

Independence Movements (1800–2000)

IB SL Study Guide

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How to Use This Guide

- **Paper 2 World History Topic 8** covers independence and nationalist movements that challenged colonial rule between 1800 and 2000
- **Paper 2** is a 90-minute exam in which you write **two essays**, each worth **15 marks** — one from Topic 8 and one from another World History topic (or both from Topic 8)
- This topic is **identical for SL and HL students** — both sit the same Paper 2 questions. HL students also sit Paper 3 (regional option), but that is separate
- The single most important rule: questions often ask you to refer to **two independence movements from different regions**. You must demonstrate cross-regional knowledge. India and Algeria, or Vietnam and Cuba, are valid pairings. India and Pakistan are not — both are South Asia
- **Exam Alerts** flag the traps that cost marks in essays
- **IB Tips** highlight what examiners reward in extended responses
- **Worked Examples** provide model essay outlines for common question types

Aligned to IB History SL/HL World History Topic 8 — current syllabus

Videos on this page: Overview — Independence Movements · Origins and Causes · Methods of Resistance · India 1857–1947 · Algeria and Africa

►Watch: Overview — The Age of Decolonisation

VIDEO

Section 1: Theme 1 — Origins and Causes of Independence Movements

1.1 The Nature of Colonial Rule

European empires at their height in the late 19th century controlled approximately **85% of the world's land surface**. Colonial rule was not a single system but a spectrum of arrangements — from direct rule (France in Algeria, Britain in Bengal) to indirect rule (Britain using local chiefs in sub-Saharan Africa) to settler colonialism (French Algeria, British Kenya, Dutch South Africa). What these systems shared was the subordination of colonised peoples' political, economic, and cultural autonomy to metropolitan interests.

Key features of colonial rule that generated resistance:

Feature	Detail	Independence movement link
Economic exploitation	Raw material extraction; captive markets; taxation in cash forcing peasants into wage labour	Provided material grievances; created educated clerk class that studied colonial contradictions
Political exclusion	Colonised people denied representation, legal equality, and civil rights	Nationalist leaders used the colonisers' own democratic rhetoric against them
Cultural suppression	Missionary education; denigration of local culture, language, and religion	Produced "negritude" and related cultural nationalist movements; Hindu and Islamic revival in India
Land alienation	European settler farms, plantation agriculture; best land taken	Central to Kenya, Algeria, Zimbabwe; land became a revolutionary demand
Racial hierarchy	Legal and social discrimination on racial lines	Created sense of common identity among disparate groups; gave movements their moral argument

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Do not write that independence movements were simply a reaction to "bad" colonial rule. Examiners want you to analyse **specific causes** — economic exploitation, political exclusion, the impact of the World Wars, ideological influences — not a general sense of grievance. Vague phrases like "colonisers were cruel" will not earn marks. Name specific policies, specific grievances, specific contradictions.

1.2 Economic Exploitation as a Cause of Nationalism

Colonial economies were structured to benefit the metropole. The effect was not simply poverty but a specific kind of economic distortion that created both grievances and the social conditions for nationalist organisation.

India: The British deindustrialised India's textile industry through tariff policies favouring Lancashire mills. India's share of world manufacturing output fell from approximately **25% in 1750** to **2% by 1900**. The **drain of wealth** (a concept developed by the Congress leader **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** and the economist **Dadabhai Naoroji**, who calculated the "drain" at £200–300 million annually by the 1870s) became a central nationalist argument: that colonialism impoverished India structurally, not incidentally.

Algeria: French colonisation after 1830 systematically dispossessed Algerian Muslim farmers. By 1950, approximately **27,000 European settlers** (colons) owned about **40%** of the best agricultural land, while over 9 million Algerians were crowded onto the remaining marginal land. Rural poverty and the exclusion of educated Algerians from equal professional opportunity (the "glass ceiling" of the colonial civil service) drove both peasants and urban elites toward the FLN.

Ghana (Gold Coast): Cocoa farmers in the Gold Coast understood that they produced a commodity sold at world prices but bought manufactured goods at inflated prices —

the classic colonial terms-of-trade problem. When Britain bought cocoa at prices far below market value in World War II (to support the British war effort), Gold Coast farmers organised a 1937–38 **cocoa hold-up** — a boycott that demonstrated their capacity for collective action and prefigured the Convention People’s Party’s mass politics.

Vietnam: French Indochina extracted rubber, rice, and coal. Vietnamese rice exports tripled under French rule even as Vietnamese peasants experienced recurrent famine — a contradiction that Ho Chi Minh made central to his revolutionary argument. French planters’ rubber estates (the *plantations de caoutchouc*) became synonymous with brutal labour conditions that radicalised the rural population.

1.3 Political Exclusion and the Role of Education

Colonial education systems produced a critical unintended consequence: they trained a class of educated Africans and Asians in Western political thought — liberalism, nationalism, even socialism — and then denied those ideas’ practical application to the colonised themselves.

IB TIP

IB Tip: The “educated elite” argument is one of the strongest in any causes essay. Show how colonial education systems produced the leaders of independence movements — Gandhi (Inner Temple, London), Nkrumah (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania; London School of Economics), Ho Chi Minh (Paris), Ben Bella (French military service). These men learned their politics in the metropole and turned those tools against it. Examiners reward this kind of specific, analytical linkage.

The Congress of Educated Elites: The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, was initially dominated by lawyers and professionals who had studied in Britain and believed the British would honour their own principles of representative government. The Morley-Minto Reforms (1909) and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) offered minimal concession — advisory councils, limited franchises — while retaining all real power with the Viceroy. The gap between British rhetoric and British practice was radicalising.

The Évolués in Algeria: French colonial policy theoretically offered Algerians the possibility of full citizenship if they renounced their Muslim personal status. By 1936, only about **2,500 Algerians** had taken up this offer — revealing both its restrictive conditions and its cultural humiliation. The reform movement known as the **Blum-Viollette Plan** (1936), which would have granted citizenship to 20,000–25,000 educated Algerians without requiring them to renounce Islam, was killed by European settler opposition. This failure discredited the integrationist path and pushed educated Algerians toward nationalism.

The Harlem Renaissance and Pan-Africanism: Kwame Nkrumah absorbed Pan-African thought from **W.E.B. Du Bois**, Marcus Garvey’s “Back to Africa” movement,

and the **Fifth Pan-African Congress** (Manchester, 1945), which he helped organise. The idea that all people of African descent shared a common political identity — and that African independence was part of a global struggle — gave Ghanaian nationalism its intellectual framework and its international connections.

1.4 The Role of World War I

World War I was a watershed for colonial independence movements for three interconnected reasons: it exposed the fragility of European power, it generated promises that were not kept, and it created a new ideological environment in which self-determination became a recognised principle of international relations.

Wartime mobilisation and the crisis of colonial legitimacy: European powers mobilised millions of colonial subjects as soldiers and labourers. Over **1.5 million soldiers** from British India served on the Western Front, in Mesopotamia, and in East Africa. France recruited approximately **600,000 African troops** (tirailleurs sénégalais) plus hundreds of thousands of North Africans. The physical experience of war — seeing European soldiers die in the mud, seeing European cities, living in France — shattered the myth of European invincibility and racial superiority.

Wilson's Fourteen Points and the principle of self-determination: President Woodrow Wilson's January 1918 declaration that the post-war settlement should be based on **national self-determination** electrified colonised peoples worldwide. Indian Congress leaders, Vietnamese nationalists (Ho Chi Minh petitioned the Paris Peace Conference in 1919), and Korean activists all interpreted Wilson's words as a global promise. The Paris Peace Conference dashed these hopes — self-determination was applied to European peoples within defeated empires, not to Asians or Africans within victorious empires.

