

Chapter 29 Viewpoint Activity

When nationalist movements began in Africa (textbook pages 743–744), many leaders were Africans who had been educated by European schools and Christian missionaries. In the passages below, two historians explore the influence of these colonial-era teachings on movements for independence. ♦ *As you read, think about the points each writer makes. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Influences on African Nationalism

Ali A. Mazrui

It is one additional irony of African history that Christianity, so often identified with European imperialism, should at the same time have produced so many African nationalists. . . . All Christian schools were simultaneously carriers of Western secular [nonreligious] skills and values. The missionary schools taught mathematics as well as religious studies; sometimes philosophy as well as the catechism; social studies in the here and now as well as theology about the hereafter. Young Christians such as Kwame Nkrumah, products of missionary schools, once considered becoming priests—only to change their minds and become politicians with a rendezvous with history. . . .

One result has been the remarkable irony that Christianity has been both an ally of colonization and a partner in liberation. . . . Perhaps it is no surprise that one of the first acts of the Afrikaner Nationalist government on coming to power [in South Africa] in 1948 was to close some of the mission schools for giving Africans, as Verwoerd later put it, “the wrong expectations.”

Basil Davidson

. . . [F]or in Africa, as in Europe, the driving inspiration was not that all men should be divided by becoming nationals, but that all men should be united by becoming free. . . .

This line of thought may be traced through every phase of the colonial period. Involvement in the First World War gave it a new strength. If the African volunteers who suffered on the battlefields of European conflict “were good enough to fight and die in the [British] Empire’s cause,” wrote the *Gold Coast Independent* in 1921. . . . “they were good enough . . . to have a share in the government of their countries.” Others felt the same. . . . [T]he year 1920 saw a meeting in Accra of African spokesmen from each of the four British West African territories. . . . “We desire,” announced [a Gold Coast leader] . . . to promote unity among our people”; and the aims of unity, however tentatively stated, were equality and freedom.

“ . . . *Christianity, so often identified with European imperialism, should at the same time have produced so many African nationalists.* ”

Sources: (1) *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, by Ali A. Mazrui (Little, Brown and Co., 1986); (2) *Africa in History*, by Basil Davidson (Macmillan, 1974).

Questions to Discuss

1. According to Mazrui, the first writer, what was the educational background of most of the African nationalist leaders? What subjects were they taught in school?
2. How did World War I influence Africans’ wish for equality?
3. **Predicting Consequences** How do you think learning Western ideas, history, and science would help spur a person to work for independence?