Challenges of Nation Building in Africa and the Middle East
Note the Uneasy Coexistence of the Modern World and the Traditional World in Africa

-Much of Africa was colonized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
- France in the north and western part of Africa, and England in the east and south, dominated the Continent
- By World War II many of the people in these African colonies wanted independence from their colonial masters
- The leaders of many of the independence movements in these countries, though, had an uneasy relationship with Western trends
- They wanted the economic and social progress that Western technology made possible but they also wanted to retain many of Africa’s traditions
Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972)

- First president of Ghana (1957), a former British colony
- Advocate of Pan-Africanism
- Founding member of the organization of African Unity (OAU), in 1963
- Very familiar with U.S.; had attended Lincoln University in PA (1935-1942)
- Strongly influenced by the ideas of Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois
- Had led nonviolent resistance (boycotts, strikes, etc.) to British rule in the Gold Coast in 1949-1950; arrested and jailed by British for over a year
- Believed that socialism reflected African ideals more than capitalism
- While in power, ruled essentially as a dictator; he outlawed strikes, set up a one party state
- Overthrown in a coup d’etat in 1966
Jomo Kenyatta (1894-1978)

- First prime minister (1963-1964), then president of Kenya (1964-1978)
- A member of the Kikuyu (or Gikuyu) tribe, Kenyatta was born in British East Africa
- Trained as a carpenter, he joined the Kikuyu Central Association (or KCA) in 1924 and eventually became the organization’s leader
- In the 1930s he attended college in both England and the Soviet Union
- In 1946 he became a teacher in Kenya
- In 1947 Kenyatta became president of the Kenya African Union (or KAU) and calls for independence for Kenya
- In 1951 Kenyatta is arrested and put on trial for allegedly being involved in the strongly anti-colonialist Mau Mau rebellion; he is convicted and forced to spend 7 years in prison
- In 1963 he becomes Kenya’s first post-colonial leader; he is pro-Western and moderate but also authoritarian; he effectively rules Kenya as a one-party state
- In the picture to the right, Kenyatta is speaking with Thurgood Marshall, a future U.S. Supreme Court justice
Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1938)

- Kenyan author and playwright known for challenging political authorities in his homeland
- Spent some time as a political prisoner in the 1970s for criticizing Daniel Arap Moi, the Kenyan leader after Kenyatta; since then, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has lived mostly in exile
- Originally wrote in English, now writes in Gikuyu or Kikuyu (an important language in Kenya) and Swahili
- Prefers not to write in English because of its colonial associations
- Currently a professor of comparative literature and English at the University of California-Irvine

- The Mau Mau Uprising was directed against British colonial authorities in Kenya.
- It also involved attacks on loyalists within the Kikuyu tribe.
- It was very bloody; atrocities were committed on both sides, and thousands of people – Kenyans and British – were killed.
- It was brutally repressed.
- Opinions differ about the Mau Mau; some consider them freedom fighters, others consider them to have been terrorists.
Biafra (1967-1970)

-Biafra was a break-away state in Nigeria which sought its independence in the late 1960s.
- The Igbo who constituted a majority in the Biafran region, wanted to live apart from other ethnic groups (such as the Hausa or the Yoruba) in Nigeria.
- The newly free government of Nigeria refused and a civil war developed.
- A state of extreme famine developed in Biafra; perhaps as many as one million people, mostly children, died of hunger.
The international community was outraged by events in Biafra but did little to stop the civil war. In the end, Biafra lost its quest for independence and was reabsorbed into Nigeria.
Mohammad Ahmad Ben Balla (1918-)

-Ahmad Ben Balla was an Algerian revolutionary who led the fight against French colonial rule, in the 1950s esp.
-He gained military experience while serving in the French army during World War II; later, he was arrested as a leader of the National Liberation Front (or FLN) and kept in prison for many years
-After French President Charles De Gaulle granted Algeria independence, Ahmad Ben Balla was elected president of his country (in 1963)
-He favored land reforms and gave support to Nasser in Egypt
-In 1965 he was ousted by the Algerian military in a coup d’etat and placed under house arrest; then, in 1980, he was allowed to go into exile
Aime Césaire (1913-2008) and “la negritude”

-Aime Césaire, a writer, poet, teacher and politician from Martinique (a Caribbean island), believed that Africans as well as those of African ancestry have a distinct and markedly non-European culture.

-European colonialism had harmed the development of this African culture.

