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# The Challenge of Democracy in Africa

### MAIN IDEA

**REVOLUTION** As the recent histories of Nigeria and South Africa show, ethnic and racial conflicts can hinder democracy.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

In 1996, as Nigeria struggled with democracy, South Africa adopted a bill of rights that promotes racial equality.

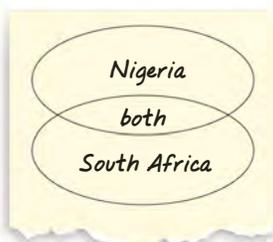
### TERMS & NAMES

- federal system
- martial law
- dissident
- apartheid
- Nelson Mandela

**SETTING THE STAGE** Beginning in the late 1950s, dozens of European colonies in Africa gained their independence and became nations. As in Latin America, the establishment of democracy in Africa proved difficult. In many cases, the newly independent nations faced a host of problems that slowed their progress toward democracy. The main reason for Africa’s difficulties was the negative impact of colonial rule. European powers had done little to prepare their African colonies for independence.

### TAKING NOTES

**Comparing** Use a Venn diagram to compare political events in Nigeria and South Africa.



## Colonial Rule Limits Democracy

The lingering effects of colonialism undermined efforts to build stable, democratic economies and states. This can be seen throughout Africa.

**European Policies Cause Problems** When the Europeans established colonial boundaries, they ignored existing ethnic or cultural divisions. New borders divided peoples of the same background or threw different—often rival—groups together. Because of this, a sense of national identity was difficult to develop. After independence, the old colonial boundaries became the borders of the newly independent states. As a result, ethnic and cultural conflicts remained.

Other problems had an economic basis. European powers had viewed colonies as sources of wealth for the home country. The colonial powers encouraged the export of one or two cash crops, such as coffee or rubber, rather than the production of a range of products to serve local needs. Europeans developed plantations and mines but few factories. Manufactured goods were imported from European countries. These policies left new African nations with unbalanced economies and a small middle class. Such economic problems lessened their chances to create democratic stability.

European rule also disrupted African family and community life. In some cases, colonial powers moved Africans far from their families and villages to work in mines or on plantations. In addition, most newly independent nations still lacked a skilled, literate work force that could take on the task of building a new nation.

**Short-Lived Democracies** When Britain and France gave up their colonies, they left fragile democratic governments in place. Soon problems threatened those governments. Rival ethnic groups often fought for power. Strong militaries became tools for ambitious leaders. In many cases, a military dictatorship replaced democracy.



## Africa, 1967



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** Describe the Eastern Region, which seceded as Biafra. Describe its size and location compared to the rest of Nigeria.
- Location** In which region is Lagos, Nigeria's capital in 1967?

## Civil War in Nigeria

Nigeria, a former British colony, won its independence peacefully in 1960. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and one of its richest. However, the country was ethnically divided. This soon created problems that led to war.

**A Land of Many Peoples** Three major ethnic groups live within Nigeria's borders. In the north are the Hausa-Fulani, who are mostly Muslim. In the south are the Yoruba and the Igbo (also called Ibo), who are mostly Christians, Muslims, or animists, who believe that spirits are present in animals, plants, and natural objects. The Yoruba, a farming people with a tradition of kings, live to the west. The Igbo, a farming people who have a democratic tradition, live to the east.

After independence, Nigeria adopted a **federal system**. In a federal system, power is shared between state governments and a central authority. The Nigerians set up three states, one for each region and ethnic group, with a political party in each.

**War with Biafra** Although one group dominated each state, the states also had ethnic minorities. In the Western Region, non-Yoruba minorities began to resent Yoruba control. In 1963, they tried to break away and form their own region. This led to fighting. In January 1966, a group of army officers, most of them Igbo, seized power in the capital city of Lagos. These officers abolished the regional governments and declared **martial law**, or temporary military rule.

The Hausa-Fulani, who did not trust the Igbo, launched an attack from the north. They persecuted and killed many Igbo. The survivors fled east. In 1967, the Eastern Region seceded from Nigeria, declaring itself the new nation of Biafra (bee•AF•ruh).