The Amritsar Massacre (1919): On **13 April 1919**, General Dyer ordered British troops to fire on an unarmed crowd in the Jallianwala Bagh garden in Amritsar, Punjab, killing at least **379 people** (Congress estimates were higher) and wounding over 1,200. The massacre, and the British establishment's initial defence of Dyer, permanently shattered the moderate Congress belief that Britain would voluntarily reform. It is the single most important event in pushing Gandhi's movement toward non-cooperation.

MEMORISE THIS

WWI's impact on independence movements — four channels:

- **Military demystification:** Colonial soldiers witnessed European vulnerability; returned with skills, arms experience, and changed expectations
- **Wilson's self-determination:** Global principle created expectations that peace conference refused to meet — radicalising effect
- **Economic dislocation:** War taxation, food requisitioning, inflation hit colonial economies hard; grievances intensified

- **Broken promises:** Britain promised India post-war reform; France promised reforms in Indochina; none were honoured substantially

1.5 The Role of World War II

World War II accelerated decolonisation more dramatically than World War I. Three mechanisms were decisive: the military defeat of European colonial powers by Japan, the Atlantic Charter's rhetorical commitment to self-determination, and the economic exhaustion of European empires.

Japan and the collapse of European prestige: Japan's conquests in 1941–1942 — **Malaya, Singapore, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, French Indochina** — were not merely military defeats. They destroyed the psychological foundation of colonial rule: the belief in European racial and civilisational superiority. When 130,000 British troops surrendered to a Japanese force at **Singapore** (February 1942), it was — in Churchill's words — “the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history.” Indian, Burmese, and Malayan independence movements drew an immediate lesson: European power was not invincible.

The Atlantic Charter (August 1941): Churchill and Roosevelt agreed in this declaration that they “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” Churchill later claimed this applied only to European peoples under Nazi occupation. Roosevelt disagreed — and colonised peoples across Asia and Africa used the Charter's language to demand that Allied war aims be applied universally.

Post-war weakness of European empires: By 1945, Britain was effectively bankrupt — dependent on American loans (the Anglo-American Loan Agreement, 1945). France had been occupied and humiliated. Neither power had the financial capacity to suppress major independence movements across multiple continents simultaneously. The British decision to grant Indian independence (1947) was partly strategic: the Indian Army was no longer reliable for suppressing Indian nationalism, and the cost of holding India by force was prohibitive.

The Vietnamese August Revolution (1945): Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh seized the moment of Japanese surrender (August 1945) to declare Vietnamese independence before French forces could reassert control. Ho's declaration deliberately echoed both the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man — weaponising Western liberal texts against Western imperialism.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Students frequently write that WWII “caused” decolonisation. This oversimplifies. WWII **accelerated** processes already underway — Indian nationalism, Vietnamese communism, Algerian nationalism all predated 1939. The stronger argument is that WWII changed the **balance of power and legitimacy** — it weakened European empires militarily and financially, undermined colonial ideology, and created an international environment (UN Charter, Cold War competition for non-aligned states) hostile to open imperialism.

1.6 Ideological Influences

Independence movements drew on a variety of ideological traditions, often in complex combinations:

Nationalism: The idea that a people sharing language, culture, history, or religion constitute a “nation” entitled to self-government. Borrowed from European nationalist thought; adapted to colonial contexts where the “nation” had to be constructed across ethnic and regional divisions. Gandhi’s Indian nationalism had to bridge Hindu-Muslim divisions; Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism sought a continental identity above ethnic divisions.

Marxism/Communism: Ho Chi Minh, Castro, and Nkrumah (to varying degrees) used Marxist analysis to explain colonialism as a form of class exploitation on a global scale. Lenin’s **theory of imperialism** (1917) argued that colonialism was the highest stage of capitalism — the export of capital to exploit cheap labour and raw materials. This framework gave independence movements a global theory and a superpower patron (the USSR) willing to provide material support.

Pan-Africanism: The movement asserting African cultural, political, and spiritual unity across the continent and the African diaspora. Key figures: W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James. The Fifth Pan-African Congress (Manchester, 1945) explicitly linked African independence to anti-colonial struggle worldwide.

Islamic modernism: In Algeria and across North Africa, Islamic thought was a resource for resistance. The **Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema**, founded by **Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis** in 1931, promoted the idea that Islam, Arabic language, and Algerian identity were inseparable — directly challenging French assimilationist policy. Ben Badis’s maxim “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my homeland” became a slogan of the independence movement.

Liberal constitutionalism: Many early independence leaders — Nehru, early Congress moderates, Nkrumah’s early position — argued that colonised peoples should receive the constitutional rights already promised by colonial powers. This was strategically useful because it put the colonisers on the defensive: you cannot defend liberalism while denying it.

MEMORISE THIS

Ideological toolkit — MNPIL:

- **Marxism/Leninism** — Ho Chi Minh, Castro; explains colonialism as economic exploitation; provides USSR patron
- **Nationalism** — universal; must construct “the nation” across internal divisions
- **Pan-Africanism** — Nkrumah, Du Bois; African unity across ethnicity and diaspora
- **Islam** — Ben Badis in Algeria; religious and cultural identity as resistance
- **Liberal constitutionalism** — Gandhi, early Nehru; turn colonial powers’ own values against them

▶ Watch: Origins of Independence — Nationalism and Colonial Resistance

VIDEO

Section 2: Theme 2 — Methods Used to Achieve Independence

2.1 Overview of Methods

Independence movements did not choose their methods in a vacuum — they were shaped by the nature of colonial rule, the resources available, the political landscape, and the personality of leaders. Most movements used a combination of methods over time, shifting emphasis as circumstances changed.

The spectrum of methods:

Method	Definition	Example
Armed struggle	Organised violence against colonial forces or settlers	FLN in Algeria, Viet Minh against France
Civil disobedience	Organised non-violent law-breaking to expose injustice and raise political cost	Gandhi’s campaigns in India
Mass political organisation	Building parties, trade unions, and civic organisations to demonstrate popular support	Convention People’s Party (Ghana), Indian National Congress
Diplomacy and international pressure	Lobbying the UN, allied powers, and international opinion	Nehru at the UN, FLN’s diplomatic campaign in Cairo and New York
Propaganda and cultural resistance	Newspapers, literature, cultural revival to create national consciousness	Ho Chi Minh’s journalism, Negritude movement
Elite negotiation	Behind-the-scenes bargaining between nationalist leaders and colonial officials	Nehru and Mountbatten; Nkrumah and the British

💡 IB TIP

IB Tip: The best “methods” essays do not simply list what movements did — they analyse **why particular methods were chosen, how effective they were, and what**

their costs and limits were. A movement that relied solely on civil disobedience in the face of overwhelming repression may not have succeeded; a movement that used armed struggle risked alienating international support. The relationship between methods and outcomes is what earns the top marks.

2.2 Civil Disobedience — Gandhi and the Indian Case

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) developed the doctrine of **satyagraha** (“truth-force” or “soul-force”) in South Africa (1906–1914) and applied it to India from 1917. Satyagraha was not merely passive resistance — it was a disciplined, active moral strategy designed to expose the injustice of colonial law by publicly breaking it and accepting the consequences, thereby forcing the colonial power to choose between concession and visible brutality.

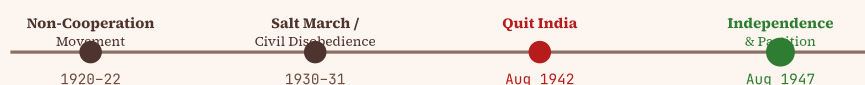
Key campaigns:

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–1922): Following the Amritsar Massacre and the disastrous Khilafat crisis, Gandhi called on Indians to boycott British institutions — courts, schools, honours, textiles. The movement mobilised millions but was called off by Gandhi after the **Chauri Chaura incident** (February 1922) in which a mob killed 22 policemen. Gandhi’s insistence on non-violence over mass mobilisation frustrated many Congress activists.

