CHAPTER 24
Nationalism, Revolution, and Dictatorship: Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America from 1919 to 1939

CHAPTER OUTLINE
AND FOCUS QUESTIONS

The Rise of Nationalism
What were the various stages in the rise of nationalist movements in Asia and the Middle East, and what challenges did they face?

Revolution in China
What problems did China encounter between the two world wars, and what solutions did the Nationalists and the Communists propose to solve them?

Japan Between the Wars
How did Japan address the problems of nation building in the first decades of the twentieth century, and why did democratic institutions not take hold more effectively?

Nationalism and Dictatorship in Latin America
What problems did the nations of Latin America face in the interwar years? To what degree were the problems a consequence of foreign influence?

CRITICAL THINKING
How did the societies discussed in this chapter deal with the political, economic, and social challenges that they faced after World War I, and how did these challenges differ from one region to another?

IN 1930, MOHANDAS GANDHI, the sixty-one-year-old leader of the nonviolent movement for Indian independence from British rule, began a march to the sea with seventy-eight followers. Their destination was Dandi, a little coastal town some 240 miles away. The group covered about 12 miles a day. As they went, Gandhi preached his doctrine of nonviolent resistance to British rule in every village he passed through: “Civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man.” By the time he reached Dandi, twenty-four days later, his small group had become an army of thousands. When they arrived at Dandi, Gandhi picked up a pinch of salt from the sand. All along the coast, thousands did likewise, openly breaking British laws that prohibited Indians from making their own salt. The British had long profited from their monopoly on the making and sale of salt. By this simple act of disobedience, Gandhi and the Indian people had taken a bold step on their long march toward independence.

The salt march was but one of many nonviolent activities that Gandhi undertook between World War I and World War II to win India’s independence from British rule. World War I had not only deeply affected the lives of Europeans but had also undermined the prestige of Western civilization in the minds of many observers in the rest of the world. As the Europeans devastated their own civilization on the battlefields of Europe, the subject peoples of their vast colonial empires were quick to recognize the opportunity to shake free of foreign domination. In those areas, movements for national independence began to take shape. Some were inspired by the nationalist and liberal movements of the West, while others began to look toward the new Marxist model provided by the victory of the Communists in Soviet Russia, who soon worked to spread their revolutionary vision.
to African and Asian societies. In the Middle East, World War I ended the rule of the Ottoman Empire and led to the creation of new states, many of which were placed under Western domination. The societies of Latin America were no longer under direct colonial rule and thus, for the most part, did not face the same types of challenges as their less fortunate counterparts in Asia and Africa. Nevertheless, in some cases the economies of the Latin American countries were virtually controlled by foreign interests. A similar situation prevailed in China and Japan, which had managed with some difficulty to retain at least a degree of political independence, despite severe pressure from the West during the era of high imperialism. But the political flux and economic disruption that characterized much of the world during the two decades following World War I had affected Latin America, China, and Japan as well, leading many in these regions to heed the siren call of fascist dictatorship or social revolution. For all the peoples of Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, the end of the Great War had not created a world safe for democracy, as Woodrow Wilson had hoped, but an age of great peril and uncertainty.

The Rise of Nationalism

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the various stages in the rise of nationalist movements in Asia and the Middle East, and what challenges did they face?

World War I sundered the political and social foundations of the West and severely undermined its self-confidence. In Europe, doubts about the future viability of Western civilization were widespread, especially among the intellectual elite. These doubts were quick to reach the perceptive observers in Asia and Africa and contributed to a rising tide of unrest against Western political domination throughout the colonial and semicolonial world. That unrest took a variety of forms but was most notably displayed in increasing worker activism, rural protest, and a sense of national fervor among anticolonialist intellectuals. In areas of Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America where independent states had successfully resisted the Western onslaught, the discontent fostered by the war and later by the Great Depression led to a loss of confidence in democratic institutions and the rise of political dictatorships.

Modern Nationalism

The first stage of resistance to the West in Asia and Africa (see Chapter 21) had resulted in humiliation and failure and must have confirmed many Westerners’ conviction that colonial peoples lacked both the strength and the know-how to create modern states and govern their own destinies. But the process was just beginning. The next phase—the rise of modern nationalism—began to take shape at the beginning of the twentieth century and was the product of the convergence of several factors. The most vocal source of anticolonialist sentiment was a new urban middle class of westernized intellectuals. In many cases, these merchants, petty functionaries, clerks, students, and professionals had been educated in Western-style schools. A few had spent time in the West. Many spoke Western languages, wore Western clothes, and worked in occupations connected with the colonial regime. Some even wrote in the languages of their colonial masters.

The results were paradoxical. On the one hand, this “new class” admired Western culture and sometimes harbored a deep sense of contempt for traditional ways. On the other hand, many strongly resented the foreigners and their arrogant contempt for colonial peoples. Though eager to introduce Western ideas and institutions into their own societies, these intellectuals were dismayed at the gap between ideal and reality, theory and practice, in colonial policy. Although Western political thought exalted democracy, equality, and individual freedom, democratic institutions were primitive or nonexistent in the colonies.

Equality in economic opportunity and social life was also noticeably lacking. Normally, the middle classes did not suffer in the same manner as impoverished peasants or menial workers in coal mines or on sugar or rubber plantations, but they, too, had complaints. They were usually relegated to low-level jobs in the government or business and were paid less than Europeans in similar positions. The superiority of the Europeans was expressed in a variety of ways, including “whites only” clubs and the use of the familiar form of the language (normally used by adults to children) when addressing the local peoples.

Under these conditions, many of the new urban educated class were ambivalent toward their colonial masters and the civilization that they represented. Out of this mixture of hopes and resentments emerged the first stirrings of modern nationalism in Asia and Africa. During the first quarter of the century, in colonial and semicolonial societies from the Suez Canal to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, educated indigenous peoples began to organize political parties and movements seeking reforms or the end of foreign rule and the restoration of independence.

RELIGION AND NATIONALISM At first, many of the leaders of these movements did not focus clearly on the idea of nationhood but tried to defend indigenous economic interests or religious beliefs. In Burma, for example, the first expression of modern nationalism came from students at the University of Rangoon, who protested against official persecution of the Buddhist religion and British failure to observe local customs in Buddhist temples, such as not removing their footwear. As part of the protest against British arrogance and lack of respect for local religious traditions, the students adopted the name Thakin (TAHK-in)—a polite term in the Burmese language that means “lord” or “master,” thereby emphasizing their demand for the right to rule themselves. Only in the 1930s did the Thakins begin to focus specifically on national independence.

In the Dutch East Indies, Sarekat (SAR-eh-kaht) Islam (Islamic Association) began as a self-help society among
The Dilemma of the Intellectual

Sutan Sjahrir was a prominent leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement who briefly served as prime minister of the Republic of Indonesia in the 1950s. Like many Western-educated Asian intellectuals, he was tortured by the realization that by education and outlook he was closer to his colonial masters—in his case, the Dutch—than to his own people. He wrote the following passage in a letter to his wife in 1935 and later included it in his book *Out of Exile.*

**Sutan Sjahrir, Out of Exile**

Am I perhaps estranged from my people? . . . Why are the things that contain beauty for them and arouse their gentler emotions only senseless and displeasing for me? In reality, the spiritual gap between my people and me is certainly no greater than that between an intellectual in Holland . . . and the undeveloped people of Holland. . . . The difference is rather . . . that the intellectual in Holland does not feel this gap because there is a portion—even a fairly large portion—of his own people on approximately the same intellectual level as himself. . . .

This is what we lack here. Not only is the number of intellectuals in this country smaller in proportion to the total population—in fact, very much smaller—but in addition, the few who are here do not constitute any single entity in spiritual outlook, or in any spiritual life or single culture whatsoever. . . . It is for them so much more difficult than for the intellectuals in Holland. In Holland they build—both consciously and unconsciously—on what is already there. . . .

Even if they oppose it, they do so as a method of application or as a starting point.

In our country this is not the case. Here there has been no spiritual or cultural life, and no intellectual progress for centuries. There are the much-praised Eastern art forms but what are these except bare rudiments from a feudal culture that cannot possibly provide a dynamic fulcrum for people of the twentieth century? . . . Our spiritual needs are needs of the twentieth century; our problems and our views are of the twentieth century. Our inclination is no longer toward the mystical, but toward reality, clarity, and objectivity. . . .

We intellectuals here are much closer to Europe or America than we are to the Borobudur or Mahabharata or to the primitive Islamic culture of Java and Sumatra. . . .

So, it seems, the problem stands in principle. It is seldom put forth by us in this light, and instead most of us search unconsciously for a synthesis that will leave us internally tranquil. We want to have both Western science and Eastern philosophy, the Eastern “spirit,” in the culture. But what is this Eastern spirit? It is, they say, the sense of the higher, of spirituality, of the eternal and religious, as opposed to the materialism of the West. I have heard this countless times, but it has never convinced me.

**Q** Why did Sutan Sjahrir feel estranged from his own culture? What was his answer to the challenges faced by his country in coming to terms with the modern world?

Muslim merchants to fight domination of the local economy by Chinese interests. Eventually, activist elements began to realize that the source of the problem was not the Chinese merchants but the colonial presence, and in the 1920s, Sarekat Islam was transformed into a new organization, the Nationalist Party of Indonesia (PNI), that focused on national independence. Like the Thakins in Burma, this party would eventually lead the country to independence after World War II.

**INDEPENDENCE OR MODERNIZATION? THE NATIONALIST QUANDARY** Building a new nation, however, requires more than a shared sense of grievances against the foreign invader. A host of other issues also had to be resolved. Soon patriots throughout the colonial world were engaged in a lively and sometimes acrimonious debate over such questions as whether independence or modernization should be their primary objective. The answer depended in part on how the colonial regime was perceived. If it was viewed as a source of needed reforms in a traditional society, a gradualist approach made sense. But if it was seen primarily as an impediment to change, the first priority, in the minds of many, was to bring it to an end. The vast majority of patriotic individuals were convinced that to survive, their societies must adopt much of the Western way of life; yet many were equally determined that the local culture would not, and should not, become a carbon copy of the West. What was the national identity, after all, if it did not incorporate national traditions?

Another reason for using traditional values was to provide ideological symbols that the common people could understand and would rally around. Though aware that they needed to enlist the mass of the population in the common struggle, most urban intellectuals had difficulty communicating with the teeming population in the countryside who did not understand such complicated and unfamiliar concepts as democracy and nationhood. As the Indonesian intellectual Sutan Sjahrir (SOO-tan syah-REER) (1909–1966) lamented, many westernized intellectuals had more in common with their colonial rulers than with the rural population in the villages (see the box above). As one French colonial official
remarked in some surprise to a French-educated Vietnamese reformist, “Why, Monsieur, you are more French than I am!”

Gandhi and the Indian National Congress

Nowhere in the colonial world were these issues debated more vigorously than in India. Before the Sepoy Rebellion (see Chapter 21), Indian consciousness had focused primarily on the question of religious identity. After all, the subcontinent had not been ruled by a dynasty of purely indigenous origins since the Guptas in the middle of the first millennium C.E. But in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a stronger sense of national consciousness began to emerge, provoked by the conservative policies and racial arrogance of the British colonial authorities.

