies. Before moving toward negotiations, however, the British government and public indeed had to be convinced that preservation of full imperial control in a colony would be more trouble than it was worth. Typically, the peoples of British possessions had to demand their independence, insistently and forcefully—often by resorting to violence.

And so, much the same cycle occurred in a number of British colonies after World War I: Coalitions of local interests demanded greater autonomy; opposition to imperial rule found expression in strikes, boycotts of British goods, and street protests; British efforts to suppress the disorder provoked bloodshed, which, in turn, intensified opposition in the colony and polarized public opinion at home; negotiations brought concessions, including home rule or the promise of such in the not-too-distant future. This was the pattern in Ireland, Egypt, and India, and in some of the Ottoman provinces that fell under a British mandate after the war, such as Iraq and Palestine.

It is easy to imagine masses of exploited peasants and workers rising up against imperial rule under a vanguard of enlightened patriots, but the reality was more complex. Ambitions for greater control over government could divide a society as easily as they could unite it. Religious, economic, and social fissures ran through colonial societies just as they did through European states. The prospect of home rule or independence immediately raised questions about the redistribution of power—questions that seldom had obvious answers. The history of Egypt illustrates some of these complexities.

Egypt

In Egypt the divisions were social and political. Occupied by Britain in 1882, Egypt had previously been a province of the Ottoman Empire under the control of a khedive, who acknowledged Ottoman sovereignty but otherwise behaved like a monarch. The British had found it convenient to preserve this fiction until 1914, when it declared Egypt a British protectorate, deposed the Ottoman khedive, and installed his uncle as sultan.

After the armistice, a three-way tug-of-war quickly developed between the British, intent on protecting the Suez Canal; the sultan, eager to enlarge his political authority; and a small group of independence-minded activists drawn primarily from Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt's major cities. The latter group had sought to seize the moment in 1919 by sending a delegation, or *Wafd*, to Versailles to lobby for Egyptian independence. Denied visas by the British, members of the would-be delegation called their supporters into the streets. The riots that ensued demonstrated the power of the *Wafd*, which now became the name of a political party, and rattled the British, who had little desire to maintain control of Egypt at the

point of bayonets. Yet while the *Wafd* could tap into broadly shared yearnings for independence, it was not a party of the people. Led by absentee landlords, civil servants, and businessmen, the *Wafd* was more interested in winning control over tariff policy and patronage than in advancing a program of land reform, public education, and representative democracy. The question in Egypt, then, was not so much one of self-determination by an entire people as one of which elite would end up in control of the state.

Despite the differences between Egypt and other scenes of revolt against British rule, such as Ireland and Iraq, the dilemma facing the British was the same. Continued British rule entailed a commitment of troops and wealth; neither was in abundant supply after the war, and neither could guarantee order. However, capitulation to independence movements had large political and strategic costs. Not surprisingly, the British sought to find a middle path that would relieve them of the need to garrison hostile colonies but that would protect vital interests. As in South Africa earlier in the century, this meant striking a bargain with those local forces that were best able to guarantee order.

In Egypt, this took the form of a power-sharing solution imposed unilaterally. In 1922, Britain declared the nation independent while reserving to itself control of the Suez Canal and Egypt's foreign policy. At British insistence, the sultan approved a constitutional monarchy and a bicameral parliament with a democratically elected lower house. Nevertheless, power resided elsewhere—with the landed notables, who controlled the upper house, and with the sultan-king, who had the authority to convene and dissolve the parliament, veto legislation, and appoint ministers. This outcome fell short of the complete independence sought by the *Wafd*, but it restored order, satisfied many members of Egypt's elites, and afforded Britain continued control of the empire's lifeline. It did little, however, for the peasants and agricultural laborers who constituted 90 percent of Egypt's population. They had had little land or power before the British arrived, and they remained destitute and largely voiceless after the British effected their partial disengagement.

In Egypt and elsewhere, peasants and workers were often pawns of better-educated elites in the struggle for political power. This is not to say, however, that the humble people who constituted the great majority in Egypt and other colonial societies lacked grievances against imperial rule or aspirations for an independent future. The *Wafd* drew support from rural villages, and the throngs who shouted anti-British slogans in Egypt's city streets were composed largely of workmen, many just a few years removed from the fields. A continent away, about half of the Koreans arrested during the 1919 independence demonstrations against Japan were farmers, many of them desperately poor.

The leaders of the *Wafd* and the authors of the Korean declaration of independence were cosmopolitan by comparison with the masses they sought to lead. Egypt's elites were largely schooled in France; many of the Korean leaders were members of Christian congregations, and some had studied in Shanghai or Tokyo. These activists read newspapers and books, kept up with current events, and knew of documents such as the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. It is hard to know what independence may

have meant to the people who took to the streets, few of whom could read and most of whom had only sporadic contact outside their village or neighborhood. The promise of lower taxes or of better prices for their crops or their labor? The hope for a school for their children, a few acres of land, or a medical clinic? Redress for slights or a visceral hatred of the alien? Or the restoration of some happier and perhaps mythical time when life was easier and justice prevailed? Neither slogans nor manifestoes tell us much about their motives, but the upheavals of the postwar era testify to the capacity of the masses to play a role in colonial politics.

Raj and Swaraj: The Struggle for Indian Independence

Of all the independence movements under way in the early twentieth century, India's was especially notable for the magnitude of its task, the innovativeness of its tactics, and its influence on liberation movements in other parts of the world. It exemplifies, on a grand scale, the recurring problems of decolonization. Those seeking independence must find ways not only to end a colonial regime but also to preserve order and the integrity of a state as imperial authority erodes.

British India and the Origins of the Indian National Congress

India was easily Great Britain's largest and richest imperial possession. In population and area it was equivalent to Europe west of the borders of tsarist Russia. Through much of the century prior to World War I, India had supplied Britain with raw materials and markets, secure ports for its ships, and mercenaries for its colonial armies. Its products—cotton and jute, tea, sugar, and grain—fed British mills and stomachs. Its purchases—coal and steel, steam engines and cloth—kept Britain's factories and mines busy, its workers employed, and its trade accounts in the black. Not only was India a huge and rich prize, it was also a showplace for British imperial rule—for its laws, technology, and administrative efficiency.

Geography—mountains, deserts, and jungles—isolated India from the rest of Asia, but it also divided India internally, giving it a rich variety of climates and habitats. Its peoples were even more varied. The subcontinent held speakers of over two hundred languages. Many of these groups found common ground in Hindu religious beliefs, but more than 15 percent of the subcontinent's three hundred million people were Muslims. Smaller, but still significant, religious groups included the Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists.