-”Negritude” (or blackness) involved a recognition of one’s African or black identity and an appreciation of its culture and heritage.

-In French literary circles, he was famous for writing a book-length poem in 1939, “Notebook of a Return to My Native Land,” but he wrote other noteworthy poems and plays too (such as La Tempête, a creative remake of Shakespeare’s “Tempest”).
Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961)

-Lumumba was a Congolese revolutionary leader who became Prime Minister of the Congo in June 1960 after that country won its independence from Belgium
-A Pan-Africanist like Nkrumah, he was also stridently anti-Western and Marxist in ideology
-When turmoil gripped the Congo shortly after he took power, he called upon the Soviet Union for help
-August 1960 his government was overthrown by the military in the Congo, led by Col. Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko, purportedly with the help of the CIA; later, after Lumumba’s arrest and imprisonment, he was executed by a firing squad
Joseph Mobutu Sese Soko (1930-1997)

-Mobutu had joined Lumumba’s political movement, the MNC (Mouvement National Congolais) in the late 1950s and become one of his aides; fatefully, in mid-1960, Lumumba had appointed Mobutu army chief of staff

-After Lumumba’s death, Mobutu served in various roles in the government before becoming the longtime President of the Congo (renamed Zaire), from 1965 to 1997

-Mobutu was known for the corruption and repressiveness of his regime as well as for his lavish lifestyle

-A vast country, the Congo had great mineral wealth (particularly in the Katanga mining region in the east) but few of Mobutu’s countrymen benefitted from it while he was in power

-Mobutu was a staunch anti-communist and for that reason received considerable foreign aid from the U.S. and France even if he also sought to reduce the influence of colonial-era institutions and practices in Zaire
Apartheid in South Africa

-Apartheid refers to discriminatory policies enforced in South Africa during much of the 20th century.

-After South Africa had gained its independence from Great Britain, several white-minority governments, passed a series of laws that drastically curtailed the rights of Africans and other non-whites to vote, go to university, etc.; these governments also instituted laws requiring the separation of whites and blacks.

-Various black nationalist groups, led by the African National Congress (or ANC), formed in opposition to both the government and these segregationist policies (referred to collectively as apartheid).
Nelson Mandela (1918-)

-Mandela was one of the leaders of those opposed to the Apartheid regime in South Africa
-He initially favored non-violent protest in opposition to South Africa’s apartheid system
-Later, he became a leader of the ANC’s armed wing
-Arrested in 1961 for sabotage, he spent more than 27 years in prison
-After negotiations with Pres. F. de Klerk in the late 1980s, he was released from prison
-He was elected South Africa’s first African president in 1994
-In 1999 he retired
While president, Mandela sought to reconcile formerly bitter foes, whose hostility spanned decades. He also had many relatively new problems to contend with, such as HIV/AIDS. South Africa, like many sub-Saharan African countries, has for many years had to deal with an HIV/AIDS epidemic.
Another African country that has had a difficult transition to independence and democracy is Rwanda. Like many other African nations, it has experienced conflict among different ethnic groups. In Rwanda’s case this conflict led to a civil war between Hutus and Tutsis. Numerous atrocities were committed on both sides before other countries intervened. Because much of the killing seemed motivated by an effort by some Hutus to eliminate the Tutsis and any Hutus who did not share their ideology, international tribunals were set up to punish those responsible. Somewhere between 500,000-1 million people, or roughly 20% of Rwanda’s population, are thought to have been killed in this conflict.
Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970)

- Nasser was the charismatic leader of Egypt from 1956 to 1970
- A former Air Force officer, he took power in a coup d’état and steered Egypt on a more nationalist and anti-colonialist course
- His success in facing down the British, the French and the Israelis in the 1956 Suez crisis won him wide acclaim in the Third World
- He was less successful in the Six Day War against the Israelis in 1967; Egypt lost the war and had to give up the Sinai and the Gaza Strip to Israel
- His attempt to unify Syria and Egypt in the United Arab Republic (UAR) was short-lived
- He oversaw some major rebuilding projects, such as the Aswan Dam, and received aid from the Soviet Union, which did not please the U.S.
The Suez Canal Crisis (1956)

-This canal, built in the late 19th century, was strategically important to Great Britain and many other countries.

-When Nasser announced plans to nationalize it, Great Britain, France, and Israel became concerned and sent in troops, precipitating the Suez Crisis.

-U.S. President demanded that these countries withdraw their troops.