The first Indian nationalists were upper class and educated. Many of them were from urban areas such as Bombay (now Mumbai), Madras (now Chennai), and Calcutta (now Kolkata). Some were trained in law and were members of the civil service. At first, many tended to prefer reform to revolution and believed that India needed modernization before it could handle independence. An exponent of this view was Gopal Gokhale (goh-PAHL GOH-kuh-lay) (1866–1915), a moderate nationalist who hoped that he could convince the British to bring about needed reforms in Indian society. Gokhale and other like-minded reformists did have some effect. In the 1880s, the government introduced a measure of self-government for the first time. All too often, however, such efforts were sabotaged by local British officials.

The slow pace of reform convinced many Indian nationalists that relying on British benevolence was futile. In 1885, a small group of Indians, with some British participation, met in Bombay to form the Indian National Congress (INC). They hoped to speak for all India, but most were high-caste English-trained Hindus. Like their reformist predecessors, members of the INC did not demand immediate independence and accepted the need for reforms to end traditional abuses like child marriage and sati. At the same time, they called for an Indian share in the governing process and more spending on economic development and less on military campaigns along the frontier. The British responded with a few concessions, but change was glacially slow. As impatient members of the INC became disillusioned, the radicals split off and formed the New Party, which called for the use of terrorism and violence to achieve national independence.

The INC also had difficulty reconciling religious differences within its ranks. The stated goal of the INC was to seek self-determination for all Indians regardless of class or religious affiliation, but many of its leaders were Hindu and inevitably reflected Hindu concerns. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the separate Muslim League was created to represent the interests of the millions of Muslims in Indian society.

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE In 1915, a young Hindu lawyer returned from South Africa to become active in the INC. He transformed the movement and galvanized India’s struggle for independence and identity. Mohandas Gandhi (moh-HAHN-dus GAHN-dee) (1869–1948) was born in Gujarat (goo-juh-RAHT), in western India, the son of a government minister. In the late nineteenth century, he studied in London and became a lawyer. In 1893, he went to South Africa to work in a law firm serving Indian émigrés working as laborers there. He soon became aware of the racial prejudice and exploitation experienced by Indians living in the territory and tried to organize them to protect their interests.

On his return to India, Gandhi immediately became active in the independence movement. Using his experience in South Africa, he set up a movement based on nonviolent resistance—the Hindi term was satyagraha (SUHT-yuh-grah-hah), meaning “hold fast to the truth”—to try to force the British to improve the lot of the poor and grant independence to India. His goal was twofold: to convert the British to his views while simultaneously strengthening the unity and sense of self-respect of his compatriots. Gandhi was particularly concerned about the plight of the millions of untouchables, whom he called harijans (HAR-ih-jans), or “children of God.”

When the British attempted to suppress dissent, he called on his followers to refuse to obey British regulations. He began to manufacture his own clothes, now dressing in a simple dhoti (DOH-tee) made of coarse homespun cotton, and adopted the spinning wheel as a symbol of Indian resistance to imports of British textiles.

Gandhi, now increasingly known as Mahatma (mah-HAHT-muh), or India’s “Great Soul,” organized mass protests to achieve his aims, but in 1919 they got out of hand and led to violence and British reprisals. British troops killed hundreds of unarmed protesters in the enclosed square in the city of Amritsar (am-RIT-sur) in northwestern India. When the protests spread, Gandhi was horrified at the violence. Nevertheless, he was arrested for his role in the protests and spent several years in prison.

Gandhi combined his anticolonial activities with an appeal to the spiritual instincts of all Indians. Though he had been born and raised a Hindu, his universalist approach to the idea of God transcended individual religion, albeit shaped by the historical themes of Hindu belief. At a speech given in London in September 1931, he expressed his view of the nature of God as “an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything . . . , an unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof.”

While Gandhi was in prison, the political situation continued to evolve. In 1921, the British passed the Government of
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India Act, transforming the heretofore advisory Legislative Council into a bicameral parliament, two-thirds of whose members would be elected. Similar bodies were created at the provincial level. In a stroke, 5 million Indians were enfranchised. But such reforms were no longer enough for many members of the INC, who wanted to push aggressively for full independence. The British exacerbated the situation by increasing the salt tax and prohibiting the Indian people from manufacturing or harvesting their own salt. Gandhi, now released from prison, returned to his earlier policy of civil disobedience by openly joining several dozen supporters in a 240-mile walk to the sea, where he picked up a lump of salt and urged Indians to ignore the law (see the Film & History feature above). Gandhi and many other members of the INC were arrested.

Indian women were also active in the movement. The first organizations to promote women’s rights had been established in the early years of the century, and they quickly became involved in a variety of efforts to bring about social reforms. Women accounted for about 20,000, or nearly 10 percent, of people arrested and jailed for taking part in demonstrations during the interwar period. Women marched, picketed foreign shops, and promoted the spinning and wearing of homemade cloth. By the 1930s, women’s associations were actively promoting a number of reforms, including women’s education, the introduction of birth control devices, the abolition of child marriage, and universal suffrage. In 1929, the Sarda Act raised the minimum age of marriage to fourteen.

NEW LEADERS AND NEW PROBLEMS In the 1930s, a new figure entered the movement in the person of Jawaharlal Nehru (juh-WAH-hur-lahl NAY-roo) (1889–1964), son of an earlier INC leader. Educated in the law in Great Britain and a brahmin by birth, Nehru personified the new Anglo-Indian politician: secular, rational, upper class, and intellectual. In fact, he appeared to be everything that Gandhi was not. With Nehru’s emergence, the independence movement embarked
on two paths, religious and secular, Indian and Western, traditional and modern. The dual character of the INC leadership may well have strengthened the movement by bringing together the two primary impulses behind the desire for independence: elite nationalism and the primordial force of Indian traditionalism. But it portended trouble for the nation’s new leadership in defining India’s future path in the contemporary world. In the meantime, Muslim discontent with Hindu dominance over the INC was increasing. In 1940, the Muslim League called for the creation of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan (“land of the pure”) in the northwest (see the box on p. 703). As communal strife between Hindus and Muslims increased, many Indians came to realize with sorrow (and some British colonialists with satisfaction) that British rule was all that stood between peace and civil war.

The Nationalist Revolt in the Middle East

In the Middle East, as in Europe, World War I hastened the collapse of old empires. The Ottoman Empire, which had dominated the eastern Mediterranean since the seizure of Constantinople in 1453, had been growing weaker since the end of the eighteenth century, troubled by rising governmental corruption, a decline in the effectiveness of the sultans, and the loss of considerable territory in the Balkans and southwestern Russia. In North Africa, Ottoman authority, tenuous at best, had disintegrated in the nineteenth century, enabling the French to seize Algeria and Tunisia and the British to establish a protectorate over the Nile River valley.

DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE Reformist elements in Istanbul, to be sure, had tried from time to time to resist the trend, but military defeats continued: Greece declared its independence, and Ottoman power declined steadily in the Middle East. A rising sense of nationality among Serbs, Armenians, and other minority peoples threatened the internal stability and cohesion of the empire. In the 1870s, a new generation of Ottoman reformers seized power in Istanbul and pushed through a constitution aimed at forming a legislative assembly that would represent all the peoples in the state. But the sultan they placed on the throne suspended the new charter and attempted to rule by traditional authoritarian means.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the defunct 1876 constitution had become a symbol of change for reformist elements, now grouped together under the common name Young Turks (undoubtedly borrowed from the Young Italy nationalist movement earlier in the century). They found support in the Ottoman army and administration and among Turks living in exile. In 1908, the Young Turks forced the sultan to restore the constitution, and he was removed from power the following year.

But the Young Turks had appeared at a moment of extreme fragility for the empire. Internal rebellions, combined with Austrian annexations of Ottoman territories in the Balkans, undermined support for the new government and provoked the army to step in. With most minorities from the old empire now removed from Istanbul’s authority, many ethnic Turks began to embrace a new concept of a Turkish state based on Turkish nationality.

The final blow to the old empire came in World War I, when the Ottoman government allied with Germany in the hope of driving the British from Egypt and restoring Ottoman rule over the Nile valley. In response, the British declared an official protectorate over Egypt and, aided by the efforts of the dashing, if eccentric, British adventurer T. E. Lawrence (popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia), sought to undermine Ottoman rule in the Arabian peninsula by encouraging Arab nationalists there. In 1916, the local governor of Mecca, encouraged by the British, declared Arabia independent from Ottoman rule, while British troops, advancing from Egypt, seized Palestine. In October 1918, having suffered more than 300,000 casualties during the war, the Ottoman Empire negotiated an armistice with the Allied Powers.

MUSTAFA KEMAL AND THE MODERNIZATION OF TURKEY

During the next few years, the tottering empire began to fall apart as the British and the French made plans to divide up Ottoman territories in the Middle East and the Greeks won Allied approval to seize the western parts of the Anatolian peninsula for their dream of re-creating the substance of the old Byzantine Empire. The impending collapse energized key elements in Turkey under the leadership of a war hero, Colonel Mustafa Kemal (moos-tah-FAH kuh-MAHL) (1881–1938), who had commanded Turkish forces in their successful defense of the Dardanelles against a British invasion during World War I. Now he resigned from the army and convoked a national congress that called for an elected government and the preservation of the remaining territories of the old empire in a new republic of Turkey. Establishing his capital at Ankara (AN-kuh-ruh), Kemal’s forces drove the Greeks from the Anatolian peninsula and persuaded the British to agree to a new treaty. In 1923, the last of the Ottoman sultans fled the country, which was now declared a Turkish republic. The Ottoman Empire had come to an end.

During the next few years, President Mustafa Kemal, now popularly known as Atatürk (ah-tah-TIRK), or “Father Turk,” attempted to transform Turkey into a modern secular republic. The trappings of a democratic system were put in place, centered on an elected Grand National Assembly, but the president was relatively intolerant of opposition and harshly suppressed critics of his rule. Turkish nationalism was emphasized, and the Turkish language, now written in the Roman alphabet, was shorn of many of its Arabic elements. Popular education was emphasized, old aristocratic titles like pasha and bey were abolished, and all Turkish citizens were given family names in the European style.

Atatürk also took steps to modernize the economy, overseeing the establishment of a light industrial sector producing textiles, glass, paper, and cement and instituting a five-year plan on the Soviet model to provide for state direction over the economy. Atatürk was no admirer of Soviet communism, however, and the Turkish economy can be better described as a form of state capitalism. He also encouraged the modernization of the agricultural sector by establishing training institutions and model farms, but such reforms had relatively little effect on the nation’s generally conservative peasantry.
During the mid-nineteenth century, one modernizing shah attempted to introduce political and economic reforms but faced resistance from tribal and religious—predominantly Shi’ite—forces. To buttress its rule, the dynasty turned increasingly to Russia and Great Britain to protect itself from its own people.

