CHAPTER 29
Challenges of Nation Building in Africa and the Middle East

CHAPTER OUTLINE AND FOCUS QUESTIONS

Uhuru: The Struggle for Independence in Africa

What role did nationalist movements play in the transition to independence in Africa, and how did such movements differ from their counterparts elsewhere?

The Era of Independence

How have dreams clashed with realities in the independent nations of Africa, and how have African governments sought to meet these challenges?

Continuity and Change in Modern African Societies

How did the rise of independent states affect the lives and the role of women in African societies? How does that role compare with the role played by women in other parts of the contemporary world?

Crescent of Conflict

What problems have the nations of the Middle East faced since the end of World War II, and to what degree have they managed to resolve them?

Society and Culture in the Contemporary Middle East

How have religious issues affected economic, social, and cultural conditions in the Middle East in recent decades?

CRITICAL THINKING

What factors can be advanced to explain the chronic instability and internal conflict that have characterized conditions in Africa and the Middle East since World War II?

BY THE END OF World War II, many societies in Asia and Africa had endured more than half a century of colonial rule. Although Europeans complacently assumed that colonialism was a necessary step in the process of introducing civilization to “backward” peoples around the globe, many of their colonial subjects disagreed. Some even argued that the Western drive for political hegemony and economic profit, far from being a panacea for the world’s ills, was a plague that threatened ultimately to destroy human civilization.

Few were more outspoken in their contempt for Western culture than the Ghanaian official Michael Francis Dei-Anang (DAY-ahn-NAHNG). In Whither Bound Africa, written in 1946, he scathingly unmasked the pretensions of Western superiority:

Forward! To what?
To the recking round
Of medieval crimes,
Where the greedy hawks
of Aryan stock
Prey with bombs and guns
On men of lesser breed?
Forward to CIVILIZATION.1

To observers like Dei-Anang, the new Africa that emerged from imperialist rule had a duty to seek its own ways of resolving the problems of humanity.
One of the aspects of Western civilization that some thoughtful Asians and Africans rejected was the concept of the nation-state as the natural unit of communal identity in the modern world. In their view, nationalism was at the root of many of the evils of the twentieth century and should be abandoned as a model for development in the postwar period. In Africa, some intellectuals pointed to the traditional village community as a unique symbol of the humanistic and spiritual qualities of the people; they felt that the village might serve as a common bond that would knit all the peoples of the continent into a cohesive African community. The nation-state was similarly repudiated by some observers in the Middle East, where many Muslims viewed Western materialist culture as a threat to the fundamental principles of Islam. To fend off the new threat from their old adversary, some leaders dreamed of resurrecting the concept of a global caliphate (see Chapter 7) to unify all Muslim peoples and allow them to pursue their common destiny throughout the Islamic world.

Time has not been kind to such dreams of transnational solidarity and cooperation in the postwar world. Although the peoples of Africa and the Middle East were gradually liberated from the formal trappings of European authority, most political elites in both regions adopted the model of the nation-state with enthusiasm. The results have been mixed, and sometimes costly. Political inexperience and continued European economic domination have frustrated efforts to achieve political stability. At the same time, arbitrary boundaries imposed by the colonial powers, in combination with ethnic and religious divisions, have led to bitter conflicts that undermine attempts to realize the dream of solidarity and cooperation. Today, these two regions, although blessed with enormous potential, are among the most volatile and conflict-ridden areas in the world.

After World War II, Europeans reluctantly recognized that the end result of colonial rule in Africa would be African self-government, if not full independence. Accordingly, the African population would have to be trained to handle the responsibilities of representative government. In many cases, however, relatively little had been done to prepare the local people for self-rule. During the late nineteenth century, African administrators had held influential positions in several British colonies, and one even served as governor of the Gold Coast. But with the formal institution of colonial rule, senior positions were reserved for the British, while local authority remained in the hands of African rulers.

**Uhuru: The Struggle for Independence in Africa**

**FOCUS QUESTION:** What role did nationalist movements play in the transition to independence in Africa, and how did such movements differ from their counterparts elsewhere?

After World War II, most British colonies introduced reforms that increased the representation of the local population. Members of legislative and executive councils were increasingly chosen through elections, and Africans came to constitute a majority of these bodies. Elected councils at the local level were introduced in the 1950s to reduce the power of the chiefs and clan heads, who had controlled local government under indirect rule. An exception was South Africa, where European domination continued. In the Union of South Africa, the franchise was restricted to whites only in the former territory of the Cape Colony, where persons of mixed ancestry had enjoyed the right to vote since the mid-nineteenth century. Black Africans did win some limited electoral rights in Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively), although whites generally dominated the political scene.

A similar process of political liberalization was taking place in the French colonies. At first, the French tried to integrate the African peoples into French culture. By the 1920s, however, racist beliefs in Western cultural superiority and the tenacity of traditional beliefs and practices among Africans had somewhat discredited this ideal. The French therefore substituted a more limited program of assimilating African elites into Western culture and using them as administrators at the local level as a link to the remainder of the population.

**The Colonial Legacy**

As in Asia, colonial rule had a mixed impact on the societies and peoples of Africa. The Western presence brought a number of short-term and long-term benefits to Africa, such as improved transportation and communication facilities, and in a few areas laid the foundation for a modern industrial and commercial sector. Improved sanitation and medical care increased life expectancy. The introduction of selective elements of Western political systems laid the groundwork for the gradual creation of democratic societies.

Yet the benefits of westernization were distributed very unequally, and the vast majority of Africans found their lives little improved, if at all. Only South Africa and French-held Algeria, for example, developed modern industrial sectors, extensive railroad networks, and modern communications systems. In both countries, European settlers were numerous, most investment capital for industrial ventures was European, and whites comprised almost the entire professional and managerial class. Members of the local population were generally restricted to unskilled or semiskilled jobs at wages less than one-fifth those enjoyed by Europeans.

Many colonies concentrated on export crops—peanuts in Senegal and Gambia, cotton in Egypt and Uganda, coffee in Kenya, palm oil and cocoa products in the Gold Coast. In some cases, the crops were grown on plantations, which were usually owned by Europeans. But plantation agriculture was not always suitable in Africa, and much farming was done by free or tenant farmers. In some areas, where land ownership was traditionally vested in the community, the land was...
The Rise of Nationalism

Political organizations for African rights did not arise until after World War I, and then only in a few areas, such as British-ruled Kenya and the Gold Coast. At first, organizations such as the National Congress of British West Africa (formed in 1919 in the Gold Coast) and Jomo Kenyatta’s Kikuyu Central Association focused on improving living conditions in the colonies rather than on national independence. After World War II, however, following the example of independence movements elsewhere, these groups became organized political parties with independence as their objective. In the Gold Coast, Kwame Nkrumah (KWAH-may en-KROO-muh) (1909–1972) led the Convention People’s Party, the first formal political party in black Africa. In the late 1940s, Jomo Kenyatta (JOH-moh ken-YAHT-uh) (1894–1978) founded the Kenya African National Union (KANU), which focused on economic issues but had an implied political agenda as well.

For the most part, these political activities were nonviolent and were led by Western-educated African intellectuals. Their constituents were primarily urban professionals, merchants, and members of labor unions. But the demand for independence was not restricted to the cities. In Kenya, for example, the widely publicized Mau Mau (MOW MOW (“ow” as in “how”)) movement among the Kikuyu (ki-KOO-yoo) people used guerrilla tactics as an element of its program to achieve uhuru (oo-HOO-ruh) (Swahili for “freedom”) from the British. One of the primary reasons for the revolt was to protest against the unlawful seizure of African lands by European plantation owners. Although only about a hundred Europeans were killed compared with an estimated two thousand Africans who died at the hands of either Mau Mau units or the British, the specter of a nationwide revolt alarmed the European population and convinced the British government in 1959 to promise eventual independence.

In South Africa and Algeria where the political system was also dominated by European settlers, the transition to independence was more complicated. In South Africa, political activity by local Africans began with the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912. Initially, the ANC was dominated by Western-oriented intellectuals and had limited mass support. Its goal was to achieve economic and political reforms, including full equality for educated Africans, within the framework of the existing system. But the ANC’s efforts met with little success, while conservative white parties managed to stiffen the segregation laws and impose a policy of full legal segregation, called apartheid (uh-PAHRT-hyt), in 1948. In response, the ANC became increasingly radicalized, and by the 1950s, the prospects for violence rather than conciliation were growing.

In Algeria, resistance to French rule by Berbers and Arabs in rural areas had never ceased. After World War II, urban agitation intensified, leading to a widespread rebellion against colonial rule in the mid-1950s. At first, the French government tried to maintain its authority in Algeria, which was considered an integral part of metropolitan France. But when Charles de Gaulle became president of France in 1958, he reversed French policy, and Algeria became an independent republic four years later, with Ahmad Ben Bella (AH-muhd ben BELL-uh) (1918–2004) as its president. The armed struggle in Algeria hastened the transition to statehood in its neighbors as well. Tunisia won its independence in 1956 after some urban agitation and rural unrest but retained close ties with Paris. The French attempted to suppress the nationalist movement in French Morocco by sending Sultan Muhammad V into exile, but the effort failed, and in 1956, he returned as the ruler of the independent state of Morocco.

Most black African nations achieved their independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, beginning with the Gold Coast, renamed Ghana, in 1957 (see Map 29.1). It was soon followed by Nigeria; the Belgian Congo, renamed Zaire (zah-EER) and then the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Kenya; Tanganyika (tang-an-YEE-kuh), later joined with Zanzibar (ZAN-zi-bar) and renamed Tanzania (tan-zuh-nee-uh); and several other countries. Most of the French colonies agreed to accept independence within the framework of de Gaulle’s French Community. By the late 1960s, only parts of southern Africa and the Portuguese possessions of Mozambique and Angola remained under European rule.

Independence thus came later to Africa than to most of Asia. Several factors help explain the delay. For one thing, colonialism was established in Africa somewhat later than in most areas of Asia, and the inevitable reaction from the local population was consequently later in coming. Furthermore, with the exception of a few areas in West Africa and along the Mediterranean, coherent states with a strong sense of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic unity did not exist in most of Africa. Most traditional states, such as Ashanti (uh-SHAHN-tee or uh-SHAHN-tee) in West Africa, Songhai (song-HY) in the southern Sahara, and Kongo in the Congo River basin, were collections of heterogeneous peoples with little sense of national or cultural unity. Even after colonies were established, the European powers often practiced a policy of “divide and rule,” and the British encouraged political decentralization by retaining the authority of the traditional local chieftains. It is hardly surprising that when opposition to colonial rule emerged, unity was difficult to achieve.
The Destiny of Africa: Unity or Diversity?

Like their counterparts in South and Southeast Asia, most of Africa’s new leaders came from the urban middle class. They had studied in Europe or the United States and spoke and read European languages. Although most were profoundly critical of colonial policies, they appeared for the most part to accept the Western model of governance and Western democratic values.

Their views on economics were somewhat more diverse. Some, like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and General Mobutu Sese Seko (moh-BOO-toh SEK-oh) (1930–1997) of Zaire, were advocates of Western-style capitalism. Others, like Julius Nyerere (ny-REHR-ee) (1922–1999) of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sekou Touré (say-KOO too-REY) (1922–1984) of Guinea, preferred an “African form of socialism,” which bore scant resemblance to the Marxist-Leninist socialism practiced in the Soviet Union. According to its advocates, it was descended from traditional communal practices in precolonial Africa.

At first, most of the new African leaders accepted the national boundaries established during the colonial era. But as we have noted, these boundaries were artificial creations of the colonial powers. Virtually all of the new states included widely diverse ethnic, linguistic, and territorial groups. Zaire, for example, was composed of more than two hundred territorial groups speaking seventy-five different languages. Such conditions posed a severe challenge to the task of forming cohesive nation-states.

A number of leaders—including Nkrumah of Ghana, Touré of Guinea, and Nyerere of Tanganyika—were enticed by Pan-Africanism, the concept of a continental unity that transcended national boundaries. Nkrumah in particular hoped that a pan-African union could be established that would unite all of the new countries of the continent in a broader community. His dream was not widely shared by other African political figures, however, who eventually settled on a more innocuous concept of regional cooperation on key issues. The concrete manifestation of this idea was the Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in Addis Ababa (AH-diss AH-bah-buh) in 1963 (see the box on p. 860).

The Era of Independence

The newly independent African states faced intimidating challenges. They had been profoundly affected by colonial rule, but the experience had been highly unsatisfactory in most respects. Although Western political institutions, values, and technology had been introduced, at least in the cities, the exposure to European civilization had been superficial at best for most Africans and tragic for many. At the outset of independence, most African societies were still primarily agrarian and traditional, and their modern sectors depended mainly on imports from the West.

Q Why was unity so difficult to achieve in African regions?

FOCUS QUESTION: How have dreams clashed with realities in the independent nations of Africa, and how have African governments sought to meet these challenges?
Toward African Unity

In May 1963, the leaders of thirty-two African states met in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, to discuss the creation of an organization that would represent the interests of all the newly independent countries of Africa. The result was the Organization of African Unity. An excerpt from its charter is presented here. Although the organization did not realize all of the aspirations of its founders, it provided a useful forum for the discussion and resolution of its members’ common problems. In 2001, it was replaced by the African Union, which was designed to bring about increased cooperation among the states on the continent; unlike the OAU, the African Union has recognized the need on occasion to intervene in the internal affairs of member nations.

Charter of the Organization of African Unity

We, the Heads of African States and Governments assembled in the City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;

CONVINCED that it is the inalienable right of all people to control their own destiny;

CONSCIOUS of the fact that freedom, equality, justice, and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples;

CONSCIOUS of our responsibility to harness the natural and human resources of our continent for the total advancement of our peoples in spheres of human endeavor;

INSPIRED by a common determination to promote understanding among our peoples and cooperation among our States in response to the aspirations of our peoples for brotherhood and solidarity, in a larger unity transcending ethnic and national differences;

CONVINCED that, in order to translate this determination into a dynamic force in the cause of human progress, conditions for peace and security must be established and maintained;

DETERMINED to safeguard and consolidate the hard-won independence as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our States, and to fight against neocolonialism in all its forms;

DEDICATED to the general progress of Africa; . . .

DESIROUS that all African States should henceforth unite so that the welfare and well-being of their peoples can be assured;

RESOLVED to reinforce the links between our states by establishing and strengthening common institutions;

HAVE agreed to the present Charter.