-Nasser was able to claim success for standing up to these other powers.
The Suez Crisis (continued)

-The U.S. position in this context is understandable in terms of both the Cold War and in U.S. support for an end to imperialism (even if the U.S. had engaged in its share of imperialist ventures too)
Yasir Arafat and the PLO

- The Palestinian Liberation Organization was founded after the 1948 War fought between Israel and several surrounding Arab nations.
- It was led by Yasir Arafat, a Palestinian who believed that nonviolent protests were of limited usefulness against the Israelis.
- The P.L.O engaged in guerilla activity as well as terrorist acts (such as the taking of hostages at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich).
The Six Day War (1967)

- In a surprise attack on Egypt, Israel gained territory in the Sinai as well as in the Gaza Strip.
- Israel also defeated Jordan and obtained control over East Jerusalem and the West Bank.
- Israel also defeated Syria and took over the Golan Heights, which otherwise threatened Northern Israel, particularly the Galilean region.
- Many Arabs, especially Palestinian refugees, opposed Israel’s continuing occupation of these territories and refused to accept not only Israel’s new boundaries but also its right to exist as a nation.
Golda Meir (1898-1978)

Described by former Prime Minister David ben-Gurion as “the best man in government,” Golda Meir was one of Israel’s more successful leaders during the 1960s and 1970s. A member of the Labor Party, she oversaw many of the reforms that enabled Israel to modernize and become as advanced economically as some Western nations. She was Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974.

She was born in Kiev, Ukraine; earlier in life, she had lived on a kibbutz (or collective farm) (1921-1924) and also worked as a schoolteacher in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Yom Kippur War (1973)

- Egypt, now led by Anwar el-Sadat, and other Arab nations attacked Israel during a Jewish religious holiday.
- Israel at first lost land and tanks but eventually recovered for the military situation to return to the status quo ante.
- U.S. support was instrumental in helping the Israelis; in retaliation, OPEC nations sharply curtailed oil supplies to the U.S., causing a spike in gas prices.
U.S. President attempted to cope with this crisis by dispatching Sec. of State Henry Kissinger to negotiate directly with Arab governments.

Although his so-called “shuttle diplomacy” in previous years had helped him develop a good working relationship with Arab heads of state, he was only partially successful in this matter.

Shortages of oil and gas ended but prices for these commodities stayed relatively high.
The Camp David Accords (1978)

-U.S. President Jimmy Carter was able to get Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat and Israeli leader Menachem Begin to agree to a peace treaty.

-In exchange for the return of the Sinai peninsula to Egypt, Egypt agreed to recognize Israel’s right to exist and to resume trade with it.

-Other Arab leaders shunned Sadat, who was assassinated by men affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood a few years later; Sadat’s Vice President, Hosni Mubarak, then took over as Egyptian leader.
Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution (1979)

- In Iran, the pro-Western leader Shah Reza Pahlavi was forced to go into exile in 1979.
- In his place, a theocracy led by the fundamentalist Shi’ite leader, the Ayatollah (or Imam) Khomeini, was established.
- It was vehemently anti-American.
Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988)

-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein tried to take advantage of the instability in Iran by seizing oil fields in southwestern Iran
-The Iran attacked Iraqi troops in response
-This war was very bloody
-The Iraqis, which in general had more advanced weaponry, sometimes resorted to biological warfare whereas the Iranians often used human wave attacks
-In the end, neither side won
Saddam Hussein (1937-2006)

- Saddam Hussein was a member of the Ba’ath party in Iraq.
- He took power in a coup d’etat in 1979 and ruled until 2003.
- Nominally a Sunni Muslim but in fact a secularist leader, he nationalized Iraq’s oil industry and established a repressive regime in his country.
- He was deposed as a result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.
The First Intifada (or uprising) (1987)

In this the first of two intifada, Palestinians began demonstrating against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and other territories taken over by Israel as the result of the 1948 or 1967 Wars. These demonstrations turned violent; many Palestinians and Israelis were killed.
First Persian Gulf War (1990-1991)

-In this war, U.S. President George H.W. Bush organized a grand coalition of Western and Arab states that forced Saddam Hussein to relinquish Kuwait, which his Revolutionary Guard and other troops had seized in August 1990

-The U.S. allowed Saddam Hussein to stay in power and didn’t intervene further when Iraqi rebels were unable to force Saddam’s removal from power

-A No-Fly Zone was later imposed in Iraq to try to prevent Saddam from further terrorizing ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq, including Kurds in the north of the country