Social and political differences further divided the peoples of India. In predominantly Hindu areas, a caste system divided people into more than two thousand hereditary groups based on occupation and status. Beneath this elaborate caste structure were tens of millions of so-called Untouchables, people deemed so impure by virtue of the lowly occupations of their ancestors as to be without any status whatsoever. Rigid prohibitions on contact across these groups, especially

between the highest and the lowest, remained powerful in the early twentieth century.

Politically, India was fragmented between the two-thirds of the subcontinent under direct British supervision and a remaining third under the nominal control of hereditary princes or maharajahs. These princes, remnants of the aristocracy that had dominated India in the eighteenth century, acknowledged British authority over foreign affairs and British supervision of their budgets, armies, and borders in exchange for annual subventions and the retention of the trappings of power.

Britain maintained dominion, or *raj*, over this huge empire with a small commitment of its own troops and administrators—fewer than one hundred thousand on the eve of World War I. Three circumstances explain the striking disparity between British numbers and power. First, India's internal divisions made it possible for British administrators to play off one group against another. Britain had made alliances with some princes against others to expand its authority during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Later, it found loyal and able recruits for the colonial army among minority groups such as the Muslims, the Sikhs, and the Gurkha tribesmen living in the foothills of the Himalayas. Second, technology afforded the British advantages. Their weapons were superior to those available to the maharajas; their telegraph lines could carry early warnings of trouble; their railroads could concentrate troops quickly where needed; their engineers built visible symbols of British power across the subcontinent in the form of canals, dams, bridges, and rail lines. Third, and perhaps most important, the British won considerable respect from India's indigenous elites, despite the pervasive racism of imperial rule. British policing reduced fratricidal warfare and banditry; British capital financed both railroads and vast irrigation projects; British schools enlarged access to education; British courts, magistrates, and officials supervised a stiff but generally honest civil service. Imperial rule served the mother country first and foremost, but it had the acquiescence of many Indians and the active support of some.

The history of India's independence movement testifies to the British success in co-opting Indian elites. Although British rule had inspired sporadic rebellions and conspiracies, the first political party to speak for all of India emerged only in the mid-1880s with the organization of the Indian National Congress. Its goals were initially modest: the achievement of a larger voice for Indians in the British-run civil service and gradual movement toward home rule and dominion status within the empire. Isolated from the majority of Indians by caste, education, and privileges, members of the Congress feared social disorder as much as they wanted self-governance.

Broader opposition to British authority began to appear in the early twentieth century. Famines, an uncontrolled epidemic of bubonic plague, and falling prices for Indian-made cloth, grain, and indigo called into question the benefits of British rule. Terrorist bombings, inspired by reports of Russian anarchist attacks, and a boycott of British cloth escalated tensions. Britain responded to the turmoil with stick and carrot, clamping down on militant opposition while giving

moderates a larger, although still advisory, role in administration. This policy had some success. While many Indians distrusted Britain, others retained a basic faith in British institutions and good intentions. The Congress Party exemplified this divide. By 1908, it had split into two wings. One sought self-rule by encouraging demonstrations, boycotts, and other forms of civil disobedience; the other, larger wing continued to work for gradual reform within the framework of British laws.

World War I, however, helped to heal that divide, principally by undermining the gradualists' confidence in British competence and intentions. Britain's conduct of the war illustrated both the importance of India and British indifference to Indian interests. More than eight hundred thousand Indians served in British uniform, and another five hundred thousand worked in labor battalions; over fifty thousand Indian troops died in the service of the empire. Indian mines and mills supplied Britain with essential war materials; by the end of the war, India enjoyed a surplus in trade with Britain for the first time since accounts had been kept. Yet many Indian lives had been needlessly sacrificed in the trenches of France and the deserts of Mesopotamia, India's magnificent rail system had fallen into disrepair, and antisedition laws had abridged Indians' rights to free speech. Not for the first time, Indian interests had been sacrificed for the good of the mother country.

The Congress Party recognized that the peace settlement would bring an opportunity for India to achieve greater autonomy. By 1915, the party had begun to enlarge its support in the thousands of small villages in which most Indians lived. Allied propaganda about the virtues of national self-determination nurtured Indians' hopes for home rule, as did a British promise of eventual self-governance made in 1917. But confidence in British promises eroded quickly after the war. The British government, intent on restoring the prewar order and stifling sentiment for independence, extended wartime antisedition laws instead of repealing them, thereby giving colonial authorities broad authority to arrest and imprison political activists without the traditional right to a jury trial.

Arrests made under the new laws provoked protests in several Indian cities, and by the spring of 1919 incidents of anti-European violence and rumors of a nationwide uprising were common. The most serious violence occurred in April 1919 in Amritsar, a city of about a hundred and fifty thousand in India's northwest. The arrest of two Indian nationalists provoked riots; these led to assaults on Europeans, including the murder of three bankers and the beating of a female British physician. The commander of the city's garrison ordered Indians passing the site of the assault to crawl on their hands and knees. When a huge crowd gathered to protest this and other indignities, the brigadier ordered his troops, mostly Gurkhas and Sikhs, to open fire. Nearly four hundred civilians died, and more than a thousand were wounded.

The British government quickly relieved the officer of command, but irreparable damage had been done to the British cause. The massacre undid the effect of decades of homilies about Christian charity and the rule of law and brought hundreds of thousands of Indians over to the cause of independence. The violence also tipped the balance of opinion in India's Congress Party away from patient

negotiation and toward a policy of mass mobilization and public confrontation with imperial authorities. The architect of the new policies was a middle-aged lawyer, Mohandas Gandhi.

Gandhi, Congress, and the Dilemma of Finding a Formula for Home Rule

In many respects, Gandhi was a child of the British Empire. Born to a well-connected family in one of India's princedoms, he had studied law in England before moving to an eastern province of South Africa, Natal, in 1893. There he practiced in a thriving Indian community that included many servants brought to Africa under indenture. During the next two decades, Gandhi saw the gap between British principles and practice firsthand and became a leader in efforts to secure greater political rights for his fellow Indians. An eclectic thinker, Gandhi drew upon both Western and Indian traditions in working out a program of reform. From the West, he took Christian precepts about the brotherhood of humankind and the virtues of nonviolent action. He grafted these onto a belief that social change was linked with the spiritual development of the individual—a conviction rooted in the Hindu tradition. Superimposed on both was a loyalty to his people and a fierce desire to improve their condition—spiritually, politically, and economically.