Q What are the key objectives expressed in this charter? To what degree have they been achieved?

Dream and Reality: Political and Economic Conditions in Independent Africa

The program of the OAU called for an Africa based on freedom, equality, justice, and dignity and on the unity, solidarity, prosperity, and territorial integrity of African states. It did not take long for reality to set in. Vast disparities in education and wealth and the lingering effects of colonial domination made it hard to establish material prosperity in much of Africa. Expectations that independence would lead to stable and prosperous political structures based on “one person, one vote” were soon disappointed as the initial phase of pluralistic governments gave way to a series of military regimes and one-party states. Between 1957 and 1982, more than seventy leaders of African countries were overthrown by violence.

THE PROBLEM OF NEOCOLONIALISM Part of the problem was the residual impact of colonialism. Most new countries in Africa were dependent on the export of a single crop or natural resource. When prices fluctuated or dropped, these countries were at the mercy of the international market. In several cases, the resources were still controlled by foreigners, leading to the charge that colonialism had been succeeded by neocolonialism, in which Western domination was maintained primarily by economic rather than political or military means.

World trade patterns often exacerbated these problems. Most African states had to import technology and manufactured goods from the West, and the prices of those goods rose more rapidly than those of the export products. Many of the exports were raw materials, and their prices were often subject to rapid fluctuations.

The new states contributed to their own problems. Treasury funds were squandered on military equipment or expensive consumer goods rather than applied to building up the infrastructure to support and sustain an industrial economy. Corruption, a painful reality throughout the modern world, became almost a way of life in Africa as bribery became necessary to obtain even the most basic services (see the box on p. 861).

AFRICA IN THE COLD WAR Many of the problems encountered by the new nations of Africa have also been ascribed to the fact that independence has not ended Western interference in Africa’s political affairs. Many African leaders were
After 1965, African novelists transferred their anger from the foreign oppressor to their own national leaders, deploring their greed, corruption, and inhumanity. One of the most pessimistic expressions of this betrayal of newly independent Africa is found in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, a novel published by the Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah (AY-yee KWAY AR-mah) in 1968. The author decried the government of Kwame Nkrumah and was unimpressed with the rumors of a military coup, which, he predicted, would simply replace the regime with a new despot and his entourage of “fat men.” Ghana today has made significant progress in reducing the level of corruption.

**Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born**

The net had been made in the special Ghanaian way that allowed the really big corrupt people to pass through it. A net to catch only the small, dispensable fellows, trying in their anguished blindness to leap and to attain the gleam and the comfort the only way these things could be done. And the big ones floated free, like all the slogans. End bribery and corruption. Build Socialism. Equality. Shit. A man would just have to make up his mind that there was never going to be anything but despair, and there would be no way of escaping it.

In the life of the nation itself, maybe nothing really new would happen. New men would take into their hands the power to steal the nation’s riches and to use it for their own satisfaction. That, of course, was to be expected. New people would use the country’s power to get rid of men and women who talked a language that did not flatter them. There would be nothing different in that. That would only be a continuation of the Ghanaian way of life. But here was the real change. The individual man of power now shivering, his head filled with the fear of the vengeance of those he had wronged. For him everything was going to change. And for those like him who had grown greasy and fat singing the praises of their chief, for those who had been getting themselves ready for the enjoyment of hoped-for favors, there would be long days of pain ahead. The flatterers with their new white Mercedes cars would have to find ways of burying old words. For those who had come directly against the old power, there would be much happiness. But for the nation itself there would only be a change of embezzlers and a change of the hunters and the hunted. A pitiful shrinking of the world from those days Teacher still looked back to, when the single mind was filled with the hopes of a whole people. A pitiful shrinking, to days when all the powerful could think of was to use the power of a whole people to fill their own paunches. Endless days, same days, stretching into the future with no end anywhere in sight.

**Q** According to Ayi Kwei Armah, who was to blame for conditions in his country? Did the charter of the OAU (see the box on p. 860) make provisions for dealing with situations such as this?

Even within many new African nations, the concept of nationhood was undermined by the lingering force of regionalism or ethnic rivalries. Nigeria, with the largest population on the continent, was rent by civil strife during the late 1960s when dissident Ibo (EE-boh) groups in the southeast attempted unsuccessfully to form the independent state of Biafra (bee-AH-fruh). Another force undermining nationalism in Africa was that of pan-Islamism. Its prime exponent in Africa was the Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser (guh-MAHL AB-dool NAH-sur) (see “Nasser and Pan-Arabism” later in this chapter). After Nasser’s death in 1970, the torch of Islamic unity in Africa was carried by the Libyan president Muammar Qaddafi (moo-AHM-ahr guh-DAH-fee) (b. 1942), whose ambitions to create a greater Muslim nation in the Sahara under his authority led to conflict with neighboring Chad. The Islamic resurgence also surfaced in Nigeria and other nations of West Africa, where divisions between Muslims and Christians began to emerge and have recently erupted into violence.

**THE POPULATION BOMB** Finally, rapid population growth crippled efforts to create modern economies. By the 1980s,
annual population growth averaged nearly 3 percent throughout Africa, the highest rate of any continent. Drought conditions and the inexorable spread of the Sahara (usually known as desertification), caused partly by overcultivation of the land, led to widespread hunger and starvation, first in West African countries such as Niger and Mali and then in Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan.

Predictions are that the population of Africa will increase by at least 200 million over the next ten years, but that estimate does not take into account the prevalence of AIDS, which has reached epidemic proportions in Africa. According to a United Nations study, at least 5 percent of the entire population of sub-Saharan Africa is infected with the virus, including a high percentage of the urban middle class. More than 65 percent of the AIDS cases reported around the world are on the continent of Africa. Some observers estimate that without measures to curtail the effects of the disease, it will have a significant impact on several African countries by reducing population growth.

Today poverty is widespread in Africa, particularly among the three-quarters of the population still living off the land. Urban areas have grown tremendously, but as in much of Asia, most are surrounded by massive squatter settlements of rural peoples who have fled to the cities in search of a better life. The expansion of the cities has overwhelmed fragile transportation and sanitation systems and led to rising pollution and perpetual traffic jams, while millions are forced to live without running water and electricity. Meanwhile, the fortunate few (all too often government officials on the take) live the high life and emulate the consumerism of the West (in a particularly expressive phrase, the rich in many East African countries are known as wabenzi, or “Mercedes-Benz people”).

In “Pedestrian, to Passing Benz-Man,” the Kenyan poet Albert Ojuka (oh-JOO-kuh) voiced the popular discontent with economic inequality in the 1970s:

You man, lifted gently
out of the poverty and suffering
we so recently shared; I say—
why splash the muddy puddle on to
my bare legs, as if, still unsatisfied
with your seated opulence
you must sully the unwashed
with your diesel-smoke and mud-water
and force him to buy, beyond his means
a bar of soap from your shop?
a few years back we shared a master
today you have none, while I have
exchanged a parasite for something worse.
But maybe a few years is too long a time. 2

It is a lament still voiced today.

The Search for Solutions

While the problems of nation building described here have to one degree or another afflicted all of the emerging states of Africa, each has sought to deal with the challenge in its own way, sometimes with strikingly different consequences. Some African countries have made dramatic improvements in the past two decades, but others have encountered increasing difficulties. Despite all its shared problems, Africa today remains one of the most diverse regions of the globe.

TANZANIA: AN AFRICAN ROUTE TO SOCIALISM

Concern over the dangers of economic inequality inspired a number of African leaders to restrict foreign investment and nationalize the major industries and utilities while promoting democratic ideals and values. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was the most consistent, promoting the ideals of socialism and self-reliance through his Arusha (uh-ROO-shuh) Declaration of 1967, which set forth the principles for building a socialist society in Africa. Nyerere did not seek to establish a Leninist-style dictatorship of the proletariat in Tanzania, but neither was he a proponent of a multiparty democracy, which in his view would be divisive under the conditions prevailing in Africa:

Where there is one party—provided it is identified with the nation as a whole—the foundations of democracy can be firmer, and the people can have more opportunity to exercise a real choice, than when you have two or more parties.

Manioc, Food for the Millions. Manioc (also called cassava or yuca), a tuber like the potato, was brought to Africa from South America soon after the voyages of Columbus. Although low in nutrient value, it can be cultivated in poor soil with little moisture and is the staple food for nearly one-third of the population of sub-Saharan Africa. Manioc is also widely grown in other parts of Asia and South America and is familiar to Westerners as the source of tapioca. In the photograph shown here, village women in Senegal rhythmically pound manioc to remove traces of naturally occurring cyanide that would otherwise poison those who rely on the tuber as a basic commodity. As the threat of chronic drought becomes an ever more common reality in parts of Africa, dry crops like manioc will acquire increasing importance in the diet of the African people.
To import the Western parliamentary system into Africa, he argued, could lead to violence because the opposition parties would be viewed as traitors by the majority of the population.

Taking advantage of his powerful political influence, Nyerere placed limits on income and established village collectives to avoid the corrosive effects of economic inequality and government corruption. Sympathetic foreign countries provided considerable economic aid to assist the experiment, and many observers noted that levels of corruption, political instability, and ethnic strife were lower in Tanzania than in many other African countries. Nyerere’s vision was not shared by all of his compatriots, however. Political elements on the island of Zanzibar, citing the stagnation brought by two decades of socialism, agitated for autonomy or even total separation from the mainland. Tanzania also has poor soil, inadequate rainfall, and limited resources, all of which have contributed to its slow growth and continuing rural and urban poverty.

In 1985, Nyerere voluntarily retired from the presidency. In his farewell speech, he confessed that he had failed to achieve many of his ambitious goals to create a socialist society in Africa. In particular, he admitted that his plan to collectivize the traditional private farm (shamba) had run into strong resistance from conservative peasants. “You can socialize what is not traditional,” he remarked. “The shamba can’t be socialized.” But Nyerere insisted that many of his policies had succeeded in improving social and economic conditions, and he argued that the only real solution was to consolidate the multitude of small countries in the region into a larger East African Federation. Today, a quarter of a century later, Nyerere’s party, the Party of the Revolution, continues to rule the country. The current president, Jakaya Kikwete (jah-KAH-yah kee-KWEH-tee) (b. 1950), was reelected in 2010 by a comfortable margin, although there were charges of electoral fraud.

KENYA: THE PERILS OF CAPITALISM The countries that opted for capitalism faced their own dilemmas. Neighboring Kenya, blessed with better soil in the highlands, a local tradition of aggressive commerce, and a residue of European settlers, welcomed foreign investment and profit incentives. The results have been mixed. Kenya has a strong current of indigenous African capitalism and a substantial middle class, mostly based in the capital, Nairobi (ny-ROH-bee). But landlessness, unemployment, and income inequities are high, even by African standards (almost one-fifth of the country’s 41 million people are squatters, and unemployment is currently estimated at 40 percent). The rate of population growth—about 2.5 percent annually—is one of the higher rates in the world. Almost 80 percent of the population remains rural, and 50 percent of the people live below the poverty line. The result has been widespread unrest in a country formerly admired for its successful development.

Kenya’s problems have been exacerbated by chronic disputes between disparate ethnic groups and simmering tensions between farmers and pastoralists, leading some to question whether the country is capable of achieving political stability (see the box on p. 864). For many years, the country maintained a fragile stability under the dictatorial rule of President Daniel arap Moi (ah-RHAP moh-YEE) (b. 1924), one of the most authoritarian of African leaders. Plagued by charges of corruption, Moi finally agreed to retire in 2002, but under his successor, Mwai Kibaki (MWY kee-BAH-kee) (b. 1931), the twin problems of political instability and widespread poverty continue to afflict the country. When presidential elections held in January 2008 led to a victory for Kibaki’s party, opposition elements—angered by the government’s perceived favoritism toward Kibaki’s Kikuyu constituency—launched numerous protests, and violent riots occurred throughout the country. A fragile truce was eventually put in place, but popular anger at current conditions smolders just beneath the surface.

ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA: EXPERIMENTS IN MARXISM Beginning in the mid-1970s, a few African nations decided to adopt Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism. In Angola and Ethiopia, Marxist parties followed the Soviet model and attempted to create fully socialist societies with the assistance of Soviet experts and Cuban troops and advisers. Economically, the results were disappointing, and both countries faced severe internal opposition. In Ethiopia, the revolt by Muslim guerrilla fighters in the province of Eritrea (er-ih-TREE-uh) led to the fall of the Marxist leader Mengistu Haile Mariam (men-GIS-too HY-lee MAHR-ee-ee-uhm) (b. 1937) and his regime in 1990 and the eventual independence of Eritrea. A similar revolt erupted against the government in Angola, with the rebel group UNITA controlling much of the rural population and for a time threatening the capital city of Luanda (loo-AHN-duh). With the death of the rebel leader Julius Savimbi (suh-VIM-bee) in 2002, the civil war finally appeared to be at an end.

SOUTH AFRICA: AN END TO APARTHEID Perhaps Africa’s greatest success story is in South Africa, where the white government, which long maintained a policy of racial segregation (apartheid) and restricted black sovereignty to a series of small “Bantustans” in relatively infertile areas of the country, finally accepted the inevitability of African involvement in the political process and the national economy. A key factor in the decision was growing international pressure in the form of a campaign to persuade foreign investors to withdraw funds from the country. In 1990, the government of President F. W. (Frederik Willem) de Klerk (b. 1936) released African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela (man-DELL-uh) (b. 1918) from prison, where he had been held since 1964. In 1993, the two leaders agreed to hold democratic national elections the following spring. In the meantime, ANC representatives agreed to take part in a transitional coalition government with de Klerk’s National Party. Those elections resulted in a substantial majority for the ANC, and Mandela became president.

In May 1996, a new constitution was approved, calling for a multiracial state. The National Party immediately went into opposition, claiming that the new charter did not adequately provide for joint decision making by members of the coalition. The third group in the coalition government, the
Tom Mboya (uhm-BOY-yuh) (1930–1969) was an inspiring political figure in Kenya during the era of early independence. As minister of labor during the transition to statehood, he urged his fellow Kenyans to believe in the prospect of independence, while calming the anxieties of European residents by assuring them that their lives and property would not be threatened or confiscated. This selection is from a speech he delivered in July 1962, in which he recognized the challenges of independence while expressing confidence that the experiment would inevitably succeed. In 1969, Mboya was assassinated by a political opponent.


