

## **Twentieth Century to the Present: Globalization of Trade, Communication, and Culture**

If it was possible to make a short list of changes that took place during previous centuries, it is more difficult to do that for the twentieth century and our own time. Many changes continued from the previous century. Nationalist struggles resulted in many independent nations. Two world wars and the Cold War had lasting effects throughout the century. Economic development and social growth were important goals for newly independent nations, and industrialization spread unevenly. Trade and economic interdependence came to be called globalization, and the environment became a major issue. Air travel, vaccines and tourism allowed people to travel to wondrous places in the Indian Ocean for work and pleasure, and for people native to the Indian Ocean region to travel, work, and migrate around the Indian Ocean and all over the world. In this era, too, the land routes are not shown on the map. The networks of roads became very thick during this era.

### **World Wars I and II**

Competition among European powers took the form of economic contests over raw materials, lands, and trade, especially because industrialization required resources not found in Europe. Warfare among nation-states and land empires spilled over into the oceans, especially when competition for colonies was at stake. This competition led to the build-up of military hardware such as ships, the race to invent more powerful weapons and more secure defenses. Highly destructive explosives, guns and artillery were the instruments that allowed European powers to overcome people and territories where they were not available. World War I ended old empires like the Ottoman, but also contributed to ending modern empires. Millions of indigenous troops from the colonies fought in World War I, and demanded independence.

Air power was a small factor in World War I, but by World War II, bombers dominated the air, and aircraft carriers played important roles. Coal power gave way to the use of petroleum, and the age of nuclear power began with horrible destruction by the atom bomb. Colonial powers searched for oil and sought alliances which would grant their nations permanent access and profit from petroleum. World War II followed the worldwide Great Depression that proved how well connected economies already were. The Indian Ocean was more directly affected by World War II than World War I, because Japan, a rising industrial power, occupied territory from the Russian Pacific coast and Korea to Indonesia and Burma in Southeast Asia. The occupation ended with hard fighting and Japanese surrender. The atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945 were acts of destruction that led to an arms race on one hand, and movements to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

### **Independence and the United Nations**

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially after the two world wars, colonized countries demanded their independence. Colonial powers were weakened by war, and some were willing to grant independence shortly after 1945. Other independence struggles were violent and long, lasting into the 1960s and 70s. Nation-building after the anti-colonial struggles was often difficult because post-colonial boundaries split tribes, religious, and

culture groups, tore cities from surrounding lands, or left nations with few resources. Some independence agreements left groups in power that had difficulty balancing their people's needs with the demands of major powers. From large nations like India to tiny nations like Mauritius, all joined the United Nations and became active in its development and cultural organizations and its political assemblies. During the Cold War, newly independent countries, led by Indian Ocean nations, opposed the idea of choosing between Communist governments led by China and the Soviet Union, and free market political systems led by the United States. They formed the Non-Aligned Movement, which first met in 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia.

### **Development and Underdevelopment**

The most difficult but hopeful task facing any newly independent nation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was development, sometimes called modernization. There were theories and prescriptions about how nations could "catch up" to industrialized nations, if only they completed a list of tasks, including better health care, education, and efforts to increase production and cut imports. After decades, however, many countries did not see much progress. It proved very difficult to overcome the economic advantages held by former colonial powers, which had more capital, more production, better access to cheap resources, and controlled access to their own markets. The global economy continued to look much like it did under colonialism. Some nations in Asia and Africa remained unable to develop, and their populations lived in poverty that sometimes seemed hopeless, especially with the double effects of disease and environmental destruction. Japan recovered a strong economic position after the war. Toward the end of the century, some Asian countries, such as India, China, Malaysia and Korea had achieved growth and developed industries to manufacture and export goods, develop banking and finance, and attract foreign business capital. Oil-producing nations of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf poured out oil to satisfy the world's thirst for energy, and invested the wealth from oil in developing their nations. The Arabian Peninsula was proven to have nearly half of all known oil reserves, but other countries near the Indian Ocean also have oil. Approximately 40 percent of the world's offshore oil production comes from the Indian Ocean.

Countries in the Indian Ocean are also the source for Liquefied Natural Gas, the cleanest-burning fossil fuel. Today, the search is on for environmentally low-impact, less expensive fuels such as wind power, geo-thermal, and solar. Even ocean waves can be harnessed to generate power. Global efforts to help the poorest nations bridge the technology gap, cure diseases, and repair the effects of centuries of greedy resource exploitation may offer hope.

### **Globalization**

Globalization is the process of integrating the world's economies into an interdependent, connected whole. Globalization can also mean that cultures are in communication across the globe, visiting as tourists or workers, sharing ideas and influences such as world religions, world history studies, world music, world news, and popular culture fads. Globalization is the result of centuries of expanding trade and communication, but it depends on today's instant communication via telephone, television, radio and the Internet. Unlike even a century ago,

many more people have access to global communication technology. The technology gap still prevents many poor people from access, however.

Globalization is uneven, and it is not only positive. It can in some ways erase inequality, or it can make inequality worse. For example, when many countries produce cell phones, they become less expensive for everyone due to competition. The other side of that coin, however, is competition for jobs in a global economy. Wherever workers are cheapest, production can flow. Economists have called this "the race to the bottom," since workers are forced to accept low pay or watch jobs go elsewhere. On the other hand, when the tsunami of 2004 struck, people all over the world immediately began sending donations to help. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have taken up many causes, such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Doctors Without Borders. Money flows have been globalized, even though there is not one world currency. Globalization means that when the economy in a few wealthy countries suffers, financial problems are felt around the world. Globalization has increased during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Environmental Challenges**

During the past two or three centuries, people traveled through the earth discovering and making use of resources. The world seemed like it could never be exhausted. As long as humans have existed, they have had an impact on the environment, hunting large animals, cutting and burning forests, and introducing plants and animals to new lands. All of these activities brought environmental change, but world population was much smaller then. It took 10,000 years of human history until around 1830 before the world population reached one billion. It took only two hundred more years to reach six billion people. Migration, urbanization, agriculture, use of resources including fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, and gas), forest products, sea creatures and domestic animals, mining of minerals and building roads have huge effects now. Science has also advanced our knowledge of the environment, so we can study our own impacts.

Global warming is changing the atmosphere and weather. Melting polar ice-caps will cause sea levels to rise as they did, much more slowly, in prehistoric times. Islands home to millions, including the Maldives and many Pacific Islands will be no more unless something can be done. The Tsunami of 2004 and Cyclone Nargis in 2008 gave an idea of the disaster rising water can cause. Some island nations have brought the issue to the United Nations, asking that wealthy nations which contributed to global warming through fossil fuel use help pay for measures to save these islands from being submerged.

In the Indian Ocean, species extinction from habitat loss is a major issue being researched by biologists. Deforestation of tropical rain forests is proceeding rapidly due to human population increases and economic pressure to extract resources. Other environmental problems in the oceans include over-fishing, causing populations to crash. International organizations are trying to agree on sustainable fishing practices. Pollution from pesticides, toxic oil and chemical spills and land run-off is causing death and disease in marine life. Noise pollution from ships affects whales and other marine mammals. Plastic bottles and other garbage in the seas have formed vast floating islands of trash. Other problems of

Twentieth Century to the Present, "Historical Overview"

uncertain origin are coral reef bleaching, algae blooms, and mass beaching of whales. International agreements like the Law of the Sea help large and small nations cooperate and control destructive competition.