Decolonization
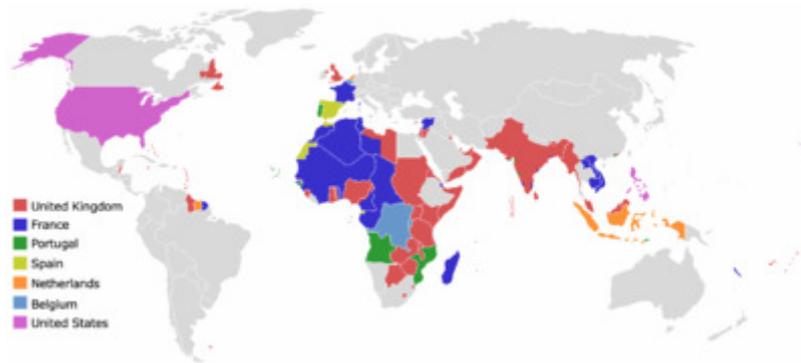

Colonialism in 1945

Decolonization refers to the undoing of [colonialism](#), the establishment of governance or authority through the creation of settlements by another country or jurisdiction. The term generally refers to the achievement of [independence](#) by the various [Western colonies and protectorates](#) in Asia and [Africa](#) following [World War II](#). This conforms with an intellectual movement known as [Post-Colonialism](#). A particularly active period of decolonization occurred between 1945 to 1960, beginning with the independence of [Pakistan and the Republic of India](#) from Great Britain in 1947 and the [First Indochina War](#). A number of [national liberation movements](#) were established prior to the war, but most did not achieve their aims until after it. Decolonization can be achieved by attaining independence, integrating with the administering power or another state, or establishing a "free association" status. The [United Nations](#) has stated that in the process of decolonization there is no alternative to the principle of [self-determination](#). Decolonization may involve [peaceful negotiation](#) and/or violent [revolt and armed struggle](#) by the native population.

Methods and stages

Decolonization is a political process, frequently involving violence. In extreme circumstances, there is a [war of independence](#), sometimes following a [revolution](#). More often, there is a dynamic cycle where negotiations fail, minor disturbances ensue resulting in suppression by the police and military forces, escalating into more violent [revolts](#) that lead to further negotiations until independence is granted. In rare cases, the actions of the native population are characterized by [non-violence](#), [India](#) being an example of this, and the violence comes as active suppression from the occupying forces or as political opposition from forces representing minority local communities who feel threatened by the prospect of independence. For example, there was a war of independence in [French Indochina](#), while in some countries in [French West Africa](#) (excluding the [Maghreb countries](#)) decolonization resulted from a combination of insurrection and negotiation. The process is only complete when the [de facto](#) government of the newly independent country is recognized as the [de jure](#) sovereign [state](#) by the community of nations.

Independence is often difficult to achieve without the encouragement and practical support from one or more external parties. The motives for giving such aid are varied: nations of the same ethnic and/or religious stock may sympathize with oppressed groups, or a strong nation may attempt to destabilize a colony as a tactical move to weaken a rival or enemy colonizing power or to create space for its own sphere of influence; examples of this include British support of the [Haitian Revolution](#) against France, and the [Monroe Doctrine](#) of 1823, in which the United States warned the European powers not to interfere in the affairs of the newly independent states of the [Western Hemisphere](#).

As world opinion became more pro-emancipation following [World War I](#), there was an *institutionalized collective effort* to advance the cause of emancipation through the [League of Nations](#). Under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, a number of [mandates](#) were created. The expressed intention was to prepare these countries for self-government, but the reality was merely a redistribution of control over the former colonies of the defeated powers, mainly [Germany](#) and the [Ottoman Empire](#). This reassignment work continued through the [United Nations](#), with a similar system of [trust territories](#)

created to adjust control over both former colonies and mandated territories administered by the nations defeated in World War II, including Japan.

In referendums, some colonized populations have chosen to retain their colonial status, such as Gibraltar and French Guiana. On the other hand, colonial powers have sometimes promoted decolonization in order to shed the financial, military and other burdens that tend to grow in those colonies where the colonial regimes have become more benign.

Empires have expanded and contracted throughout history but, in several respects, the modern phenomenon of decolonization has produced different outcomes. Now, when states surrender both the *de facto* rule of their colonies and their *de jure* claims to such rule, the ex-colonies are generally not absorbed by other powers. Further, the former colonial powers have, in most cases, not only continued existing, but have also maintained their status as Powers, retaining strong economic and cultural ties with their former colonies. Through these ties, former colonial powers have ironically maintained a significant proportion of the previous benefits of their empires, but with smaller costs — thus, despite frequent resistance to demands for decolonisation, the outcomes have satisfied the colonizers' self-interests.

Decolonization is rarely achieved through a single historical act, but rather progresses through one or more stages of emancipation, each of which can be offered or fought for: these can include the introduction of elected representatives (advisory or voting; minority or majority or even exclusive), degrees of autonomy or self-rule. Thus, the final phase of decolonisation may in fact concern little more than handing over responsibility for foreign relations and security, and soliciting *de jure* recognition for the new sovereignty. But, even following the recognition of statehood, a degree of continuity can be maintained through bilateral treaties between now equal governments involving practicalities such as military training, mutual protection pacts, or even a garrison and/or military bases.