It is suggested by some people that there is no such thing as a Kenya nation. All kinds of arguments and recriminations are thrown up to try to prove that any nationalist ambitions for Kenya must encounter more difficulties than could ever be overcome. Noisy minorities in all walks of life, both here and in their contact with overseas interests, keep plugging away at their “no confidence” theme. Some people say that Kenya is heading for economic disaster and political chaos and tribal war. . . .

When I talk now about a “Kenya nation,” I am not speaking as a political romantic, but as a realist. Any sincere politician or leader must have some vision in front of him. There must be something much more than notoriety to attract him toward unceasing work, the bitterness of struggle, the temptations, and the pressures. There must be a factor of dedication, an undeniable impulse to build and to serve. In this he must satisfy himself. There are very few other rewards.

It is not only the vision of the leaders that dictates our struggle. There are the deep-rooted aspirations of our people. These people may appear simple and uneducated; they may not be articulate, but they are human beings and not stones. They have an inborn pride and a genuine desire for self-improvement and self-fulfillment. These are facts which may have dodged many people in the past but with which we all must reckon in the future. To ignore this force would be to lead to frustrations and explosions—indeed we have already had such an experience in Kenya.

It is not, however, the fear of this force that should dictate our decisions. There is the positive side of this force, namely, its ability to face the challenge of nation building. We have to release this force of our people for new and constructive purposes. We have to harness the enthusiasm for self-improvement to form the spearhead in our efforts for nation-building.

True, we have tribal differences and sensitivities. So often people point at the Congo and warn that Kenya is doomed to become another Congo. I do not share this view. We have passed the stage when this could have happened. We have passed through more trials than most African countries, and I believe we have come to appreciate freedom to a point where we would be prepared to defend it with our lives. We do not intend to exchange British colonialism for either local dictator-ship or Soviet and American colonialism.

Q: Why is the author of this document confident that the people of Kenya can surmount the challenges of nationhood?

Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, agreed to remain within the government, but rivalry between the ANC and Zulu elites intensified. Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi (MANG-goh-soo-too boo-tuh-LAY-zee) (b. 1928), drawing on the growing force of Zulu nationalism, began to invoke the memory of the great nineteenth-century Zulu ruler Shaka in a possible bid at future independence.

In 1999, a major step toward political stability was taken when Nelson Mandela stepped down from the presidency and was replaced by his longtime disciple Thabo Mbeki (TAH-boh uhm-BAY-kee) (b. 1942). The new president faced a number of intimidating problems, including rising unemployment, widespread lawlessness, chronic corruption, and an ominous flight of capital and professional personnel from the country. Mbeki’s conservative economic policies earned the support of some white voters and the country’s new black elite but were criticized by labor unions, which contended that the benefits of the new black leadership were not seeping down to the poor. The government’s promises to carry out an extensive land reform program—aimed at providing farmland to the nation’s 40 million black farmers—were not fulfilled, leading some squatters to seize unused private lands near Johannesburg.

In 2008, Mbeki was forced out of office by disgruntled ANC party members. A year later, his onetime vice president and rival Jacob Zuma (ZOOh-ruh) (b. 1942) was elected president. Although the country faces serious challenges, South Africa remains the wealthiest and most industrialized state in Africa and the best hope that a multiracial society can succeed on the continent. The country’s black elite now number nearly one-quarter of its wealthiest households, compared with only 9 percent in 1991.

NIGERIA: A NATION DIVIDED If the situation in South Africa provides grounds for modest optimism, the situation in Nigeria provides reason for serious concern. Africa’s largest country in terms of population and one of its wealthiest because of substantial oil reserves, Nigeria was for many years in the
grip of military strongmen. During his rule, General Sani Abacha (SAH-nee ah-BAH-chuh) (1943–1998) ruthlessly suppressed all opposition and in late 1995 ordered the execution of author Ken Saro-Wiwa (SAH-roh-WEE-wah) (1941–1995) despite widespread protests from human rights groups abroad. Saro-Wiwa had criticized environmental damage caused by foreign oil interests in southern Nigeria, but the regime’s major concern was his support for separatist activities in the area that had launched the Biafran insurrection in the late 1960s. When Abacha died in 1998 under mysterious circumstances, national elections led to the creation of a civilian government under Olusegun Obasanjo (ohl-OO-seh-goon oh-buh-SAHN-joh) (b. 1937).

Civilian leadership has not been a panacea for Nigeria’s problems, however. Although Obasanjo promised reforms to bring an end to the corruption and favoritism that had long plagued Nigerian politics, the results were disappointing (the state power company—known as NEPA—was so inefficient that Nigerians joked that the initials stood for ‘never expect power again’). When presidential elections held in 2007 led to the election of Umaru Yar’Adua (oo-MAHR-oo YAH-rah-doo-uh (b. 1951–2010), an obscure member of Obasanjo’s ruling political party, opposition forces and neutral observers complained that the vote had been seriously flawed. After Yar’Adua died from an illness in 2010, he was succeeded by his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan (b. 1951), who was elected president in his own right in 2011.

One of the most critical problems facing the Nigerian government in recent years has been rooted in religious disputes. In early 2000, riots between Christians and Muslims broke out in several northern cities as a result of the decision by Muslim provincial officials to apply Shari’a throughout their jurisdictions. The violence abated as local officials managed to craft compromise policies that limit the application of some New Housing for the Poor. Under apartheid, much of the black population in South Africa was confined to so-called townships, squalid slums located along the fringes of the country’s major cities. The top photo shows a crowded township on the edge of Cape Town, one of the most modern cities on the continent of Africa. Today, the government is actively building new communities that provide better housing, running water, and electricity for their residents. The photo on the bottom shows a new township rising on the outskirts of the city of New London. The township has many modern facilities and even a new shopping mall with consumer goods for local residents.
of the harsher aspects of Muslim law, but the dispute continues to threaten the fragile unity of Africa’s most populous country. The election of Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, in 2011 led to new protests among Muslims in the northern part of the country. Under an unwritten agreement, the presidency has alternated between Muslims and Christians, and some Muslims argued that a Muslim should hold the office because Yar’Adua, a Muslim, had died before he could serve a second term.

TENSIONS IN THE DESERT  The religious tensions that erupted in Nigeria have spilled over into neighboring states on the border of the Sahara. Pressure to apply Shari’a is spreading to Nigeria’s northern neighbor, Niger, where the government has opposed Islamic law on the grounds that it would unsettle the country. Christian churches have been attacked, and bars and brothels have been sacked and burned to the ground.

A similar rift between farmers and herders has been at the root of the lengthy civil war that has been raging in Sudan. Conflict between Muslim pastoralists—supported by the central government in Khartoum—and predominantly Christian black farmers in the southern part of the country was finally brought to an end in 2004, and the government agreed to permit a plebiscite in the south under the sponsorship of the United Nations to determine whether the local population there wished to secede from the country. In elections held in early 2011, voters overwhelmingly supported independence as the new nation of the Republic of South Sudan.

In the meantime, the violence in the south had spread to western Darfur province, where clashes between farmers and armed pastoral people led to reports of widespread starvation among the local villagers. The United Nations, joined by other African countries, has sought to bring an end to the bloodshed. The violence continues, however, and now threatens to overflow into neighboring Chad.

The dispute between Muslims and Christians throughout the southern Sahara is a contemporary variant of the traditional tensions that have existed between farmers and pastoralists throughout recorded history. Muslim cattle herders, migrating southward to escape the increasing desiccation of the grasslands south of the Sahara, compete for precious land with primarily Christian farmers. As a result of the religious revival now under way throughout the continent, the confrontation often leads to outbreaks of violence with strong religious and ethnic overtones (see the comparative essay “Religion and Society” on p. 867).

CENTRAL AFRICA: CAULDRON OF CONFLICT  The most tragic situation is in the Central African states of Rwanda and Burundi, where a chronic conflict between the minority Tutsis and the Hutu majority has led to a bitter civil war, with thousands of refugees fleeing to the neighboring Congo. The Tutsis, supported by the colonial Belgian government, had long dominated the sedentary Hutu population. The Hutus’ attempt to bring an end to Tutsi domination initiated the most recent conflicts, which have been marked by massacres on both sides. In the meantime, the presence of large numbers of foreign troops and refugees intensified centrifugal forces inside Zaire, where General Mobutu Sese Seko had long ruled with an iron hand. In 1997, military forces led by Mobutu’s long-time opponent Laurent-Désiré Kabila (loh-RAHN-DAY-zee-
The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a steady trend toward the secularization of society as people increasingly turned from religion to science for explanations of natural phenomena and for answers to the challenges of everyday life.

In recent years, however, the trend has reversed as religious faith in all its guises appears to be reviving in much of the world. Although the percentage of people attending religious services on a regular basis or professing firm religious convictions has been dropping steadily in many countries, the intensity of religious belief appears to be growing among the faithful. This phenomenon has been widely publicized in the United States, where the evangelical movement has become a significant force in politics and an influential factor in defining many social issues. But it has also occurred in Latin America, where a drop in membership in the Roman Catholic Church has been offset by significant increases in the popularity of evangelical Protestant sects. In the Muslim world, the influence of traditional Islam has been steadily on the rise, not only in the Middle East but also in non-Arab countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia (see Chapter 30). In Africa, as we observe in this chapter, the appeal of both Christianity and Islam appears to be on the rise. Even in Russia and China, where half a century of Communist government sought to eradicate religion as the “opiate of the people,” the popularity of religion is growing.

One major reason for the increasing popularity of religion in contemporary life is the desire to counter the widespread sense of malaise brought on by the absence of any sense of meaning and purpose in life—a purpose that religious faith provides. For many evangelical Christians in the United States, for example, the adoption of a Christian lifestyle is seen as a necessary prerequisite for resolving problems of crime, drugs, and social alienation. It is likely that a similar phenomenon is present with other religions and in other parts of the world. Religious faith also provides a sense of community at a time when village and family ties are declining in many countries.

Historical evidence suggests, however, that although religious fervor may enhance the sense of community and commitment among believers, it can have a highly divisive impact on society as a whole, as the examples of Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, Africa, and the Middle East vividly attest. Even if less dramatically, as in the United States and Latin America, religion divides as well as unites, and it will be a continuing task for religious leaders of all faiths to promote tolerance for peoples of other persuasions.

Another challenge for contemporary religion is to find ways to coexist with expanding scientific knowledge. Influential figures in the evangelical movement in the United States, for example, not only support a conservative social agenda but are also suspicious of the role of technology and science in the contemporary world. Similar views are often expressed by significant factions in other world religions. Although fear of the impact of science on contemporary life is widespread, efforts to turn the clock back to a mythical golden age are not likely to succeed in the face of powerful forces for change set in motion by advances in scientific knowledge.

Ray Kabila (1939–2001) managed to topple the general’s corrupt government. Once in power, Kabila renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo and promised a return to democratic practices. The new government systematically suppressed political dissent, however, and in January 2001, Kabila was assassinated. He was succeeded by his son Joseph Kabila (b. 1971). Peace talks to end the conflict began that fall, but the fighting has continued.

**Africa: A Continent in Flux**

The brief survey of events in some of the more important African countries provided here illustrates the enormous difficulty that historians of Africa face in drawing any general conclusions about the pace and scope of change that has taken place in the continent in recent decades. Progress in some areas has been countered by growing problems elsewhere, and signs of hope in one region contrast with feelings of despair in another.

The shifting fortunes experienced throughout the continent are most prominently illustrated in the political arena. Over the past two decades, the collapse of one-party regimes has led to the emergence of fragile democracies in several countries. In other instances, however, democratic governments erupted in civil war or were replaced by authoritarian...
leaders. One prominent example of the latter is the Ivory Coast, long considered one of West Africa’s most stable and prosperous countries. After the death of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny (fay-LEEKS oo-FWAY-bwah-NYEE) in 1993, long-simmering resentment between Christians in the south and newly arrived Muslim immigrants in the north erupted into open conflict. National elections held in 2010 led to sporadic violence and a standoff between opposition forces and the sitting president, who was forced to resign the following year. By contrast, in Liberia, a bitter civil war recently gave way to the emergence of a stable democratic government under Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (b. 1938), one of the continent’s first female presidents.

The economic picture in Africa has also been mixed. It is clear that African societies have not yet begun to surmount the challenges they have faced since independence. Most African states are still poor and their populations illiterate. Moreover, African concerns continue to carry little weight in the international community. A recent agreement by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the need to reduce agricultural subsidies in the advanced nations has been widely ignored. In 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed the Millennium Declaration, which called for a dramatic reduction in the incidence of poverty, hunger, and illiteracy worldwide by the year 2015. So far, however, efforts to realize these ambitious goals have been limited. At a conference on the subject in September 2003, the participants squabbled over how to fund the effort. Some delegations, including that of the United States, argued that external assistance cannot succeed unless the nations of Africa adopt measures to bring about good government and sound economic policies.

Despite the African continent’s chronic economic problems, however, there are signs of hope. The overall rate of economic growth for the region as a whole is twice what it was during the 1980s and 1990s. African countries were also less affected by the recent economic downturn than was much of the rest of the world. Although poverty, AIDS, and a lack of education and infrastructure are still major impediments in much of the region, rising commodity prices—most notably, an increase in oil revenues—are enabling many countries to make additional investments and reduce their national debt. One promising sign is that the African people as a whole are not about to despair. In a recent survey of public opinion throughout the continent, the majority of respondents were optimistic about the future and confident that they would be economically better off in five years.

Certainly, part of the solution to the continent’s multiple problems must come from within. Although there are gratifying signs of progress toward political stability in some countries, others are still governed by brutal dictatorships or racked by civil strife. Corruption and political inexperience are serious problems as well. But many of Africa’s difficulties are a consequence of interference by foreign governments and international corporations. Efforts by Western governments to protect their local farmers by providing subsidies or levying high tariffs have hurt African growers in countries where agricultural products are a major export crop. Foreign corporations interfere in local politics and impede the normal political process, often to the detriment of local populations.

**THE AFRICAN UNION: A GLIMMER OF HOPE** A significant part of the problem is that Africans must find better ways to cooperate with one another and to protect and promote their own interests. A first step in that direction was taken in 1991, when the OAU agreed to establish the African Economic Community (AEC). In 2001, the OAU was replaced by the African Union, which is intended to provide greater political and economic integration throughout the continent on the pattern of the European Union (see Chapter 28). The new organization has already sought to mediate several of the conflicts in the region.