The Salt March (March–April 1930): Gandhi led a 240-mile march from Ahmedabad to Dandi on the coast, where he symbolically made salt from seawater — breaking the British salt monopoly. The march was carefully choreographed for maximum symbolic impact and international press coverage. It triggered a nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement; approximately **60,000 Indians were arrested**. The British offer to negotiate — the Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931) — demonstrated that non-violent mass civil disobedience could force concessions.

Quit India (August 1942): In the midst of WWII, Gandhi called for immediate British withdrawal from India. The British responded by imprisoning Gandhi and the entire Congress leadership within hours. The resulting leaderless uprising was suppressed violently — over 1,000 killed, over 100,000 arrested — but demonstrated that British rule in India had become ungovernable.

Gandhi’s Major Campaigns in India, 1920–1947



Key campaigns that defined the independence movement's methods. Red = suppressed violently; Green = achieved goal.

Limits of non-violence: Not all Congress leaders accepted Gandhi's methods. **Subhas Chandra Bose** broke with Congress and sought Axis support for armed resistance, forming the **Indian National Army (INA)** from Indian POWs captured by Japan. Bose's approach failed militarily, but the British decision to try INA soldiers for treason backfired — public sympathy for the soldiers and mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy (1946) convinced Attlee's government that British military control of India could not be maintained.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Gandhi's non-violence is often romanticised. Examiners will reward essays that acknowledge its **limits and critics**: the failure of Non-Cooperation after Chauri Chaura; the exclusion of Dalits' (untouchables') interests from mainstream Congress; Muslim League's view that Congress represented Hindu nationalism; Ambedkar's critique of Gandhi's caste politics. A balanced essay on Gandhi's methods must engage with what non-violence could not achieve.

2.3 Armed Struggle — Algeria and Vietnam

Algeria: The FLN and the War of Independence (1954–1962)

The **Front de Libération Nationale (FLN)**, founded in Cairo in 1954, launched an armed uprising on **1 November 1954** (Toussaint Rouge — “Red All Saints’ Day”) with approximately 70 simultaneous attacks across Algeria. The FLN's strategy combined guerrilla warfare in rural areas (primarily the Aurès mountains initially), urban terrorism, and intensive diplomatic work to internationalise the conflict.

Military strategy:

The FLN followed a three-phase guerrilla doctrine influenced by Mao Zedong's writings: first, organise and survive; second, expand and control territory; third, conventional military offensive. In practice, the FLN never reached phase three — they could not defeat the French Army in the field. Their strategy was instead to make the cost of the war **politically unbearable in France** while building international support for Algerian independence.

The Battle of Algiers (1956–1957): The FLN under **Saadi Yacef** launched a bomb campaign in Algiers targeting European civilian cafés and public spaces. The French Army (particularly the 10th Parachute Division under General Massu) responded with **systematic torture and mass detention**. The FLN network was destroyed militarily — but the exposure of French torture methods destroyed France's moral authority internationally and provoked a crisis of conscience in France itself. The Battle of Algiers was a tactical defeat but a strategic victory for the FLN.

The Morice Line: France constructed an electrified fence (the **Morice Line**) along the Tunisian and Moroccan borders to prevent arms and fighters reaching Algeria. It was

largely effective militarily — the external FLN army (the ALN) could not break through. But it meant the war could not be won militarily by either side.

Diplomatic strategy: FLN leadership in Cairo (the **Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne**, GPRA, declared 1958) lobbied the Arab League, the UN General Assembly, and Non-Aligned Movement states. Each year from 1955, the UN debated the Algerian question — forcing France to defend its position internationally. The FLN understood that Algerian independence would be won in New York, Cairo, and Paris as much as in the mountains.

The Evian Accords (March 1962): After the fall of the Fourth Republic, De Gaulle's exhausting negotiations with the FLN concluded in the Evian Accords — a ceasefire and referendum on self-determination. The referendum (July 1962) produced **99.7% in favour of independence**. Over one million European settlers (pieds-noirs) fled to France.

MEMORISE THIS

FLN strategy — key components:

- **Military:** Guerrilla warfare in rural areas; urban terrorism (Algiers) to raise political cost
- **Social control:** Collect taxes, run parallel courts, enforce boycotts; built a state within the state
- **Diplomatic:** GPRA in Cairo; UN lobbying; Arab League support; Non-Aligned Movement solidarity
- **France's weakness:** Morice Line contained but could not end the war; torture destroyed moral authority; cost was unsustainable politically

Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh (1945–1954)

Ho Chi Minh (born Nguyen Sinh Cung, 1890–1969) was simultaneously a nationalist, a communist, and a brilliant strategist who fused Leninist party organisation with Vietnamese patriotism. He had been active in Paris communist circles after WWI, founded the Indochina Communist Party (1930), and led the **Viet Minh** (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi — League for the Independence of Vietnam, founded 1941) against both Japanese occupation and French colonial restoration.

The August Revolution (1945): When Japan surrendered (August 1945), the Viet Minh seized power across Vietnam before the French could return. On **2 September 1945**, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence in Hanoi, reading from the American Declaration of Independence (“All men are created equal...”). The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed — but France, with British and Chinese Nationalist assistance, reasserted control by early 1946.

People's War doctrine: Ho Chi Minh and his military commander **Vo Nguyen Giap** applied a Maoist people's war strategy. Unlike conventional armies, the Viet Minh

would survive by dissolving into the population — “the guerrilla swims in the people like a fish in the sea.” Giap’s three-phase strategy:

1. **Strategic defence** — survive French military sweeps; build political organisation in the countryside
2. **Strategic stalemate** — attrite French forces; raise political cost
3. **Strategic offensive** — deliver a decisive military blow when conditions allowed

Dien Bien Phu (March–May 1954): The decisive battle of the First Indochina War. General Giap lured French forces into a fortified camp at Dien Bien Phu, a remote valley near the Laotian border. The French expected a conventional assault they could repel with firepower and airlifted supplies. Instead, Giap’s forces — using **50,000 soldiers and 100,000 civilian porters** who carried artillery piece by piece through jungle — surrounded the valley and established artillery positions on the overlooking hills. The French were systematically destroyed over 57 days. **Dien Bien Phu fell on 7 May 1954.** The defeat immediately preceded the Geneva Conference, which partitioned Vietnam at the 17th parallel and scheduled reunification elections (which were never held).

IB TIP

IB Tip: Dien Bien Phu is more than a military event — it was a **psychological turning point** for anti-colonial movements worldwide. It demonstrated that a non-European people with limited industrial resources could defeat a European colonial army through strategic ingenuity, mass mobilisation, and willingness to sustain casualties. Giap’s victory inspired the FLN in Algeria, which also began its uprising in November 1954 — months after the French defeat.

2.4 Mass Political Organisation — Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah

Ghana’s independence (1957) is often described as a model of relatively peaceful transfer of power — but this conceals the political pressure, mass organisation, and occasional violence that made British concession inevitable.

Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972) returned to the Gold Coast in 1947 after twelve years studying in the United States and Britain, where he had encountered Pan-Africanism, Marcus Garvey’s Black nationalism, and Leninist party organisation. He became secretary-general of the **United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)**, then split from it in 1949 to found the more radical **Convention People’s Party (CPP)**.