Gandhi evolved a synthetic philosophy of life and political action during his years in South Africa. Indians, he maintained, must mobilize the force of truth, *satyagraha*, to overcome injustice. Truth would strengthen the resolve of reformers and set change in motion within the hearts and minds of oppressors. Reform, in other words, would depend in part on the innate goodness of those in authority—a goodness that could be called forth by the display of virtue among the dispossessed. Violence, whether employed by oppressors or the oppressed, would ultimately be self-defeating. When wielded by those in authority, violence revealed the illegitimacy of their power; when directed against authority, it only hardened hearts and elicited more oppression. It was far better for reformers to meet injustice with reverence for life and nonviolence. This could take the form of peaceful demonstrations and noncooperation with authorities. The ultimate goal would be the attainment of greater *swaraj*, or self-rule, a term that embraced both the mastery of private passions and political self-governance. Gandhi's philosophy combined personal holiness and political savvy.

Shortly after the beginning of World War I, Gandhi returned to India, where he lived and traveled among the rural poor, deepened his acquaintance with Hindu thought, and promoted the construction of village schools and clinics. Eager to substitute domestic products for imports but suspicious of large-scale industry, Gandhi advocated small-scale craft enterprises as a way to enrich both the family and the nation. More than this, he prescribed manual labor for all Indians as a way of breaking down the barriers between thinkers and doers that the caste system had long encouraged. The spinning wheel, a symbol of his movement, could teach humility to the privileged, thrift to the poor, and self-reliance to the community as a whole.

Gandhi had endorsed the British cause in the war and hoped that the British would fulfill their promises of home rule expeditiously when the war ended. Nevertheless, like many others, he came to realize that British withdrawal would come about only as a result of determined pressure. By the time the armistice was signed, Gandhi had extended the scope of his activities from the local to the national level and had achieved a unique position in Indian politics. Many leaders of the Congress Party knew the world of the upper-caste Indian; some knew the world of the British; very few knew much about the world of the humble villager. Gandhi knew all three. Some members of Congress had strong constituencies in particular provinces or among particular religious communities. Gandhi was known nationwide and—almost alone in Indian politics—found admirers across religious lines. While many members of the Congress Party were preoccupied with the control of patronage jobs and the preservation of caste privileges, Gandhi was focused on achieving an India that was not just independent of Britain but unified, democratic, and just. His blend of politics and spirituality was an enigma to the British. His countrymen saw in him a great spirit or *mahatma*, a teacher and master who expressed the best in Indian traditions by personal example and public acts.

British efforts to suppress dissent before and after the Amritsar massacre led to a struggle for the control of India that would continue for thirty years, waxing and waning through several major cycles. A nationwide satyagraha campaign



Margaret Bourke-White/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

Gandhi, seen here with a spinning wheel, promoted household manufactures as a way to relieve rural poverty and to avoid the evils of industrial capitalism. In this he differed with other leaders of the Congress Party who believed that India needed heavy industries to gain economic independence and long-term prosperity.

launched by Gandhi and the Congress in 1920–1922 secured concessions giving propertied Indians greater influence in provincial government, the army, and the civil service. A second campaign, begun in 1930, had the immediate aim of ending the government's tax on salt—the production and sale of which was a state monopoly—and the broader goal of demonstrating the illegitimacy of British authority. The campaign's centerpiece was a trek across southern India that ended at the sea, where Gandhi publicly violated the law by gathering and consuming salt deposited by ocean waters. Police arrested Gandhi and more than sixty thousand of his supporters, and the government secured his agreement to end the campaign by offering modest concessions. Imperial officials thought they had dealt Gandhi a defeat, but instead it proved to be a huge political victory for the independence movement. Not only had Gandhi demonstrated, for a second time, his ability to tie India up in knots, he also had won sympathy around the world.

Gandhi and the Congress Party together made a winning combination. Gandhi's rectitude, shrewd understanding of international opinion, and affinities with the Indian masses complemented the Congress Party's political organization and access to the resources of Indian entrepreneurs and professionals. Under Gandhi's prodding, the Congress had enlarged its membership, opening its doors to the humble as well as the rich, enrolling students in a Young India League, and enlisting thousands of Indian women in an All India Women's Conference. Gandhi also understood the importance of maintaining solidarity within the independence movement. Exercising leadership as Congress president in the early 1920s and informally thereafter, Gandhi steered the party away from violent measures, which were advocated by some of its radical members, and away from Hindu particularism—a temptation that became stronger in the 1920s and 1930s as more and more Muslims gravitated toward their own political organizations, such as the Muslim League. Faced with a broad, popular movement, a succession of British governments saw little option but to withdraw from India at the lowest possible cost to Britain's international position and economic interests. As in Egypt, however, the problem was, "What comes next?"

The Congress and Gandhi were committed to a united, democratic India with a strong central government. This solution aroused anxiety among minorities, especially Muslims. The Congress Party was open to Muslims, and many Muslims respected Gandhi. Nevertheless, the Congress Party was dominated by Hindus. Any democratically elected central government would be dominated by Hindus as well, and this meant that they would command the civil service, the police, the courts, and the award of government contracts.

Muslim politicians, among whom an English-educated barrister, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, was rising to prominence, insisted that any formula for independence guarantee the political rights of Muslims. At the very least, they wanted a federal system under which predominantly Muslim provinces would enjoy considerable autonomy and a share of seats in the Indian parliament that exceeded their representation in the general population. From the perspective of the Congress, such a federation was a recipe for partition. Muslim and Hindu provinces would go their separate ways, and other minorities would demand equivalent autonomy, returning

India to the weak and divided condition it had been in when the British arrived. Extremists on each side suspected the other side of plotting forcible conversions, organized theft, or even massacres. These suspicions and fears intensified as it became clear that independence was approaching.

No one could find a formula for independence that was acceptable to all major groups. The British lurched from one short-term expedient to another, at times offering concessions and at other times clamping down on outspoken advocates of change. Through it all, the Indian economy suffered. Uncertainty about the future, strikes, and boycotts discouraged British investment. World agricultural prices were weak through the 1920s and disastrously so in the early 1930s, driving millions of peasants off the land. Indian industry could not absorb the surplus labor. As a global depression began to settle in, millions fell into lives of desperate poverty in cities that could offer neither relief nor basic services. As in Egypt and elsewhere, the urban destitute amplified political tensions by serving as an ever-visible sign of social dysfunction and an ever-ready source of disciples for political and religious extremists.