There is some debate over whether or not the United States, Canada and Latin America can be considered decolonized, as it was the colonist and their descendants who revolted and declared their independence instead of the indigenous peoples, as is usually the case. Scholars such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Dakota) and Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) have argued that portions of the United States still are in need of decolonization.

Western European colonial powers

Czechoslovak anti-colonialist propaganda poster: "Socialism opened the door of liberation for colonial nations."

The New Imperialism period, with the scramble for Africa and the Opium Wars, marked the zenith of European colonization. It also marked the acceleration of the trends that would end it. The extraordinary material demands of the conflict had spread economic change across the world (notably inflation), and the associated social pressures of "war imperialism" created both peasant unrest and a burgeoning middle class.

Economic growth created stakeholders with their own demands, while racial issues meant these people clearly stood apart from the colonial middle-class and had to form their own group. The start of mass nationalism, as a concept and practice, would fatally undermine the ideologies of imperialism.

There were, naturally, other factors, from agrarian change (and disaster – French Indochina), changes or developments in religion (Buddhism in Burma, Islam in the Dutch East Indies, marginally people like John Chilembwe in Nyasaland), and the impact of the depression of the 1930s.

The Great Depression, despite the concentration of its impact on the industrialized world, was also exceptionally damaging in the rural colonies. Agricultural prices fell much harder and faster than those of industrial goods. From around 1925 until World War II, the colonies suffered. The colonial powers concentrated on domestic issues, protectionism and tariffs, disregarding the damage done to international trade flows. The colonies, almost all primary "cash crop" producers, lost the majority of their export income and were forced away from the "open" complementary colonial economies to "closed" systems. While some areas returned to subsistence farming (British Malaya) others diversified (India, West Africa), and some began to industrialise. These economies would not fit the colonial strait-jacket when efforts were made to renew the links. Further, the European-owned and -run plantations proved more vulnerable to extended deflation than native capitalists, reducing the dominance of "white" farmers in colonial economies and making the European governments and investors of the 1930s co-opt indigenous elites — despite the implications for the future.

The efforts at colonial reform also hastened their end — notably the move from non-interventionist collaborative systems towards directed, disruptive, direct management to drive economic change. The creation of genuine bureaucratic government boosted the formation of indigenous bourgeoisie. This was especially true in the British Empire, which seemed less capable (or less ruthless) in controlling political nationalism. Driven by pragmatic demands of budgets and manpower the British made deals with the nationalist elites. They dealt with the white Dominions, retained strategic resources at the cost of reducing direct control in Egypt, and made numerous reforms in the *Raj*, culminating in the Government of India Act (1935).

Africa was a very different case from Asia between the wars. Tropical Africa was not fully drawn into the colonial system before the end of the 19th century, excluding only the complexities of the Union of South Africa (busily introducing racial segregation from 1924 and thus catalyzing the anti-colonial political growth of half the continent) and the Empire of Ethiopia. Colonial controls ranged between extremes. Economic growth was often curtailed. There were no indigenous nationalist groups with widespread popular support before 1939.

The United States

At end of the Spanish-American War, at the end of the 19th century, the United States of America held several colonial territories seized from Spain, among them the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Although the United States had initially embarked upon a policy of colonization of these territories (and had fought to suppress local "insurgencies" there, such as in the Philippine-American War), by the 1930s, the U.S. policy for the Philippines had changed toward the direction of eventual self-government. Following the invasion and occupation of the Philippines by Japan during World War II, the Philippines gained independence peacefully from the United States in 1946.

However, other U.S. possessions, such as Puerto Rico, did not gain full independence. Puerto Ricans have held U.S. citizenship since 1917, but do not vote in federal elections or pay federal taxes. Puerto Rico achieved self-government in 1952 and became a commonwealth in association with the United States. Puerto Rico was taken off the UN list of non-sovereign territories in 1953 through resolution 748. In 1967, 1993 and 1998, Puerto Rican voters rejected proposals to grant the territory statehood or independence. Nevertheless, the island's political status remains a hot topic of debate.

Japan

As the only Asian nation to become a colonial power during the modern era, Japan had gained several substantial colonial concessions in east Asia such as Taiwan and Korea. Pursuing a colonial policy

comparable to those of European powers, Japan settled significant populations of ethnic Japanese in its colonies while simultaneously suppressing indigenous ethnic populations by enforcing the learning and use of the Japanese language in schools. Other methods such as public interaction, and attempts to eradicate the use of Korean and Taiwanese (Min Nan) among the indigenous peoples, were seen to be used. Japan also set up the Imperial university in Korea (Keijo Imperial University) and Taiwan (Taihoku University) to compel education.