Eventually, the growing foreign presence led to the rise of an indigenous Persian nationalist movement. Its efforts were largely directed against Russian advances in the northwest and the growing European influence in the small modern industrial sector, the profits from which left the country or disappeared into the hands of the dynasty’s ruling elite. Supported actively by Shi’ite religious leaders, opposition to the regime rose steadily among both peasants and merchants in the cities, and in 1906, popular pressures forced the reigning shah to grant a constitution on the Western model. It was an eerie foretaste of the revolution of 1979 (see Chapter 29).

As in the Ottoman Empire and Manchu China, however, the modernizers had moved too soon, before their power base was secure. With the support of the Russians and the British, the shah was able to retain control, while the two foreign powers began to divide the country into separate spheres of influence. One reason for the growing foreign presence in Persia was the discovery of oil reserves in the southern part of the country in 1908. Within a few years, oil exports increased rapidly, with the bulk of the profits going into the pockets of British investors.

In 1921, an officer in the Persian army by the name of Reza Khan (ree-ZAH KAHN) (1878–1944) led a mutiny that seized power in Tehran. The new ruler had originally intended to establish a republic, but resistance from traditional forces impeded his efforts, and in 1925 the new Pahlavi (PAH-luH-vee) dynasty, with Reza Khan as shah, replaced the now defunct Qajar dynasty. During the next few years, Reza Khan attempted to follow the example of Ataturk in Turkey, introducing a number of reforms to strengthen the central government, modernize the civilian and military bureaucracy, and establish a modern economic infrastructure. In 1935, he officially changed the name of the nation to Iran.

Unlike Ataturk, Reza Khan did not attempt to destroy the power of Islamic beliefs, but he did encourage the establishment of a Western-style educational system and forbade women to wear the veil in public. Women continued to be exploited, however. Like the textile industry in Meiji Japan (see Chapter 22), the Iranian carpet industry was based on the intensive labor of women; the carpets they produced were a valuable export—second only to oil—in the interwar period. To strengthen the sense of Iranian nationalism and reduce the power of Islam, Reza Khan attempted to popularize the symbols and beliefs of pre-Islamic times. Like his Qajar
predecessors, however, he was hindered by strong foreign influence. When the Soviet Union and Great Britain decided to send troops into the country during World War II, he resigned in protest and died three years later.

Mohammed Iqbal, Speech to the All-India Muslim League (1930)

It cannot be denied that Islam, regarded as an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity—by which expression I mean a social structure regulated by a legal system and animated by a specific ethical ideal—has been the chief formative factor in the life history of the Muslims of India. It has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups and finally transform them into a well-defined people. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that India is perhaps the only country in the world where Islam, as a people-building force, has worked at its best. In India, as elsewhere, the structure of Islam as a society is almost entirely due to the working of Islam as a culture inspired by a specific ethical ideal. What I mean to say is that Muslim society, with its remarkable homogeneity and inner unity, has grown to be what it is under the pressure of the laws and institutions associated with the culture of Islam.

Communalism in its higher aspect, then, is indispensable to the formation of a harmonious whole in a country like India. The units of Indian society are not territorial as in European countries. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different religions. Their behavior is not at all determined by a common race consciousness. Even the Hindus do not form a homogeneous group. The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognizing the fact of communal groups. The Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified.

I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interests of India and Islam. For India it means security and peace resulting from an internal balance of power; for Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp of Arabian imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times.

Why did Mustafa Kemal believe that the caliphate no longer met the needs of the Turkish people? Why did Mohammed Iqbal believe that a separate state for Muslims in India would be required? How did he attempt to persuade non-Muslims that this would be to their benefit as well?

NATION BUILDING IN IRAQ

One other consequence of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the emergence of a new political entity along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, once the heartland of ancient empires. Lacking definable borders...
and sharply divided along ethnic and religious lines—a Shi’ite majority in rural areas was balanced by a vocal Sunni minority in the cities and a largely Kurdish population in the northern mountains—the area had been under Ottoman rule since the seventeenth century. With the advent of World War I, the lowland area from Baghdad southward to the Persian Gulf was occupied by British forces, who hoped to protect oil-producing regions in neighboring Persia from a German takeover.

Although the British claimed to have arrived as liberators, in 1920 the country now known as Iraq was placed under British control as a mandate of the League of Nations. Civil unrest and growing anti-Western sentiment rapidly dispelled any immediate plans for the emergence of an independent government, and in 1921, after the suppression of resistance forces, the country was placed under the titular authority of King Faisal (FY-suhl) of Syria, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Faisal relied for support primarily on the politically more sophisticated urban Sunni population, although they represented less than a quarter of the population. The discovery of oil near Kirkuk (kir-KOOK) in 1927 increased the value of the area to the British, who granted formal independence to the country in 1932, although British advisers retained a strong influence over the fragile government.

**THE RISE OF ARAB NATIONALISM** As we have seen, the Arab uprising during World War I helped bring about the demise of the Ottoman Empire. There had been resistance against Ottoman rule in the Arabian peninsula since the eighteenth century, when the devoutly Muslim Wahhabi (wuh-HAH-bee) sect revolted in an attempt to drive out outside influences and cleanse Islam of corrupt practices that had developed in past centuries. The revolt was eventually suppressed, but Wahhabi influence persisted.

World War I offered an opportunity for the Arabs to throw off the shackles of Ottoman rule—but what would replace them? The Arabs were not a nation but an idea, a loose collection of peoples who often did not see eye to eye on matters that affected their community. Disagreement over what constitutes an Arab has plagued generations of political leaders who have sought unsuccessfully to knit together the disparate peoples of the region into a single Arab nation.

When the Arab leaders in Mecca declared their independence from Ottoman rule in 1916, they had hoped for British support, but—despite the efforts of T. E. Lawrence—they were to be sorely disappointed. At the close of the war, the British and French agreed to create a number of mandates in the area under the general supervision of the League of Nations (see Chapter 23). Iraq was assigned to the British; Syria and Lebanon (the two areas were separated so that Christian peoples in Lebanon could be placed under Christian administration) were given to the French.

In the early 1920s, a leader of the Wahhabi movement, Ibn Saud (IB-un sah-OOD) (1880–1953), united Arab tribes in the northern part of the Arabian peninsula and drove out the remnants of Ottoman rule. Ibn Saud was a descendant of the family that had led the Wahhabi revolt in the eighteenth century. Devout and gifted, he won broad support among Arab tribal peoples and established the kingdom of Saudi Arabia throughout much of the peninsula in 1932.

At first, his new kingdom, consisting essentially of the vast desert wastes of central Arabia, was desperately poor. Its financial resources were limited to the income from Muslim pilgrims visiting the holy sites in Mecca and Medina. But during the 1930s, American companies began to explore for oil, and in 1938, Standard Oil made a successful strike at Dhahran (dah-RAHN), on the Persian Gulf. Soon an Arab-American oil conglomerate, popularly called Aramco, was established, and the isolated kingdom was suddenly inundated by Western oilmen and untold wealth.

**THE ISSUE OF PALESTINE** The land of Palestine—one of the homes of the Jews but now inhabited primarily by Muslim Arabs—became a separate mandate and immediately became a thorny problem for the British. In 1897, the Austrian-born journalist Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) (see Chapter 20) had convened an international conference in Basel, Switzerland, which led to the creation of a World Zionist Organization (WZO). The aim of the organization was to create a homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people, who had long been dispersed widely throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Over the next decade, Jewish immigration into Palestine, then under Ottoman rule, increased with WZO support. By the outbreak of World War I, about 85,000 Jews lived in Palestine, representing about 15 percent of the total population. In 1917, responding to appeals from the British chemist Chaim Weizmann (KY-im VYTS-mahn), British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur Balfour (BAL-fooir) issued a declaration saying Palestine was to be a national home for the Jews. The Balfour Declaration, which was later confirmed by the League of Nations, was ambiguous on the legal status of the territory and promised that the decision would not undermine the rights of the non-Jewish peoples currently living in the area. But Arab nationalists were incensed. How could a national home for the Jewish people be established in a territory where the majority of the population was Muslim?

After World War I, more Jewish settlers began to arrive in Palestine in response to the promises made in the Balfour Declaration. As tensions between the new arrivals and existing Muslim residents began to escalate, the British tried to restrict Jewish immigration into the territory while Arab voices rejected the concept of a separate state. In a bid to relieve Arab sensitivities, Great Britain created the separate
emirate of Trans-Jordan out of the eastern portion of Palestine. After World War II, it would become the independent kingdom of Jordan. The stage was set for the conflicts that would take place in the region after World War II.

THE BRITISH IN EGYPT  Great Britain had maintained a loose protectorate over Egypt since the middle of the nineteenth century, although the area remained nominally under Ottoman rule. London formalized its protectorate in 1914 to protect the Suez Canal and the Nile River valley from possible seizure by the Central Powers. After the war, however, nationalist elements became restive and formed the Wafd (WAHFT) Party, a secular organization dedicated to the creation of an independent Egypt based on the principles of representative government. The Wafd received the support of many middle-class Egyptians who, like Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, hoped to meld Islamic practices with the secular tradition of the modern West. This modernist form of Islam did not have broad appeal outside the cosmopolitan centers, however, and in 1928 the Muslim cleric Hasan al-Bana (hah-SAHN al-BAN-uh) organized the Muslim Brotherhood, which demanded strict adherence to the traditional teachings of the Prophet, as set forth in the Qur’an. The Brotherhood rejected Western ways and sought to create a new Egypt based firmly on the precepts of the Shari’a. By the 1930s, the organization had as many as a million members.

Nationalism and Revolution

Before the Russian Revolution, to most intellectuals in Asia and Africa, “westernization” referred to the capitalist democratic civilization of western Europe and the United States, not the doctrine of social revolution developed by Karl Marx. Until 1917, Marxism was regarded as a utopian idea rather than a concrete system of government. Moreover, to many intellectuals, Marxism appeared to have little relevance to conditions in Asia and Africa. Marxist doctrine, after all, declared that a communist society would arise only from the ashes of an advanced capitalism that had already passed through the Industrial Revolution. From the perspective of Marxist historical analysis, most societies in Asia and Africa were still at the feudal stage of development; they lacked the economic conditions and political awareness to achieve a socialist revolution that would bring the working class to power. Finally, the Marxist view of nationalism and religion had little appeal to many patriotic intellectuals in the non-Western world. Marx believed that nationhood and religion were essentially false ideas that diverted the attention of the oppressed masses from the critical issues of class struggle and, in his phrase, the exploitation of one person by another. Instead, Marx stressed an “internationalist” outlook based on class consciousness and the eventual creation of a classless society with no artificial divisions based on culture, nation, or religion.