The Nigerian government then went to war to reunite the country. The Igbo were badly outnumbered and outgunned. In 1970, Biafra surrendered. Nigeria was reunited, but perhaps more than a million Igbo died, most from starvation. **A**

### MAIN IDEA

#### Recognizing Effects

**A** What was the effect of the war on the Igbo?

## Nigeria's Nation-Building

After the war, Nigerians returned to the process of nation-building. “When the war ended,” noted one officer, “it was like a referee blowing a whistle in a football game. People just put down their guns and went back to the business of living.” The Nigerian government did not punish the Igbo. It used federal money to rebuild the Igbo region.

**Federal Government Restored** The military governed Nigeria for most of the 1970s. During this time, Nigerian leaders tried to create a more stable federal system, with a strong central government and a number of regional units. The government also tried to build a more modern economy, based on oil income.

In 1979, the military handed power back to civilian rulers. Nigerians were cheered by the return to democracy. Some people, however, remained concerned about ethnic divisions in the nation. Nigerian democracy was short-lived. In 1983, the military overthrew the civilian government, charging it with corruption. A new military regime, dominated by the Hausa-Fulani, took charge.

**A Return to Civilian Rule** In the years that followed, the military governed Nigeria, while promising to bring back civilian rule. The army held elections in 1993, which resulted in the victory of popular leader Moshood Abiola. However, officers declared the results invalid, and a dictator, General Sani Abacha, took control.

General Abacha banned political activity and jailed **dissidents**, or government opponents. Upon Abacha's death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar seized power and promised to end military rule. He kept his word. In 1999, Nigerians elected their first civilian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, in nearly 20 years. In 2003, Obasanjo was reelected.

### > Analyzing Primary Sources

#### Ken Saro-Wiwa

On November 10, 1995, Nigeria hanged nine political prisoners—all critics of the military government. Many around the world believed the nine were convicted on false charges to silence them. One of the nine was Ken Saro-Wiwa, a noted writer and activist. Shortly before his death, Saro-Wiwa smuggled several manuscripts out of prison.

#### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS

- 1. Drawing Conclusions** *What do Saro-Wiwa's imprisonment and execution suggest about the government of the military dictator, General Sani Abacha?*
- 2. Making Inferences** *What seems to be Saro-Wiwa's attitude toward his persecutors?*

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

Injustice stalks the land like a tiger on the prowl. To be at the mercy of buffoons [fools] is the ultimate insult. To find the instruments of state power reducing you to dust is the injury. . . .

It is also very important that we have chosen the path of non-violent struggle. Our opponents are given to violence and we cannot meet them on their turf, even if we wanted to. Non-violent struggle offers weak people the strength which they otherwise would not have. The spirit becomes important, and no gun can silence that. I am aware, though, that non-violent struggle occasions more death than armed struggle. And that remains a cause for worry at all times. Whether the Ogoni people will be able to withstand the rigors of the struggle is yet to be seen. Again, their ability to do so will point the way of peaceful struggle to other peoples on the African continent. It is therefore not to be underrated.



**KEN SARO-WIWA**, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary*

**Civilian Presidents** Obasanjo was an ethnic Yoruba from southwest Nigeria. As a critic of Nigerian military regimes, he had spent three years in jail (1995–1998) under Sani Abacha. As a former general, Obasanjo had the support of the military.

Obasanjo worked for a strong, unified Nigeria. He made some progress in his battle against corruption. He also attempted to draw the attention of the world to the need for debt relief for Nigeria. Obasanjo saw debt relief as essential to the relief of hunger and the future of democracy in Africa.

The controversial 2007 elections brought President Umaru Yar’Adua to power. Like his mentor Mr. Obasanjo, President Yar’Adua faced a variety of problems. These included war, violence, corruption, poverty, pollution, and hunger. In addition, militant groups are threatening Nigeria’s oil exports and economic growth.

## South Africa Under Apartheid

In South Africa, racial conflict was the result of colonial rule. From its beginnings under Dutch and British control, South Africa was racially divided. A small white minority ruled a large black majority. In 1910, South Africa gained self-rule as a dominion of the British Empire. In 1931, it became an independent member of the British Commonwealth. Although South Africa had a constitutional government, the constitution gave whites power and denied the black majority its rights.

