

## DBQ 14: Decolonization and Revolution: 1945-1975

(Adapted from *Document-Based Assessment for Global History*, Walch Education)

**Historical Context:** Following World War II, there were major independence movements, as well as revolutions, to change the leadership of countries such as India, Vietnam, Cuba, China, and Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah said “This wind of change blowing through Africa . . . is a raging hurricane against which the old order cannot stand. . . . Thus we have witnessed the greatest awakening ever seen on the earth of suppressed and exploited peoples against the powers that have kept them in subjection. This, without a doubt, is the most significant happening of the twentieth century.” At the same time in Cuba and China, Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong were leading revolutions to change their countries. Strong leaders shaped the movements for independence and change.

**Part A:** The following documents provide information about revolutions and the independence movements that swept the world after World War II. Examine the documents carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

**Document 1:** This excerpt, from the “Declaration Against Colonialism,” was adopted by the United Nations in 1960.

The General Assembly, Mindful of the determination proclaimed by the peoples of the world in the Charter of the United Nations to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person . . . , Solemnly proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms . . . And to this end Declares that:

The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation . . . is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and co-operation.

All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**Question:** What is the main idea of this U.N. declaration?

**Document 2:** The following is an excerpt from Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese nationalist.

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to re-conquer their country.

**Question:** Describe the method Ho Chi Minh recommended to the Vietnamese people.

**Document 3:**

A. Mohandas Gandhi describes his method for fighting for Indian independence.

Passive [nonviolent] resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms . . . If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach [breaking] I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

B. In describing the Salt March, in which he used passive resistance, Gandhi said the following:

If the awakening of the people in the country is true and real, the salt law is a good as abolished. [raising a lump of salt] With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire.

**Question:** Describe the method recommended by Gandhi to the Indian people. What was Gandhi’s goal?

**Document 4:** These are the words of Nelson Mandela as he fights for the end of apartheid in South Africa.

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African People. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

**Question:** What change does Mandela recommend for South Africa? Explain.

**Document 5:** Kwame Nkrumah, the leader in the fight for Ghana’s independence, described the movement with these words:

Independence for the Gold Coast was my aim. It was a colony and I have always regarded colonialism as the policy by which a foreign power binds territories to herself by political ties, with the primary object of promoting her own economic advantage . . . Thus we have witnessed the greatest awakening ever seen on this earth of suppressed and exploited peoples against the powers that have kept them in subjection. This, without a doubt, is the most significant happening of the twentieth century.

**Questions:** What is the “most significant happening of the twentieth century” according to Nkrumah? Why is he opposed to colonialism?

**Document 6:** Jomo Kenyatta, leader of the fight for independence for Kenya, and its first president, said the following: The land is ours. When Europeans came, they kept us back and took our land. The freedom tree can only grow when you pour blood on it.

**Question:** What is the reason for Kenyatta’s call for independence? Explain.

**Document 7:** This excerpt is from a speech given by Mao Zedong in 1945.

Our aim . . . is to build up the confidence of the whole [Communist] Party and the entire people in the certain triumph of the revolution. . . . We must . . . raise the political consciousness of the entire people so that they may willingly and gladly fight together with us for victory. We should fire the whole people with the conviction that China belongs not to the reactionaries but to the Chinese people. . . . We firmly believe that, led by the Chinese Communist Party . . . the Chinese people will achieve complete victory. . .

**Questions:** What is Mao Zedong attempting to do in this speech? Describe his method of change.

**Document 8:** These are the words of Fidel Castro spoken in his defense at a trial in 1953.

When we speak of struggle, the people mean the vast unredeemed masses, to whom all make promises and who all deceive; we mean the people who yearn for a better, more dignified and more just nation . . . people who, to attain these changes, are ready to give even the very last breath of their lives—when they believe in something or in someone . . . .These are the people, the ones who know misfortune and, therefore, are capable of fighting with limitless courage! To the people whose desperate roads through life have been paved with the bricks of betrayal we . . . say . . . Here you have it, fight for it with all your might so that liberty and happiness may be yours.

**Question:** Which “people” does Fidel Castro feel are the basis of the Cuban Revolution?

**Part B—Essay** - Evaluate the methods and roles of leaders and organizations in the movement for independence and change in the period between 1945 and 1975.

#### Document 1

The General Assembly of the United Nations in the “Declaration Against Colonialism” called for an end to colonialism. It is a fundamental human right for the people of a country to be free from control by another country. All people have the right to choose the government they want and to develop their own economy and culture. The U.N. encouraged all nations to work together and to strive for world peace.

#### Document 2

Ho Chi Minh, the nationalist leader who fought for Vietnamese independence from the French, urged the Vietnamese people to unite and fight to the end to prevent the French from regaining control. He is an inspiration to the people as he dedicated his life to the goal of independence.

#### Document 3

Gandhi, in leading the fight for India’s independence from Great Britain, urged the use of passive resistance. He would not obey unjust laws and was ready to accept the consequences. He used this method in the salt march. He felt that if the Indian people refused to pay the salt tax, the British Empire would start to break up. India would gain independence by passive resistance. India would use peaceful means—“soul force.”

#### Document 4

Mandela, in his fight to end apartheid, was willing to die for his goal: that all people live together in a “democratic and free” society. It would mean the end of apartheid, which had separated and subjugated the blacks in South Africa.

#### Document 5

Nkrumah, in his fight for independence for the Gold Coast (Ghana), felt the independence movement that was sweeping Africa was the most important event in the twentieth century. This movement would sweep away colonialism. Nkrumah was against colonialism because he said its primary purpose was to gain wealth for the foreign power.

#### Document 6

Kenyatta claimed that the Europeans had taken the land that belongs to the people of Kenya, who must be willing to shed their blood to regain their independence. Kenyatta was motivating the people to fight.

#### Document 7

Mao Zedong made the Chinese people aware of the need to fight together against the “reactionaries” (the Nationalists). Mao was raising the confidence of and predicting a victory for the Chinese people if they followed the leadership of the Communist party.

#### Document 8

In this speech, Castro is rallying the support of the Cuban people to fight against the dictator. The people are the masses who want a better, more just country. The people must be willing to die for what they believe in. The people for whom he is fighting are the unemployed, the laborers, small businessmen, and young professionals who are not doing well under the dictator’s regime. They must fight for liberty and happiness. It is their duty to be revolutionaries.

#### Additional Information Beyond the Documents

The documents provide students with only fragments of evidence. Answers should include relevant information from beyond the documents—information that students have learned from their classroom study. The following list suggests some of the information that students might include in their essays from outside learning.

Information about independence movements and methods

Leaders for independence—Mandela, Ho Chi Minh, Gandhi, Kenyatta, Nkrumah

Revolutionary leaders—Fidel Castro for the Cuban Revolution and Mao Zedong for the Chinese Revolution of 1949

Methods used to motivate and fight for change and independence

133