After failing at repression and negotiation, in 1935 the British resorted to a unilateral solution—a Government of India Act that declared India to be a confederation of largely autonomous provinces. The scheme offered every group part of what it wanted but satisfied none. The franchise was broadened, but only to include about 20 percent of adults. Minorities were guaranteed seats in provincial assemblies by a system of separate electorates. The assemblies exercised broad powers of government, but British governors retained crucial reserve powers. An elected federal legislature appointed members of a federal Executive Council, but the British viceroy continued to hold the power to veto legislation and to rule under emergency decrees. Hereditary princes retained seats in the upper house of the federal parliament but lost some of their customary privileges.

The act was never fully implemented and failed to resolve the issues that were vexing India. Minorities continued to feel exposed to abuse by majorities. The Congress Party objected to the wide powers granted to provincial governments, the role of hereditary princes in the federal legislature, and the powers reserved to the British governors and the viceroy. Many British officials saw the act as a surrender; those who sought disengagement saw in it a commitment of indefinite duration and expense. The act did lead to nationwide elections in which the Congress Party won a mandate in all but the predominantly Muslim parts of India. Whatever India's future, the Congress Party would be a crucial part of it.

The Quiescent Colonies

The independence movements in Egypt and India were the most vigorous challenges to Britain's empire in the aftermath of the war, but there were others. In Iraq, Britain defended its League mandate by waging war against Kurdish tribesmen who were seeking their own nation. In Palestine, another League mandate, Jews pressed Britain to fulfill its wartime promise to create a Jewish homeland,

while Arabs assailed the British for permitting thousands of European Jews to settle on their land. Headlines about skirmishes in the mountains of Iraq and the alleys of Jerusalem competed for space in London's newspapers with stories about bombings in Ireland, riots in Cairo, and demonstrations in India. Taken together with reports about anti-imperialist movements in China, the outspoken nationalism of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, and the anti-imperialist tirades of Russia's Bolsheviks, readers could easily imagine that the entire globe was rising.

But this was not so. The independence movements that flourished in India and Egypt after the war found few analogues elsewhere among Europe's colonies. Sub-Saharan Africa, despite the economic dislocations caused by the war, remained generally quiescent. So, too, did the extensive Dutch and French colonies in Southeast Asia, despite sporadic outbursts of nationalist rhetoric from students and urban professionals. The Philippine Islands, an American possession since the Spanish-American War, saw no recurrence of the guerrilla warfare of the early years of the century. And the United States continued to intervene frequently in the affairs of its neighbors in the Caribbean and Central America, much as it had done before the war.

The contrast between the colonial areas that caught the fire of nationalism and those that did not underlines the importance of certain internal factors in the formation of popular anti-imperialism. A history of exploitation and abuse of authority was not, in itself, sufficient to generate mass movements. Independence movements such as those that appeared in Egypt, India, and Korea required leadership, an audience receptive to a nationalist message, and means by which leaders and followers could make connections with each other.

In many colonies, one or more of these conditions were absent. Consider the case of sub-Saharan Africa, a region in which Britain, France, Belgium, and Portugal all administered huge empires during the 1920s. Exploitation there certainly was; in many areas it was egregious. During the war, France had impressed hundreds of thousands of West Africans into service as soldiers and laborers. Village chiefs were threatened with jail if they did not produce a certain number of "volunteers," and African recruiters, working for the French, roamed the countryside seizing young men, much as slave raiders had done a century earlier. The French gave scant attention to the hardships this caused until faced with insurrections in the countryside and plunging food production. Britain also drafted tens of thousands of Africans into its service during a long campaign against an army of German colonials in East Africa. The British typically relied on cash rather than coercion to find recruits, but the conditions of service were severe, and villages in the prime recruiting grounds of Kenya and South Africa suffered the prolonged absence or loss of their young men, three hundred fifty thousand of whom were engaged as bearers, laborers, and soldiers.

Such abuses were not a wartime aberration. Both before and after the war, colonial officials sacrificed the interests of Africans to those of the state, European-owned business firms, and European settlers. Colonial administrators built railroads and telegraph lines by mandating a certain number of days of obligatory labor and pressured villagers to work in Western-owned mines or on Western-controlled

plantations by imposing hut or head taxes payable in scarce European currency. Village lands were declared vacant and transferred to the control of European entrepreneurs who grew peanuts, rapeseed, rubber, sugar, bananas, and coffee for export. Legislation passed in 1913 stripped Africans of the right to own land in more than 90 percent of South Africa. In 1936 a government run by about thirty-five thousand white settlers reserved half of all land in Rhodesia for white ownership. In Kenya, British authorities granted a few thousand white settlers control of four-and-a-half million acres of prime agricultural land. France gave a few dozen investment companies thirty-year concessions over huge tracts in Gabon and Chad in return for rent and a modest share of the profit (little of which was realized).

Regulations governing the working and housing conditions of African laborers, where they existed at all, were slanted to promote the interests of white management. African workers were segregated into overcrowded and filthy barracks or shantytown sections of cities. While the British made sporadic efforts to improve the health, education, and living conditions of their subjects, Portugal squeezed as much as it could from its colonies in Angola and Mozambique at the minimum possible cost. Perhaps worst of all was the Belgian administration of the vast area in central Africa drained by the Congo River. It had been run as a personal fiefdom by Belgium's King Leopold II from 1884 to 1908. The abuses of his regime, which ranged from pillage to the mutilation of Africans accused of petty theft, had shocked even apologists for imperial rule and had prompted the Belgian government to assume management of the colony. The Congo's new administrators curbed some of the violence, but they made the Congo the scene of a development project as cruel as it was grand. The colony's Katanga province, rich in copper, gold, and other metals, became the site of huge investments in mines, railroads, and metal-processing plants during the 1920s. By 1925 this mini-Manchester in the jungle, complete with European-style public buildings and prisonlike barracks for native labor, was the world's third largest producer of copper, after the United States and Chile, and was well on its way to becoming a source for much of the world's uranium and radium. The Congolese saw little of this bounty, except as they loaded it onto railcars for shipment overseas. The Belgians called it progress.

Where workers concentrated—on docks, in mines, and on plantations—there was resistance, although it was rarely coordinated. Angry laborers might steal, loaf, strike, or even riot, but conditions did not lend themselves to political organization. Workers in large mines or on big plantations were often recruited from different tribal or language groups. They worked seasonally or for specified terms and then returned to their villages. Unions were discouraged or prohibited.

The colonial powers, with the exception of Britain, gave little attention to promoting literacy in their African colonies, and in some there was no indigenous tradition of book learning. Consequently, very few workers were literate. The ability to read and write was not, of course, essential to politics, but it is difficult to convert aspirations into a political movement or party without a literate leadership.