For these reasons, many patriotic non-Western intellectuals initially deemed Marxism both irrelevant and unappealing. That situation began to change after the Russian Revolution in 1917. The rise to power of Lenin’s Bolsheviks demonstrated that a revolutionary party espousing Marxist principles could overturn a corrupt, outdated system and launch a new experiment dedicated to ending human inequality and achieving a paradise on earth. In 1920, Lenin proposed a new revolutionary strategy designed to relate Marxist doctrine and practice to non-Western societies. His reasons were not entirely altruistic. Soviet Russia, surrounded by capitalist powers, desperately needed allies in its struggle to survive in a hostile world.
LENIN AND THE EAST To Lenin, the anticolonial movements emerging in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East after World War I were natural allies of the beleaguered new regime in Moscow. In the spring of 1913, he had written, “Was it so long ago that China was considered typical of the landsthat had been standing still for centuries? Today China is a land of seething political activity, the scene of a virile social movement and of a democratic upsurge.” Similar conditions, he added, were spreading the democratic revolution to other parts of Asia—to Turkey, Persia, and Iraq. Ferment was on the rise even in British India. Lenin was convinced that only the ability of the imperialist powers to find markets, raw materials, and sources of capital investment in the non-Western world kept capitalism alive. If the tentacles of capitalist influence in Asia and Africa could be severed, imperialism would weaken and collapse.

Establishing such an alliance was not easy, however. Most nationalist leaders in colonial countries belonged to the urban middle class, and many abhorred the idea of a comprehensive revolution to create a totally egalitarian society. In addition, many still adhered to traditional religious beliefs and were opposed to the atheistic principles of classical Marxism.

Since it was unrealistic to expect bourgeois nationalist support for social revolution, Lenin sought a compromise that would enable Communist Parties to be organized among the working classes in the preindustrial societies of Asia and Africa. These parties would then forge informal alliances with existing middle-class parties to struggle against the common enemies of feudal reaction (the remnants of the traditional ruling class) and Western imperialism. Such an alliance, of course, could not be permanent because many bourgeois nationalists in Asia and Africa would reject an egalitarian, classless society. Once the imperialists had been overthrown, therefore, the Communist Parties would turn against their erstwhile nationalist partners to seize power on their own and carry out the socialist revolution. Lenin thus proposed a two-stage revolution: an initial “national democratic” stage followed by a “proletarian socialist” stage.

Lenin’s strategy became a major element in Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s. Soviet agents fanned out across the world to carry Marxism beyond the boundaries of industrial Europe. The primary instrument of this effort was the Third International, usually known as the Communist International, or Comintern for short. Formed in 1919 at Lenin’s prodding, the Comintern was a worldwide organization of Communist Parties dedicated to the advancement of world revolution. At its headquarters in Moscow, agents from around the world were trained in the precepts of world communism and then sent back to their countries to form Marxist parties and promote the cause of social revolution. By the end of the 1920s, almost every colonial or semicolonial society in Asia had a party based on Marxist principles. The Soviets had less success in the Middle East, where Marxist ideology appealed mainly to minorities such as Jews and Armenians in the cities, or in black Africa, where Soviet strategists in any case felt that conditions were not sufficiently advanced for the creation of Communist organizations.

THE APPEAL OF COMMUNISM According to Marxist doctrine, the rank and file of Communist Parties should be urban factory workers alienated from capitalist society by inhumane working conditions. In practice, many of the leaders even in European Communist Parties tended to be urban intellectuals or members of the lower middle class (in Marxist parlance, the “petty bourgeoisie”). That phenomenon was even more true in the non-Western world, where most early Marxists were rootless intellectuals. Some were probably drawn into the movement for patriotic reasons and saw Marxist doctrine as a new and more effective means of modernizing their societies and removing the colonial exploiters (see the box on p. 707).

Others were attracted by the message of egalitarian communism and the utopian dream of a classless society. For those who had lost their faith in traditional religion, communism often served as a new secular ideology, dealing not with the hereafter but with the here and now or, indeed, with a remote future when the state would wither away and the “classless society” would replace the lost truth of traditional faiths.

Of course, the new doctrine’s appeal was not the same in all non-Western societies. In Confucian societies such as China and Vietnam, where traditional belief systems had been badly discredited by their failure to counter the Western challenge, communism had an immediate impact and rapidly became a major factor in the anticolonial movement. In Buddhist and Muslim societies, where traditional religion remained strong and actually became a cohesive factor in the resistance movement, communism had less success. To maximize their appeal and minimize potential conflict with traditional ideas, Communist Parties frequently attempted to adapt Marxist doctrine to indigenous values and institutions. In the Middle East, for example, the Ba’ath (BAHTH) Party in Syria adopted a hybrid socialism combining Marxism with Arab nationalism. In Egypt, however, the Wafd Party, formed by modernist intellectuals in 1918, focused its efforts on the creation of an independent government based on Western democratic principles but gave little thought to measures designed to alleviate problems of poverty in urban and rural areas.

In some instances, the Communists were briefly able to establish a cooperative relationship with the bourgeois parties. The most famous example was the alliance between the Chinese Communist Party and Sun Yat-sen’s Nationalist Party (discussed in the next section). In the Dutch East Indies, the Indonesian Communist Party (known as the PKI) allied with the middle-class nationalist group Sarekat Islam but later broke loose in an effort to organize its own mass movement among the poor peasants. In French Indochina, Vietnamese Communists organized by the Moscow-trained revolutionary Ho Chi Minh (HOH CHEE MIN) sought at first to cooperate with bourgeois nationalist parties against the colonial regime. These efforts were abandoned in 1928, however, when the Comintern, reacting to Chiang Kai-shek’s betrayal of the alliance with the Chinese Communist Party, declared that Communist Parties should restrict their recruiting efforts to the most revolutionary elements in society—notably, the urban intellectuals and the working class. Harassed by colonial authorities and saddled with strategic directions from Moscow that often had little relevance to local conditions, Communist Parties in most colonial societies had little success in...
The Path of Liberation

In 1919, the Vietnamese revolutionary Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969) was living in exile in France, where he first became acquainted with the new revolutionary experiment in Bolshevik Russia. Later he became a leader of the Vietnamese Communist movement. In the following passage, written in 1960, he reminisces about his reasons for becoming a Communist. The Second International mentioned in the text was an organization created in 1889 by moderate socialists who pursued their goal by parliamentary means. Lenin created the Third International, or Comintern, in 1919 to promote violent revolution.

Ho Chi Minh, “The Path Which Led Me to Leninism”

After World War I, I made my living in Paris, now as a retoucher at a photographer’s, now as a painter of “Chinese antiquities” (made in France!). I would distribute leaflets denouncing the crimes committed by the French colonialists in Vietnam.

At that time, I supported the October Revolution [in Russia] only instinctively, not yet grasping all its historic importance. I loved and admired Lenin because he was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots; until then, I had read none of his books.

The reason for my joining the French Socialist Party was that these “ladies and gentlemen”—as I called my comrades at that moment—had shown their sympathy toward me, toward the struggle of the oppressed peoples. But I understood neither what was a party, a trade union, nor what was Socialism nor Communism.

Heated discussions were then taking place in the branches of the Socialist Party, about the question whether the Socialist Party should remain in the Second International, should a Second-and-a-Half International be founded, or should the Socialist Party join Lenin’s Third International? I attended the meetings regularly, twice or three times a week, and attentively listened to the discussion. First, I could not understand thoroughly. Why were the discussions so heated? Either with the Second, Second-and-a-Half, or Third International, the revolution could be waged. What was the use of arguing then? As for the First International, what had become of it?

What I wanted most to know—and this precisely was not debated in the meetings—was: which International sides with the peoples of colonial countries?

I raised this question—the most important in my opinion—in a meeting. Some comrades answered: It is the Third, not the Second International. And a comrade gave me Lenin’s “Thesis on the national and colonial questions,” published by l’Humanité, to read.

There were political terms difficult to understand in this thesis. But by dint of reading it again and again, finally I could grasp the main part of it. What emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness, and confidence it instilled in me! I was overjoyed to tears. Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted aloud as if addressing large crowds: “Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!”

After that, I had entire confidence in Lenin, in the Third International.

Why did Ho Chi Minh believe that the Third International was the key to the liberation of the colonial peoples? What were the essential elements of Lenin’s strategy for bringing that about?

Revolution in China

Overall, revolutionary Marxism had its greatest impact in China, where a group of young radicals, including several faculty and staff members from Peking (Beijing) University, founded the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. The rise of the CCP was a consequence of the failed revolution of 1911. When political forces are too weak or too divided to consolidate their power during a period of instability, the military usually steps in to fill the vacuum. In China, Sun Yat-sen (SOON yaht-SEN) and his colleagues had accepted General Yuan Shikai (yoo-AHN shee-KY) as president of the new Chinese republic in 1911 because they lacked the military force to compete with his control over the army (see Chapter 22). Moreover, many feared, perhaps rightly, that if the revolt lapsed into chaos, the Western powers would intervene and the last shreds of Chinese sovereignty would be lost. But some had misgivings about Yuan’s intentions. As one remarked in a letter to a friend, “We don’t know whether he will be a George Washington or a Napoleon.”
As it turned out, he was neither. Showing little comprehension of the new ideas sweeping into China from the West, Yuan ruled in a traditional manner, reviving Confucian rituals and institutions and eventually trying to found a new imperial dynasty. Yuan’s dictatorial inclinations rapidly led to clashes with Sun’s party, now renamed the Guomindang (gwoh-min-DAHNG) (Kuomintang), or Nationalist Party. When Yuan dissolved the new parliament, the Nationalists launched a rebellion; it failed, and Sun fled to Japan.

Yuan was strong enough to brush off the challenge from the revolutionary forces but not to turn back the clock of history. He died in 1916 (apparently of natural causes, although legend holds that his heart was broken by popular resistance to his imperial pretensions) and was succeeded by one of his military subordinates. For the next several years, China slipped into semianarchy as the power of the central government disintegrated and military warlords seized power in the provinces.

The problem was that appeals for American-style democracy and women’s liberation had little relevance to Chinese peasants, most of whom were still illiterate and concerned above all with survival. Consequently, the New Culture Movement did not win widespread support outside the urban areas. It certainly earned the distrust of conservative military officers, one of whom threatened to lob artillery shells into areas. It certainly earned the distrust of conservative military officers, one of whom threatened to lob artillery shells into Beijing and Peking University to destroy the poisonous new ideas and eliminate their advocates.

Discontent among intellectuals, however, was soon joined by the rising chorus of public protest against Japan’s efforts to expand its influence on the mainland. During the first decade of the twentieth century, Japan had taken advantage of the Qing’s decline to extend its domination over Manchuria and Korea (see Chapter 22). In 1915, the Japanese government insisted that Yuan Shikai accept a series of twenty-one demands that would have given Japan a virtual protectorate over the Chinese government and economy. Yuan was able to fend off the most far-reaching Japanese demands by
arousing popular outrage in China, but at the Paris Peace Conference four years later, Japan received Germany’s sphere of influence in Shandong (SHAHN-doong) Province as a reward for its support of the Allied cause in World War I. On hearing that the Chinese government had accepted the decision, on May 4, 1919, patriotic students, supported by other sectors of the urban population, demonstrated in Beijing and other major cities of the country (see the comparative illustration on p. 808). Although this May Fourth Movement did not lead to the restoration of Shandong to Chinese rule, it did alert a substantial part of the politically literate population to the threat to national survival and the incompetence of the warlord government.