The CPP’s innovations:

Innovation	Detail
Mass membership	CPP recruited market women, farmers, veterans, youth — not just the educated elite
Positive Action	General strike and civil disobedience campaign (January 1950) modelled on Gandhi
Prison as platform	Nkrumah was arrested in 1950; the CPP won the 1951 elections while he was in prison; British released him to lead government
Press and propaganda	Nkrumah's newspaper Evening News reached mass audience; slogans like "Self-Government Now"
International connections	CPP linked to Pan-African networks; used UN as forum; cultivated anti-colonial bloc

The path to independence: The British approach to Gold Coast decolonisation — unlike Algeria or Vietnam — was essentially to manage the transfer once it became clear that the CPP commanded overwhelming popular support. Nkrumah's "Positive Action" campaign (1950) and the CPP's election victory (1951) demonstrated that British authority depended on African consent that was no longer forthcoming. The British Governor, **Sir Charles Arden-Clarke**, chose negotiation over repression. Ghana became independent on **6 March 1957** — the first sub-Saharan African country to achieve independence.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Ghana's independence is sometimes presented as purely peaceful. This misses the coercion involved — Nkrumah's Positive Action campaign involved strikes and civil disobedience that the British suppressed with force (28 killed in the 1948 Accra riots that preceded the CPP's founding). It also misses the structural reason for British concession: post-war Britain could not afford to hold multiple colonies by force simultaneously, and the Gold Coast's cocoa revenue was insufficient to justify the cost of military suppression.

► **Watch: Methods of Independence — Gandhi, Guerrilla War, and Mass Politics**

VIDEO

Section 3: Case Studies in Depth

3.1 India (1857–1947)

► **Watch: Indian Independence — From 1857 to Partition**

VIDEO

The 1857 Uprising

The **Indian Uprising of 1857** (called the "Indian Mutiny" in British historiography, the "First War of Independence" in Indian nationalist historiography) began as a sepoy (Indian soldier) mutiny triggered by the introduction of the Enfield rifle — whose cartridges were rumoured to be greased with pig and cow fat, offending both Muslim

and Hindu soldiers. The uprising spread across northern India, involving peasants, dispossessed princes (especially from Awadh, annexed in 1856), and religious leaders.

The uprising was defeated by 1858 but had two lasting consequences: the **East India Company was abolished** and India was placed under direct Crown rule (the British Raj); and the British concluded they must rule India more carefully, maintaining caste hierarchies and respecting religious practice — a conservatism that would both entrench British power and, ultimately, reinforce the communal divisions that complicated independence.

The Indian National Congress (1885–1920)

The **Indian National Congress** was founded in 1885 by A.O. Hume (a British civil servant) and Indian professionals including **Dadabhai Naoroji** and **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**. Its initial program was moderate: petitions for Indian representation in the Civil Service and legislative councils, complaint about the drain of wealth, demand for British rule to honour its own principles.

The Congress split in 1907 between **Moderates** (Gokhale — work within the system, use petitions and argument) and **Extremists** (Bal Gangadhar Tilak — self-rule now, mass mobilisation, Swadeshi boycott of British goods). The split weakened Congress until Gandhi's arrival transformed its methods.

Gandhi's Transformation of the Congress (1920–1942)

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 after 21 years in South Africa. He understood mass politics and rural India in a way that the Westernised Congress leadership did not. His key innovations:

- **Broadened Congress** to include peasants, artisans, and workers — not just lawyers and professionals
- **Made Congress a mass party** through the 1920 constitutional reforms: three-tier structure, payment of membership fee, provincial Congress Committees in regional languages
- **Non-cooperation and civil disobedience** replaced petitioning as the primary method
- **Symbolic genius:** The charkha (spinning wheel) as symbol of Indian self-reliance; khadi (homespun cloth) boycott as both economic resistance and cultural statement

Jinnah, the Muslim League, and Partition

Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) began his political career as a secular constitutional nationalist — dubbed “the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity” by Gokhale. By the 1930s, Jinnah had concluded that the Congress — despite its secular constitution — operated as a Hindu-majority organisation that would inevitably subordinate Muslim interests in an independent India.

The **Muslim League**, founded 1906, became under Jinnah's leadership the vehicle for a separate Muslim political identity. The **Lahore Resolution (March 1940)** called for the creation of independent Muslim states in the northwestern and northeastern zones of India — the origin of the demand for **Pakistan** (from P for Punjab, A for Afghan/NWFP, K for Kashmir, I for Sind, -stan from Baluchistan).

The failure of the **Cabinet Mission Plan** (1946) — a last British attempt to keep India united as a federation — made partition almost inevitable. The **Mountbatten Plan** (June 1947) set the date: independence on **15 August 1947**, with British India partitioned into India and Pakistan.

Partition's cost: The line drawn by **Cyril Radcliffe** (who had never visited India before) divided Punjab and Bengal. The resulting mass migrations involved **12–15 million people** and approximately **200,000–2 million deaths** in communal violence — one of the largest forced population transfers in history. Gandhi was assassinated on **30 January 1948** by a Hindu nationalist who blamed him for partition's concessions to Muslims.

MEMORISE THIS

India key dates:

Date	Event
1857	Uprising; Company rule replaced by British Crown
1885	Indian National Congress founded
1905	Partition of Bengal; Swadeshi movement
1907	Congress split — Moderates vs. Extremists
1909	Morley-Minto Reforms — limited Indian representation
1915	Gandhi returns from South Africa
13 Apr 1919	Amritsar Massacre — 379+ killed
1920–22	Non-Cooperation Movement
1930	Salt March — Civil Disobedience Movement
1935	Government of India Act — provincial self-government
Mar 1940	Lahore Resolution — Muslim League demands Pakistan
Aug 1942	Quit India Movement
15 Aug 1947	Indian independence and partition
30 Jan 1948	Gandhi assassinated

3.2 Algeria (1954–1962)

Background: 132 Years of French Colonisation

France conquered Algeria between **1830 and 1847**, killing an estimated **500,000 to 1 million Algerians** in the conquest and subsequent resistance wars (notably the resistance of **Emir Abdelkader**, 1832–1847). Algeria was treated not as a colony but as an integral part of France — it was divided into three French *départements* and over one million European settlers (French, Spanish, Italian) emigrated there. This settler

presence (the *pieds-noirs*) made Algerian independence far more politically difficult than independence in territories without large settler communities.

The FLN Uprising (1954)

The FLN was founded by a **nine-man committee of colonels** (the “nine historic chiefs”), including **Ahmed Ben Bella**, **Belkacem Krim**, and **Larbi Ben M’Hidi**. Their November 1954 manifesto called for national independence, restoration of a sovereign Algeria, and the preservation of fundamental liberties without distinction of race or religion.

The French response was initially characterised by denial: Premier Pierre Mendès France declared “Algeria is France” — the three departments were constitutionally part of the Republic. As guerrilla activity grew, France committed increasingly large forces — from 50,000 in 1954 to **400,000 troops by 1956**.

The French Use of Torture and Its Political Consequences

The French Army’s systematic use of torture — particularly *gégène* (electric shock applied by field telephone generator) — during the Battle of Algiers was documented by **Henri Alleg** in *La Question* (1958), a memoir that was immediately banned by the French government but had already circulated widely. General Massu later acknowledged in his memoirs that torture was systematic.

The torture scandal had three effects:

1. It galvanised French intellectual opinion against the war (Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus — though Camus’s position was more ambiguous, as he was a *pied-noir*)
2. It destroyed France’s ability to claim it was fighting for “civilisation” against terrorism
3. It gave the FLN’s international diplomatic campaign its most powerful argument

The Collapse of the Fourth Republic and De Gaulle

The Algerian War brought down the French **Fourth Republic** in May 1958, when army officers in Algeria threatened a coup if De Gaulle was not returned to power. The resulting **Fifth Republic** (De Gaulle’s constitution) was initially supported by settlers who believed De Gaulle would keep Algeria French. De Gaulle’s policy of **autodétermination** (announced 1959) — offering Algerians a referendum on their future — provoked the **1960 “Barricades Week”** settler uprising and the **1961 OAS** (Organisation Armée Secrète) terrorist campaign by French settlers and rogue army officers against both the FLN and the French government.

The **Evian Accords** (18 March 1962) ended the war. Over **1 million European settlers** fled to France between 1961 and 1963 — the most rapid mass migration in French history.