As Africa evolves, it is useful to remember that economic and political change is often an agonizingly slow and painful process. Introduced to industrialization and concepts of Western democracy only a century ago, African societies are still groping for ways to graft Western political institutions and economic practices onto a structure still significantly influenced by traditional values and attitudes.

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**Continuity and Change in Modern African Societies**

**FOCUS QUESTIONS:** How did the rise of independent states affect the lives and the role of women in African societies? How does that role compare with the role played by women in other parts of the contemporary world?

In general, the impact of the West has been greater on urban and educated Africans and more limited on their rural and illiterate compatriots. One reason is that the colonial presence was first and most firmly established in the cities. Many cities, including Dakar, Lagos, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Brazzaville, and Nairobi, are direct products of the colonial experience. Most African cities today look like their counterparts elsewhere in the world. They have high-rise buildings, blocks of residential apartments, wide boulevards, neon lights, movie theaters, and traffic jams.

**Education**

The educational system has been the primary means of introducing Western values and culture. In the precolonial era, formal schools did not really exist in Africa except for parochial schools in Christian Ethiopia and academies to train young males in Islamic doctrine and law in Muslim societies in North and West Africa. For the average African, education took place at the home or in the village courtyard and stressed socialization and vocational training. Traditional education in Africa was not necessarily inferior to that in Europe. Social values and customs were transmitted to the young by storytellers, often village elders, who could gain considerable prestige through their performance.

Europeans introduced modern Western education into Africa in the nineteenth century. At first, the schools
concentrated on vocational training, with some instruction in European languages and Western civilization. Eventually, pressure from Africans led to the introduction of professional training, and the first institutes of higher learning were established in the early twentieth century.

With independence, African countries established their own state-run schools. The emphasis was on the primary level, but high schools and universities were established in major cities. The basic objectives have been to introduce vocational training and improve literacy rates. Unfortunately, both funding and trained teachers are scarce in most countries, and few rural areas have schools. As a result, illiteracy remains high, estimated at about 70 percent of the population across the continent. There has been a perceptible shift toward education in the vernacular languages. In West Africa, only about one in four adults is conversant in a Western language.

Urban and Rural Life

The cities are where the African elites live and work. Affluent Africans, like their contemporaries in other developing countries, have been strongly attracted to the glittering material aspects of Western culture. They live in Western-style homes or apartments and eat Western foods stored in Western refrigerators, and those who can afford it drive Western cars. It has been said, not wholly in praise, that there are more Mercedes-Benz automobiles in Nigeria than in Germany, where they are manufactured.

Outside the major cities, where about three-quarters of the continent’s inhabitants live, Western influence has had less impact. Millions of people throughout Africa (as in Asia) live much as their ancestors did, in thatch huts without modern plumbing and electricity (see the comparative illustration on p. 870): they farm or hunt by traditional methods, practice time-honored family rituals, and believe in the traditional deities. Even here, however, change is taking place. Slavery has been eliminated, for the most part, although there have been persistent reports of raids by slave traders on defenseless villages in the southern Sudan. Economic need, though, has brought about massive migrations as some leave to work on plantations, others move to the cities, and still others flee abroad or to refugee camps to escape starvation. Migration itself is a wrenching experience, disrupting familiar family and village ties and enforcing new social relationships.

Nowhere, in fact, is the dichotomy between old and new, local and foreign, rural and urban so clear and painful as in Africa. Urban dwellers regard the village as the repository of all that is backward in the African past, while rural peoples view the growing urban areas as a source of corruption, prostitution, hedonism, and the destruction of communal customs and values. The tension between traditional ways and Western culture is particularly strong among African intellectuals, many of whom are torn between their admiration for things Western and their desire to retain an African identity.

African Women

As noted in Chapter 21, one of the consequences of colonialism in Africa was a change in the relationship between men and women. Some of these changes could be described as beneficial, but others were not. Women were often introduced to Western education and given legal rights denied to them in the precolonial era. But they also became a labor source and were sometime recruited or compelled to work on construction projects.

Independence also had a significant impact on gender roles in African society. Almost without exception, the new governments established the principle of sexual equality and permitted women to vote and run for political office. Yet as elsewhere, women continue to operate at a disability in a world dominated by males. Politics remains a male preserve, and although a few professions, such as teaching, child care, and clerical work, are dominated by women, most African women are employed in menial positions such as agricultural labor, factory work, and retail trade as domestics. Education is open to all at the elementary level, but women comprise less than 20 percent of students at the upper levels in most African societies today.

**URBAN WOMEN** Not surprisingly, women have made the greatest strides in the cities. Most urban women, like men, now marry on the basis of personal choice, although a significant minority are still willing to accept their parents’ choice.
After marriage, African women appear to occupy a more equal position than their counterparts in most Asian countries. Each marriage partner tends to maintain a separate income, and women often have the right to possess property separate from their husbands. Though many wives still defer to their husbands in the traditional manner, others are like the woman in Abioseh Nicol’s story “A Truly Married Woman,” who, after years of living as a common-law wife with her husband, is finally able to provide the price and finalize the marriage. After the wedding, she declares, “For twelve years I have got up every morning at five to make tea for you and breakfast. Now I am a truly married woman, [and] you must treat me with a little more respect. You are now my husband and not a lover. Get up and make yourself a cup of tea.”

In the cities, a feminist movement is growing, but it is firmly based on conditions in the local environment. Many African women writers, for example, opt for a brand of African feminism much like that of Ama Ata Aidoo (AH-mah AH-tah ah-EE-doo) (b. 1942), a Ghanaian novelist, whose ultimate objective is to free African society as a whole, not just its female inhabitants. After receiving her education at a girls’ school in the preindependence Gold Coast and attending Stanford University in the United States, she embarked on a writing career. Every African woman and every man, she insists, “should be a feminist, especially if they believe that African society should take charge of our land, its wealth, our lives, and the burden of our development. Because it is not possible to advocate independence for our continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer.”

**WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS** Feminism has had less impact on women in rural areas, where traditional attitudes continue to exert a strong influence. In some societies, female genital mutilation, the traditional rite of passage for a young girl’s transit to womanhood, is still widely practiced. Polygamy is also not uncommon, and arranged marriages are still the rule rather than the exception. In some Muslim societies, efforts to apply Shari’a law have led to greater restrictions on the freedom of women. In northern Nigeria, a women was recently sentenced to death for committing adultery. The sentence was later reversed on appeal.

The dichotomy between rural and urban values can lead to acute tensions. Many African villagers regard the cities as the fount of evil, decadence, and corruption. Women in particular have suffered from the tension between the pull of the city and the village. As men are drawn to the cities in search of employment and excitement, their wives and girlfriends are left behind, both literally and figuratively, in the village. Fortunately, there are some signs of change. In 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president of Liberia—the first woman to be elected chief executive of a country on the African continent.
African Culture

Inevitably, the tension between traditional and modern, local and foreign, and individual and communal that has permeated contemporary African society has spilled over into culture. In general, in the visual arts and music, utility and ritual have given way to pleasure and decoration. In the process, Africans have been affected to a certain extent by foreign influences but have retained their distinctive characteristics. Wood carving, metalwork, painting, and sculpture, for example, have preserved their traditional forms but are now increasingly adapted to serve the tourist industry and the export market.

LITERATURE  No area of African culture has been so strongly affected by political and social events as literature. Except for Muslim areas in North and East Africa, precolonial Africans did not have a written literature, although their tradition of oral storytelling served as a rich repository of history, custom, and folk culture. The first written literature in the vernacular or in European languages emerged during the nineteenth century in the form of novels, poetry, and drama.

Angry at the negative portrayal of Africa in Western literature (see the box on p. 872), African authors initially wrote primarily for a European audience as a means of establishing black dignity and purpose. In response to condescending Western attitudes about African history, many glorified the emotional and communal aspects of the traditional African experience. The Nigerian Chinua Achebe (CHIHN-wah ah-CHAY-bay) (b. 1930) is considered the first major African novelist to write in the English language. In his writings, he attempted to interpret African history from an African perspective and to forge a new sense of African identity. In his trailblazing novel Things Fall Apart (1958), he recounted the story of a Nigerian who refused to submit to the new British order and eventually committed suicide. Criticizing his contemporaries who accepted foreign rule, the protagonist lamented that the white man “has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”

In recent decades, the African novel has taken a dramatic turn, shifting its focus from the brutality of the foreign oppressor to the shortcomings of the new African leaders. Having gained independence, African politicians are portrayed as mimicking and even outdoing the injustices committed by their colonial predecessors. A prominent example of this genre is the work of the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (GOO-gee wah tee-AHNG-goh) (b. 1938). His first novel, A Grain of Wheat, takes place on the eve of independence. Although it mocks local British society for its racism, snobishness, and superficiality, its chief interest lies in its unsentimental and even unflattering portrayal of ordinary Kenyans in their daily struggle for survival.

Like most of his predecessors, Ngugi initially wrote in English, but he eventually decided to write in his native Kikuyu as a means of broadening his readership. For that reason, perhaps, in the late 1970s, he was placed under house arrest for writing subversive literature. There, he secretly wrote Devil on the Cross, which urged his compatriots to overthrow the ruling government. Published in 1980, the book...
Colonialism camouflaged its economic objectives under the cloak of a “civilizing mission,” which in Africa was aimed at illuminating the so-called Dark Continent with Europe’s brilliant civilization. In 1899, the Polish-born English author Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) fictionalized his harrowing journey up the Congo River in the novella Heart of Darkness. Conrad’s protagonist, Marlow, travels upriver to locate a Belgian trader who has mysteriously disappeared. The novella describes Marlow’s gradual recognition of the egregious excesses of colonial rule, as well as his realization that such evil lurks in everyone’s heart. The story concludes with a cry: “The horror! The horror!” Voicing views that expressed his Victorian perspective, Conrad described an Africa that was incomprehensible, sensual, and primitive.

Over the years, Conrad’s work has provoked much debate. Author Chinua Achebe, for one, lambasted Heart of Darkness as a radical diatribe. Since independence, many African writers have been prompted to counter Conrad’s portrayal by reaffirming the dignity and purpose of the African people. One of the first to do so was the Guinean author Camara Laye (1928–1980), who in 1954 composed a brilliant novel, The Radiance of the King, which can be viewed as the mirror image of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. In Laye’s work, Clarence, another European protagonist, undertakes a journey into the impenetrable heart of Africa. This time, however, he is enlightened by the process, obtaining self-knowledge and ultimately salvation.

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. . . . But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.

Camara Laye, The Radiance of the King

At that very moment the king turned his head, turned it imperceptibly, and his glance fell upon Clarence. . . .

“Yes, no one is as base as I, as naked as I,” he thought. “And you, lord, you are willing to rest your eyes upon me!”

Or was it because of his very nakedness? . . . “Because of your very nakedness!” the look seemed to say. “That terrifying void that is within you and which opens to receive me; your hunger which calls to my hunger; your very baseness which did not exist until I gave it leave; and the great shame you feel. . . .”

When he had come before the king, when he stood in the great radiance of the king, still ravaged by the tongue of fire, but alive still, and living only through the touch of that fire, Clarence fell upon his knees, for it seemed to him that he was finally at the end of his seeking, and at the end of all seekings.

Compare the depiction of the continent of Africa in these two passages. Is Laye making a response to Conrad? If so, what is it?
have emerged as prominent writers of African fiction. Two examples are Buchi Emecheta (BOO-chee ay-muh-CHAY-tuh) (b. 1940) of Nigeria and Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana. Beginning with Second Class Citizen (1975), which chronicled the breakdown of her own marriage, Emecheta has published numerous works exploring the role of women in contemporary African society and denouncing the practice of polygamy. Ata Aidoo has focused on the identity of today’s African women and the changing relations between men and women in society. In her novel Changes: A Love Story (1991), she chronicles the lives of three women, none presented as a victim but all caught up in the struggle for survival and happiness. Of late, two young authors have garnered great acclaim for their novels about Nigeria’s political and social upheavals—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (chim-muh-MAHN-duh en-GOH-zee ah-dee-CHEE-ee) (b. 1977) in Half a Yellow Sun (2006) and Sefi Atta (b. 1964) in Everything Good Will Come (2005).

MUSIC Contemporary African music also reflects a hybridization or fusion with Western culture. Having traveled to the Americas via the slave trade centuries earlier, African drum beats evolved into North American jazz and Latin American dance rhythms, only to return to reenergize African music. In fact, today music is one of Africans’ most effective weapons for social and political protest. Easily accessible to all, African music, whether Afro-beat in Nigeria, rai in Algeria, or reggae in Benin, represents the “weapon of the future,” contemporary musicians say; “it helped free Nelson Mandela” and “will put Africa back on the map.” Censored by all the African dictatorial regimes, these courageous musicians persist in their struggle against corruption, what one singer calls the second slavery, “the cancer that is eating away at the system.” Their voices echo the chorus “Together we can build a nation / Because Africa has brains, youth, knowledge.”

What Is the Future of Africa?

Nowhere in the developing world is the dilemma of continuity and change more agonizing than in Africa. Mesmerized by the spectacle of Western affluence yet repulsed by the bloody trail from slavery to World War II and the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, African intellectuals have been torn between the dual images of Western materialism and African uniqueness. For the average African, of course, such intellectual dilemmas pale before the daily challenge of survival. But the fundamental gap between traditional and modern is perhaps wider in Africa than anywhere else in the world and may well be harder to bridge.

What is the future of Africa? It seems almost foolhardy to seek an answer to such a question, given the degree of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity that exists throughout the vast continent. Not surprisingly, visions of the future are equally diverse. Some Africans still yearn for the dreams embodied in the program of the OAU. Novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong’o calls for “an internationalization of all the democratic and social struggles for human equality, justice, peace, and progress.” Others have discarded the democratic ideal and turned their attention to systems based on the subordination of the individual to the community as the guiding principle of national development. Like all peoples, Africans must ultimately find their own solutions within the context of their own traditions, not by seeking to imitate the example of others.

Crescent of Conflict

“‘We Muslims are of one family even though we live under different governments and in various regions.’” So said Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini (ah-yah-TUL-uh roo-HUL-uh khoh-MAY-nee), the Islamic religious figure and leader of the 1979 revolution that overthrew the shah in Iran. The ayatollah’s remark was dismissed by some as just a pious wish by a religious mystic. In fact, however, it illustrates one crucial aspect of the political dynamics of the region.