The Nationalist-Communist Alliance

By 1920, central authority had almost ceased to exist in China. Two competing political forces now began to emerge from the chaos. One was Sun Yat-sen’s Nationalist Party. Driven from the political arena seven years earlier by Yuan Shikai, the party now reestablished itself on the mainland by making an alliance with the warlord ruler of Guangdong (gwahng-DOONG) (Kwangtung) Province in southern China. From Canton, Sun sought international assistance to carry out his national revolution. The other was the CCP. Following Lenin’s strategy, Comintern agents advised the new party to link up with the more experienced Nationalists. Sun Yat-sen needed the expertise and the diplomatic support that Soviet Russia could provide because his anti-imperialist rhetoric had alienated many Western powers; one English-language newspaper in Shanghai remarked, “All his life, all his influence, are devoted to ideas which keep China in turmoil, and it is utterly undesirable that he should be allowed to prosecute those aims here.” In 1923, the two parties formed an alliance to oppose the warlords and drive the imperialist powers out of China.

For three years, with the assistance of a Comintern mission in Canton, the two parties submerged their mutual suspicions and mobilized and trained a revolutionary army to march north and seize control of China. The so-called Northern Expedition began in the summer of 1926 (see Map 24.1). By the following spring, revolutionary forces were in control of all Chinese territory south of the Yangtze River, including the major river ports of Wuhan (WOO-HAHN) and Shanghai (SHANG-hy). But tensions between the two parties now surfaced. Sun Yat-sen had died of cancer in 1925 and was succeeded as head of the Nationalist Party by his military subordinate, Chiang Kai-shek (CHANG ky-SHEK) (see the comparative illustration on p. 710). Chiang feigned support for the alliance with the Communists but actually planned to destroy them. In April 1927, he struck against the Communists and their supporters in Shanghai, killing thousands. After the massacre, most of the Communist leaders went into hiding in the city, where they attempted to revive the movement in its traditional base among the urban working class. Some party members, however, led by the young Communist organizer Mao Zedong (mow zee-DOONG [“ow” as in “how”]) (Mao Tse-tung), fled to the hilly areas south of the Yangtze River.

Unlike most CCP leaders, Mao was convinced that the Chinese revolution must be based not on workers in the big cities but on the impoverished peasants in the countryside. The son of a prosperous farmer, Mao had helped organize a peasant movement in southern China during the early 1920s and then served as an agitator in rural villages in his home province of Hunan (HOO-NAHN) during the Northern Expedition in the fall of 1926. At that time, he wrote a report to the party leadership suggesting that the CCP support peasant demands for a land revolution (see the box on p. 711). But his superiors refused, fearing that such radical policies would destroy the alliance with the Nationalists.

The Nanjing Republic

In 1928, Chiang Kai-shek founded a new Chinese republic at Nanjing, and over the next three years, he managed to reunify China by a combination of military operations and inducements (known as “silver bullets”) to various northern warlords to join his movement. He also attempted to put an end to the Communists, rooting them out of their urban base in Shanghai and their rural redoubt in the rugged hills of
Jiangxi (JAHNG-shee) (Kiangsi) Province. He succeeded in the first task in 1931, when most party leaders were forced to flee Shanghai for Mao’s base in southern China. Three years later, using their superior military strength, Chiang’s troops surrounded the Communist base in Jiangxi, inducing Mao’s young People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to abandon its guerrilla lair and embark on the famous Long March, an arduous journey of thousands of miles on foot through mountains, marshes, and deserts to the small provincial town of Yan’an (yuh-NAHN) (Yenan) 200 miles north of the city of Xian (SHEE-ahn) in the dusty hills of northern China (see Map 24.1). Of the 90,000 who embarked on the journey in October 1934, only 10,000 arrived in Yan’an a year later. Contemporary observers must have thought that the Communist threat to the Nanjing regime had been averted forever.

Meanwhile, Chiang was trying to build a new nation. When the Nanjing Republic was established in 1928, Chiang publicly declared his commitment to Sun Yat-sen’s “three people’s principles.” In a program announced in 1918, Sun had written about the all-important second stage of “political tutelage”:

China . . . needs a republican government just as a boy needs school. As a schoolboy must have good teachers and helpful friends, so the Chinese people, being for the first time under republican rule, must have a farsighted revolutionary government for their training. This calls for the period of political tutelage, which is a necessary transitional stage from monarchy to republicanism. Without this, disorder will be unavoidable.5

In keeping with Sun’s program, Chiang announced a period of political indoctrination to prepare the Chinese people for a final stage of constitutional government. In the meantime, the Nationalists would use their dictatorial power to carry out a land reform program and modernize the urban industrial sector.

But it would take more than paper plans to create a new China. Years of neglect and civil war had severely frayed the political, economic, and social fabric of the nation. There were faint signs of an impending industrial revolution in the major urban centers, but most of the people in the countryside, drained by warlord exactions and civil strife, were still grindingly poor and overwhelmingly illiterate. A westernized middle class had begun to emerge in the cities and formed much of the natural constituency of the Nanjing government. But this new westernized elite, preoccupied with bourgeois values of individual advancement and material accumulation, had few links with the peasants in the countryside or the rickshaw drivers “running in this world of suffering,” in the poignant words of a Chinese poet. In an expressive phrase,
A Call for Revolt

In the fall of 1926, Nationalist and Communist forces moved north from Canton on their Northern Expedition in an effort to defeat the warlords. The young Communist Mao Zedong accompanied revolutionary troops into his home province of Hunan, where he submitted a report to the CCP Central Committee calling for a massive peasant revolt against the ruling order. The report shows his confidence that peasants could play an active role in the Chinese revolution despite the skepticism of many of his colleagues.

Mao Zedong, “The Peasant Movement in Hunan”

During my recent visit to Hunan I made a firsthand investigation of conditions. . . . In a very short time, . . . several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, . . . a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back. They will smash all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants, and evil gentry into their graves. Every revolutionary party and every revolutionary comrade will be put to the test, to be accepted or rejected as they decide. There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticizing? Or to stand in their way and oppose them? Every Chinese is free to choose, but events will force you to make the choice quickly.

The main targets of attack by the peasants are the local tyrants, the evil gentry and the lawless landlords, but in passing they also hit out against patriarchal ideas and institutions, against the corrupt officials in the cities and against bad practices and customs in the rural areas. . . . As a result, the privileges which the feudal landlords enjoyed for thousands of years are being shattered to pieces. . . . With the collapse of the power of the landlords, the peasant associations have now become the sole organs of authority, and the popular slogan “All power to the peasant associations” has become a reality. The peasants’ revolt disturbed the gentry’s sweet dreams. When the news from the countryside reached the cities, it caused immediate uproar among the gentry. . . . From the middle social strata upwards to the Kuomintang [Nationalist] right-wingers, there was not a single person who did not sum up the whole business in the phrase, “It’s terrible!” . . . Even quite progressive people said, “Though terrible, it is inevitable in a revolution.” In short, nobody could altogether deny the word “terrible.” But . . . the fact is that the great peasant masses have risen to fulfill their historic mission. . . . What the peasants are doing is absolutely right; what they are doing is fine! “It’s fine!” is the theory of the peasants and of all other revolutionaries. Every revolutionary comrade should know that the national revolution requires a great change in the countryside. The Revolution of 1911 did not bring about this change, hence its failure. This change is now taking place, and it is an important factor for the completion of the revolution. Every revolutionary comrade must support it, or he will be taking the stand of counterrevolution.

Q Why did Mao Zedong believe that rural peasants could help bring about a social revolution in China? How does his vision compare with the reality of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia?

Mao Zedong on the Long March. In 1934, the Communist leader Mao Zedong led his bedraggled forces on the famous Long March from southern China to a new location at Yan’an, in the hills just south of the Gobi Desert. The epic journey has ever since been celebrated as a symbol of the party’s willingness to sacrifice for the revolutionary cause. In this photograph, Mao sits astride a white horse as he accompanies his followers on the march. Reportedly, he was the only participant allowed to ride a horse en route to Yan’an.
some critics dismissed Chiang and his chief followers as “banana Chinese”—yellow on the outside, white on the inside.

THE BEST OF EAST AND WEST Chiang was aware of the difficulty of introducing exotic foreign ideas into a society still culturally conservative. While building a modern industrial sector, he attempted to synthesize modern Western ideas with traditional Confucian values of hard work, obedience, and moral integrity. In the officially promoted New Life Movement, sponsored by his Wellesley-educated wife, Mei-ling Soong (May-Ling Soong), Chiang sought to propagate traditional Confucian social ethics such as integrity, propriety, and righteousness while rejecting what he considered the excessive individualism and material greed of Western capitalism.

Unfortunately for Chiang, Confucian ideas—at least in their institutional form—had been widely discredited by the failure of the traditional system to solve China’s growing problems. With only a tenuous hold over the Chinese provinces (the Nanjing government had total control over only a handful of provinces in the Yangtze valley), a growing Japanese threat in the north, and a world suffering from the Great Depression, Chiang made little progress with his program. Lacking the political sensitivity of Sun Yat-sen and fearing Communist influence, Chiang repressed opposition and censored free expression, thereby alienating many intellectuals and political moderates. Since the urban middle class and landed gentry were his natural political constituency, he shunned programs that would lead to a redistribution of wealth. A land reform program was enacted in 1930 but had little effect.

Chiang Kai-shek’s government had little more success in promoting industrial development. During the decade of precarious peace following the Northern Expedition, industrial growth averaged only about 1 percent annually. Much of the national wealth was in the hands of the senior officials and close subordinates of the ruling elite. Military expenses consumed half the budget, and distressingly little was devoted to social and economic development.

The new government, then, had little success in dealing with China’s deep-seated economic and social problems. The deadly combination of internal disintegration and foreign pressure now began to coincide with the virtual collapse of the global economic order during the Great Depression and the rise of militant political forces in Japan determined to extend Japanese influence and power in an unstable Asia. These forces and the turmoil they unleashed will be examined in the next chapter.

"Down with Confucius and Sons": Economic, Social, and Cultural Change in Republican China

The transformation of the old order that had commenced at the end of the Qing era extended into the period of the early Chinese republic. The industrial sector continued to grow, albeit slowly. Although about 75 percent of all industrial goods were still manually produced in the early 1930s, mechanization was gradually beginning to replace manual labor in a number of traditional industries, notably in the manufacture of textile goods. Traditional Chinese exports, such as silk and tea, were hit hard by the Great Depression, however, and manufacturing suffered a decline during the 1930s. It is difficult to gauge conditions in the countryside during the early republican era, but there is no doubt that farmers were often victimized by high taxes imposed by local warlords and the endemic political and social conflict.