World War II gave Japanese Empire occasion to conquer vast swaths of Asia, sweeping into China and seizing the Western colonies of Vietnam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Burma, Malaya, Timor and Indonesia among others, albeit only for the duration of the war. An estimated 20 million Chinese died during the Japanese occupation of China (1931-1945).[2] Following its surrender to the Allies in 1945, Japan was deprived of all its colonies. Japan further claims that the southern Kuril Islands are a small portion of its own national territory, colonized by the Soviet Union.

French Decolonization

After World War I, the colonized people were frustrated at France's failure to recognize the effort provided by the French colonies (resources, but more importantly colonial troops - the famous *tirailleurs*). Although in Paris the Great Mosque of Paris was constructed as recognition of these efforts, the French state had no intention to allow self-rule, let alone independence to the colonized people. Thus, nationalism in the colonies became stronger in between the two wars, leading to Abd el-Krim's Rif War (1921-1925) in Morocco and to the creation of Messali Hadj's Star of North Africa in Algeria in 1925. However, these movements would gain full potential only after World War II. The October 27, 1946 Constitution creating the Fourth Republic substituted the French Union to the colonial empire. On the night of March 29, 1947, a nationalist uprising in Madagascar led the French government headed by Paul Ramadier (Socialist) to violent repression: one year of bitter fighting, in which 90,000 to 100,000 Malagasy died. On May 8, 1945, the Sétif massacre took place in Algeria.

In 1946, the states of French Indochina withdrew from the Union, leading to the Indochina War (1946-54) against Ho Chi Minh, who had been a co-founder of the French Communist Party in 1920 and had founded the Vietminh in 1941. In 1956, Morocco and Tunisia gained their independence, while the Algerian War was raging (1954-1962). With Charles de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 amidst turmoil and threats of a right-wing coup d'Etat to protect "French Algeria", the decolonization was completed with the independence of Sub-Saharan Africa's colonies in 1960 and the March 19, 1962 Evian Accords, which put an end to the Algerian war. The OAS movement unsuccessfully tried to block the accords with a series of bombings, including an attempted assassination against Charles de Gaulle.

To this day, the Algerian war — officially called until the 1990s a "public order operation" — remains a trauma for both France and Algeria. Philosopher Paul Ricœur has spoken of the necessity of a "decolonization of memory", starting with the recognition of the 1961 Paris massacre during the Algerian war and the recognition of the decisive role of African and especially North African immigrant manpower in the *Trente Glorieuses* post-World War II economic growth period. In the 1960s, due to economic needs for post-war reconstruction and rapid economic growth, French employers actively sought to recruit manpower from the colonies, explaining today's multiethnic population.

**The Soviet Union and anti-colonialism**

The Soviet Union sought to effect the abolishment of colonial governance by Western countries, either by direct subversion of Western-leaning or -controlled governments or indirectly by influence of political leadership and support. Many of the revolutions of this time period were inspired or influenced in this way. The conflicts in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Congo, and Sudan, among others, have been characterized as such.

Most Soviet leaders expressed the Marxist-Leninist view that imperialism was the height of capitalism, and generated a class-stratified society. It followed, then, that Soviet leadership would encourage independence movements in colonized territories, especially as the Cold War progressed. Because so many of these wars of independence expanded into general Cold War conflicts, the United States also supported several such independence movements in opposition to Soviet interests.

During the Vietnam War, Communist countries supported anti-colonialist movements in various countries still under colonial administration through propaganda, developmental and economic assistance, and in some cases military aid. Notably among these were the support of armed rebel movements by Cuba in Angola, and the Soviet Union (as well as the People's Republic of China) in Vietnam.

It is noteworthy that while Britain, Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands took colonies overseas, the Russian Empire expanded via land across Asia. The Soviet Union did not make any moves to return this land.

The emergence of the Third World (1945-)
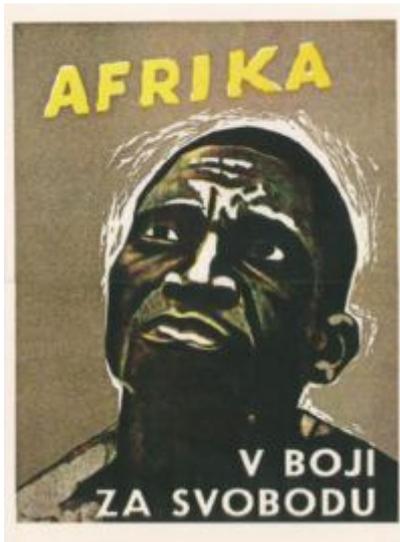
Czechoslovak anti-colonialist propaganda poster: "Africa - fighting for freedom".