If the concept of cultural uniqueness has been presented as a potential alternative to the system of nation-states in Africa, a similar role has been played in the Middle East by the religion of Islam. In both regions, a yearning for a sense of community beyond national borders tugs at the emotions and intellect of their inhabitants and counteracts the dynamic pull of nationalism that has led to political turmoil and conflict in much of the rest of the world.

A dramatic example of the powerful force of pan-Islamic sentiment took place on September 11, 2001, when Muslim terrorists hijacked four U.S. airliners and turned them into missiles aimed at the center of world capitalism (see Chapter 28). Although the organizers of the attack—known as al-Qaeda—were located in Afghanistan, the terrorists themselves came from other Muslim states, primarily Saudi Arabia. In the months that followed, support for al-Qaeda and its elusive leader, Osama bin Laden, intensified throughout the Muslim world. To many observers, it was clear that bin Laden and his cohorts had tapped into a wellspring of hostility and resentment directed at the Western world.

What were the sources of Muslim anger? In a speech released on videotape shortly after the attack, bin Laden declared that the attacks were a response to the “humiliation and disgrace” inflicted on the Islamic world for more than eighty years, a period dating back to the end of World War I. For the Middle East, the period between the two world wars was an era of transition. With the fall of the Ottoman and Persian Empires, new modernizing regimes emerged in Turkey and Iran, and a more traditionalist but fiercely independent government was established in Saudi Arabia. Elsewhere, European influence continued to be strong; the British and French had mandates in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, and British influence persisted in Iraq, in southern Arabia, and throughout the Nile valley. Pan-Arabism—the concept of the unity of all Arab peoples—was on the rise, but it lacked focus and coherence.

During World War II, the Middle East became the cockpit of European rivalries, as it had been during World War I.

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The region was more significant to the warring powers than previously because of the growing importance of oil and the Suez Canal’s position as a vital sea route. For a brief period, the German Afrika Korps threatened to seize Egypt and the Suez Canal, but British troops defeated the German forces at El Alamein, west of Alexandria, in 1942. Thereafter, the entire region from the Mediterranean Sea eastward was under secure Allied occupation until the end of the war.

The Question of Palestine

As in other areas of Asia, the end of World War II led to the emergence of a number of independent states in the Middle East. Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, all European mandates before the war, became independent. Egypt, Iran, and Iraq, though still under a degree of Western influence, became increasingly autonomous. Sympathy for the idea of Arab unity led to the formation of the Arab League in 1945, but different points of view among its members prevented it from achieving anything of substance.

The one issue on which all Muslim states in the area could agree was the question of Palestine. As tensions between Jews and Arabs in that mandate intensified during the 1930s, the British attempted to limit Jewish immigration into the area and firmly rejected proposals for independence, despite the promise made in the 1917 Balfour Declaration (see Chapter 24).

After World War II ended, the situation drifted rapidly toward crisis, as thousands of Jewish refugees, many of them displaced persons camps in Europe, sought to migrate to Palestine despite British efforts to prevent their arrival. As violence between Muslims and Jews intensified in the fall of 1947, the issue was taken up in the United Nations General Assembly. After an intense debate, the assembly voted to approve the partition of Palestine into two separate states, one for the Jews and one for the Arabs. The city of Jerusalem was to be placed under international control. A UN commission was established to iron out the details and determine the future boundaries.

During the next several months, growing hostility between Jewish and Arab forces—the latter increasingly supported by neighboring Muslim states—caused the British to announce that they would withdraw their own peacekeeping forces by May 15, 1948. Shortly after the stroke of midnight, as the British mandate formally came to a close, the Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion (ben-GOOR-ee-uhn) (1886–1973) announced the independence of the state of Israel. Later that same day, the new state was formally recognized by the United States, while military forces from several neighboring Muslim states—all of which had vigorously opposed the formation of a Jewish state in the region—entered Israeli territory but were beaten back. Thousands of Arab residents of the new state fled. Internal dissonance among the Arabs, combined with the strength of Jewish resistance groups, contributed to the failure of the invasion, but the bitterness between the two sides did not subside. The Muslim states refused to recognize the new state of Israel, which became a member of the United Nations, legitimizing it in the eyes of the rest of the world. The stage for future conflict was set.

The exodus of thousands of Palestinian refugees into neighboring Muslim states had repercussions that are still felt today. Jordan, which had become an independent kingdom under its Hashemite (HASH-uh-myt) ruler, was flooded by the arrival of one million urban Palestinians. They overwhelmed the half million Jordanians, most of whom were Bedouins. To the north, the state of Lebanon had been created to provide the local Christian community with a country of their own, but the arrival of the Palestinian refugees upset the delicate balance between Christians and Muslims. Moreover, the creation of Lebanon had angered the Syrians, who had lost that land as well as other territories to Turkey as a result of European decisions before and after World War II.

Nasser and Pan-Arabism

The dispute over Palestine put Egypt in an uncomfortable position. Technically, Egypt was not an Arab state. King Farouk (fuh-ROOK) (1920–1965), who had acceded to power in 1936, had frequently declared support for the Arab cause, but the Egyptian people were not Bedouins and shared little of the culture of the peoples across the Red Sea. Nevertheless, Farouk committed Egyptian armies to the disastrous war against Israel.

In 1952, Farouk, whose corrupt habits had severely eroded his early popularity, was overthrown by a military coup engineered by young military officers, and the monarchy was replaced by a republic. The real force behind the scenes was Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser (1918–1970), the son of a minor government functionary who, like many of his fellow officers, had been angered by the army’s inadequate preparation for the war against Israel four years earlier.

In 1954, Nasser seized power in his own right and immediately instituted a land reform program. He also adopted a policy of neutrality in foreign affairs and expressed sympathy for the Arab cause. The British presence had rankled many Egyptians for years, for even after granting Egypt independence, Britain had retained control over the Suez Canal. In 1956, Nasser suddenly nationalized the Suez Canal Company, which had been under British and French administration. Seeing a threat to their route to the Indian Ocean, the British and the French launched a joint attack on Egypt to protect their investment. They were joined by Israel, whose leaders had grown exasperated at sporadic Arab commando raids launched from the Egyptian Sinai (SY-ny) peninsula against Israeli territory and now decided to strike back. But the Eisenhower administration in the United States, concerned that the attack smacked of a revival of colonialism, supported Nasser and brought about the withdrawal of foreign forces from Egypt and of Israeli troops from the Sinai.

THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC Nasser now turned to pan-Arabism. Egypt had won the admiration of other states in the area for its successful eviction of the British and the French from the Suez Canal and for its sponsorship of efforts to replace Israel by an independent Palestinian state. The Ba’ath (BAHTH) Party, which advocated the unity of all Arab states in a new socialist society, assumed power in Syria in 1957 and
The Arab-Israeli Dispute

Growing Arab hostility was a constant threat to the security of Israel. In the years after independence, Israeli leaders dedicated themselves to creating a Jewish homeland. Aided by reparations paid by the postwar German government and private funds provided by Jews living abroad, notably in the United States, the government attempted to build a modern democratic state that would be a magnet for Jews throughout the world and a symbol of Jewish achievement.

Ensuring the survival of the tiny state surrounded by antagonistic Arab neighbors was a considerable challenge, made more difficult by divisions within the Israeli population. Some were immigrants from Europe, while others came from other states in the Middle East. Some were secular and even socialist in their views, while others were politically and religiously conservative. The state was also home to Christians as well as Muslim Palestinians who had not fled to other countries. To balance these diverse interests, Israel established a parliament, called the Knesset (kuh-NESS-it), on the European model, with proportional representation based on the number of votes each party received in the general election. The parties were so numerous that none ever received a majority of votes, and all governments had to be formed from a coalition of several parties. As a result, moderate secular leaders such as longtime prime minister David Ben-Gurion had to cater to more marginal parties composed of conservative religious groups.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the dispute between Israel and other states in the Middle East intensified (see the box on p. 876). Essentially alone except for the sympathy of the United States and a handful of Western European countries, Israel adopted a policy of determined resistance to and immediate retaliation against PLO and Arab provocations. By the spring of 1967, relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors had deteriorated as Nasser attempted to improve his standing in the Arab world by imposing a blockade against Israeli commerce through the Gulf of Aqaba (AH-kah-buh), a move that he had attempted before in 1956.

THE SIX-DAY WAR Concerned that it might be isolated, and lacking firm support from Western powers (which had originally guaranteed Israel the freedom to use the Gulf of Aqaba), in June 1967 Israel suddenly launched air strikes against Egypt and several of its Arab neighbors. Israeli armies then broke the blockade at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba and occupied the Sinai peninsula. Other Israeli forces attacked Jordanian territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River (Jordan's King Hussein had recently signed an alliance with Egypt and placed his army under Egyptian command), occupied the city of Jerusalem, and seized Syrian military positions in the Golan Heights, along the Israeli-Syrian border (see Map 29.2 on p. 877).

Despite limited Soviet support for Egypt and Syria, in a war lasting only six days, Israel had mocked Nasser's pretensions of Arab unity and tripled the size of its territory, thus enhancing its precarious security. But the new Israel aroused even more bitter hostility among the Arabs and added one million Palestinians inside its borders, most of them on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

During the next few years, the focus of the Arab-Israeli dispute shifted as Arab states demanded the return of the territories lost in the 1967 war. Meanwhile, many Israelis argued that the new lands improved the security of the beleaguered state and should be retained. Concerned that the dispute might lead to a confrontation between the superpowers, with the Soviet Union backing the Arabs, the Nixon administration tried to achieve a peace settlement. The peace effort received a mild stimulus when Nasser died of a heart attack in September 1970 and was succeeded by his vice president, ex-general Anwar al-Sadat (ahn-WAHR al-sah-DAHT) (1918–1981). Sadat soon showed himself to be more pragmatic than his predecessor, dropping the now irrelevant name United Arab Republic in favor of the Arab Republic of Egypt and replacing Nasser's socialist policies with a new strategy based on free enterprise and encouragement of Western investment. He also agreed to sign a peace treaty with Israel on condition that

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A Plea for Peace in the Middle East

In an effort to end an Egyptian blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba against Israeli shipping, Israel joined Great Britain and France in attacking Egypt during the Suez Canal crisis in October 1956. Israel quickly captured the Sinai peninsula, but the United Nations condemned the attack and pressured Great Britain, France, and Israel to withdraw their troops. For four months, Israel refused, demanding that the Arab states respect its right to use the Gulf of Aqaba. In March 1957, however, the Israeli government agreed to withdraw from the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. This selection is from the speech in which Golda Meir, Israel’s foreign minister, announced the withdrawal.

Golda Meir Announces an Israeli Withdrawal from the Sinai

Interference, by armed force, with ships of Israeli flag exercising free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and through the Straits of Tiran, will be viewed by Israel as an attack entitling it to exercise its inherent right of self-defense under article 51 of the United Nations Charter and to take all such measures as are necessary to ensure the free and innocent passage of its ships in the Gulf and in the Straits. We make this announcement in accordance with the accepted principles of international law under which all states have an inherent right to use their forces to protect their ships and their rights against interference by armed force. My government naturally hopes that this contingency will not occur. In a public address on 20 February 1957, President Eisenhower states: “We should not assume that, if Israel withdraws, Egypt will prevent Israel shipping from using the Suez Canal or the Gulf of Aqaba.” This declaration has weighed heavily with my government in determining its action today. Israel is now prepared to withdraw its forces from the regions of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran in the confidence that there will be continued freedom of navigation for international and Israeli shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba and through the Straits of Tiran.

May I now add these few words to the states in the Middle East area and, more specifically, to the neighbors of Israel. We all come from an area which is a very ancient one. The hills and the valleys have been witnesses to many wars and many conflicts. But that is not the only thing which characterizes that part of the world from which we come. It is also a part of the world which is of an ancient culture. It is that part of the world which has given to humanity three great religions. It is also that part of the world which has given a code of ethics to all humanity. In our countries, in the entire region, all our peoples are anxious for and in need of a higher standard of living, of great programs of development and progress. Can we, from now on—all of us—turn a new leaf and, instead of fighting with each other, can we all, united, fight poverty and disease and illiteracy? Is it possible for us to put all our efforts and all our energy into one single purpose, the betterment and progress of development of all our lands and all our peoples? I can here pledge the government and the people of Israel to do their part in this united effort. There is no limit to what we are prepared to contribute so that all of us, together, can live to see a day of happiness for our peoples and can see again from that region a great contribution to peace and happiness for all humanity.

Q How did neighboring states react to Golda Meir’s offer of cooperation? Why did they react the way they did?

Israel withdraw to its pre-1967 frontiers. Concerned that other Arab countries would refuse to make peace and take advantage of its presumed weakness, Israel refused.

Rebuffed in his offer of peace, smarting from criticism of his moderate stand from other Arab leaders, and increasingly concerned over Israeli plans to build permanent Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Sadat attempted once again to renew Arab unity through a new confrontation with Israel. On Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement), an Israeli national holiday, Egyptian forces suddenly launched an air and artillery attack on Israeli positions in the Sinai just east of the Suez Canal. Syrian armies attacked Israeli positions in the Golan Heights. After early Arab successes, the Israelis managed to recoup some of their losses on both fronts. As a superpower confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union loomed, a cease-fire was finally reached. The focus of tension, however, now switched to Lebanon, where many Palestinians had found refuge and the PLO had set up its headquarters. Rising tension along the border was compounded by increasingly hostile disputes between Christians and Muslims over control of the capital, Beirut (bay-ROOT).

THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS After his election as U.S. president in 1976, Jimmy Carter began to press for a compromise peace based on Israel’s return of territories occupied during the 1967 war and Arab recognition of the state of Israel. In September 1978, Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin (muh-NAH-kum BAY-gin) (1913–1992) met with Carter at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland. In the first treaty signed with a Muslim state, Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai but not from other occupied territories unless it was recognized by other Arab countries.
During the early 1980s, the militancy of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) increased, leading to rising unrest. To control the situation, in 1982 a new Israeli government under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir (b. 1915) invaded southern Lebanon to destroy PLO commando bases near the Israeli border. The invasion aroused controversy abroad and further destabilized the perilous balance between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon. In the early 1990s, U.S.-sponsored peace talks opened between Israel and a number of its neighbors, leading to a breakthrough in 1993, when Israel and the PLO reached an agreement in Oslo, Norway, calling for Palestinian autonomy in selected areas of Israel in return for PLO recognition of the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

Progress in implementing the agreement, however, was slow. Terrorist attacks by Palestinian militants resulted in heavy casualties and shook the confidence of many Jewish citizens that their security needs could be protected under the agreement. At the same time, Jewish residents of the West Bank resisted the extension of Palestinian authority in the area. In November 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (rah-BEN) (1922–1995) was assassinated by an Israeli opponent of the accords. National elections held a few months later led to the formation of a new government under Benjamin Netanyahu (NET-ahn-YAH-hoo) (b. 1949), which adopted a tougher stance in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat.

