Decolonization Worksheet

Grade 11 history · 1945 – 1985



Name: Date: Score: / 26

Why the empires went

Decolonization was the process by which colonies became independent states. Most of it happened in thirty years after 1945, and the usual mistake is to explain it with one cause.

Several pressures arrived together. European powers came out of the Second World War financially exhausted. Colonial soldiers had fought for empires that denied them a vote at home, and said so on return. Both Cold War superpowers opposed formal empire, for their own reasons. And mass **nationalist movements** had become capable of organizing strikes and boycotts that made a colony expensive to hold.

What varied was the resistance. Where a ruling power had few settlers and little to defend, transfers were negotiated in a few years. Where a large settler population held land, or where bases and resources mattered, independence took a war. That single variable explains most of the difference between cases.

Part A — Vocabulary match each term to its meaning (8 marks)

1. Decolonization	_____	A. Dividing a territory into separate states along claimed communal lines
2. Self-determination	_____	B. Mass refusal to cooperate, without armed force
3. Mandate	_____	C. A territory administered by one state on behalf of an international body
4. Partition	_____	D. A colony where migrants from the ruling power became a permanent population
5. Nationalist movement	_____	E. Continued economic control over a formally independent state
6. Non-violent resistance	_____	F. The principle that a people should choose its own government
7. Settler colony	_____	G. An organized campaign for independence and self-rule
8. Neocolonialism	_____	H. The process by which colonies became independent states

Part B — Fill in the blanks (6 marks)

1. The principle that a people should choose its own government is self-_____.

2. Dividing a territory along claimed communal lines is _____.

3. Mass refusal to cooperate without armed force is _____ resistance.

4. Continued economic control over an independent state is _____.

5. A colony where migrants became a permanent population is a _____ colony.

6. An organized campaign for independence is a _____ movement.

Part C — Pressure or resistance? write P if it pushed empires out, R if it held them in (6 marks)

Factor	P or R
European powers were financially exhausted after 1945	
Colonial soldiers had fought for empires that denied them a vote	
Both Cold War superpowers opposed formal empire	
Settler populations with land and property to lose	
Mass nationalist parties able to organize strikes and boycotts	
Military bases and resources the ruling power wanted to keep	

Part D — Read the graph (2 marks)

1. In which ten-year period did the number of member states rise fastest?

2. Give one reason the increase slowed after 1975.

Part E — Compare the outcomes explain what happened and why (4 marks)

1. Ghana became independent in 1957 after negotiation; Algeria took an eight-year war. Explain the main reason for the difference.

2. What does the term neocolonialism claim about states that gained political independence?

Decolonization Worksheet — Answer Key

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Part A — Vocabulary

1. **Decolonization** → H
2. **Self-determination** → F
3. **Mandate** → C
4. **Partition** → A
5. **Nationalist movement** → G
6. **Non-violent resistance** → B
7. **Settler colony** → D
8. **Neocolonialism** → E

Part B — Fill in the blanks

1. **determination**
2. **partition**
3. **non-violent**
4. **neocolonialism**
5. **settler**
6. **nationalist**

Part C — Pressure or resistance?

1. **P** — European powers were financially exhausted after 1945
2. **P** — Colonial soldiers had fought for empires that denied them a vote
3. **P** — Both Cold War superpowers opposed formal empire
4. **R** — Settler populations with land and property to lose
5. **P** — Mass nationalist parties able to organize strikes and boycotts
6. **R** — Military bases and resources the ruling power wanted to keep

Part D — Read the graph

1. **1955 to 1965**
   The bar rises from 34 to 92, by far the steepest step on the graph. Most of it is African independence around 1960.
2. **Most colonies had already become independent.**
   Accept any sound reason: the remaining cases were the hardest ones, often settler colonies or small territories, so there were simply fewer left to convert.

Part E — Compare the outcomes

1. **The settler population.**
   Ghana had few permanent settlers, so the ruling power had little to defend and could negotiate a transfer. Algeria had around a million settlers who regarded it as home and who had the political weight to block any transfer, which turned independence into a war. Credit any answer identifying settler numbers or entrenched interests as the deciding factor.
2. **That formal independence left economic control in outside hands.**
   The claim is that flags, elections and seats at the United Nations changed the politics while trade terms, debt, currency arrangements and ownership of resources kept real decisions elsewhere. Students may question the term; a reasoned challenge earns full marks as long as the claim itself is stated accurately first.