The term "Third World" was coined by French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952, on the model of the Third Estate, which, according to the Abbé Sieyès, represented everything, but was nothing: "...because at the end this ignored, exploited, scorned Third World like the Third Estate, wants to become something too" (Sauvy). The emergence of this new political entity, in the frame of the Cold War, was complex and painful. Several tentatives were made to organize newly independent states in order to oppose a common front towards both the US's and the USSR's influence on them, with the consequences of the Sino-Soviet split already at works. Thus, the Non-Aligned Movement constituted itself, around the main figures of Nehru, the leader of India, Sukarno, the Indonesian president, Tito the Communist leader of Yugoslavia, and Nasser, head of Egypt who successfully opposed the French and British imperial powers during the 1956 Suez crisis. After the 1954 Geneva Conference which put an end to the French war against Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, the 1955 Bandung Conference gathered Nasser, Nehru, Tito, Sukarno, the leader of Indonesia, and Zhou Enlai, Premier of the People's Republic of China. In 1960, the UN General Assembly voted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The next year, the Non-Aligned Movement was officially created in Belgrade (1961), and was followed in 1964 by the creation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which tried to promote a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO was opposed to the 1944 Bretton Woods system, which had benefited the leading states which had created it, and remained in force until 1971 after the United States' suspension of convertibility from dollars to gold. The main tenets of the NIEO were:

1. Developing countries must be entitled to regulate and control the activities of multinational corporations operating within their territory.
2. They must be free to nationalize or expropriate foreign property on conditions favourable to them.
3. They must be free to set up associations of primary commodities producers similar to the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, created on September 17, 1960 to

protest pressure by major oil companies (mostly owned by U.S., British, and Dutch nationals) to reduce oil prices and payments to producers.); all other States must recognize this right and refrain from taking economic, military, or political measures calculated to restrict it.

4. International trade should be based on the need to ensure stable, equitable, and remunerative prices for raw materials, generalized non-reciprocal and non-discriminatory tariff preferences, as well as transfer of technology to developing countries; and should provide economic and technical assistance without any strings attached.
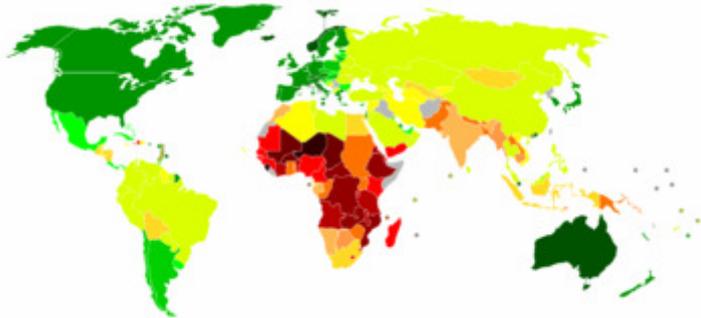
The UN Human Development Index (HDI) is a quantitative index of development, alternative to the classic Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which some use as a proxy to define the Third World. While the GDP only calculates economic wealth, the HDI includes life expectancy, public health and literacy as fundamental factors of a good quality of life.

The UNCTAD however wasn't very effective in implementing this New International Economic Order (NIEO), and social and economic inequalities between industrialized countries and the Third World kept on growing through-out the 1960s until the 21st century. The 1973 oil crisis which followed the Yom Kippur War (October 1973) was triggered by the OPEC which decided an embargo against the US and Western countries, causing a fourfold increase in the price of oil, which lasted five months, starting on October 17, 1973, and ending on March 18 1974. OPEC nations then agreed, on January 7, 1975, to raise crude oil prices by 10%. At that time, OPEC nations — including many who had recently nationalised their oil industries — joined the call for a New International Economic Order to be initiated by coalitions of primary producers. Concluding the First OPEC Summit in Algiers they called for stable and just commodity prices, an international food and agriculture program, technology transfer from North to South, and the democratization of the economic system. But industrialized countries quickly began to look for substitutes to OPEC petroleum, with the oil companies investing the majority of their research capital in the US and European countries or others, politically sure countries. The OPEC lost more and more influence on the world prices of oil.

The second oil crisis occurred in the wake of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Then, the 1982 Latin American debt crisis exploded in Mexico first, then Argentina and Brazil, which proved unable to pay back their debts, jeopardizing the existence of the international economic system.

The 1990s were characterized by the prevalence of the Washington consensus on neoliberal policies, "structural adjustment" and "shock therapies" for the former Communist states.

Modern approaches to decolonization

Though the term "decolonization" is not well received among donors in international development today, the root of the emerging emphasis on projects to promote "democracy, governance and human rights" by international donors and to promote "institution building" and a "[human rights based approach]" to development is really to achieve decolonization.

In many independent, post-colonial nations, the systems and cultures of colonialism continue. Weak Parliaments and Ministerial governments (where Ministries issue their own edicts and write laws rather than the Parliament) are holdovers of colonialism since political decisions were made outside the country, Parliaments were at most for show, and the executive branch (then, foreign Governor Generals and foreign civil servants) held local power. Similarly, militaries are strong and civil control

over them is weak; a holdover of military control exercised by a foreign military. In some cases, the governing systems in post-colonial countries could be viewed as ruling elites who succeeded in coup d'etats against the foreign colonial regime but never gave up the system of control.

In many countries, the human rights challenges are to empower women and reverse the legacy of missionization that promoted patriarchy and to empower individuals and civil society through changes in education systems that were set up by colonial governments to train obedient servants of colonial regimes.

Often the impact of colonialism is more subtle, with preferences for clothes (such as "blue" shirts of French officials and pith helmets), drugs (alcohol and tobacco that colonial governments introduced, often as a way to tax locals) and other cultural attributes remain.