SOCIAL CHANGES Social changes followed shifts in the economy and the political culture. By 1915, the assault on the old system and values by educated youth was intense. The main focus of the attack was the Confucian concept of the family—in particular, filial piety and the subordination of women (see the comparative essay "Out of the Doll’s House" on p. 713). Young people called for the right to choose their own mates and their own careers. Inspired by the American women’s advocate Margaret Sanger who visited China in 1922, women began to demand rights and opportunities equal to those enjoyed by men. More broadly, progressives called for an end to the concept of duty to the community and praised the Western individualist ethos. The popular short story writer Lu Xun (Ioo Shun) (Lu Hsun) criticized the Confucian concept of family as a “man-eating” system that degraded humanity. In a famous short story “Diary of a Madman,” the protagonist remarks:

I remember when I was four or five years old, sitting in the cool of the hall, my brother told me that if a man’s parents were ill, he should cut off a piece of his flesh and boil it for them if he wanted to be considered a good son. I have only just realized that I have been living all these years in a place where for four thousand years they have been eating human flesh.

Such criticisms did have some beneficial results. During the early republic, the tyranny of the old family system began to decline, at least in urban areas, under the impact of economic changes and the urgings of the New Culture intellectuals. Women began to escape their cloistered existence and seek education and employment alongside their male contemporaries. Free choice in marriage and a more relaxed attitude toward sex became commonplace among affluent families in the cities, where the teenage children of westernized elites aped the clothing, social habits, and musical tastes of their contemporaries in Europe and the United States.

But, as a rule, the new emphasis on individualism and women’s rights did not penetrate to the textile factories, where more than a million women worked in slave labor conditions, or to the villages, where traditional attitudes and customs held sway. Arranged marriages continued to be the rule.

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<th>CHRONOLOGY Revolution in China</th>
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<td>May Fourth demonstrations</td>
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In Henrik Ibsen’s 1879 play A Doll’s House, Nora Helmer informs her husband, Torvald, that she will no longer accept his control over her life and announces her intention to leave home to start her life anew (see the box on p. 593). When the outraged Torvald cites her sacred duties as wife and mother, Nora replies that she has other duties just as sacred, those to herself. “I can no longer be satisfied with what most people say,” she declares. “I must think things out for myself and try to get clear about them.”

To Ibsen’s contemporaries, such remarks were revolutionary. In nineteenth-century Europe, the traditional characterization of the sexes, based on gender-defined social roles, had been elevated to the status of a universal law. As the family wage earners, men were expected to go off to work, while women were responsible for caring for home and family. Women were advised to accept their lot and play their role as effectively and as gracefully as possible. In other parts of the world, women generally had even fewer rights than their male counterparts. Often, as in traditional China, they were viewed as sex objects.

The ideal, however, did not always match the reality. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, many women in Europe, especially those in the lower classes, were driven by the need for supplemental income to seek employment outside the home, often in the form of menial labor. Some women, inspired by the ideals of human dignity and freedom expressed during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, began to protest against a tradition of female inferiority that had long kept them in a “doll’s house” of male domination and to claim equal rights before the law.

The movement to liberate women from the iron cage of legal and social inferiority first began to gain ground in English-speaking countries such as Great Britain and the United States, but it gradually spread to the continent of Europe and then to colonial areas in Africa and Asia. By the first decades of the twentieth century, women’s liberation movements were under way in parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia, voicing a growing demand for access to education, equal treatment before the law, and the right to vote. Nowhere was this more true than in China, where a small minority of educated women began to agitate for equal rights with men.

Progress, however, was often agonizingly slow, especially in societies where age-old traditional values had not yet been undermined by the corrosive force of the Industrial Revolution. In many colonial societies, the effort to improve the condition of women was subordinated to the goal of gaining national independence. In some instances, women’s liberation movements were led by educated elites who failed to include the concerns of working-class women in their agendas. Colonialism, too, was a double-edged sword, as the sexist bias of European officials combined with indigenous traditions of male superiority to marginalize women even further. As men moved to the cities to exploit opportunities provided by the new colonial administration, women were left to cope with their traditional responsibilities in the villages, often without the safety net of male support that had sustained them during the precolonial era.

Based on the information presented in this textbook, to what extent, if at all, did the imperial policies applied in colonial territories serve to benefit women’s rights?

A NEW CULTURE? Nowhere was the struggle between traditional and modern more visible than in the field of culture. Beginning with the New Culture era, radical reformists criticized traditional culture as the symbol and instrument of feudal oppression that must be entirely eradicated before a new China could stand with dignity in the modern world. During the 1920s and 1930s, Western literature and art became highly popular, especially among the urban middle class. Traditional culture continued to prevail among more conservative elements, and...
An Arranged Marriage

Under Western influence, Chinese social customs changed dramatically for many urban elites in the interwar years. A vocal women’s movement, inspired in part by translations of Henrik Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House*, campaigned aggressively for universal suffrage and an end to sexual discrimination. Some progressives called for free choice in marriage and divorce and even for free love. By the 1930s, the government had taken some steps to free women from patriarchal marriage constraints and realize sexual equality. But life was generally unaffected in the villages, where traditional patterns held sway. This often created severe tensions between older and younger generations, as this passage from a novel by the popular twentieth-century writer Ba Jin (BAH JIN) shows.

**Ba Jin, *Family***

Brought up with loving care, after studying with a private tutor for a number of years, Chueh-hsin entered middle school. One of the school’s best students, he graduated four years later at the top of his class. He was very interested in physics and chemistry and hoped to study abroad, in Germany. His mind was full of beautiful dreams. At that time he was the envy of his classmates.

In his fourth year at middle school, he lost his mother. His father later married again, this time to a younger woman who had been his mother’s cousin. Chueh-hsin was aware of his loss, for he knew full well that nothing could replace the love of a mother. But her death left no irreparable wound in his heart; he was able to console himself with rosy dreams of the future. Moreover, he had someone who understood him and could comfort him—his pretty cousin Mei, “mei” for “plum blossom.”

But then, one day, his dreams were shattered, cruelly and bitterly shattered. The evening he returned home carrying his diploma, the plaudits of his teachers and friends still ringing in his ears, his father called him into his room and said:

“Now that you’ve graduated, I want to arrange your marriage. Your grandfather is looking forward to having a great-grandson, and I, too, would like to be able to hold a grandson in my arms. You’re old enough to be married; I won’t feel easy until I fulfill my obligation to find you a wife. Although I didn’t accumulate much money in my years away from home as an official, still I’ve put by enough for us to get along on. My health isn’t what it used to be; I’m thinking of spending my time at home and having you help me run the household affairs. All the more reason you’ll be needing a wife. I’ve already arranged a match with the Li family. The thirteenth of next month is a good day. We’ll announce the engagement then. You can be married within the year...”

Chueh-hsin did not utter a word of protest, nor did such a thought ever occur to him. He merely nodded to indicate his compliance with his father’s wishes. But after he returned to his own room, and shut the door, he threw himself down on his bed, covered his head with the quilt and wept. He wept for his broken dreams.

He was deeply in love with Mei, but now his father had chosen another, a girl he had never seen, and said that he must marry within the year. What’s more, his hopes of continuing his studies had burst like a bubble. It was a terrible shock to Chueh-hsin. His future was finished, his beautiful dreams shattered.

He cried his disappointment and bitterness. But the door was closed and Chueh-hsin’s head was beneath the bedding. No one knew. He did not fight back, he never thought of resisting. He only bemoaned his fate. But he accepted it. He complied with his father’s will without a trace of resentment. But in his heart he wept for himself, wept for the girl he adored—Mei, his “plum blossom.”

**Q** Why does Chueh-hsin comply with the wishes of his father in the matter of his marriage? Why were arranged marriages so prevalent in traditional China?

some intellectuals argued for a new art that would synthesize the best of Chinese and foreign culture. But the most creative artists were interested in imitating foreign trends, while traditionalists were more concerned with preservation.

Literature in particular was influenced by foreign ideas as Western genres like the novel and the short story attracted a growing audience. Although most Chinese novels written after World War I dealt with Chinese subjects, they reflected the Western tendency toward social realism and often dealt with the new westernized middle class, as in *Midnight* by Mao Dun (mow DOON [“ow” as in “how”]), which describes the changing mores of Shanghai’s urban elites. Another favorite theme was the disintegration of the traditional Confucian family—Ba Jin’s famous novel *Family* is an example. Most of China’s modern authors displayed a clear contempt for the past.

**Japan Between the Wars**

**FOCUS QUESTION:** How did Japan address the problems of nation building in the first decades of the twentieth century, and why did democratic institutions not take hold more effectively?

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Japan made remarkable progress toward the creation of an advanced society on the Western model. The political system
based on the Meiji Constitution of 1890 began to evolve along Western pluralistic lines, and a multiparty system took shape, while the economic and social reforms launched during the Meiji era led to increasing prosperity and the development of a modern industrial and commercial sector. Optimists had reason to hope that Japan was on the road to becoming a full-fledged democracy.

Experiment in Democracy

As the twentieth century progressed, the Japanese political system appeared to evolve significantly toward the pluralistic democratic model. Political parties expanded their popular following and became increasingly competitive, and universal male suffrage was instituted in the 1920s. Individual pressure groups began to appear in Japanese society, along with an independent press and a bill of rights. The influence of the old ruling oligarchy, the genro, had not yet been significantly challenged, however, nor had that of its ideological foundation, the kokutai (koh-kuh-TY) (see Chapter 22).

These fragile democratic institutions were able to survive through the 1920s, often called the era of Taisho (TY-SHOH) democracy, from the reign title of the ruling emperor. During that period, the military budget was reduced, and a suffrage bill enacted in 1925 granted the vote to all Japanese males, thus continuing the process of democratization begun earlier in the century. Women remained disenfranchised, but women’s associations became increasingly visible during the 1920s, and many women were active in the labor movement and in campaigns for various social reforms.

But the era was also marked by growing social turmoil, and two opposing forces within the system were gearing up to challenge the prevailing wisdom. On the left, a Marxist labor movement, which reflected the tensions in the working class and the increasing radicalism among the rural poor, began to take shape in the early 1920s in response to growing economic difficulties. Attempts to suppress labor disturbances led to further radicalization. On the right, ultranationalist groups called for a rejection of Western models of development and a more militant approach to realizing national objectives. In 1919, the radical nationalist Kita Ikki (KEE-tuh IK-kee) called for a military takeover and the establishment of a new system bearing strong resemblance to what would later be called National Socialism in Germany.

This cultural conflict between old and new, indigenous and foreign, was reflected in literature. Japanese self-confidence had been restored after the victories over China and Russia and launched an age of cultural creativity in the early twentieth century. Fascination with Western literature gave birth to a striking new genre called the “I novel.” Defying traditional Japanese reticence, some authors reveled in self-exposure with confessions of their innermost thoughts. Others found release in the “proletarian literature” movement of the early 1920s. Inspired by Soviet literary examples, these authors wanted literature to serve socialist goals and improve the lives of the working class. Finally, some Japanese writers...
The deep-seated conflict between Eastern and Western culture manifested itself in early-twentieth-century Japan through the writings of Nagai Kafu (NAH-gy KAH-foo) (1879–1959). Although Kafu had become a fervent admirer of French culture after living for a time in Europe, he decried the vulgarity and pretentiousness of the westernized Tokyo of his day. In his fiction, he sought to extol the virtues of an idealized “Edo” of the past, wandering through the narrow streets of the city in search of old houses that had not been transformed by the passion for modernization. In the following passage, Kafu expressed his frustration at the superficial absorption of Western ideas during the Meiji era, an effort that only served to mask Japan’s feudal heritage. Although more conflicted in his views than many of his contemporaries, Kafu reflected the cultural confusion stemming from Japan’s attempt to imitate Western ways.