IB Tip: Algeria is an excellent case for essays on the **costs and limits of armed struggle**. The FLN won independence but at enormous cost: 300,000–400,000 Algerians killed (French official figure was 141,000; Algerian nationalist figures were higher), 2 million displaced into camps, massive economic disruption. Independence was followed almost immediately by internal FLN power struggles and the establishment of a one-party state under Ben Bella — raising questions about what the struggle had achieved for ordinary Algerians.

3.3 Vietnam (1945–1954)

Ho Chi Minh — Leader, Theorist, Strategist

Ho Chi Minh combined roles that in most movements are separated: he was simultaneously the **symbolic national leader** (comparable to Gandhi or Nkrumah), the **ideological theorist** (a committed communist who adapted Leninism to Vietnamese conditions), and a **capable political organiser** (the Viet Minh's party structure was modelled on the Soviet Communist Party). His flexibility — described by the historian David Marr as “a chameleon of nationalism” — allowed him to present the Viet Minh as a broad nationalist coalition while maintaining communist direction.

The Franco-Viet Minh War (1946–1954)

The war began with the **Haiphong Massacre** (November 1946), when French naval forces bombarded the Vietnamese quarter of Haiphong in response to a customs dispute, killing an estimated **6,000 civilians**. The Viet Minh retreated to the countryside, beginning the “resistance war” that would last eight years.

French strategy rested on controlling cities and main roads (“ink-blot” strategy) and searching for a decisive engagement that would destroy the Viet Minh in open battle. Giap refused this engagement through 1950–1953, allowing the Viet Minh to build strength in the countryside. The French built a string of fortified posts along the Chinese border (the **de Lattre Line**) that the Viet Minh overran in 1950, receiving arms supplies from the newly victorious Chinese communists.

Dien Bien Phu in detail:

The French commander General **Navarre** chose Dien Bien Phu as a “mooring point” (*point d’ancrage*) — a fortified base that would draw the Viet Minh into open battle. He expected to hold it against guerrilla infantry attacks. Instead, Giap assembled 200 artillery pieces on the surrounding hills — which the French thought impassable — and conducted a siege. The French guns were commanded by Colonel **Piroth**, who committed suicide when he realised his counter-battery fire was ineffective against Giap's entrenched artillery.

The garrison of approximately **16,000 French Union troops** surrendered on **7 May 1954** — the day before the Indochina question came up at the Geneva Conference, where negotiations were already underway.

The Geneva Accords (July 1954): Vietnam was temporarily divided at the **17th parallel**: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh) in the north; the State of Vietnam (Bao Dai, soon Diem) in the south. Nationwide reunification elections were scheduled for 1956. The United States, which had financed 80% of the French war effort, refused to sign the accords and began replacing French influence in the south — setting the stage for American intervention and the Second Indochina War.

3.4 Cuba (1953–1959)

Cuba's independence movement belongs to a different historical tradition — it was a revolution against a **US-backed dictatorship** rather than against direct colonial rule, but it connects to independence movements through its anti-imperial dimension.

Background: Cuba had achieved formal independence from Spain in 1898, but the **Platt Amendment** (1901) gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban affairs and control Cuba's foreign policy. American corporations owned vast sugar estates; the US military had intervened multiple times. The dictatorship of **Fulgencio Batista** (1952–1959) was supported by American business interests and was characterised by corruption, police repression, and inequality.

Fidel Castro (born 1926) launched the **26th of July Movement** with an attack on the **Moncada Barracks** in Santiago de Cuba on **26 July 1953**. The attack failed; Castro was captured, tried, and imprisoned (his trial speech — “History will absolve me” — became a revolutionary manifesto). Released under an amnesty in 1955, Castro went to Mexico, where he met the Argentine revolutionary **Ernesto “Che” Guevara**.

The Granma landing and guerrilla war (1956–1959): Castro, Guevara, Raúl Castro, and 79 others landed in Cuba from the yacht *Granma* on **2 December 1956**. The landing was a military disaster — most were killed or captured in the first days. The 20 survivors (including the Castro brothers and Guevara) retreated to the Sierra Maestra mountains and built a guerrilla movement that grew as Batista's repression alienated the population. By 1958, Batista's army had effectively ceased to fight; Batista fled on **1 January 1959**. Castro entered Havana on 8 January.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Cuba connects to multiple Paper 2 topics — Topic 8 (independence/anti-imperialism), Topic 10 (authoritarian states — Castro's subsequent rule), and Topic 12 (the Cold War — the Cuban Missile Crisis, Bay of Pigs). Be precise about which aspect of Cuban history the question is asking about. An essay on independence movements should focus on 1953–1959 and the anti-Batista struggle; save Castro's consolidation of power for the authoritarian states context.

3.5 Ghana (1947–1957)

►Watch: African Independence — Nkrumah, Ghana, and Pan-Africanism

VIDEO

Nkrumah's strategic vision went beyond Ghanaian independence — he saw Ghana as the catalyst for Pan-African liberation. His slogan “Seek ye first the political kingdom” reflected his conviction that political independence was the prerequisite for economic and cultural liberation. His 1957 independence speech declared that Ghana’s independence was “meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa.”

The CPP's political machine:

The Convention People's Party mobilised constituencies that previous Gold Coast nationalism had ignored. The **market women** of Accra — who controlled the retail distribution network — were a major organisational base. Veterans of WWII service in the British Army, who had seen Europe and returned with changed expectations, were another. The CPP's six-point program (self-government, decent housing, full literacy, democratisation of government, elimination of racial discrimination, development of agriculture) was deliberately broad enough to unite disparate interests.

The 1951 election: The British held elections under a new constitution in February 1951. Nkrumah won his seat from jail — the CPP won **34 of 38 contested seats**. The British Governor released Nkrumah and asked him to form a government. This “negotiated revolution” — independence won through elections rather than armed struggle — reflected both British post-war weakness and Nkrumah's political skill in making the cost of resistance higher than the cost of concession.

MEMORISE THIS

Ghana key dates:

Date	Event
1947	United Gold Coast Convention founded; Nkrumah arrives as secretary-general
1948	Accra riots — 29 killed; Watson Commission recommends reform
1949	CPP founded; Nkrumah breaks with UGCC
Jan 1950	Positive Action campaign; Nkrumah arrested
Feb 1951	CPP wins election; Nkrumah released, becomes Leader of Government Business
1954	CPP wins further elections; internal self-government
1956	Plebiscite in British Togoland — votes to join Gold Coast
6 Mar 1957	Ghana independence — first sub-Saharan African state
1958	Nkrumah hosts first Conference of Independent African States in Accra

Section 4: Theme 3 — Challenges of New States

4.1 Nation-Building and Identity

Independence created states, but not always nations. The borders of post-colonial states were largely inherited from European colonial cartographers who had drawn lines across the map of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East without reference to ethnic, linguistic, or religious communities. The new leaders of independent states faced the challenge of constructing a common national identity across deeply divided populations.

India: The Indian constitution (adopted 1950) created a secular, democratic republic with special provisions for linguistic minorities, scheduled castes (Dalits), and scheduled tribes. Nehru's model was a **“composite nationalism”** — an Indian identity that transcended religion, caste, and language. The States Reorganisation Act (1956) redrew internal state boundaries on linguistic lines — acknowledging that diversity could not be suppressed, only managed. The tension between Indian unity and its extraordinary diversity is arguably the defining challenge of Indian political life to this day.

Ghana: Nkrumah faced the challenge of building a national identity above the Ashanti, Ewe, Ga, and other ethnic communities. His approach was a combination of **centralisation** (weakening traditional rulers and regional assemblies), **CPP party state** (using the party apparatus to penetrate local communities), and **Pan-Africanism** (displacing ethnic identity onto a continental African identity). By 1960, Ghana was a one-party republic — the authoritarian turn that had been implicit in Nkrumah's Leninist organisational methods from the start.