**Apartheid Segregates Society** In 1948, the National Party came to power in South Africa. This party promoted Afrikaner, or Dutch South African, nationalism. It also instituted a policy of **apartheid**, complete separation of the races. The minority government banned social contacts between whites and blacks. It established segregated schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods.

In 1959, the minority government set up reserves, called homelands, for the country’s major black groups. Blacks were forbidden to live in white areas unless they worked as servants or laborers for whites. The homelands policy was totally unbalanced. Although blacks made up about 75 percent of the population, the government set aside only 13 percent of the land for them. Whites kept the best land. **B**

**Blacks Protest** The blacks of South Africa resisted the controls imposed by the white minority. In 1912, they formed the African National Congress (ANC) to fight for their rights. The ANC organized strikes and boycotts to protest racist policies. The government banned the ANC and imprisoned many of its members. One was ANC leader **Nelson Mandela** (man•DEHL•uh).

The troubles continued. In 1976, riots over school policies broke out in the black township of Soweto, leaving about 600 students dead. In 1977, police beat popular protest leader Stephen Biko to death while he was in custody. As protests mounted, the government declared a nationwide state of emergency in 1986.

▼ A young South African poll worker helps an elderly man to vote in the first election open to citizens of all races.

### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**B** How did the policy of apartheid strengthen whites’ hold on power?



## Struggle for Democracy

By the late 1980s, South Africa was under great pressure to change. For years, a black South African bishop, Desmond Tutu, had led an economic campaign against apartheid. He asked foreign nations not to do business with South Africa. In response, many nations imposed trade restrictions. They also isolated South Africa in other ways, for example, by banning South Africa from the Olympic Games. (In 1984, Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent methods.)

**The First Steps** In 1989, white South Africans elected a new president, F. W. de Klerk. His goal was to transform South Africa and end its isolation. In February 1990, he legalized the ANC and also released Nelson Mandela from prison.

These dramatic actions marked the beginning of a new era in South Africa. Over the next 18 months, the South African parliament repealed apartheid laws that had segregated public facilities and restricted land ownership by blacks. World leaders welcomed these changes and began to ease restrictions on South Africa.

Although some legal barriers had fallen, others would remain until a new constitution was in place. First, the country needed to form a multiracial government. After lengthy negotiations, President de Klerk agreed to hold South Africa's first universal elections, in which people of all races could vote, in April 1994.

**Majority Rule** Among the candidates for president were F. W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela. During the campaign, the Inkatha Freedom Party—a rival party to the ANC—threatened to disrupt the process. Nevertheless, the vote went smoothly. South Africans of all races peacefully waited at the polls in long lines. To no one's surprise, the ANC won 63 percent of the vote. They won 252 of 400 seats in the National Assembly (the larger of the two houses in Parliament). Mandela was elected president. Mandela stepped down in 1999, but the nation's democratic government continued.

**A New Constitution** In 1996, after much debate, South African lawmakers passed a new, more democratic constitution. It guaranteed equal rights for all citizens. The constitution included a bill of rights modeled on the U.S. Bill of Rights. The political changes that South Africa had achieved gave other peoples around the world great hope for the future of democracy.

**South Africa Today** In 1999, ANC official Thabo Mbeki won election as president in a peaceful transition of power. As Mbeki assumed office, he faced a number of serious challenges. These included high crime rates—South Africa's

### MAIN IDEA

#### Recognizing Effects

How did Desmond Tutu help force South Africa to end apartheid?

### History Makers



#### Nelson Mandela 1918–

Nelson Mandela has said that he first grew interested in politics when he heard elders in his village describe how freely his people lived before whites came. Inspired to help his people regain that freedom, Mandela trained as a lawyer and

became a top official in the ANC. Convinced that apartheid would never end peacefully, he joined the armed struggle against white rule. For this, he was imprisoned for 27 years.

After his presidential victory, Mandela continued to work to heal his country.



#### F. W. de Klerk 1936–

Like Mandela, Frederik W. de Klerk also trained as a lawyer. Born to an Afrikaner family with close links to the National Party, de Klerk was elected to Parliament in 1972.