Except in South Africa, modern forms of communication and transportation had not penetrated far into the interior. Telegraph lines were sparse and primarily served the colonial bureaucracy; railroads and paved roads hardly existed outside a few locales of extensive exploitation, such as the Belgian Congo's Katanga province. Rivers provided the only access to the interior of Africa, as had been true for centuries. Huge tracts of forest, savannah, and desert were barriers to transit and obstructed political organization at levels beyond the village.

Even where shipping, heavy industry, or plantation agriculture was taking root, there were few signs of popular nationalism. The histories and unique cultures of Korea and Egypt had undergirded the nationalist aspirations of their twentieth-century leaders. India, despite its internal divisiveness, had been a single political entity at times in the past and was administered as such by the British, who, over generations of rule, had knit the subcontinent together with an extensive rail network and powerful civil service. By contrast, borders in sub-Saharan Africa were recent and often ignored cultural and linguistic filiations. Consequently, while exploited Africans might feel aggrieved and resentful, they seldom channeled these feelings into anything resembling nationalism. Grassroots yearnings for change typically focused on strengthening tribal or kinship groupings or on redressing local labor grievances, if they found expression at all.

The imperial exploitation of Africa was brutal and large-scale, but not unique. Similar abuses occurred in the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya, French Indochina, and Japanese Formosa, Korea, and Manchuria. Although apologists for imperialism had argued that colonies would eventually benefit from foreign control, the exploitation grew more intense and widespread after the war than it had been before. Technological change had much to do with this trend. Agricultural research led to new strains of tropical crops that were well suited to commercial cultivation. Medical research led to better preventives for malaria and sleeping sickness, thereby making tropical climates safer for European settlers. Larger and faster merchant ships propelled by reliable and fuel-efficient diesel engines could carry bulk cargoes at lower costs than the steamships of 1900. These changes created opportunities for profit in regions that hitherto had been deemed too poor, too dangerous, or too remote to merit attention.

Over time imperial rule tended to create the conditions necessary for the formation of organized resistance, as it had done in India. The construction of railroads or the improvement of ports turned villages into towns and towns into cities and set in motion economic changes that had far-reaching social effects. Agile members of local elites might adapt to the changes by cooperating with the new authorities, taking advantage of commercial opportunities, and placing their sons in missionary schools to acquire skills that were of use to business and the state. The Indian independence movement emerged from such elites, and similar movements were under way in Africa, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, and Indochina by the 1920s. But they were small and weak by comparison with India's, finding support mainly where commercial development was intense: in Dakar, the port city of Senegal; in Elisabethville, the industrial hub of Katanga; and in Jakarta, the great trading port of the Dutch East Indies.

In most of these regions, larger-scale movements toward independence would emerge only after economic development advanced further and a second world war disrupted the empires that had survived the first.

Dependency and Development

World War I led to the creation of a host of new states in Eastern Europe and accelerated independence movements in colonies where local conditions were ripe for change. What about those large parts of the world that were nominally self-governing but were dependent on Europe for capital and markets? This was the condition of the great majority of the non-European members of the League of Nations: a group that included China, Australia, New Zealand, and the republics of Latin America. The histories of these societies were quite diverse, reflecting their distinct cultural traditions, geographies, and resources. Nevertheless, they confronted some common dilemmas. To one degree or another, all had become integrated into the global economy on unequal terms. Although they were often rich in agricultural and mineral resources, they were deficient in the capital necessary to make those resources productive. Most lacked internal markets that were sufficiently large and wealthy to sustain diversified industrial economies. Some, like the British dominions and the larger states of Latin America, were well along in building the infrastructures necessary for participation in global trade: railroads and ports, legal and administrative systems, banks and corporations. Others, including most of the nations of Central America, were at early stages in this process. But all developing nations wrestled with the social and political effects of economic development: urbanization, the circulation of new ideas about governance, the growth of new economic groups, and conflicts over the control of land. Development meant clashes between old and new ways of life.

Export Economies, Boom-Bust Cycles, and Political Instability

With few exceptions, these nations were debtors. They borrowed abroad to finance development at home and met payments on their loans by exporting commodities. The strategy had both benefits and risks. Foreign capital not only financed railroads, port facilities, mines, and plants for processing raw materials but also underwrote electrical, telegraph and telephone networks. The export of commodities provided the income to purchase imports, upon which tax revenues were typically based. Higher government income sometimes meant improved social services, especially in the urban districts—more schools, more housing, and better provision for public health. By 1900 Buenos Aires had become *la reina del Plata*, the queen of the River Plate, or, as the French claimed, the Paris of South America. Carriages with rubber tires, automobiles, and electric-powered trolleys rode the newly asphalted streets and the wide avenues connecting the city's landmarks. In Brazil, new prosperity brought about by a boom in coffee and rubber prices began the transformation of São Paulo into the leading industrial

center of Latin America. Even Manaus, in the middle of the Amazon, boasted the amenities of European cities, including electric street lighting and an imposing theater. In Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina, prosperity extended beyond the major cities and into large parts of the countryside, where grain, cattle, and sheep afforded growers and their suppliers a comfortable lifestyle.

Nevertheless, all of these states, to a greater or lesser degree, had an exaggerated sensitivity to the business cycle: When Europe or America sneezed, much of Latin America got pneumonia. One reason for this sensitivity was an unevenness in investment that tied prosperity to the performance of one or two industries. A nation that derives income from a broad array of industries will generally be able to absorb economic downturns more easily than one that is dependent on a few sources of income because economic recessions rarely affect all sectors of an economy simultaneously. In times of rapid growth, diversified economies will tend to grow at a moderate pace for much the same reason: Prosperity moves through an economy like a wave, raising some boats before others. By contrast, the economy of a nation whose resources are heavily concentrated in a single industry often careens from highs to lows. Such a nation can grow at a dizzying rate if its special strength is in a sector that enjoys high demand but faces catastrophic failure if that demand dries up. The damage done by downturns is obvious: unemployment, shortages of credit, and falling tax receipts. But rapid growth can also carry penalties. A boom will often encourage investors to increase their wagers on the winning industries, thus producing an even greater concentration of resources in a few sectors.

Commodity prices remained stable during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Economic growth in Europe and the United States proceeded apace with the expansion of the supply of raw materials; Europe provided a reliable source of credit, and an international gold standard made it easy to transfer funds from one currency to another. But the era of stable prices ended with World War I. Britain and other major trading nations suspended convertibility of their currencies into gold, redirected capital from foreign to domestic investments, and shifted production and shipping from civilian to military needs.