Algeria: The FLN's internal divisions — between the external leadership (GPRA in Cairo), the internal guerrilla commanders (the *wilaya* colonels), and the external army (ALN in Morocco and Tunisia) — broke into open conflict within days of independence in July 1962. **Ahmed Ben Bella** won the power struggle, becoming Algeria's first president, and established a one-party state. The FLN's wartime unity was a vehicle for independence, not a blueprint for governance.

4.2 Political Instability

The transfer of power rarely produced stable democratic government. The reasons were structural:

- Colonial powers had not prepared colonised peoples for self-government — deliberate policy, since educated administrators might lead independence movements
- Colonial institutions (civil services, courts, armies) were designed for control, not representative governance

- Economic structures were export-oriented, not designed for domestic development
- Cold War superpowers intervened to support whichever faction served their interests

Ghana under Nkrumah (1957–1966): Nkrumah’s authoritarian turn — the Preventive Detention Act (1958), the creation of a one-party state (1964), and cult of personality — alienated the professional and military elite. He was overthrown in a **military coup on 24 February 1966** while visiting Hanoi. His economic mismanagement (ambitious industrial projects financed by cocoa revenue that collapsed when prices fell) gave the military its justification.

Vietnam’s division: The failure to hold the 1956 reunification elections (South Vietnam and the United States refused) left Vietnam divided and set the stage for American intervention. The Second Indochina War (1965–1975) was, from one perspective, the continuation of the Vietnamese independence struggle — against American neocolonialism after French colonialism. The unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam was only proclaimed in 1976.

Algeria after independence: The FLN’s one-party state proved economically capable (Algeria’s oil revenues provided a fiscal base that Ghana lacked) but politically repressive. The suppressed Islamic opposition eventually produced the **Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)**, whose electoral victory in 1991 was cancelled by the army — triggering a civil war (1991–2002) in which approximately 100,000–200,000 people were killed.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert: Students often write that political instability in post-colonial states was caused purely by colonialism leaving behind “divided” or “unprepared” societies. Examiners will reward essays that also acknowledge the **agency of post-independence leaders** — Nkrumah’s economic misjudgements, Ben Bella’s authoritarian consolidation, the FLN’s suppression of opposition. Colonialism created structural constraints; post-colonial leaders made choices within those constraints. Both levels of explanation are required.

4.3 Economic Development

Colonial economies were designed to export raw materials and import manufactured goods — exactly the opposite of what developing states needed for industrialisation. The new states faced a “colonial inheritance” problem: limited infrastructure, minimal industrial base, dependence on commodity prices set in foreign markets, and debt incurred during the independence struggle.

Nehru’s “socialist pattern of society”: India under Nehru (1947–1964) pursued state-led industrialisation through **Five Year Plans** modelled partly on Soviet planning. Large state enterprises dominated steel, heavy engineering, and telecommunications.

The economy grew but slowly; the “Hindu rate of growth” (approximately 3.5% per year in the 1950s–1970s) was insufficient to absorb India’s growing population into productive employment. Land reform — promised to peasants who had supported independence — was implemented unevenly by state governments dominated by landlord interests.

Ghana’s “big push” industrialisation: Nkrumah’s development strategy was ambitious — the **Volta River Project** (Akosombo Dam, completed 1965) would provide hydroelectric power for aluminium smelting using Ghana’s bauxite. The project was completed but the aluminium smelter never used Ghanaian bauxite — it imported cheaper aluminium from the United States. Meanwhile, Ghana’s cocoa revenue, on which everything depended, collapsed when world prices fell. By 1966, Ghana was effectively bankrupt.

Algeria’s oil state: Algeria discovered large oil and gas reserves in the Sahara during the independence war. The **Evian Accords** left France with preferential access to these resources — a neocolonial arrangement the FLN had accepted to achieve independence. The nationalisation of French oil companies (1971) gave Algeria control of its hydrocarbon revenues, which funded an industrial policy (steel, petrochemicals) but also created a rentier state dependent on oil prices.

4.4 Cold War Interference

The Cold War transformed independence movements from bilateral conflicts between colonisers and colonised into three-sided struggles, with the United States and Soviet Union competing to align newly independent states with their respective blocs.

The Non-Aligned Movement: Nehru (India), Nkrumah (Ghana), Sukarno (Indonesia), Tito (Yugoslavia), and Nasser (Egypt) founded the **Non-Aligned Movement** (NAM) at the **Bandung Conference** (April 1955) to resist Cold War pressure. The NAM’s principled position — refusing to align with either superpower — gave newly independent states a degree of diplomatic autonomy but did not protect them from superpower interference.

American intervention: The United States supported the **Bay of Pigs invasion** (1961) against Castro’s Cuba, imposed an economic embargo that lasted decades, and backed anti-communist coups across Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In Vietnam, American support for the Diem government (and later direct military intervention) prolonged the conflict for another 20 years after French defeat.

Soviet support: The USSR provided arms, military training, and economic support to anti-colonial movements that aligned with communist or socialist politics — Vietnam, Algeria (limited), Cuba, Angola, Mozambique. Soviet support was not altruistic — it was an instrument of Cold War competition — but it provided essential resources to movements that would otherwise have been outgunned.

The Congo Crisis (1960–1965): The Congolese independence leader **Patrice Lumumba** was overthrown and assassinated within months of independence (January 1961) in a coup backed by Belgian, British, and American intelligence. The CIA’s role in Lumumba’s assassination — motivated by fear that he would align Congo with the Soviets — exemplifies Cold War intervention overriding the wishes of the newly independent population.

 MEMORISE THIS

Cold War and independence — key patterns:

- **NAM:** Nehru, Nkrumah, Nasser tried to maintain autonomy between blocs — partially successful but not protection against covert intervention
- **US pattern:** Support anti-communist dictators (Batista, Diem, Mobutu); covert action against socialist leaders (Lumumba, Allende, Arbenz)
- **USSR pattern:** Arm and fund socialist movements (Vietnam, Cuba, Angola); rarely intervened militarily in the independence period
- **Result:** Many newly independent states had their political direction shaped by superpower competition rather than domestic choice

Section 5: Cross-Regional Comparison

5.1 Comparing Methods Across Regions

	India	Algeria	Vietnam	Cuba	Ghana
Primary method	Civil disobedience + mass politics	Armed struggle + diplomacy	Armed struggle (people’s war)	Armed struggle (guerrilla)	Mass politics + elections
Role of violence	Limited; Gandhi opposed	Central	Central	Central	Limited (1948 riots)
Role of leader	Gandhi, then Nehru	Ben Bella (political), Boumediene (military)	Ho Chi Minh	Fidel Castro	Nkrumah
International support	British Labour Party sympathy; UN	Arab League, USSR, NAM	China, USSR	USSR (after 1960)	Pan-African networks, NAM
Colonial power’s response	Negotiate after WWII	Military suppression, then negotiate	Military suppression → defeat	Support Batista	Negotiate after 1948
Independence achieved	1947	1962	1954 (partial) / 1976 (full)	1959	1957

5.2 Comparing Post-Independence Outcomes

IB TIP

IB Tip: The IB syllabus requires analysis of independence movements' **outcomes** as well as their causes and methods. A strong comparative essay will note that armed struggle movements (Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba) tended to produce more authoritarian post-independence states — partly because the military organisation required for armed struggle created power structures that were hard to democratise, and partly because the Cold War environment rewarded aligned states over democratic ones. This is not a universal rule — case study analysis is essential — but it is a pattern worth raising.