Some experts in development, such as David Lempert, have suggested an opening of dialogues from the colonial powers on the systems they introduced and the harms that continue as a way of decolonizing in rights policy documents for the UN system and for Europe. First World countries often seem reluctant to engage in this form of decolonization, however, since they may benefit from the legacies of colonialism that they created, in contemporary trade and political relations.

Post-colonial organizations
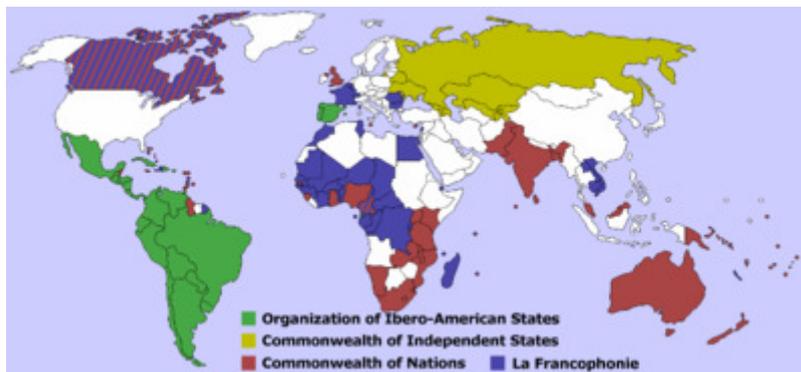
Four international organizations whose membership largely follows the pattern of previous colonial empires.

Due to a common history and culture, former colonial powers created institutions which more loosely associated their former colonies. Membership is voluntary, and in some cases can be revoked if a member state loses some objective criteria (usually a requirement for democratic governance). The organizations serve cultural, economic, and political purposes between the associated countries, although no such organization has become politically prominent as an entity in its own right.

Former Colonial Power	Organization	Founded
Britain	Commonwealth of Nations	1931
	Commonwealth Realms	1931
	Associated states	1967
France	French Union	1946
	French Community	1958
	Francophonie	1970
Spain & Portugal	Latin Union	1954
	Organization of Ibero-American States	1991
	Community of Portuguese Language Countries	1996
United States	Commonwealths	1934

	Freely Associated States	1982
European Union	ACP countries	1975

Differing perspectives

There is quite a bit of controversy over decolonisation. The end goal tends to be universally regarded as good, but there has been much debate over the best way to grant full independence.

Decolonization and political instability

Some say the post–World War II decolonisation movement was too rushed, especially in Africa, and resulted in the creation of unstable regimes in the newly independent countries. Thus causing war between and within the new independent nation-states.

Others argue that this instability is largely the result of problems from the colonial period, including arbitrary nation-state borders, lack of training of local populations and disproportional economy. However by the 20th century most colonial powers were slowly being forced by the moral beliefs of population to consider the welfare of their colonial subjects.

Economic effects

Effects on the colonizers

John Kenneth Galbraith argues that the post-World War II decolonization was brought about for economic reasons. In *A Journey Through Economic Time*, he writes, "The engine of economic well-being was now within and between the advanced industrial countries. Domestic economic growth — as now measured and much discussed — came to be seen as far more important than the erstwhile colonial trade... The economic effect in the United States from the granting of independence to the Philippines was unnoticeable, partly due to the Bell Trade Act, which allowed American monopoly in the economy of the Philippines. The departure of India and Pakistan made small economic difference in Britain. Dutch economists calculated that the economic effect from the loss of the great Dutch empire in Indonesia was compensated for by a couple of years or so of domestic post-war economic growth. The end of the colonial era is celebrated in the history books as a triumph of national aspiration in the former colonies and of benign good sense on the part of the colonial powers. Lurking beneath, as so often happens, was a strong current of economic interest — or in this case, disinterest."

Part of the reason for the lack of economic impact felt by the colonizer upon the release of the colonized was that costs and benefits were not eliminated, but shifted. The colonizer no longer had the burden of obligation, financial or otherwise, to their colony. The colonizer continued to be able to obtain cheap goods and labor as well as economic benefits (see Suez Canal Crisis) from the former colonies. Financial, political and military pressure could still be used to achieve goals desired by the colonizer. The most obvious difference is the ability of the colonizer to disclaim responsibility for the colonized.

Effects on the former colonies

Settled populations

Decolonization is not an easy matter in colonies where a large population of settlers lives, particularly if they have been there for several generations. This population, in general, may have to be repatriated, often losing considerable property. For instance, the decolonisation of Algeria by France was particularly uneasy due to the large European and Sephardic Jewish population (see also *pied noir*), which largely evacuated to France when Algeria became independent. In Zimbabwe, former Rhodesia, president Robert Mugabe has, starting in the 1990s, targeted white farmers and forcibly seized their property. In some cases, decolonisation is hardly possible or impossible because of the importance of the settler population or where the indigenous population is now in the minority; such is

the case of the British population of the Cayman Islands, the Russian population of Kazakhstan, the Chinese population of Singapore as well as the immigrant communities of USA and Canada.