These sudden changes in long-established patterns caused global dislocations. The war proved a boon to exporting nations that produced materials of strategic importance. Bolivian tin, Peruvian copper, Chilean nitrates, and Venezuelan oil were in high demand, as were the grains of Canada, the beef of Argentina, and the wool of New Zealand and Australia. After the war, however, commodity prices oscillated rapidly and unpredictably. Producers of grains, sugar, cotton, and meat, who had expanded their operations during the war, now found themselves in a cutthroat competition that depressed prices. Exporters of materials essential to war, such as the nitrates that were an ingredient in explosives, faced wholesale cancellations of contracts. The economic news was not all somber. The rapid growth of the U.S. automobile industry and the worldwide expansion of electrical utilities sustained strong markets for rubber, oil, copper, tin, and lead. Demand grew, as well, for coffee and bananas, products that millions of middle-class

consumers in Europe and the United States put on their breakfast tables after the war. Nevertheless, the abrupt shifts in trade created challenges for both winners and losers.

Latin America was both the main beneficiary and the chief victim of these oscillations. Between 1913 and 1928 it doubled its share of the world market in petroleum, copper, lead, and wheat, and significantly increased its share in such other important commodities as tin, silver, beef, sugar, and maize. Yet its income did not consistently track the growth in the volume of trade. While South America continued to produce large quantities of coffee and rubber, for example, plantations in Africa and Asia became potent competitors, ending Latin America's monopolies and bringing prices down to levels at which profits were hard to realize.

Price instability afflicted industrial nations as well. U.S. agriculture, for example, after enjoying unprecedented prosperity during the 1910s, entered a prolonged slump after the war. The hard times extended, almost without interruption, into the global depression of the 1930s. But the plight of American farmers had only a modest impact on the U.S. economy as a whole during the 1920s because the manufacturing and construction sectors were expanding vigorously. The situation was quite different in a nation such as Argentina, which derived a much larger share of its national income from the sale of farm goods than did the United States.

Most vulnerable of all were states in which only one or two commodities dominated exports. Strong international prices for the key export would trigger a frenzied boom in employment, construction, and public spending, and the flood of money would drive up the prices of foodstuffs and imported goods. Weak prices for the key export would bring unemployment, defaults on debt, government deficits, shortages of cash and credit, and, sometimes, price deflation. Whereas inflation eroded the value of savings and impoverished those workers whose incomes lagged behind prices, deflation was devastating to borrowers because the real value of payments on loans rose as the purchasing power of currency decreased.

Economies would thus lurch from one crisis to another in response to changing world demand (Map 4.2). In Cuba, the key commodity was sugar; in Bolivia, it was tin; in Colombia, coffee; in Peru, copper; in Guatemala and Honduras, bananas. In most cases, national governments could do little to temper the oscillations because commodity prices were beyond their control. Prices for sugar depended not only on the size of Cuba's crop but also on such factors as production by sugar cane plantations in the Philippines and Africa and tariff policies in the United States and Europe. Large-scale cultivation of a single crop also exposed growers to biological risks. Plant diseases, for example, sharply curtailed the export of bananas from Costa Rica and destroyed the cacao industry in Ecuador during the 1920s.

Reliance on the export of a few commodities to Europe and North America has been a recurring pattern in Latin American history, going back to the gold and silver mining of the colonial era. Some historians have viewed this pattern in trade to be the basic reason for many of the differences between North and

**MAP 4.2 Latin America, 1929.**

Latin America, like Africa and much of Asia, depended on the export of commodities for the foreign exchange to purchase industrial goods. This dependence created boom and bust economic cycles and sharpened tensions between economic classes in nations such as Mexico.



South America. Dependence on the production and sale of commodities for export, so the argument runs, magnifies inequalities in wealth and status, serves to keep political power concentrated in the hands of a landed elite, and leaves nations vulnerable to domination from abroad. Critics of this “dependency theory” have pointed out that exports rarely constituted more than a modest fraction of the economic activity in South American nations and noted that many factors contributed to the dominance of landed elites in Latin America. Nevertheless, even critics acknowledge that economies drawing a large fraction of their foreign exchange from the sale of a handful of commodities expose themselves to boom-bust cycles that exacerbate social conflict.

As in India, Africa, or any large and complex region, the conflicts were many and varied. Latin America was a kaleidoscope of societies that differed from each other in ethnic and racial makeup, wealth, social structure, and attitudes toward Europe and the United States. In some, such as Bolivia, enduring divisions between those of predominantly Indian or Spanish origin remained politically potent; in others, such as Chile, Indian populations were modest by comparison with more recent immigrant groups from Germany or Italy. Skin color was less central to identity than in the United States, but it nevertheless was often a marker of status and wealth in Brazil, Cuba, and other societies where African slaves had once worked fields of sugar cane. Whereas Argentina had sufficient wealth to provide near-universal schooling to its children, illiteracy was the rule in large parts of the Andes and the back-country of Central America, where wealth and its privileges were tightly held by a tiny land-owning elite. Yankee imperialism reverberated more powerfully in Colombia, which had lost its Panamanian province through U.S. intervention, than in Argentina, where foreign investors more often spoke with a British than an American accent. Greatly as these fracture lines differed, they all could become deep fissures under the wedge of economic boom and bust.

Tensions were most acute in those Latin American republics making the most rapid economic progress. In growing cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City, ideas about political reform began to circulate among professionals, civil servants, and businessmen. These well-educated groups tended to see liberal political institutions, designed along the lines of those of Britain, France, and the United States, as the surest road to sustained economic development, and to see economic development as a precondition for broad improvements in standards of living. Many of these reformers sought to open government to persons of their own social background and to shift some of the tax burden from import duties to land taxes. This agenda placed them in direct conflict with older elites—a landholding oligarchy and the Catholic Church—that saw much to lose and little to gain from change. Growing cities were also nurseries for labor unions. Although most unions began with narrow aims (better wages and working conditions), some evolved into organizations with broad political goals that sometimes coincided with and sometimes conflicted with those of the educated elites.

The population of industrial workers and urban professionals in the cities of Latin America was growing rapidly during the decades around the turn of the

century, but these groups remained small in comparison with the peasantry. In most regions, peasants remained too isolated to be a factor in politics, but where railroads went, they, too, could become a force for change. As elsewhere in the world, modern means of communication and transportation brought large, previously isolated regions into contact with the institutions of the state and with capitalism.