Nagai Kafu, “Commentary on Reisho (Sneers)”

My primary purpose in writing Sneers was to attempt a serious critique of the confused, tasteless externals of Tokyo life in 1909; to lament the difficulty of living peacefully in the atmosphere of this period; and, finally, to try to study and seek out places where genuine Japanese features might still be found.

A Zaibatsu Economy

Japan also continued to make impressive progress in economic development. Spurred by rising domestic demand as well as continued government investment in the economy, the production of raw materials tripled between 1900 and 1930, and industrial production increased more than twelvefold. Much of the increase went into exports, and Western manufacturers began to complain about increasing competition from the Japanese.

As often happens, rapid industrialization was accompanied by some hardship and rising social tensions. In the Meiji model, various manufacturing processes were concentrated in a single enterprise, the zaibatsu (zy-BAHT-soo or DZY-bahts), or financial clique. Some of these firms were existing merchant companies, such as Mitsui (MIT-swee) and Sumitomo (soo-mee-TOH-moh), that had the capital and the foresight to move into new areas of opportunity. Others were formed by enterprising samurai, who used their status and experience in management to good account in a new environment. Whatever their origins, these firms gradually developed, often with official encouragement, into large conglomerates that controlled a major segment of the Japanese economy. By 1937, the four largest zaibatsu—Mitsui, Mitsubishi (mit-soo-BEE-shee), Sumitomo, and Yasuda (yah-SOO-duh)—controlled 21 percent of the banking industry, 26 percent of mining, 35 percent of shipbuilding, 38 percent of commercial shipping, and more than 60 percent of paper manufacturing and insurance.

This concentration of power and wealth in a few major industrial combines created problems in Japanese society. In the first place, it resulted in the emergence of a dual economy: on the one hand, a modern industry characterized by up-to-date methods and massive government subsidies, and on the other, a traditional manufacturing sector characterized by conservative methods and small-scale production techniques.

I did not say this in so many words, but it was my intention to convey here and there in the work my conviction that the present-day importation of Western culture has been no more than superficial, and that the Japanese by no means rejoice in the profound content of Western thought. Rather, there lurks in Japan a xenophobia that is far stronger than the doctrine of the Yellow Peril that has been advanced in the West. Even now, when we have a constitutional government, there is something oriental and despotic in the atmosphere enveloping Japan to which it would be hard to give a name but which has not changed in the least since feudal times. I cannot help but feeling that, no matter how the external forms have changed, the natural features, the climate, and all the invisible things seem to harbor malice toward freedom of human wishes and the liberation of ideas. Perhaps I am mistaken, but I believe that nowhere else in the world do people resign themselves so quickly, without really thinking through problems.
Concentration of wealth also led to growing economic inequalities. As we have seen, economic growth had been achieved at the expense of the peasants, many of whom fled to the cities to escape rural poverty. That labor surplus benefited the industrial sector, but the urban proletariat was still poorly paid and ill housed. Rampant inflation in the price of rice led to food riots shortly after World War I. A rapid increase in population (the total population of the Japanese islands increased from an estimated 43 million in 1900 to 73 million in 1940) led to food shortages and the threat of rising unemployment. In the meantime, those left on the farm continued to suffer. As late as 1940, an estimated half of all Japanese farmers were tenants.

Shidehara Diplomacy

A final problem for Japanese leaders in the post-Meiji era was the familiar colonial dilemma of finding sources of raw materials and foreign markets for the nation’s manufactured goods. Until World War I, Japan had dealt with the problem by seizing territories such as Taiwan, Korea, and southern Manchuria and transforming them into colonies or protectorates of the growing Japanese empire. That policy had succeeded brilliantly, but it had also begun to arouse the concern and in some cases the hostility of the Western nations. China was also becoming apprehensive; as we have seen, Japanese demands for Shandong Province at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 aroused massive protests in major Chinese cities.

The United States was especially concerned about Japanese aggressiveness. Although the United States had been less active than some European states in pursuing colonies in the Pacific, it had a strong interest in keeping the area open for U.S. commercial activities. In 1922, in Washington, D.C., the United States convened a major conference of nations with interests in the Pacific to discuss problems of regional security. The Washington Conference led to agreements on several issues, but the major accomplishment was a nine-power treaty recognizing the territorial integrity of China and the Open Door. The other participants induced Japan to agree to these provisions by accepting its special position in Manchuria.

During the remainder of the 1920s, Japanese governments attempted to play by the rules laid down at the Washington Conference. Known as Shidehara (shee-deh-HAH-rah) diplomacy, after the Japanese foreign minister (and later prime minister) who attempted to carry it out, this policy sought to use diplomatic and economic means to realize Japanese interests in Asia. But this approach came under severe pressure as Japanese industrialists began to move into new areas, such as heavy industry, chemicals, mining, and the manufacturing of appliances and automobiles. Because such industries desperately needed resources not found in abundance locally, the Japanese government came under increasing pressure to find new sources abroad.

THE RISE OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

In the early 1930s, with the onset of the Great Depression and growing tensions in the international arena, nationalist forces rose to dominance in the Japanese government. The changes that occurred in the 1930s, which we shall discuss in Chapter 25, were not in the constitution or the institutional structure, which remained essentially intact, but in the composition and attitudes of the ruling group. Party leaders during the 1920s had attempted to realize Tokyo’s aspirations within the existing global political and economic framework. The dominant elements in the government in the 1930s, a mixture of military officers and ultranationalist politicians, were convinced that the diplomacy of the 1920s had failed and advocated a more aggressive approach to protecting national interests in a brutal and competitive world.
TAISHO DEMOCRACY: AN ABERRATION?
The dramatic shift in Japanese political culture that occurred in the early 1930s has caused some historians to question the breadth and depth of the trend toward democratic practices in the immediate post-World War I era. Was Taisho democracy merely a fragile attempt at comparative liberalization in a framework dominated by the Meiji vision of empire and kokutai? Or was the militant nationalism of the 1930s an aberration brought on by the Great Depression, which caused the inexcusable emergence of democracy in Japan to stall?

Clearly, there is some truth in both contentions. A process of democratization was taking place in Japan during the first decades of the twentieth century, but without shaking the essential core of the Meiji concept of the state. When the “liberal” approach of the 1920s failed to solve the problems of the day, the shallow roots of the democracy movement in Japan became exposed, and the shift toward a more aggressive approach was inevitable.

Still, the course of Japanese history after World War II (see Chapter 30) suggests that the emergence of multiparty democracy in the 1920s was not simply an aberration but a natural consequence of evolutionary trends in Japanese society. The seeds of democracy nurtured during the Taisho era were nipped in the bud by the cataclysmic effects of the Great Depression of the 1930s, but in the more conducive climate after World War II, a democratic system—suitably adjusted to Japanese soil—reached full flower.

Nationalism and Dictatorship in Latin America

FOCUS QUESTIONS: What problems did the nations of Latin America face in the interwar years? To what degree were the problems a consequence of foreign influence?

Although the nations of Latin America played almost no role in World War I, that conflict nevertheless exerted an impact on them, especially on their economies, as the region continued to be strongly affected by decisions reached in the advanced industrial nations. By the end of the 1920s, Latin America was also strongly influenced by another event of global proportions—the Great Depression.

A Changing Economy

At the beginning of the twentieth century, virtually all of Latin America, except for the three Guianas, British Honduras, and some of the Caribbean islands, had achieved independence. The economy of the region (see Map 24.2) was still based largely on the export of foodstuffs and raw
A Pledge of Cooperation

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the United States intervened periodically in the affairs of various countries in Latin America to protect the lives of U.S. citizens and its growing economic interests. By the late 1920s, that policy had aroused considerable resentment among governments throughout the region. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to allay their concerns by announcing the Good Neighbor policy toward other nations in the hemisphere. This selection is from a speech given in August 1936, in which he discussed this policy.

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy

Long before I returned to Washington as President of the United States, I made up my mind that . . . the United States could best serve the cause of peaceful humanity by setting an example. That was why on the 4th of March, 1933, I made the following declaration:

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

In the whole of the Western Hemisphere our good neighbor policy had produced results that are especially heartening. . . . The American republics to the south of us have been ready always to cooperate with the United States on a basis of equality and mutual respect, but before we inaugurated the good neighbor policy there was among them resentment and fear, because certain administrations in Washington had slighted their national pride and their sovereign rights.

In pursuance of the good neighbor policy, and because in my younger days I had learned many lessons in the hard school of experience, I stated that the United States was opposed definitely to armed intervention.

We have negotiated a Pan-American convention embodying the principles of nonintervention. We have abandoned the Platt amendment which gave us the right to intervene in the internal affairs of the Republic of Cuba. We have withdrawn American marines from Haiti. We have signed a new treaty which places our relations with Panama on a mutually satisfactory basis. We have undertaken a series of trade agreements with other American countries to our mutual commercial profit. . . .

Throughout the Americas the spirit of the good neighbor is a practical and living fact. The twenty-one American republics are not only living together in friendship and in peace; they are united in the determination so to remain.

How did President Roosevelt define the concept of a “good neighbor” in this speech? What previous U.S. policies toward Latin America does he suggest will be discarded?

THE ROLE OF THE YANKEE DOLLAR  World War I led to a decline in European investment in Latin America and a rise in the U.S. role in the local economies. By the late 1920s, the United States had replaced Great Britain as the foremost source of investment in Latin America. Unlike the British, however, U.S. investors put their funds directly into production enterprises, causing large segments of the area’s export industries to fall into American hands. A number of Central American states, for example, were popularly labeled “banana republics” because of the power and influence of the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company. American firms also dominated the copper mining industry in Chile and Peru and the oil industry in Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia.

Increasing economic power reinforced the traditionally high level of U.S. political influence in Latin America. This influence was especially evident in Central America and the Caribbean, regions that many Americans considered their backyard and hence vital to U.S. national security. The growing U.S. presence in the region provoked hostility and a growing national consciousness among Latin Americans, who viewed the United States as an aggressive imperialist power. Some charged that Washington worked to keep ruthless dictators, such as Juan Vicente Gómez (WAHN vee-SEN-tay GOH-mez) of Venezuela and Fulgencio Batista (full-JEN-seh-oh bah-TEES-tuh) of Cuba, in power in order to preserve U.S. economic influence; sometimes the United States even intervened militarily. In a bid to improve relations with Latin American countries, in 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt promulgated the Good Neighbor policy, which rejected the use of U.S. military force in the region (see the box above). To underscore his sincerity, Roosevelt ordered the withdrawal of U.S. marines from the island nation of Haiti in 1936. For the first time in thirty years, there were no U.S. occupation troops in Latin America.