Charts of the independences

In this chronological overview, not every date is indisputably the decisive moment. Often, the final phase, independence, is mentioned here, though there may be years of autonomy before, e.g. as an Associated State under the British crown.

Furthermore, note that some cases have been included that were not strictly colonized but rather protectorate, co-dominium, lease... Changes subsequent to decolonization are usually *not* included; nor is the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

18th and 19th centuries

Year	Colonizer	Event
1776	Great Britain	The 13 original colonies of the United States declare independence a year after their insurrection begins.
1783	Great Britain	The British Crown recognizes the independence of the United States.
1803	France	Via the Louisiana purchase, the last French territories in mainland North America are handed over to the United States.
1804	France	Haiti declares independence, the first non-white nation to emancipate itself from European rule.
1808	Portugal	Brazil, the largest Portuguese colony, achieves a greater degree of authonomy after the exiled king of Portugal establishes residence there. After he returns home in 1821, his son and regent declares an independent "Empire" in 1822.
1810	Spain	United Provinces of the River Plate and Chile. First declaration of an autonomous government within the Spanish Crown. Full independence would be finally achieved in 1816. (see below)
1813	Spain	Paraguay becomes independent.
1816	Spain	Chile and the United Provinces of the River Plate (former Argentina and Uruguay) declare independence. The latter would then secede and gain independence in 1828 after periods of Brazilian occupation and of federation with Argentina)
1818	Spain	Second and final declaration of independence of Chile
1819	Spain	New Granada attains independence as Gran Colombia (later to become the independent states of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela).
1821	Spain	The Dominican Republic (then Santo Domingo), Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica all declare independence; Venezuela and Mexico both achieve independence.
1821	Ottoman Empire	Greece declares independence. After a long struggle independence is finally granted by the Treaty of Constantinople in July 1832.
1822	Spain	Ecuador attains independence from Spain (and independence from Colombia 1830).
1824	Spain	Peru and Bolivia attain independence.
1847	United States	Liberia becomes a free and independent African state.
1865	Spain	The Dominican Republic gains its final independence after four years as a restored colony.
1868	Spain	Cuba declares independence and is reconquered; taken by the United States in 1898; governed under U.S. military administration until 1902.
1877	Ottoman Empire	Romania declares independence. Its independence is finally recognised in July 1878.
1878	Ottoman Empire	Bulgaria and Serbia achieve independence.
1898	Spain	The Philippines declares independence but is taken by the United States in 1899;

governed under U.S. military and then civilian administration until 1934.

1912	Ottoman Empire	Albania declares independence. Recognized in Treaty of London.

Inter-War Period

Year	Colonizer	Event
1917	Russian Empire	Finland declares its independence.
1918	Russian Empire	Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declare independence in 1918. The three Baltic states are subsequently occupied by the Soviet Union (1940-1941, 1944-1991). The three Baltic nations re-declare their independence between 1990 and 1991, and their independence is recognized by the Soviet Union on September 6, 1991.
1918	Austria-Hungary	Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland become independent.
1919	United Kingdom	End of the protectorate over Afghanistan, when Britain accepts the presence of a Soviet ambassador in Kabul.
1921	China	The strong empire loses all control over Outer Mongolia but retains the larger, progressively sinified, Inner Mongolia), which has been granted autonomy in 1912 (as well as Tibet), and now becomes a popular republic and, as of 1924, a *de facto* satellite of the USSR. Formal recognition of Mongolia will follow in 1945.
1922	United Kingdom	In Ireland, following insurgency by the IRA, most of Ireland separates from the United Kingdom as the Irish Free State, reversing 800 years of British presence. Northern Ireland, the northeast area of the island, remains within the United Kingdom.
1923	United Kingdom	End of the *de facto* protectorate over Nepal which was never truly colonized.
1930	United Kingdom	The United Kingdom returns the leased port territory at Weihaiwei to China, the first episode of decolonisation in East Asia.
1931	United Kingdom	The Statute of Westminster grants virtually full independence to Canada, New Zealand, Newfoundland, the Irish Free State, the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Union of South Africa, when it declares the British parliament incapable of passing law over these former colonies without their own consent.
1932	United Kingdom	Ends League of Nations Mandate over Iraq. Britain continues to station troops in the country and influence the Iraqi government until 1958.
1934	United States	Makes the Philippine Islands a Commonwealth. Abrogates Platt Amendment, which gave it direct authority to intervene in Cuba.
1941	France	Lebanon declares independence, effectively ending the French mandate (previously together with Syria) - it is recognized in 1943.
1941	Italy	Ethiopia, Eritrea & Tigray (appended to it), and the Italian part of Somalia are liberated by the Allies after an uneasy occupation of Ethiopia since 1935-36, and no longer joined as one colonial federal state; the Ogaden desert (disputed by Somalia) remains under British military control until 1948.
1944	Denmark	Following a plebiscite, Iceland formally becomes an independent republic on June 17, 1944.

From World War II to the present

Year	Colonizer	Event
1945	Japan	After surrender of Japan, North Korea was reigned by Soviet Union and South Korea was reigned by United States.
	Japan	The Republic of China possesses Taiwan
	France	Vietnam declares independence but only to be recognised 9 years later
	Netherlands	Indonesia declares independence but recognised by Netherlands Dec 1949.