	India	Algeria	Vietnam	Cuba	Ghana
Political system at independence	Parliamentary democracy	One-party (FLN)	One-party (VCP in North)	Eventually one-party (after 1961)	Parliamentary → one-party (1964)
Key challenge	Hindu-Muslim partition violence	FLN internal power struggle; civil war 1991–2002	Cold War partition; US intervention	US embargo; economic dependence on USSR	Economic collapse; military coup 1966
Long-term stability	Remained democratic (with Emergency 1975–77)	Authoritarian; liberalised 1989 → civil war	Unified 1976; remains communist	Remains communist state	Alternating military/civilian rule

Section 6: Exam Preparation

6.1 Common Paper 2 Question Types

Paper 2 history essays consistently follow these patterns for Topic 8:

1. **Causes question:** “Examine the causes of ONE independence movement.” OR “Compare and contrast the causes of two independence movements from different regions.”
2. **Methods question:** “Evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used by independence movements to achieve their aims.” (Must use two movements, different regions.)
3. **Role of individual question:** “Assess the role of ONE leader in achieving independence.” (Gandhi, Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, Ben Bella.)
4. **Challenges question:** “To what extent did newly independent states successfully address the challenges they faced?” (Post-independence — nation-building, economic development, Cold War.)
5. **Comparative claim question:** “Civil disobedience was more effective than armed struggle in achieving independence.” Discuss with reference to two

movements from different regions.

EXAM ALERT

Exam Alert — the “different regions” trap: The most common mark-costing error in Paper 2 Topic 8 essays is pairing two movements from the **same region**. Valid cross-regional pairs: India + Algeria, India + Ghana, India + Vietnam, Algeria + Vietnam, Algeria + Cuba, Ghana + Cuba, Vietnam + Ghana. Invalid pairings: India + Pakistan (both South Asia), Algeria + Egypt (both North Africa), Cuba + Mexico (both Latin America).

6.2 Essay Planning Template

When you receive a Paper 2 question, use this 5-minute plan:

Step 1 — Decode the command term:

- *Examine / Discuss* — balanced analysis, reach a conclusion
- *Evaluate / To what extent* — weigh evidence on both sides; qualified conclusion
- *Compare and contrast* — explicit similarities AND differences; conclude which factor is more significant
- *Assess the role of* — analysis of contribution; acknowledge limits and other factors

Step 2 — Identify your two case studies (ensure different regions)

Step 3 — Draft a thesis that directly answers the question (not a neutral statement of what you’ll discuss)

Step 4 — Plan your paragraphs: Aim for 4–5 body paragraphs, each with a clear argument, evidence, and link back to the question

Step 5 — Plan your conclusion: Summarise your argument; state the “extent” or balance of your judgement

6.3 Worked Example Essays

WORKED EXAMPLE

Question 1: “Compare and contrast the methods used by independence movements to achieve independence.” Refer to two movements from different regions.

Command term: Compare and contrast — explicit similarities AND differences; conclude which factor/difference is most significant

Thesis: Independence movements in India and Algeria employed different primary methods — civil disobedience and mass politics versus armed struggle and diplomacy respectively — reflecting the different nature of their colonial situations. Yet both movements shared a critical dimension: the internationalisation of their struggles and the exploitation of the colonial power’s declining moral authority and material capacity. The contrast in methods was ultimately less decisive than their shared goal of making colonial rule politically and economically unsustainable.

Case studies: India (Gandhi’s Congress) and Algeria (FLN)

Similarities:

- Both movements had to win support from populations divided along ethnic, regional, or religious lines (Hindu-Muslim in India; Berber-Arab, rural-urban in Algeria)
- Both used **international forums** — Gandhi’s India through the British Labour movement and the UN; FLN through the Arab League, UN General Assembly, and Non-Aligned Movement
- Both exploited the **declining capacity and moral authority** of their colonial power — Britain post-WWII financially exhausted; France morally damaged by torture revelations
- Both required **organisational structures** capable of mobilising mass populations: Congress three-tier structure; FLN wilaya system of regional military-political command

Differences:

- **Violence:** Gandhi’s movement was principled about non-violence — campaigns were called off (Non-Cooperation after Chauri Chaura) to maintain this. The FLN’s strategy was explicitly violent — targeting French civilians in the Battle of Algiers was deliberate, not aberrant
- **Colonial context:** India had been under British rule since 1858 with no large settler community capable of resistance; Algeria had 1 million European settlers with French citizenship who could not be “persuaded” — only defeated or bought out
- **Speed:** Indian independence took 27 years from Gandhi’s first major campaign (1920) to 1947; Algerian independence took just 8 years (1954–1962) — violent methods were faster, at higher cost

- **Role of WWII:** Britain's post-war weakness made negotiated independence possible in India; France's post-war weakness made it possible to resist France in Algeria, but France still fought for eight years

Conclusion:

The choice between civil disobedience and armed struggle was not merely ideological — it was structural, determined by the nature of settler presence and the colonial power's political will to fight. Both methods ultimately succeeded because they made the cost of continued colonial rule (financial, human, reputational) higher than the cost of withdrawal. The critical similarity is more analytically significant than the tactical difference: both movements succeeded by making colonialism unsustainable, not by making independence desirable to the colonial power.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Question 2: “Assess the role of ONE leader in achieving independence for their country.”

Command term: Assess — make a judgement about the leader’s importance; acknowledge limits and other factors

Chosen leader: Kwame Nkrumah and Ghanaian independence

Thesis: Nkrumah was the decisive individual in achieving Ghanaian independence — his organisational genius, Pan-African ideology, and strategic reading of British post-war weakness were essential to the CPP’s success. However, his role must be contextualised: structural factors (British financial exhaustion after WWII, the Gold Coast’s cocoa wealth making the territory governable, the absence of a large settler community) created the conditions within which Nkrumah’s skills became decisive. The leader mattered, but he mattered because of the situation he navigated.

Nkrumah’s contribution:

- **Organisational innovation:** The CPP was a mass party with roots in market communities, veterans’ associations, and rural cocoa farmers — constituencies that the UGCC’s lawyer-dominated leadership had ignored. Without this organisational base, independence agitation would have remained an elite petition exercise
- **Strategic flexibility:** Nkrumah knew when to use Positive Action (the 1950 general strike) and when to negotiate. His willingness to work within British-designed constitutional frameworks after 1951 — accepting the role of “Leader of Government Business” — allowed him to demonstrate competent self-government and remove British justifications for delay
- **International context:** Nkrumah’s Pan-African connections and attendance at the 1945 Manchester Congress gave him international stature and links to anti-colonial movements worldwide, strengthening his negotiating position
- **Symbolic genius:** “Seek ye first the political kingdom” — Nkrumah understood that the masses needed inspiration, not just organisation

Limits of the individual:

- British structural weakness was not Nkrumah’s creation — post-WWII exhaustion and American pressure on European empires created a permissive environment
- The Gold Coast had relatively advanced infrastructure (roads, cocoa market organisation) compared to other African territories — Nkrumah inherited a relatively organised society
- The CPP’s base was created by structural social changes (urbanisation, education, veterans returning from WWII) that preceded Nkrumah’s arrival
- Britain’s choice to negotiate rather than suppress was made by British decision-makers (Governor Arden-Clarke) — Nkrumah could not have forced

independence against determined British military opposition

Conclusion:

Nkrumah was necessary but not sufficient. His individual contributions — mass party organisation, strategic flexibility, international connections — were essential to converting Ghana's structural advantages (no settlers, manageable economy, Britain's post-war weakness) into independence in 1957. The "great man" and structural explanations are not alternatives; they are complementary levels of analysis for any independence movement.