Because so many Latin American nations depended for their livelihood on the export of raw materials and food products, the Great Depression of the 1930s was a disaster for the
region. In 1930, the value of Latin American exports fell to only half of the amount that had been exported in each of the previous five years. Spurred by the decline in foreign revenues, Latin American governments began to encourage the development of new industries. In some cases—the steel industry in Chile and Brazil, the oil industry in Argentina and Mexico—government investment made up for the absence of local sources of capital.

The Effects of Dependency

During the late nineteenth century, most governments in Latin America had been increasingly dominated by landed or military elites, who controlled the mass of the population—mostly impoverished peasants—by the blatant use of military force. This trend toward authoritarianism increased during the 1930s as domestic instability caused by the effects of the Great Depression led to the creation of military dictatorships throughout the region. This trend was especially evident in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—three countries that together possessed more than half of the land and wealth of Latin America.

ARGENTINA Political domination by an elite minority often had disastrous effects. The government of Argentina, controlled by landowners who had benefited from the export of beef and wheat, was slow to recognize the growing importance of establishing a local industrial base. In 1916, Hipólito Irigoyen (ee-POH-lee-toh ee-reh-GOH-yen) (1852–1933), head of the Radical Party, was elected president on a program to improve conditions for the middle and lower classes. Little was achieved, however, as the party became increasingly corrupt and drew closer to the large landowners. In 1930, the army overthrew Irigoyen’s government and reestablished the power of the landed class. But efforts to return to the previous export economy and suppress the growing influence of labor unions failed, and in 1946 General Juan Perón (WAHN puh-ROHN)—claiming the support of the descamisados (days-kah-mee-SAH-dohs) (“shirtless ones”—seized sole power (see Chapter 28).

BRAZIL Brazil followed a similar path. In 1889, the army replaced the Brazilian monarchy, installed by Portugal years before, with a republic. But it was controlled by landed elites, many of whom had grown wealthy through their ownership of vast rubber and coffee plantations. Exports of Brazilian rubber dominated the world market until just before World War I. When it proved easier to produce rubber in Southeast Asia, however, Brazilian exports suddenly collapsed, leaving the economy of the Amazon River basin in ruins.

To make matters worse, the coffee industry also suffered problems. In 1900, three-quarters of the world’s coffee was grown in Brazil. As in Argentina, the ruling oligarchy ignored the importance of establishing an urban industrial base. When the Great Depression ravaged profits from coffee exports, a wealthy rancher, Getúlio Vargas (zhi-TOO-lyoo VAHR-guhs) (1883–1954), seized power and ruled the country as president from 1930 to 1945. At first, Vargas sought to appease workers by instituting an eight-hour workday and a minimum wage, but influenced by the apparent success of fascist regimes in Europe, he ruled by increasingly autocratic means and relied on a police force that used torture to silence his opponents. His industrial policy was relatively enlightened, however, and by the end of World War II, Brazil had become Latin America’s major industrial power. In 1945, the army, fearing that Vargas might prolong his power illegally after calling for new elections, forced him to resign.
MEXICO \ After the dictator Porfirio Díaz (por-FEER-yoh DEE-ahs) was ousted from power in 1910 (see Chapter 20), Mexico entered a state of turbulence that lasted for years. The ineffective leaders who followed Díaz were unable either to solve the country’s economic problems or to bring an end to the civil strife. Declining real wages were squeezing the working class, while in the countryside almost all of the land was controlled by about a thousand families. In southern Mexico, the landless peasants responded eagerly to Emiliano Zapata (ee-mee-LYAH-noh zuh-PAH-tuh) (1879–1919) when he called for land redistribution and began to seize the estates of wealthy landholders.

For the next several years, Zapata and rebel leader Pancho Villa (pahn-CHOH VEE-uh) (1878–1923), who operated in the northern state of Chihuahua (chih-WAH-wah), became an important political force in the country by publicly advocating efforts to redress the economic grievances of the poor. But neither had a broad grasp of the challenges facing the country, and power eventually gravitated to a more moderate group of reformists around the Constitutionalist Party. The latter were intent on breaking the power of the great landed families and U.S. corporations, but without engaging in radical land reform or the nationalization of property. After a bloody conflict that cost the lives of thousands, the moderates consolidated power, and in 1917, they promulgated a new constitution that established a strong presidency, initiated land reform policies, established limits on foreign investment, and set an agenda for social welfare programs.

In 1920, the Constitutionalist Party leader Alvaro Obregón (AHL-vah-roh oh-bree-GAHN) assumed the presidency and began to carry out his reform program. But real change did not take place until the presidency of General Lázaro Cárdenas (LAH-zah-roh KAHR-day-nahhs) (1895–1970) in 1934. Cárdenas won wide popularity with the peasants by ordering the redistribution of 44 million acres of land controlled by landed elites. He also seized control of the oil industry, which had hitherto been dominated by major U.S. oil companies. Alluding to the Good Neighbor policy, President Roosevelt refused to intervene, and eventually Mexico agreed to compensate U.S. oil companies for their lost property. It then set up PEMEX, a governmental organization, to run the oil industry. By now, the revolution was democratic in name only, as the official political party, known as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), controlled the levers of power throughout society. Every six years, for more than half a century, PRI presidential candidates automatically succeeded each other in office.

Latin American Culture
The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a dramatic increase in literary activity in Latin America, a result in part of its ambivalent relationship with Europe and the United States. Many authors, while experimenting with imported modernist styles, felt compelled to proclaim their region’s unique identity through the adoption of Latin American themes and social issues. In The Underdogs (1915), for example, Mariano Azuela (mah-RAHN-oh ah-SWAY-uh) (1873–1952) presented a sympathetic but not uncritical portrait of the Mexican Revolution as his country entered an era of unsettling change.

In their determination to commend Latin America’s distinctive characteristics, some writers extolled the promise of the region’s vast virgin lands and the diversity of its peoples. In Don Segundo Sombra, published in 1926, Ricardo Guiraldes (ree-CAHR-doh gee-RAHL-dess) (1886–1927) celebrated the life of the ideal gaucho (cowboy), defining Argentina’s hope and strength through the enlightened management of its fertile earth. Likewise, in Dona Barbara, Rómulo Gallegos (ROH-moo-loh gah-YAAY-gohs) (1884–1969) wrote in a similar vein about his native Venezuela. Other authors pursued the theme of solitude and detachment,
a product of the region’s physical separation from the rest of the world.

Latin American artists followed their literary counterparts in joining the Modernist movement in Europe, yet they too were eager to promote the emergence of a new regional and national essence. In Mexico, where the government provided financial support for painting murals on public buildings, the artist Diego Rivera (DYAY-gooh rih-VAIR-uh) (1886–1957) began to produce monumental murals that served two purposes: to illustrate the national past by portraying Aztec legends and folk customs and to popularize a political message in favor of realizing the social goals of the Mexican Revolution. His wife, Frida Kahlo (FREE-duh KAH-loh) (1907–1954), incorporated Surrealist whimsy in her own paintings, many of which were portraits of herself and her family.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The turmoil brought about by World War I not only resulted in the destruction of several of the major Western empires and a redrawing of the map of Europe but also opened the door to political and social upheavals elsewhere in the world. In the Middle East, the decline and fall of the Ottoman Empire led to the creation of the secular republic of Turkey. The state of Saudi Arabia emerged in the Arabian peninsula, and Palestine became a source of tension between newly arrived Jewish settlers and longtime Muslim residents.

Other parts of Asia and Africa also witnessed the rise of movements for national independence. In many cases, these movements were spearheaded by local leaders who had been educated in Europe or the United States. In India, Mahatma Gandhi and his campaign of civil disobedience played a crucial role in his country’s bid to be free of British rule. Communist movements also began to emerge in Asian societies as radical elements sought new methods of bringing about the overthrow of Western imperialism. Japan continued to follow its own path to...
modernization, which, although successful from an economic perspective, took a menacing turn during the 1930s.

Between 1919 and 1939, China experienced a dramatic struggle to establish a modern nation. Two dynamic political organizations—the Nationalists and the Communists—competed for legitimacy as the rightful heirs of the old order. At first, they formed an alliance in an effort to defeat their common adversaries, but cooperation ultimately turned to conflict. The Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek emerged supreme, but Chiang found it difficult to control the remnants of the warlord regime in China, while the Great Depression undermined his efforts to build an industrial nation.

During the interwar years, the nations of Latin America faced severe economic problems because of their dependence on exports. Increasing U.S. investments in Latin America contributed to growing hostility toward the powerful neighbor to the north. The Great Depression forced the region to begin developing new industries, but it also led to the rise of authoritarian governments, some of them modeled after the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany.

By demolishing the remnants of their old civilization on the battlefields of World War I, Europeans had inadvertently encouraged the subject peoples of their vast colonial empires to begin their own movements for national independence. The process was by no means completed in the two decades following the Treaty of Versailles, but the bonds of imperial rule had been severely strained. Once Europeans began to weaken themselves in the even more destructive conflict of World War II, the hopes of African and Asian peoples for national independence and freedom could at last be realized. It is to that devastating world conflict that we must now turn.

CHAPTER TIMELINE

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<td>Reza Khan seizes power in Iran</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May Fourth Movement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Formation of Comintern</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Creation of Turkey under Atatürk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Northern Expedition in China</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Discovery of oil in Iraq</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creation of Nanjing Republic</td>
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<td>The Long March</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Iraq becomes independent</td>
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<td>Ibn Saud establishes Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Gandhi’s march to the sea</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Good Neighbor policy begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Vargas takes power in Brazil</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Army seizes power in Argentina</td>
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CHAPTER REVIEW

Upon Reflection

Q In what ways did Japan’s political system and social structure in the interwar years combine modern and traditional elements? How successful was the attempt to create a modern political system while retaining indigenous traditions of civil obedience and loyalty to the emperor?

Q During the early twentieth century did conditions for women change for the better or for the worse in the countries discussed in this chapter? Why?

Q Communist Parties were established in many Asian societies in the years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution. How successful were these parties in winning popular support and achieving their goals?
Key Terms

- satyagraha (p. 699)
- harijans (p. 699)
- civil disobedience (p. 700)
- Young Turks (p. 701)
- Communist International (Comintern) (p. 706)
- New Culture Movement (p. 708)
- Taisho democracy (p. 715)
- zaibatsu (p. 716)
- Good Neighbor policy (p. 719)
- descamisados (p. 720)

Suggested Reading

NATIONALISM The most up-to-date survey of modern nationalism is E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 2009), but it has little to say about the non-Western world. For a provocative study of the roots of nationalism in Asia, see B. Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London, 1983).

INDIA There have been a number of studies of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideas. See, for example, S. Wolpert, Gandhi’s Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi (Oxford, 1999), and D. Dalton, Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action (New York, 1995). For a study of Nehru, see J. M. Brown, Nehru (New York, 2000).


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