1946	United States	The sovereignty of the Philippines is recognized by the United States, which conquered the islands during the Philippine-American War. But, the United States continues to station troops in the country as well as influence the Philippine government and economy (through the Bell Trade Act) until the fall of Marcos in 1986, which allowed Filipinos to author a genuinely Filipino constitution.
	United Kingdom	The former emirate of Transjordan (present-day Jordan) becomes an independent Hashemite kingdom when Britain relinquishes UN trusteeship.
1947	United Kingdom	The Republic of India and Muslim State of Pakistan (including present-day Bangladesh) achieve direct independence in an attempt to separate the native Hindus officially from secular and Muslim parts of former British India.
1948	United Kingdom	In the Far East, Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) become independent. In the Middle East, Israel becomes independent less than a year after the British government withdraws from the Palestine Mandate; the remainder of Palestine becomes part of the Arab states of Egypt and Transjordan.
	United States	Republic of Korea was established.
	Soviet Union	Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established.
1949	France	Laos becomes independent.
	The Netherlands	The Netherlands recognises the sovereignty of Indonesia following an armed and diplomatic struggle since 1945.
1951	Italy	Libya becomes an independent kingdom.
1952	United States	Puerto Rico in the Antilles becomes a self governing Commonwealth associated to the US.
1953	France	France recognizes Cambodia's independence.
1954	France	Vietnam's independence recognized, though the nation is partitioned. The Pondichery enclave is incorporated into India. Beginning of the Algerian War of Independence
	United Kingdom	The United Kingdom withdraws from the last part of Egypt it controls: the Suez Canal zone.
1956	United Kingdom	Anglo-Egyptian Sudan becomes independent.
	France	Tunisia and the sherifian kingdom of Morocco in the Maghreb achieve independence.
	Spain	Spain-controlled areas in Morroco become independent.
1957	United Kingdom	Ghana becomes independent, initiating the decolonisation of sub-Saharan Africa.
	United Kingdom	The Federation of Malaya becomes independent.
1958	France	Guinea on the coast of West-Africa is granted independence.
	United States	Signing the Alaska Statehood Act by Dwight D. Eisenhower, granting Alaska the possibility of the equal rights of statehood
	United Kingdom	UN trustee Britain withdraws from Iraq, which becomes an independent Hashemite Kingdom (like Jordan, but soon to become a republic through the first of several coups d'état).
1960	United Kingdom	Nigeria, British Somaliland (present-day Somalia), and most of Cyprus become independent, though the UK retains sovereign control over Akrotiri and Dhekelia.
	France	Benin (then Dahomey), Upper Volta (present-day Burkina Faso), Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, the Mali Federation (split the same year into present-day Mali and Senegal), Mauritania, Niger, Togo and the Central African Republic (the Oubangui Chari) and Madagascar all become independent.
	Belgium	The Belgian Congo (also known as Congo-Kinshasa, later renamed Zaire and presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo), becomes independent.
1961	United Kingdom	Tanganyika (formerly a German colony under UK trusteeship, merged to federal Tanzania in 1964 with the island of Zanzibar, formerly a proper British