As ways of life changed and local elites came to be nested within the elites of nation or empire, social conflict and political disorder often ensued. Economic development served the interests of those who were plugged into the network of international exchange but engendered resentment among others who were still attached to older forms of social life and production. The result could be fierce rivalries that pitted established landowners against newly arrived speculators, and traditional authorities such as the clergy against secular authorities representing the state, capital, or science. Contests for local power could easily enlist villagers and peasants, who often had grievances against both parties. Sometimes peasants also found the opportunity to press their own interests: rights to land, higher wages, education, and influence over courts, tax collectors, and magistrates.

The conflicts generated by economic development in the early twentieth century varied from society to society, although general patterns are visible in the history of many nations. Mexico's history exemplifies many of the tensions generated by rapid economic change, and it is especially interesting because of the way the country responded to them. Mexico underwent a revolution that nearly dismembered the state, but that ultimately led to the broadening of economic opportunity and political participation. The events in Mexico inspired other revolutionaries later in the century, among them Cuba's Fidel Castro. They also provide an object lesson in the risks of rapid economic and social change.

Mexico's Revolution

Mexico did not participate in World War I, but it underwent a trauma that was no less severe—an extended civil war that profoundly altered its political and social structure. The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 after nearly thirty-five years in which Mexican politics had been dominated by Porfirio Díaz, a wily general-turned-politician who promoted economic development while maintaining firm control over Mexico's political system.

Grow, Mexico did, under Díaz. Workers, some of them from as far away as China, laid down some fifteen thousand miles of railroad tracks. Telegraph lines followed the railroads, and submarine cables linked Mexican ports to the United States and Europe. Mines and smelters prospered, as production of copper, zinc, silver, and gold all grew, and a new industry appeared when large reserves of oil were tapped near the Gulf ports of Tampico and Veracruz. Manufacturing, too, expanded. By the turn of the century, Mexico was producing significant quantities of cloth, carpets, cement, and beer. This industrialization, however,

did not spur the development of a Mexican entrepreneurial class. Foreign investors financed the construction of railroads, telegraphs, and urban streetcar systems; foreign firms underwrote mining and oil drilling. Dividends on these investments went to those who provided the capital, and many of the best jobs went to British and American managers and engineers.

Although the Díaz regime was successful in attracting foreign investment, in the end it became a victim of the economic and social changes it had stimulated. Railroads, mines, and other large business enterprises brought rural districts into contact with the global economy, encouraged land speculation, and gave rise to new forms of commercial agriculture. The large farms and ranches, or *haciendas*, which had once been the nuclei of self-sufficient communities, turned to commercial crops such as sugar and tightened their control over land and water to which villagers had traditional but not legal rights. Indians, such as the Yaqui of Sonora, were pushed aside. Those who resisted were sent to work on plantations in the Yucatan; others retreated to a hardscrabble life in the mountains. By the turn of the century, the vast majority of the rural population was landless.

But even landowners could feel threatened by the economics of the Díaz era. The banks that financed capital improvements and the railroads that moved produce acquired new influence in rural districts, diluting the authority of local *grandees*. So, too, did agents of the state, who interested themselves in regions with cash crops and rising land values. Workers in the railroad towns nursed grievances against the Chinese laborers who had been imported to help build the rail lines and against Spanish shopkeepers, who were the most visible representatives of outside exploitation. At the same time, new elites associated with mobile capital and commercial development were becoming dissatisfied with older institutions that preserved the power of old landed oligarchs and a small ruling clique. Urban doctors and lawyers yearned for honest elections and honest administration, businessmen for legal and administrative reforms, and commercial farmers and ranchers for more influence over provincial governments.

The revolution began when one of these wealthy outsiders, Francisco Madero, contested a loss to Díaz in the presidential election of 1910. His call to arms, "Effective Suffrage and No Reelection," enlisted well-to-do reformers and disaffected politicians, workers, and peasants. The rebels quickly overwhelmed Díaz's poorly trained and demoralized troops. In May 1911, the aged Díaz resigned and left for Europe.

The events of 1910–1911 were the prelude to an extended civil war that sometimes resembled a free-for-all. Madero could neither quiet the turmoil in the countryside that his campaign had unleashed nor satisfy the exaggerated expectations of his supporters. Provincial revolts and disloyal lieutenants soon rose up against his government. Madero fixed his attention on controlling agrarian revolutionaries, such as the charismatic Emiliano Zapata, who demanded land for their peasant followers. But the federal army was more dangerous to Madero's shaky rule. In early 1913, the leader of that army, Victoriano Huerta, overturned

Madero's government with the connivance of the U.S. ambassador, who despaired of Madero's prospects for restoring order. Madero and his vice president were killed in February 1913.

Huerta proved no more successful than Madero at consolidating power. Huerta sought to impose authority with brutality, but ended up only strengthening the opposition. Within months of his coup, he faced three rebel armies: A guerrilla band under Zapata had all but seized control of the countryside south of Mexico City, and two more conventional armies were working their way toward the capital from Mexico's northernmost provinces. One, under the command of Alvaro Obregón, moved along the Pacific Coast; the other, under the bandit-rebel Francisco (Pancho) Villa, followed the rail line that ran through Mexico's central plateau. All three acknowledged the nominal authority of a fourth opposition leader, Venustiano Carranza, former governor of the northern state of Coahuila. In a series of battles, Villa and Obregón defeated the federal armies facing them, and in August 1914—just as war was beginning in Europe—Carranza entered Mexico City.



Culture Pictures

Three leaders of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata, Venustiano Carranza, and Pancho Villa, are seen here during a moment of comity in 1914. Having toppled the government of their common adversary, Victoriano Huerta, the alliance disintegrated after Carranza assumed Mexico's presidency.

Once again, a coup led to a new cycle of violence. The years of disorder had left provincial strongmen in command of many parts of Mexico; the most powerful among them was Villa, who neither trusted nor feared Carranza. Carranza, however, displayed more skill in consolidating power than had his predecessors. Combining tact, force, and propaganda, he slowly extended his control over Mexico. To Zapata's peasant army, he promised land reforms and influence over administration and courts in the districts in which they held power. To urban professionals, he promised a new, more democratic constitution and stringent controls on the Catholic Church, which liberals saw as having too much wealth and political influence. To labor, he promised free unions and socialist policies on the control of capital. To many strongmen in the provinces, he promised autonomy in the management of local affairs. And to Villa, he turned the sword. A reformed federal army under the command of Obregón ultimately defeated and dispersed Villa's forces in 1915. During the next five years, Carranza turned against weaker opponents: provincial strongmen (including Zapata, who was killed while fighting federal forces), anarchist and socialist unions, and bandits.