When Netanyahu was replaced as prime minister by Ehud Barak (EH-hud bah-RAHK) (b. 1942), the new Labour government promised to revitalize the peace process. Negotiations continued with the PLO and also got under way in 1999 with Syria over a peace settlement in Lebanon and the possible return of the Golan Heights. But peace talks broke down over the future of the city of Jerusalem, leading to massive riots by Palestinians, a tough Israeli response, and the election in 2000 of a new and more hard-line Israeli prime minister, the former defense minister Ariel Sharon (ah-REE-ul shuh-ROHN) (b. 1928). Sharon’s ascent to leadership was accompanied by a rash of suicide attacks by Palestinians against Israeli targets, an intensive Israeli military crackdown on suspected terrorist sites inside Palestinian territory, and a dramatic increase in bloodshed on both sides.

The death of Arafat in 2004 and his replacement by the Palestinian moderate Mahmoud Abbas (mah-MOOD ah-BAHHS) (b. 1935), followed by the unilateral evacuation of Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip a year later, raised modest hopes for progress in peace talks (key issues that remain unresolved include the future status of Jerusalem and the presence of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories). But the incapacitation of Prime Minister Sharon by a stroke and the victory of Hamas (HAH-mahhs), a militant Shi’ite organization that calls for the destruction of the state of Israel, in Palestinian elections held in late 2005 undermined the search for peace. In 2006, rocket attacks launched by guerrillas from Hezbolah (hes-bah-LAH or HEZ-bullah), a militant Shi’ite organization and political party based in Lebanon, provoked an Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon to wipe out the source

**MAP 29.2 Israel and Its Neighbors.** This map shows the evolution of the state of Israel since its founding in 1948. Areas occupied by Israel after the Six-Day War in 1967 are indicated in green.

What is the significance of the West Bank?

The promise of the Camp David accords was not fulfilled. One reason was the assassination of Sadat by Islamic militants in October 1981. But there were deeper causes, including the continued unwillingness of Muslim governments to recognize Israel and the Israeli government’s encouragement of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

**THE PLO AND THE INTIFADA** During the early 1980s, the militancy of the Palestinians increased, leading to rising unrest, popularly labeled the *intifada* (in-tuh-FAH-duh) (uprising), among PLO supporters living inside Israel. To control the situation, in 1982 a new Israeli government under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir (yits-HAHK shuh-MEEER) (b. 1915) invaded southern Lebanon to destroy PLO commando bases near the Israeli border. The invasion aroused controversy abroad and further destabilized the perilous balance between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon. In the early 1990s, U.S.-sponsored peace talks opened between Israel and a number of its neighbors, leading to a breakthrough in 1993, when Israel and the PLO reached an agreement in Oslo, Norway, calling for Palestinian autonomy in selected areas of Israel in return for PLO recognition of the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

Progress in implementing the agreement, however, was slow. Terrorist attacks by Palestinian militants resulted in heavy casualties and shook the confidence of many Jewish citizens that their security needs could be protected under the
of the assault, thereby raising the specter of a wider conflict. As attitudes on both sides hardened, national elections in 2009 led to the return to office of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

**Revolution in Iran**

The Arab-Israeli dispute also provoked an international oil crisis. In 1960, a number of oil-producing states formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to gain control over oil prices, but the organization was not recognized by the foreign oil companies. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, some OPEC nations announced significant increases in the price of oil to foreign countries. The price hikes were accompanied by an apparent oil shortage and created serious economic problems in the United States and Europe as well as in the Third World. They also proved to be a boon to oil-exporting countries, such as Libya, now under the leadership of the militantly anti-Western Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.

One of the key oil-exporting countries was Iran. Under the leadership of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (ree-ZAH PAH-luh-vee) (1919–1980), who had taken over from his father in 1941, Iran had become one of the richest countries in the Middle East. Relations with the West had occasionally been fragile, especially after Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh (MOH-sah-dek) (1882–1967) attempted to nationalize the oil industry in 1951. Mossadegh was overthrown in 1953 with covert U.S. assistance, and during the next twenty years, Iran became a prime U.S. ally. With encouragement from the United States, which hoped that Iran could become a force for stability in the Persian Gulf, the shah attempted to carry out a series of social and economic reforms to transform the country into the most advanced in the region.

Statistical evidence suggested that his efforts were succeeding. Per capita income increased dramatically, literacy rates improved, a modern communications infrastructure took shape, and an affluent middle class emerged in the capital of Tehran (teh-RAHN). Under the surface, however, trouble was brewing. Despite an ambitious land reform program, many peasants were still landless, unemployment among intellectuals was dangerously high, and the urban middle class was squeezed by high inflation. Housing costs had skyrocketed, in part because of a massive influx of foreigners attracted by oil money.

**THE FALL OF THE SHAH** Some of the unrest took the form of religious discontent as millions of devout Muslims looked with distaste at a new Iranian civilization based on greed, sexual license, and a decline in religious values. Religious conservatives opposed rampant government corruption, the ostentation of the shah’s court, and the extension of voting rights to women. Some opposition elements resorted to terrorism against wealthy Iranians or foreign residents in an attempt to initiate social and political disorder. In response, the shah’s U.S.-trained security police, the SAVAK, imprisoned and sometimes tortured thousands of dissidents.

Leading the opposition was Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini (1900–1989), an austere Shi’ite cleric who had been exiled to Iraq and then to France because of his outspoken opposition to the shah’s regime. From Paris, Khomeini continued his attacks in print, on television, and in radio broadcasts. By the late 1970s, large numbers of Iranians—especially Shi’ite Muslims, whose approach to religion is sometimes more mystical and messianic than that of their Sunni counterparts—began to respond to Khomeini’s diatribes against the “satanic regime,” and demonstrations by his supporters were repressed with ferocity by the police. But workers’ strikes grew in intensity. In 1979, the government collapsed and was replaced by a hastily formed Islamic republic headed by the returning Ayatollah Khomeini. The new government, dominated by Shi’ite clergy, immediately began to introduce traditional

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**The Temple Mount at Jerusalem.** The Temple Mount is one of the most sacred spots in the city of Jerusalem. Originally, it was the site of the Temple built during the reign of Solomon, king of the Israelites, about 1000 B.C.E. The Western Wall of the Temple is shown in the foreground. Beyond the wall is the Dome of the Rock complex, built on the place from which Muslims believe that Muhammad ascended to heaven. Sacred to both Judaism and Islam, the Temple Mount is now a major bone of contention between Muslims and Jews and a prime obstacle to a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute.
The Iranian author Marjane Satrapi (b. 1969) has re-created Persepolis, her autobiographical graphic novel, as an enthralling animated film of the same name. Using simple black-and-white animation, the movie recounts key stages in the turbulent history of modern Iran as seen through the eyes of a spirited young girl, also named Marjane. The dialogue is in French with English subtitles (a version dubbed in English is also available), and the voices of the characters are rendered beautifully by Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Chiara Mastroianni, and other European film stars.

In the film, Marjane is the daughter of middle-class left-wing intellectuals who abhor the dictatorship of the shah and actively participate in his overthrow in 1979. After the revolution, however, the severity of the ayatollah’s Islamic rule arouses their secularist and democratic impulses. Encouraged by her loving grandmother, who reinforces her modernist and feminist instincts, Marjane resents having to wear a head scarf and the educational restrictions imposed by the puritanical new Islamic regime, but to little avail. Emotionally exhausted and fearful of political retribution from the authorities, her family finally sends her to study in Vienna.

Islamic law (see the Film & History feature above). A new reign of terror ensued as supporters of the shah were rounded up and executed.

Though much of the outside world focused on the U.S. embassy in Tehran, where militants held a number of foreign hostages, the Iranian Revolution involved much more. In the eyes of the ayatollah and his followers, the United States was “the great Satan,” the powerful protector of Israel and enemy of Muslims everywhere. Furthermore, it was responsible for the corruption of Iranian society under the shah. With economic conditions in Iran rapidly deteriorating, the Islamic revolutionary government finally agreed to free the hostages in return for the release of Iranian assets in the United States.

During the next few years, the intensity of the Iranian Revolution moderated slightly as the government displayed a modest tolerance for a loosening of clerical control over freedom of expression and social activities. In 1997, a moderate Muslim cleric, Mohammad Khatami (KHAH-tah-mee) (b. 1943), was elected president of Iran. Khatami, whose surprising victory reflected a growing desire among many Iranians for a more pluralistic society open to the outside world, signaled the tantalizing possibility that Iran might wish to improve relations with the United States. During the next few years, press censorship was relaxed, leading to the emergence of several reformist newspapers and magazines, and restrictions on women’s activities were loosened. But the new president faced severe pressures from conservative elements to maintain the purity of Islamic laws, and in April 2000, the judiciary ordered several reformist publications to close because they had printed materials that “disparaged Islam.” Although student protests erupted into the streets in 2003, hard-liners continued to reject proposals to expand civil rights and limit the power of the clerics.

In 2005, the presidential elections brought a new leader, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (mah-MOOD ah-mah-dee-nee-ZHAHHD) (b. 1956), to power in Tehran. He immediately inflamed the situation by calling publicly for the destruction of the state of Israel, while his government aroused unease throughout the world by indicating its determination to

### CHRONOLOGY The Modern Middle East

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>King Farouk overthrown in Egypt</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<td>Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal</td>
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<td>Formation of the United Arab Republic</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<td>First oil crisis</td>
<td>1973</td>
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<td>Iranian Revolution</td>
<td>1979</td>
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<td>Iran-Iraq War begins</td>
<td>1980</td>
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<td>Iraqi invasion of Kuwait</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
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<td>Persian Gulf War</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
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<td>Al-Qaeda terrorist attack on the United States</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>U.S.-led forces invade Iraq</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmadinejad elected president of Iran</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular riots in Middle East</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Overthrow of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak</td>
<td>2011</td>
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develop a nuclear energy program, ostensibly for peaceful purposes. Despite worsening conditions inside Iran that eroded the government’s popularity, Ahmadinejad was reelected in June 2009, although charges of voting irregularities aroused a widespread wave of protest.

Crisis in the Persian Gulf

Although much of the Iranians’ anger was directed against the United States during the early phases of the revolution, Iran had enemies closer to home. To the north, the immensely powerful Soviet Union, driven by atheistic communism, was viewed as the latest incarnation of the Russian threat of previous centuries. To the west was a militant and hostile Iraq, under the leadership of the ambitious and brutal Saddam Hussein (sah-DAHM hoo-SAYN) (1937–2006). Iraq had just passed through a turbulent period. The monarchy had been overthrown by a military coup in 1958, but conflicts within the military ruling junta led to chronic instability, and in 1979 Colonel Saddam Hussein, a prominent member of the local Ba’athist Party, seized power on his own.

THE VISION OF SADDAM HUSSEIN

Saddam Hussein was a fervent believer in the Ba’athist vision of a single Arab state in the Middle East and soon began to persecute non-Arab groups in Iraq, including Persians and Kurds. He then turned his sights to territorial expansion to the east.

Iraq and Iran had long had an uneasy relationship, fueled by religious differences (Iranian Islam is predominantly Shi’ite, while the ruling caste in Iraq was Sunni) and a perennial dispute over borderlands adjacent to the Persian Gulf, the vital waterway for the export of oil from both countries. Like several of its neighbors, Iraq had long dreamed of unifying the Arabs but had been hindered by internal factions and suspicion among its neighbors.

During the mid-1970s, Iran gave some support to a Kurdish rebellion in the mountains of Iraq. In 1975, the government of the shah agreed to stop aiding the rebels in return for territorial concessions at the head of the Gulf. Five years later, however, the Kurdish revolt had been suppressed.

Saddam Hussein now saw his opportunity, accusing Iran of violating the territorial agreement, in 1980 he launched an attack on his neighbor. The war was a bloody one and lasted nearly ten years. Poison gas was used against civilians, and children were employed to clear minefields. Finally, with both sides virtually exhausted, a cease-fire was arranged in the fall of 1988.

The bitter conflict with Iran had not slackened Saddam Hussein’s appetite for territorial expansion. In early August 1990, Iraqi military forces suddenly moved across the border and occupied the small neighboring country of Kuwait at the head of the Gulf. The immediate pretext was the claim that Kuwait was pumping oil from fields inside Iraqi territory. Baghdad was also angry over the Kuwaiti government’s demand for repayment of loans it had made to Iraq during the war with Iran. But the underlying reason was Iraq’s contention that Kuwait was legally a part of Iraq. Kuwait had been part of the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the local prince had agreed to place his patrimony under British protection. When Iraq became independent in 1932, it claimed the area on the grounds that the state of Kuwait had been created by British imperialism, but opposition from major Western powers and other countries in the region, which feared the consequences of a “greater Iraq,” prevented an Iraqi takeover.

THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 sparked an international outcry, and the United States assembled a multinational coalition that, under the name Operation Desert Storm, liberated the country and destroyed a substantial part of Iraq’s armed forces in 1991. But the allied forces did not occupy Baghdad at the end of the war out of fear that doing so would cause a breakup of the country, an eventuality that would operate to the benefit of Iran. The allies hoped instead that Saddam’s regime would be ousted by an internal revolt. In the meantime, harsh economic sanctions were imposed on the Iraqi government as the condition for peace. The anticipated overthrow of Saddam Hussein did not materialize, however, and his tireless efforts to evade the conditions of the cease-fire continued to bedevil U.S. President Bill Clinton and his successor, George W. Bush.

Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq

The terrorist attacks launched against U.S. targets in September 2001 added a new dimension to the Middle Eastern equation. After the failure of the Soviet Union to quell the rebellion in Afghanistan during the 1980s, a fundamentalist Muslim group known as the Taliban, supported covertly by the United States, seized power in Kabul and ruled the country with a fanaticism reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution in China. Backed by conservative religious forces in Pakistan, the Taliban provided a base of operations for
Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda terrorist network. After the attacks of September 11, a coalition of forces led by the United States overthrew the Taliban and attempted to build a new and moderate government. But the country’s history of bitter intermecne warfare among tribal groups remained a severe challenge to those efforts, and Taliban forces have managed to regroup and continue to operate in the mountainous region adjacent to the Pakistani border. The terrorist threat from al-Qaeda, however, was dealt a major blow in May 2011, when Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. special operations forces during a raid on his hideout in northern Pakistan.

After moving against the Taliban at the end of 2001 the administration of George W. Bush, charging that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had not only provided support to bin Laden’s terrorist organization but also stockpiled weapons of mass destruction for use against his enemies, threatened to invade Iraq and remove him from power. It was the president’s hope that the overthrow of the Iraqi dictator would promote the spread of democracy throughout the region. The plan, widely debated in the media and opposed by many of the United States’ traditional allies, disquieted Arab leaders and fanned anti-American sentiment throughout the Muslim world. Nevertheless, in March 2003, U.S.-led forces attacked Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein’s regime. In the months that followed, occupation forces sought to restore stability to the country while setting out plans on which to build a democratic society. But although Saddam Hussein was captured by U.S. troops and later executed, armed resistance by militant Muslim elements continued.

When Barack Obama came into office in 2009, he promised to bring about the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq, while training an Iraqi military force capable of defeating the remaining insurgents. In the meantime, a fragile government has been formed in Baghdad, the embryo of a possible pro-Western state that could serve as an emblem of democracy in the Middle East. Squabbling among Sunni, Shi’ite, and Kurdish elements within the country, however, is a vivid reminder that a similar effort by the British eighty years earlier ended with minimal success.

Revolution in the Middle East

In the early months of 2011, popular protests against current conditions broke out in several countries in the Middle East. Beginning in Tunisia, the riots spread rapidly to Egypt—where they brought about the abrupt resignation of longtime president Hosni Mubarak (HAHS-nee moo-BAH-rahk) (b.1929)—and then to other countries in the region, such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen, where political leaders sought to quell the unrest, often by violent means. The uprisings aroused hopes around the world that the seeds of democracy had been planted in a region long dominated by autocratic governments, but also provoked widespread concern that unstable conditions could lead to further violence and a rise in international terrorism. In the months following the breakout of unrest, the prognosis for the future of the region was still unclear.

Society and Culture in the Contemporary Middle East

FOCUS QUESTION: How have religious issues affected economic, social, and cultural conditions in the Middle East in recent decades?

In the Middle East today, all aspects of society and culture—from political and economic issues to literature, art, and the role of the family—are intertwined with questions of religious faith.

Varieties of Government: The Politics of Islam

To many seasoned observers, the strategy applied by President George W. Bush in Iraq appeared unrealistic, since democratic values are not deeply rooted in the culture of the Middle East. In many countries, feudal rulers remain securely in power. The kings of Saudi Arabia, for example, continue to govern by traditional precepts and, citing the distinctive character of Muslim society, have been reluctant to establish representative political institutions. These rulers insist that strict observance of traditional customs be maintained. Religious police are responsible for enforcing the Muslim dress code, maintaining the prohibition against alcohol, and making sure that offices close during the time of prayer.

To be sure, there have been some variations in government throughout the region. In some societies, traditional authority has been replaced by charismatic one-party rule or military dictatorships. Nasser’s Egypt was a single-party state where the leader won political power by the force of his presence or personality. The regimes of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, and Saddam Hussein in Iraq could also trace much of their power to the personal appeal of the leader.

In other states, charismatic rule has given way to modernizing bureaucratic regimes. Examples include the governments of Syria, Yemen, Turkey, and Egypt since Nasser, where Anwar al-Sadat and his successor, Hosni Mubarak, focused on performance. Most of these regimes have remained highly autocratic in character, however, except in Turkey, where free elections and the sharing of power have become more prevalent in recent years. Only in the Jewish state of Israel are democratic institutions firmly established.

A few Arab nations, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, have engaged in limited forms of democratic experimentation. Most of the region’s recent leaders, however, have maintained that Western-style democracy is not appropriate for their societies. Bashar al-Assad (bah-SHahr al-ah-SAHHD) (b. 1965), the president of Syria, once remarked that he would tolerate only “positive criticism” of his policies. “We have to have our own democracy to match our history and culture,” he said, “arising from the needs of our people and our reality.” President Mubarak of Egypt often insisted to foreign critics that only authoritarian rule could prevent the spread of Islamic radicalism throughout his country.
Islam and Democracy

One of George W. Bush’s objectives in launching the invasion of Iraq was to promote the emergence of democratic states in the Middle East. According to U.S. officials, one reason for the formation of terrorist movements in Muslim societies is the prevalence of dictatorial governments that do not serve the interests of their citizens. According to the author of this editorial, an Indian Muslim, the problem lies as much with the actions of Western countries as it does with political attitudes in the Muslim world.

M. J. Akbar, “Linking Islam to Dictatorship”

Let us examine a central canard, that Islam and democracy are incompatible. This is an absurdity. There is nothing Islamic or un-Islamic about democracy. Democracy is the outcome of a political process, not a religious process.

It is glibly suggested that “every” Muslim country is a dictatorship, but the four largest Muslim populations of the world—in Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, and Turkey—vote to change governments. Pakistan could easily have been on this list.

Voting does not make these Muslims less or more religious. There are dictators among Muslims just as there are dictators among Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus. . . . Christian Latin America has seen ugly forms of dictatorship, as has Christian Africa.

What is unique to the Muslim world is not the absence of democracy but the fact that in 1918, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, every single Muslim in the world lived under foreign subjugation. . . .

The West, in the shape of Britain, France, or America, was never interested in democracy when a helpful dictator or king would serve. When people got a chance to express their wish, it was only logical that they would ask for popular rule. It was the street that brought Mossadegh to power in Iran and drove the shah of Iran to tearful exile in Rome. Who brought the shah of Iran and autocracy back to Iran? The CIA.

If Iranian democracy had been permitted a chance in 1953, there would have been no uprising led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. In other countries, where the struggle for independence was long and brutal, as in Algeria and Indonesia, the militias who had fought the war institutionalized army authority. In other instances, civilian heroes confused their own well-being with national health. They became regressive dictators. Once again, there was nothing Islamic about it.

Muslim countries will become democracies, too, because it is the finest form of modern governance. But it will be a process interrupted by bloody experience as the street wrenches power from usurpers. . . .

Democracy has become the latest rationale for the occupation of Iraq. . . . Granted, democracy is always preferable to tyranny no matter how it comes. But Iraqis are not dupes. They will take democracy and place it at the service of nationalism. . . .

There is uncertainty and apprehension across the Muslim nations: uncertainty about where they stand, and apprehension about both American power and the repugnant use of terrorism that in turn invites the exercise of American power. There is also anger that a legitimate cause like that of Palestine can get buried in the debris of confusion. Muslims do not see Palestinians as terrorists.

How does the author of this editorial answer the charge that democracy and Islam are incompatible? To what degree, in his view, is the West responsible for the problems of the Middle East?

Recent electoral victory of the militant group Hamas in Palestine may be a case in point.

For many years, most world leaders have accepted the logic of these contentions, provoking some critics to charge that Western governments coddle Middle Eastern dictatorships as a means of maintaining stability in the region and preserving their access to the vast oil reserves located on the Arabian peninsula (see the box on p. 882). For their part, authoritarian leaders in the region sought to deflect, often with great success, popular discontent with local conditions onto the West.

The recent outbreak of popular unrest that has erupted from North Africa to the Arabian peninsula raises questions about the potential for democratic changes to emerge in the countries throughout the region. Are democratic institutions and the principles of human freedom truly antithetical to the culture of the Middle East and the principles of Islam? As we await the consequences of the current wave of popular unrest, the fate of the region hangs in the balance.

The Economics of the Middle East: Oil and Sand

Few areas exhibit a greater disparity of individual and national wealth than the Middle East. While millions live in abject poverty, a fortunate few rank among the wealthiest people in the world. The primary reason for this disparity is oil. Unfortunately for most of the peoples of the region, oil
reserves are distributed unevenly and all too often are located in areas where the population density is low (see Map 29.3). Egypt and Turkey, with more than 75 million inhabitants apiece, have almost no oil reserves. The combined population of Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia is about 35 million people. This disparity in wealth inspired Nasser’s quest for Arab unity but has also posed a major obstacle to that unity.

ECONOMICS AND ISLAM Not surprisingly, considering their different resources and political systems, the states of the Middle East have adopted diverse approaches to the problem of developing strong and stable economies. Some, like Nasser in Egypt and the leaders of the Ba’ath Party in Syria, attempted to create a form of Arab socialism, favoring a high level of government involvement in the economy to relieve the inequities of the free enterprise system. Others turned to the Western capitalist model to maximize growth while using taxes or massive development projects to build a modern infrastructure, redistribute wealth, and maintain political stability and economic opportunity for all (see the comparative illustration on p. 884).

Whatever their approach, all the states have attempted to develop their economies in accordance with Islamic beliefs. Although the Qur’an has little to say about economics and cannot be said to be either capitalist or socialist, it is clear in its opposition to charging interest and in its concern for the material welfare of the Muslim community, the umma. How these goals are to be achieved, though, is a matter of interpretation. Socialist theories of economic development such as Nasser’s were often suggested as a way to promote economic growth while meeting the requirements of Islamic doctrine. State intervention in the economic sector would bring about rapid development, while land redistribution and the nationalization or regulation of industry would minimize the harsh inequities of the marketplace. In general, however, the socialist approach has had little success, and most governments, including those of Egypt and Syria, eventually shifted to a more free enterprise approach while encouraging foreign investment to compensate for a lack of capital or technology.

AGRICULTURAL POLICIES Although the amount of arable land is relatively small, most countries in the Middle East rely on farming to supply food for their growing populations. Much of the fertile land was owned by wealthy absentee landlords, but land reform programs in several countries have attempted to alleviate this problem.

The most comprehensive and probably the most successful land reform program was instituted in Egypt, where Nasser and his successors managed to reassign nearly a quarter of all cultivable lands by limiting the amount a single individual could hold. Similar programs in Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria generally had less effect. After the 1979 revolution in Iran, many farmers forcibly seized lands from the landlords, raising questions of ownership that the revolutionary government has tried to resolve with only minimal success.
Agricultural productivity throughout the region has been plagued by a lack of water. With populations growing at more than 2 percent annually on average in the Middle East (more than 3 percent in some countries), several governments have tried to increase the amount of water available for irrigation. Many attempts have been sabotaged by governmental ineptitude, political disagreements, and territorial conflicts, however. For example, disputes between Israel and its neighbors over water rights and between Iraq and its neighbors over the exploitation of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have caused serious tensions in recent years. Today, the dearth of water in the region is reaching crisis proportions.

**MIGRATORY WORKERS** Another way that governments have attempted to deal with rapid population growth is to encourage emigration. Oil-producing states with small populations, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have imported labor from other countries in the region, mostly to work in the oil fields. Since the mid-1980s, the majority of the population in those states has been composed of foreign nationals, who often send the bulk of their salaries back to their families in their home countries. When oil revenues declined in the 1980s and 1990s, however, several governments took measures to reduce their migrant population. Today migrant workers are a volatile force in the politics of the region.

**The Islamic Revival**

In recent years, developments in the Middle East have often been described in terms of a resurgence of traditional values and customs in response to Western influence. Indeed, some
conservative religious forces in the area have consciously attempted to replace foreign culture and values with allegedly “pure” Islamic forms of belief and behavior.

**MODERNIST ISLAM** Initially, many Muslim intellectuals responded to Western influence by trying to create a “modernized” set of Islamic beliefs and practices that would not clash with the demands of the twentieth century. This process took place to some degree in most Islamic societies, but it was especially prevalent in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk embraced the strategy when he attempted to secularize the Islamic religion in the new Turkish republic. The Turkish model was followed by Shah Reza Khan and his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in Iran and then by Nasser in postwar Egypt, all of whom attempted to honor Islamic values while asserting the primacy of other issues such as political and economic development. Religion, in effect, had become the handmaiden of political power, national identity, and economic prosperity.

These secularizing trends were particularly noticeable among the political, intellectual, and economic elites in urban areas. They had less influence in the countryside, among the poor, and among devout elements within the clergy. Many of the clerics believed that Western influence in the cities had given birth to political and economic corruption, sexual promiscuity, hedonism, individualism, and the prevalence of alcohol, pornography, and drugs. Although such practices had long existed in the Middle East, they were now far more visible and socially acceptable.

**RETURN TO TRADITION** Reaction among conservatives against the modernist movement was quick to emerge in several countries and reached its zenith in the late 1970s with the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini to Iran. It is not surprising that Iran took the lead in light of its long tradition of ideological purity within the Shi’ite sect as well as the uncompromisingly secular character of the shah’s reforms in the postwar era. In Iran today, traditional Islamic beliefs are all-pervasive and extend into education, clothing styles, social practices, and the legal system. In recent years, for example, Iranian women have been heavily fined or even flogged for violating the Islamic dress code.

The cultural and social effects of the Iranian Revolution soon began to spread. In Algeria, the political influence of fundamentalist Islamic groups enabled them to win a stunning victory in the national elections in 1992. When the military stepped in to cancel the second round of elections and crack down on the militants, the latter responded with a campaign of terrorism against moderates that claimed thousands of lives.

A similar trend emerged in Egypt, where militant groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, formed in 1928 as a means of promoting personal piety, engaged in terrorism, including the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat and attacks on foreign tourists, who are considered carriers of corrupt Western influence.

Even in Turkey, generally considered the most secular of Islamic societies, a Muslim political group took power in a coalition government formed in 1996. The new government adopted a pro-Arab stance in foreign affairs and threatened to reduce the country’s economic and political ties to Europe. Worried moderates voiced their concern that the secular legacy of Kemal Atatürk was being eroded, and eventually the government resigned under heavy pressure from the military. But a new Islamist organization, known as the Justice and Development Party (the AK Party), won elections held in 2007 and has signaled its intention to guarantee the rights of devout Muslims to display their faith publicly. In elections held in June 2011, the AK Party won a clear victory with about 50 percent of the vote.

Throughout the Middle East, even governments and individuals who do not support efforts to return to pure Islamic principles have adjusted their behavior and beliefs in subtle ways.