		colony wrested from the Omani sultanate); [Sierra Leone](#), [Kuwait](#) and [British Cameroon](#) become independent. [South Africa](#) declares independence.
	[Portugal](#)	The former coastal enclave colonies of [Goa](#), [Daman and Diu](#) are taken over by India.
1962	[United Kingdom](#)	[Uganda](#) in Africa, and [Jamaica](#) and [Trinidad and Tobago](#) in the Caribbean, achieve independence.
	[France](#)	End of [Algerian War](#), [Algeria](#) becomes independent.
	[Belgium](#)	[Rwanda](#) and [Burundi](#) (then Urundi) attain independence through the ending of the Belgian trusteeship.
	[New Zealand](#)	The South Sea UN trusteeship over the Polynesian kingdom of [Western Samoa](#) (formerly German Samoa and nowadays called just Samoa) is relinquished.
1963	[United Kingdom](#)	[Kenya](#) becomes independent.
	[United Kingdom](#)	[Singapore](#), together with [Sarawak](#) and [Sabah](#) on [North Borneo](#), form [Malaysia](#) with the pensinsular [Federation of Malaya](#). Singapore was evicted from Malaysia by Kuala Lumpur two years later.
1964	[United Kingdom](#)	Northern [Rhodesia](#) declares independence as [Zambia](#) and [Malawi](#), formerly [Nyasaland](#) does the same, both from the [United Kingdom](#). The Mediterranean island of [Malta](#) becomes independent.
1965	[United Kingdom](#)	Southern [Rhodesia](#) (the present [Zimbabwe](#)) declares independence as Rhodesia, a second [Apartheid](#) regime, but is not recognized. [Gambia](#) is recognized as independent. The British protectorate over the [Maldives](#) archipelago in the Indian Ocean is ended.
1966	[United Kingdom](#)	In the Caribbean, [Barbados](#) and [Guyana](#); and in Africa, [Botswana](#) (then Bechuanaland) and [Lesotho](#) become independent.
1967	[United Kingdom](#)	On the Arabian peninsula, [Aden](#) colony becomes independent as [South Yemen](#), to be united with formerly Ottoman North Yemen in 1990-1991.
1968	[United Kingdom](#)	[Mauritius](#) and [Swaziland](#) achieve independence.
	[Portugal](#)	After nine years of organized guerrilla resistance, most of [Guinea-Bissau](#) comes under native control.
	[Spain](#)	[Equatorial Guinea](#) (then Rio Muni) is made independent.
	[Australia](#)	Relinquishes UN trusteeship (nominally shared by the United Kingdom and New Zealand) of [Nauru](#) in the South Sea.
1971	[United Kingdom](#)	[Fiji](#) and [Tonga](#) are given independence; [Bangladesh](#) achieves independence from Pakistan with the military help of [India](#).
	[United Kingdom](#)	[Bahrain](#), [Qatar](#), [Oman](#) and seven [Trucial States](#) (the same year, six federated together as [United Arab Emirates](#) and the seventh, Ras al-Kaimah, joined soon after) become independent Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf as the British protectorates are lifted.
1973	[United Kingdom](#)	The [Bahamas](#) are granted independence.
	[Portugal](#)	Guerrillas unilaterally declare independence in the Southeastern regions of [Guinea-Bissau](#).
1974	[United Kingdom](#)	[Grenada](#) in the [Caribbean](#) becomes independent.
	[Portugal](#)	[Guinea-Bissau](#) on the coast of West-Africa is recognized as independent by Portugal.
1975	[France](#)	The [Comoros](#) archipelago in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa is granted independence.
	[Portugal](#)	[Angola](#), [Mozambique](#) and the island groups of [Cape Verde](#) and [São Tomé and Príncipe](#), all four in Africa, achieve independence. [East Timor](#) declares independence, but is subsequently occupied and annexed by Indonesia nine days later.
	[The Netherlands](#)	[Suriname](#) (then Dutch Guiana) becomes independent.
	[Australia](#)	Released from trusteeship, [Papua New Guinea](#) gains independence.

1976 United Kingdom — Seychelles archipelago in the Indian Ocean off the African coast becomes independent (one year after granting of self-rule).

Spain — The Spanish colonial rule *de facto* terminated over the Western Sahara (then Rio de Oro), when the territory was passed on to and partitioned between Mauritania and Morocco (which annexes the entire territory in 1979), rendering the declared independence of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic ineffective to the present day. Since Spain did not have the right to give away Western Sahara, under international law the territory is still under Spanish administration. The *de facto* administrator is however Morocco.

1977 France — French Somaliland, also known as Afar & Issa-land (after its main tribal groups), the present Djibouti, is granted independence.

1978 United Kingdom — Dominica in the Caribbean and the Solomon Islands, as well as Tuvalu (then the Ellice Islands), all in the South Sea, become independent.

1979 United States — Returns the Panama Canal Zone (held under a regime *sui generis* since 1903) to the republic of Panama.

United Kingdom — The Gilbert Islands (present-day Kiribati) in the South Sea as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia in the Caribbean become independent.

1980 United Kingdom — Zimbabwe (then [Southern] Rhodesia), already independent *de facto*, becomes formally independent. The joint Anglo-French colony of the New Hebrides becomes the independent island republic of Vanuatu.

1981 United Kingdom — Belize (then British Honduras) and Antigua & Barbuda become independent.

1983 United Kingdom — Saint Kitts and Nevis (an associated state since 1963) becomes independent.

1984 United Kingdom — Brunei sultanate on Borneo becomes independent.

1990 South Africa — Namibia becomes independent from South Africa.

United States — The UN Security Council gives final approval to end the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific (dissolved already in 1986), finalizing the independence of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, having been a colonial possession of the empire of Japan before UN trusteeship.

1991 Soviet Union — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldavia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan Russia and Turkmenistan become independent from the Soviet Union.

1991 United States — U.S. forces withdraw from Subic Bay and Clark Air Base in the Philippines ending major U.S. military presence, which lasted for almost a century.

1994 United States — Palau (after a transitional period as a Republic since 1981, and before part of the U.S. Trust territory of the Pacific) becomes independent from its former trustee, having been a mandate of the Japanese Empire before UN trusteeship.

1997 United Kingdom — The sovereignty of Hong Kong is transferred to China.

1999 Portugal — The sovereignty of Macau is transferred to China on schedule. It is the last in a series of coastal enclaves that militarily stronger powers had obtained through treaties from the Qing or Manchu Empire which ruled China. Macau, like Hong Kong, is not organized into the existing provincial structure applied to other provinces of the People's Republic of China, but is guaranteed a quasi-autonomous system of government within the People's Republic of China as a "Special Administrative Region" or S.A.R.

2002 Indonesia — East Timor formally achieves independence after a transitional UN administration, three years after Indonesia ended its violent quarter-century military occupation of the former Portuguese colony.