Section 7: Key Figures Reference

MEMORISE THIS

Key Figures — India:

Name	Role	Significance
Mohandas Gandhi	Congress leader 1920–1947	Developed satyagraha; broadened Congress to mass base; Salt March, Quit India
Jawaharlal Nehru	Congress leader; first PM	Secular, socialist vision for independent India; architect of non-alignment
Muhammad Ali Jinnah	Muslim League president	Argued for separate Muslim state; architect of Pakistan; first Governor-General
Bal Gangadhar Tilak	Extremist Congress leader	Popularised Swadeshi; "Swaraj is my birthright"
B.R. Ambedkar	Dalit leader; Law Minister	Led Dalit constitutional rights; critiqued Gandhi's caste politics; drafted Indian Constitution
Subhas Chandra Bose	INA leader	Sought Axis support for armed independence; formed Indian National Army
Louis Mountbatten	Last Viceroy	Accelerated partition timetable; drew independence boundary with Radcliffe
Cyril Radcliffe	Boundary Commission chair	Drew India-Pakistan partition line; never visited India before appointment

MEMORISE THIS

Key Figures — Algeria:

Name	Role	Significance
Ahmed Ben Bella	FLN founder; first president	One of the nine historic chiefs; captured by France 1956; freed 1962; president 1962–65
Abane Ramdane	FLN political theorist	Organised Soummam Congress (1956) establishing FLN's political structure; assassinated by FLN rivals 1957
Larbi Ben M'Hidi	FLN military chief, Algiers	Led Battle of Algiers network; captured and murdered in custody (Feb 1957)
General Jacques Massu	Commander, 10th Parachute Division	Won Battle of Algiers militarily; authorised systematic torture
Henri Alleg	Journalist	Wrote La Question (1958) exposing torture; book banned but already circulated
Charles de Gaulle	French president from 1958	Returned to power on promise of keeping Algeria French; negotiated independence through Evian Accords

MEMORISE THIS

Key Figures — Vietnam, Cuba, Ghana:

Name	Country	Role	Significance
Ho Chi Minh	Vietnam	Viet Minh leader; DRV president	Founded ICP (1930); declared independence 1945; directed war against France and US
Vo Nguyen Giap	Vietnam	Viet Minh military commander	Strategist of people's war; planned and commanded Dien Bien Phu campaign
Fidel Castro	Cuba	26th July Movement leader	Attacked Moncada 1953; guerrilla war 1956–59; prime minister then president 1959–2008
Che Guevara	Cuba/Argentina	Revolutionary theorist	Developed foco theory of guerrilla war; fought with Castro in Cuba; killed in Bolivia 1967
Kwame Nkrumah	Ghana	CPP leader; first president	Founded CPP 1949; architect of Ghanaian independence; Pan-African visionary; overthrown 1966
W.E.B. Du Bois	Pan-Africanism	Intellectual inspiration	Co-founded NAACP; organised Pan-African Congresses; influenced Nkrumah deeply

Section 8: Common Exam Mistakes Checklist

EXAM ALERT

Check your essays against this list before handing in:

1. **Pairing two movements from the same region** — India + Pakistan, Algeria + Egypt, Cuba + Mexico. Always verify your pair crosses regions. The examiner will note this immediately.
2. **Treating Gandhi's non-violence as automatically more "moral" than armed struggle** — The question asks you to evaluate *effectiveness*, not to make ethical judgements. The FLN achieved independence in 8 years; Gandhi's Congress took 27 years after 1920. Make the analytical comparison, not the moral one.
3. **Confusing the causes of independence movements with the immediate trigger** — The FLN's 1954 uprising was triggered by the failure of reform, but its roots lie in 124 years of colonial dispossession. The Salt March was triggered by the salt tax, but its power came from decades of economic exploitation. Always distinguish immediate trigger from underlying cause.
4. **Ignoring post-independence outcomes when the question asks about "success"** — A movement that achieved flag independence but then produced a military dictatorship or civil war has a complex "success" record. If the question asks "to what extent were independence movements successful," you must engage with post-independence reality.
5. **Writing about Gandhi without mentioning Jinnah** — Any India essay that ignores the Muslim League and partition is incomplete. The Congress-League conflict was central to how independence was achieved and at what cost.
6. **Treating Cold War interference as decisive for independence movements** — The Cold War shaped post-independence states profoundly, but independence itself was primarily achieved through internal struggle. Do not let Cold War analysis crowd out the central story of nationalist organisation and colonial weakness.
7. **Confusing the First and Second Indochina Wars** — The First Indochina War (1946–1954) was Vietnam vs. France; the Second (1965–1975) was Vietnam vs. the United States. Dien Bien Phu ended the first. For Topic 8, focus on the first; note the second as context for challenges of the new state.

Section 9: Key Timelines

MEMORISE THIS

India:

Date	Event
1857	Uprising against British East India Company
1858	Crown Rule — British Raj begins
1885	Indian National Congress founded
1905	Partition of Bengal; Swadeshi movement
1909	Morley-Minto Reforms
1915	Gandhi returns to India from South Africa
13 Apr 1919	Amritsar Massacre (379+ killed)
1920–22	Non-Cooperation Movement
Mar–Apr 1930	Salt March; Civil Disobedience Movement
1935	Government of India Act
1940	Lahore Resolution — Muslim League demands Pakistan
Aug 1942	Quit India Movement
1946	Royal Indian Navy Mutiny; Cabinet Mission Plan fails
15 Aug 1947	Independence and partition — India and Pakistan
30 Jan 1948	Gandhi assassinated
26 Jan 1950	Indian Constitution comes into force

MEMORISE THIS

Algeria:

Date	Event
1830–1847	French conquest of Algeria
1847	Emir Abdelkader surrenders
1931	Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema founded (Ben Badis)
1936	Blum-Viollette Plan killed by settler opposition
1945	Sétif massacre — French troops kill thousands of Algerians celebrating VE Day
Nov 1954	FLN uprising — Toussaint Rouge
1956	Battle of Algiers begins; Soummam Congress establishes FLN structure
1957	Battle of Algiers — FLN network destroyed militarily; torture scandal begins
1958	GPRA (provisional government) declared in Cairo; de Gaulle returns to power in France
1960	”Barricades Week” — settler uprising against de Gaulle
1961	OAS terrorist campaign; Generals’ Putsch fails
18 Mar 1962	Evian Accords — ceasefire
Jul 1962	Independence referendum — 99.7% for independence
Sep 1962	Ahmed Ben Bella becomes first president

MEMORISE THIS

Vietnam:

Date	Event
1887	French Indochina established
1930	Ho Chi Minh founds Indochina Communist Party
1941	Viet Minh founded
Aug 1945	August Revolution — Viet Minh seizes power
2 Sep 1945	Ho Chi Minh declares independence, Hanoi
Nov 1946	Haiphong Massacre — Franco-Viet Minh War begins
1950	Viet Minh overruns de Lattre Line; China begins supplying arms
Mar–May 1954	Battle of Dien Bien Phu — French surrender
7 May 1954	Dien Bien Phu falls
Jul 1954	Geneva Accords — Vietnam divided at 17th parallel
1956	Reunification elections not held
1965	US combat troops enter Vietnam — Second Indochina War
1975	Saigon falls; Vietnam reunified
1976	Socialist Republic of Vietnam proclaimed

MEMORISE THIS

Cuba and Ghana:

Date	Event
1898	Cuba: independence from Spain; US intervention
1901	Cuba: Platt Amendment — US right to intervene
1952	Cuba: Batista coup
26 Jul 1953	Cuba: Moncada Barracks attack; Castro captured
Dec 1956	Cuba: Granma landing; guerrilla war begins in Sierra Maestra
1 Jan 1959	Cuba: Batista flees; Castro enters Havana
1947	Ghana: UGCC founded; Nkrumah arrives
1948	Ghana: Accra riots
1949	Ghana: CPP founded
Jan 1950	Ghana: Positive Action; Nkrumah arrested
Feb 1951	Ghana: CPP wins election; Nkrumah released
6 Mar 1957	Ghana: Independence
1964	Ghana: One-party state declared
Feb 1966	Ghana: Military coup; Nkrumah overthrown

Section 10: Recall Practice

- ▶ Recall Questions — Origins and Causes
- ▶ Recall Questions — Methods
- ▶ Recall Questions — Post-Independence Challenges