*Answering the Call of the Muezzin.* With the renewed fervor of Muslims in the world today, scenes such as this one in Kuwait exemplify the adherents’ humble submission to God. Required to pray five times a day—at dawn, noon, midafternoon, sunset, and early evening—a Muslim, after ritual ablutions, prostrates himself facing Mecca to proclaim, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.” Responding to the call of the muezzin, which today is often a recorded message from the minaret of a mosque, the faithful can perform their prayers in a few minutes, wherever they are, at home or in any public place. There are an estimated 3.1 billion Muslims in the world today, 175 million of whom are in Indonesia, 105 million in India, and 15 million in Europe.
ways. In Egypt, for example, the government now encourages television programs devoted to religion in preference to comedies and adventure shows imported from the West, and alcohol is discouraged or at least consumed more discreetly.

Women in the Middle East

Nowhere have the fault lines between tradition and modernity in Muslim societies in the Middle East been so sharp as in the ongoing debate over the role of women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women’s place in Middle Eastern society had changed little since the death of the prophet Muhammad. Women were secluded in their homes and had few legal, political, or social rights.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, advocates of modernist views began to contend that Islamic doctrine was not inherently opposed to women’s rights. To modernists, Islamic traditions such as female seclusion, wearing the veil, and polygamy were actually pre-Islamic folk traditions that had been tolerated in the early Islamic era and continued to be practiced in later centuries. Such views had a considerable impact on a number of Middle Eastern societies, including Turkey and Iran. As we have seen, greater rights for women were a crucial element in the social revolution promoted by Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. In Iran, Shah Reza Khan and his son granted female suffrage and encouraged the education of women. In Egypt, a vocal feminist movement arose in educated women’s circles in Cairo as early as the 1920s. With the exception of Orthodox religious communities, women in Israel have achieved substantial equality with men and are active in politics, the professions, and even the armed forces. Golda Meir (muh-EE-ur) (1898–1978), prime minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974, became an international symbol of the ability of women to be world leaders.

In recent years, a more traditional view of women’s role has tended to prevail in many Middle Eastern countries. Attacks by religious conservatives on the growing role of women contributed to the emotions underlying the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Iranian women were instructed to wear the veil and to dress modestly in public. Films produced in postrevolutionary Iran rarely featured women, and when they did, physical contact between men and women was prohibited. The events in Iran had repercussions in secular Muslim societies such as Egypt, Turkey, and far-off Malaysia, where women began to dress more modestly in public and criticism of open sexuality in the media became increasingly frequent.

The most conservative nation by far remains Saudi Arabia, where following Wahhabi tradition, women are not only segregated and expected to wear the veil in public but also restricted in education and forbidden to drive automobiles (see the box on p. 887). Still, women’s rights have been extended in a few countries. In 1999, women obtained the right to vote in Kuwait, and they have been granted an equal right with their husbands to seek a divorce in Egypt. Even in Iran, women have many freedoms that they lacked before the twentieth century; for example, they can receive military training, vote, practice birth control, and publish fiction. Most important, today nearly 60 percent of university entrants in Iran are women.

Literature and Art

As in other areas of Asia and Africa, the encounter with the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries stimulated a cultural renaissance in the Middle East. Muslim authors translated Western works into Arabic and Persian and began to experiment with new literary forms.

NATIONAL LITERATURES Iran has produced one of the most prominent national literatures in the contemporary Middle East. Since World War II, Iranian literature has been hampered somewhat by political considerations, since it has been expected to serve first the Pahlavi monarchy and then the Islamic republic. Nevertheless, Iranian writers are among the most prolific in the region and often write in prose, which has finally been accepted as the equal of poetry. Perhaps the most outstanding Iranian author of the twentieth century was the short-story writer Sadeq Hedayat (sah-DEK HAY-dy-yahht) (1903–1951). Hedayat was obsessed with the frailty and absurdity of life and wrote with compassion about the problems of ordinary human beings. Frustrated and disillusioned at the government’s suppression of individual liberties, he committed suicide in 1951. Like Japan’s Mishima Yukio, Hedayat later became a cult figure among his country’s youth.
“Almighty God created sexual desire in ten parts; then he gave nine parts to women and one to man.” So pronounced Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law, as he explained why women are held morally responsible as the instigators of sexual intercourse. Consequently, over the centuries, Islamic women have been secluded, veiled, and in many cases genitally mutilated in order to safeguard male virtue. Women are forbidden to look directly at, speak to, or touch a man prior to marriage. Even today, they are often sequestered at home or limited to strictly segregated areas away from all male contact. Women normally pray at home or in an enclosed antechamber of the mosque so that their physical presence will not disturb men’s spiritual concentration.

Especially limiting today are the laws governing women’s behavior in Saudi Arabia. Schooling for girls has never been compulsory because fathers believe that “educating women is like allowing the nose of the camel into the tent; eventually the beast will edge in and take up all the room inside.” The country did not establish its first girls’ school until 1956. The following description of Saudi women is from Nine Parts Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women by the journalist Geraldine Brooks.

Geraldine Brooks, Nine Parts Desire

Women were first admitted to university in Saudi Arabia in 1962, and all women’s colleges remain strictly segregated. Lecture rooms come equipped with closed-circuit TVs and telephones, so women students can listen to a male professor and question him by phone, without having to contaminate themselves by being seen by him. When the first dozen women graduated from university in 1973, they were devastated to find that their names hadn’t been printed on the commencement program. The old tradition, that it dishonors women to mention them, was depriving them of recognition they believed they’d earned. The women and their families protested, so a separate program was printed and a segregated graduation ceremony was held for the students’ female relatives. . . .

But while the opening of women’s universities widened access to higher learning for women, it also made the educational experience much shallower. Before 1962, many progressive Saudi families had sent their daughters abroad for education. They had returned to the kingdom not only with a degree but with experience of the outside world. . . . Now a whole generation of Saudi women have completed their education entirely within the country. . . .

Lack of opportunity for education abroad means that Saudi women are trapped in the confines of an education system that still lags men’s. Subjects such as geology and petroleum engineering—tickets to influential jobs in Saudi Arabia’s oil economy—remain closed to women. . . . Few women’s colleges have their own libraries, and libraries shared with men’s schools are either entirely off limits to women or open to them only one day per week. . . .

But women and men sit for the same degree examinations. Professors quietly acknowledge the women’s scores routinely outstrip the men’s. “It’s no surprise,” said one woman professor. “Look at their lives. The boys have their cars, they can spend the evenings cruising the streets with their friends, sitting in cafés, buying black-market alcohol and drinking all night. What do the girls have? Four walls and their books. For them, education is everything.”

According to Geraldine Brooks, do women in Saudi Arabia have an opportunity to receive an education? To what degree do they take advantage of it?

Despite the male-oriented nature of Iranian society, many of the new writers have been women. Since the revolution, the veil and the chador (CHUH-der or CHAH-der), an all-enveloping cloak, have become the central metaphor in Iranian women’s writing. Those who favor body covering praise it as the last bastion of defense against Western cultural imperialism. Behind the veil, the Islamic woman can breathe freely, unpolluted by foreign exploitation and moral corruption. Other Iranian women, however, consider the veil and chador a “mobile prison” or an oppressive anachronism from the Dark Ages. As one writer, Sousan Azadi, expressed it, “As I pulled the chador over me, I felt a heaviness descending over me. I was hidden and in hiding. There was nothing visible left of Sousan Azadi. I felt like an animal of the light suddenly trapped in a cave. I was just another faceless Moslem woman carrying a whole inner world hidden inside the chador.”

Whether or not they accept the veil, women writers are a vital part of contemporary Iranian literature, addressing all aspects of social issues.

Like Iran, Egypt in the twentieth century experienced a flowering of literature accelerated by the establishment of the Egyptian republic in the early 1950s. The most illustrious contemporary Egyptian writer was Naguib Mahfouz (nah-GEEB mah-FOOZ) (1911–2006), who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988. His Cairo Trilogy (1952) chronicles three generations of a merchant family in Cairo during the tumultuous years between the world wars. Mahfouz was particularly adept at blending panoramic historical events with the intimate lives of ordinary human beings. In recent years, several best-selling novels have been translated from Arabic into English.

Although Israeli literature arises from a totally different tradition from that of its neighbors, it shares with them certain contemporary characteristics and a concern for ordinary human beings. Early writers identified with the aspirations of the new nation, trying to find a sense of order in the new reality, voicing terrors from the past and hopes for the future.

Some contemporary Israeli authors, however, have taken controversial positions on sensitive national issues. Three internationally renowned authors, Amos Oz (b. 1939), A.B. Yehoshua (YEH-hoh-shoo-uh) (b. 1936), and David Grossman (b. 1954), have long been vocal supporters of peace with the Palestinians. Their works address the difficulties of the Israeli situation as well as the bitterness of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. In his extraordinary novel, *To the End of the Land* (2010), Grossman weaves together the daily joys and sorrows of an ordinary Israeli family with the constant undercurrent of conflict and loss. Having lost his own son in battle in 2006, Grossman has been labeled by some the moral conscience of his country. With the Arabs feeling victimized by colonialism and the Jews by Nazi Germany, each side believes that it alone is the rightful proprietor of ancient Palestine. For these three authors, the only solution is compromise, which, however unsatisfactory to both sides, is preferable to mutual self-destruction.

As in other areas of the developing world, the reading of books has drastically declined in the Middle East, eclipsed by television and other forms of popular entertainment and discouraged by poverty and by government censorship reflecting political control or religious conservatism. The old maxim that “Cairo writes, Beirut publishes, and Baghdad reads” is no longer true. In Egypt, where even *The Arabian Nights* was banned, the Mubarak government censored most new fiction, while in Iraq, severe inflation has made the purchase price of books prohibitive. Another problem stems from the fact that the one common language of the Middle East—classical Arabic—is not conducive to expressing contemporary life; it is as stilted as Shakespearean English. Yet if authors choose to write in their own Arabic dialect, they greatly restrict their potential audience.

**ART AND MUSIC** Like literature, the art of the modern Middle East has been profoundly influenced by its exposure to Western culture. At first, artists tended to imitate Western models, but later they began to experiment with national styles, returning to earlier forms for inspiration. Some emulated the writers in returning to the village to depict peasants and shepherds, but others followed international trends and attempted to express the alienation and disillusionment that characterize so much of modern life.

The popular music of the contemporary Middle East has also been strongly influenced by that of the modern West, but to different degrees in different countries. In Israel, many contemporary young rock stars voice lyrics as irreverent toward the traditions of their elders as those of Europe and the United States. One idol of many Israeli young people, the rock star Aviv Geffen (b. 1973), declares himself “a person of no values,” and his music carries a shock value that attacks the country’s political and social shibboleths. The rock music popular among Palestinians, on the other hand, makes greater use of Arab musical motifs and is closely tied to a political message. One recording, “The Song of the Engineer,” lauds Yahya Ayash (1966–1996), a Palestinian accused of manufacturing many of the explosive devices used in terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens. The lyrics have their own shock value: “Spread the flame of revolution. Your explosive will wipe the enemy out, like a volcano, a torch, a banner.” When one Palestinian rock leader from Gaza was asked why his group employed a musical style that originated in the West, he explained, “For us, this is a tool like any other. Young people in Gaza like our music, they listen to us, they buy our cassettes, and so they spread our message.”

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The Middle East is one of the most unstable regions in the world today. In part, this turbulence is due to the continued interference of outsiders attracted by the massive oil reserves under the parched wastes of the Arabian peninsula and in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf. Oil is indeed both a blessing and a curse to the peoples of the region. The similarities with Africa are striking, as governments in both regions struggle to achieve regional cooperation among themselves while fending off the influence of powerful foreign states or multinational corporations.

Some would argue, however, that anger at Western meddling in the Middle East began generations or even centuries earlier. According to the historian Bernard Lewis, the roots of Muslim resentment emerged centuries ago, when Arab hegemony in the region was replaced by European domination. That sense of humiliation culminated in the early twentieth century, when much of the Middle East was occupied by Western colonial regimes. Today, the world is reaping the harvest of that long-cultivated bitterness, as recruits flock to terrorist movements.
like al-Qaeda in response to Osama bin Laden’s call to eliminate all Western influence in the Arab world.

Another factor contributing to the volatility of the Middle East is the tug-of-war between the sense of ethnic identity in the form of nationalism and the intense longing to be part of a broader Islamic community, a dream that dates back to the time of the prophet Muhammad. Sometimes, the motive for seeking Arab unity may simply be self-aggrandizement—two such examples are Nasser and Sadam Hussein. But there are undoubtedly others who see restoration of the caliphate as a means of reversing the stain of moral decline that they see taking place throughout the region. Muslims, of course, are not alone in believing that a purer form of religious faith is the best antidote for such social evils as hedonism, sexual license, and political corruption. But it is hard to deny that the issue has been pursued with more anger and passion in the Middle East than in almost any other part of the world. The current wave of popular protest has been focused primarily on internal political and economic concerns in each country. But whatever the outcome, the role of Islam in society will be one of the foremost issues that will face new leaders in the region. The consequences of this struggle cannot yet be foreseen.

**CHAPTER TIMELINE**

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<td>1945</td>
<td>Statehood for Ghana</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Algeria granted independence from France</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Formation of the Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Release of Nelson Mandela from prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>First oil crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Iraqi invasion of Kuwait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Agreements on Palestinian autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>U.S.-led invasion of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Hamas elevated to power in Palestine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER REVIEW**

**Upon Reflection**

Q What are some of the key reasons advanced to explain why democratic institutions have been slow to take root in the Middle East?

Q Why do tensions between farmers and pastoral peoples appear to be on the rise in Africa today? In what parts of the continent is the problem most serious?

Q What are the main sources of discord in the Middle East today? How do they contribute to the popularity of radical terrorist organizations in the region?

**Key Terms**

**uhuru** (p. 858)
**apartheid** (p. 858)
**pan-Africanism** (p. 859)
**neocolonialism** (p. 860)
**African Union** (p. 868)

**Suggested Reading**


**WOMEN IN AFRICA** For interesting analyses of women’s issues in the Africa of this time frame, see M. Kevane, *Women and Development in Africa: How Gender Works* (Boulder, Colo., 2004).

THE MIDDLE EAST  A good general survey of the modern Middle East is A. Goldschmidt Jr., *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Boulder, Colo., 2005).


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