A firm party loyalist, de Klerk backed apartheid but was also open to

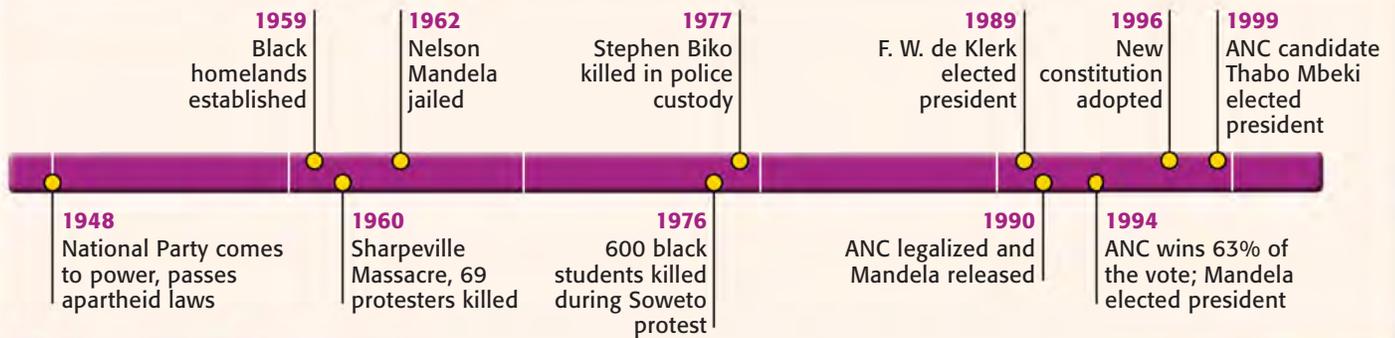
reform. Friends say that his flexibility on racial issues stemmed from his relatively liberal religious background.

In 1993, de Klerk and Mandela were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to bring democracy to South Africa.

#### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

**RESEARCH LINKS** For more on Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk, go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com)

## South Africa, 1948–Present



▲ This was South Africa's flag from 1927 to 1994.

rape and murder rates were among the highest in the world. Unemployment stood at about 40 percent among South Africa's blacks, and about 60 percent lived below the poverty level. In addition, an economic downturn discouraged foreign investment.

Mbeki promoted a free-market economic policy to repair South Africa's infrastructure and to encourage foreign investors. In 2002, South Africa was engaged in negotiations to establish free-trade agreements with a number of countries around the world, including those of the European Union as well as Japan, Canada, and the United States. This was an attempt at opening the South African economy to foreign competition and investment, and promoting growth and employment.

One of the biggest problems facing South Africa was the AIDS epidemic. Some estimates concluded that 6 million South Africans were likely to die of AIDS by 2010. Mbeki disputed that AIDS was caused by HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). His opinion put South Africa at odds with the scientific consensus throughout the world. The *New York Times* stated that Mbeki was in danger of undermining "all his good work with his stance on AIDS."

In Section 3, you will read how democratic ideas changed another part of the world, the Communist Soviet Union.



▲ South Africa adopted this flag in 1994.

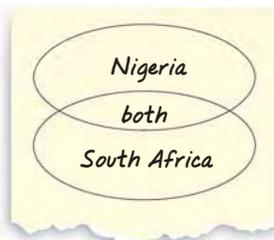
## SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- federal system
- martial law
- dissident
- apartheid
- Nelson Mandela

### USING YOUR NOTES

2. Which country is more democratic? Explain.



### MAIN IDEAS

3. What effect did old colonial boundaries have on newly independent African states?
4. What was the outcome of the war between Nigeria and Biafra?
5. What were the homelands in South Africa?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS** What do you think is the main problem that Nigeria must overcome before it can establish a democratic government?
7. **ANALYZING ISSUES** What are some of the important issues facing South Africa today?
8. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** What were the main negative effects of the economic policies of European colonizers?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **REVOLUTION** Working in small teams, write **biographies** of South African leaders who were instrumental in the revolutionary overturn of apartheid. Include pictures if possible.

### CONNECT TO TODAY MAKING AN ORAL REPORT

Do research on the current policy of Thabo Mbeki and the South African government on HIV and AIDS in South Africa. Report your findings in an **oral report** to the class.