The new regime delivered on some promises—enough to retain public support while reassembling Mexico under a strong central government. A new constitution, ratified in 1917, provided Mexicans with a list of legal rights, although neither Carranza nor his successors respected those rights when their own interests were at stake. Carranza dissolved many estates and confiscated church property, distributing some land to peasants but using much of it for payoffs to political supporters. He enforced rigid controls on the church, provoking atrocities against clerics and rural insurrections among the faithful. The regime opened opportunities to many Mexicans, rich and poor, who had been shut out of polite society and government in earlier times, but less out of deep conviction than out of pragmatic self-interest. It claimed national ownership of mineral resources, including the oil that was beginning to flow in large quantities from fields developed by American firms, but it did little to enforce the claim. It decried the graft of the Díaz era but turned a blind eye to its own corruption.

Carranza was assassinated in 1920, but his successor, Alvaro Obregón, continued his pragmatic style of administration. To his predecessor's cautious land reforms, Obregón added a campaign to wipe out illiteracy. He gave labor unions influence in government so long as they did not challenge his power. And he encouraged intellectuals and artists to create a Mexican/Revolutionary culture rooted in Mexico's Indian past, a task undertaken by painters Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, among others.

Through a mixture of genuine (if incomplete) reforms, political responsiveness (alloyed with corruption), coercion, and nationalistic propaganda, Obregón found a recipe for consolidating power centrally. His successor, Plutarco Elías Calles, perfected it, founding in 1929 the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, later renamed the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI. It was to retain power in Mexico through the rest of the century, giving Mexico neither complete

democracy nor naked tyranny. Mexico avoided the brutal dictatorships of left and right that afflicted many other parts of the world. It recovered from the disastrous decade of civil war, inflation, famine, and disease. By the end of the 1920s, per capita income was up, food prices were down, the government had taken partially effective measures against epidemic disease and illiteracy, and foreign investment had grown, if not as quickly as during the long Díaz administration. Mexico's revolution subdued the forces of class and region that had threatened to dismember the state and succeeded in giving millions of Mexicans some stake in the nation.

CONCLUSION

Mexico's revolution illustrates the dilemma facing nations that were on the periphery of the industrial West during the early twentieth century: Economic development along European lines demanded foreign capital, but such investment triggered social changes that no one could control. By enlarging the literate middle class, development created a group that was receptive to European and U.S. ideas about politics and was eager to achieve influence commensurate with its growing knowledge and wealth. By building large-scale enterprises, such as mines and railroads, it created concentrations of landless laborers who were vulnerable to unemployment and open to mobilization for political ends. By creating a standing army, it enlarged the role of the officer corps in public affairs. By granting foreigners influence on economic life, it provoked resentments that could easily turn into violent xenophobia. And by creating winners and losers in the countryside, both among landowners and among the lower classes, it upset old patterns of deference and stimulated local feuds—small fires that could spread into conflagrations as leaders of local factions aligned themselves with regional strongmen and enrolled peasants, disaffected minorities, bandits, or mercenaries in their cause.

Much the same general patterns are visible in the other republics of Latin America during the early twentieth century. In some, especially those in which economic development was less far-reaching than in Mexico, established landowners and the church remained dominant. In others, old oligarchies worked with businessmen and professionals to maintain order despite sporadic challenges. In most, however, economic development provoked chronic political discord as old and new elites, unions and peasant-based popular movements, increasingly radical intellectuals and conservative military officers all competed, legally and extra-legally, for control of the state. The growing dependence of many South American economies on commodity exports during the 1920s intensified instability, both by extending the influence of capitalist development from coastal ports into the hinterlands and by amplifying the effects of boom-bust cycles.

The global economy was hard to resist but dangerous to enter. In states where land and wealth were distributed broadly and political institutions were open to gradual reform, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the conflicts elicited by integration into the global economy remained essentially peaceful. In states where wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few and political

institutions were closed to the expression of new interests, rapid economic change led to violence.

Upheavals during the early twentieth century occurred not just in Mexico but also, as we saw in Chapter 3, in Russia and Ottoman Turkey. As we shall soon see, China, too, underwent a revolution that stretched from the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912 to the consolidation of Mao Zedong's control of mainland China in 1949. Humiliating defeats in war and foreign intrusions played much larger roles in the Russian, Turkish, and Chinese revolutions than in the Mexican Revolution. Although all four revolutions led to one-party states, the victors in Russia and China combined nationalism with a universalistic Marxist ideology. The victors in Turkey and Mexico, by contrast, were more eclectic in their ideas and less expansionist in their ambitions.

Despite differences, these upheavals shared the common denominator of conflict between old political and social institutions and Western-style economic development. As in Mexico, urban intellectuals in imperial Russia, Ottoman Turkey, and Qing China were eager to modernize their nations by adopting the technology and institutions of the industrial West. Russian liberals and socialists, the Young Turks, and the Chinese leaders of the May Fourth Movement shared an interest in land reform, democracy, and education with liberal reformers in Mexico, such as Francisco Madero. As in Mexico, the social conflicts associated with development soon eclipsed the narrower political conflicts between liberal and conservative elites. In all four societies, the growth of rail lines and ports had given rise to new commercial undertakings that threatened old interests, altered patterns of land use and tenure, created pockets of industry, undermined traditions of deference, and created pools of mobile labor that were vulnerable to fluctuations in global economic conditions. In Russia and China, revolutions evolved along class lines as revolutionary parties under the leadership of Lenin and Mao enrolled disaffected workers and peasants in their campaigns to sweep aside old elites and their institutions. In Mexico and Turkey, revolutionary leaders such as Carranza and Atatürk achieved the same result by grafting programs of land and social reform onto more xenophobic forms of nationalism.

Whether they emphasized the overriding importance of class or nation, the leaders of the revolutions in Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and China were discovering a lesson that was dawning as well on the leaders of independence movements in India and Egypt: Peasants and workers, when organized and led, could be powerful agents of social and political change.

For Further Reading

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- Susan J. Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899–1922* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). Situates radio in the U.S. social context.
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- Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980* (New York: Penguin, 1982). An exquisite study of social change, political thought, and action in modern China.
- Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, Eighth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). A broad survey of India's political and social history.
- M. E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, Second Edition (London: Longman, 1996). Sensitive to the social and political differences within a complex region.

Related Websites

World War I Document Archive

http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Main_Page

Includes texts of peace treaties ending World War I and documents on the League of Nations.

League of Nations Photo Archive

<http://www.indiana.edu/~league/photos.htm>

A well-organized collection of historical photos of individuals and conferences.

The Mexican Revolution

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mex-revolution.htm>

Photographs and documents pertaining to the Mexican revolution and links to other sites.