

Unit 5: Crisis and Change  
Lesson G: Theaters and Consequences of World War II  
Student Resource: Libyan Independence Case Study

### Libyan Independence Case Study

Libya was technically still an Italian colony at the end of World War II, although Great Britain and France were handling the administration of the country by 1945.

The Paris Peace Treaties, signed on February 10, 1947 to end World War II, were vague about colonies. The language used indicated that colonies should “remain in their present state until their future is decided.” The majority of Libyans favored independence, but the U.N. investigation found that the country was not ready for self-government.

- The United States suggested that Libya be governed by the United Nations (chartered in October 1945) under a trusteeship until the country was ready for self rule.
- The U.S.S.R. recommended that the three Libyan regions be placed under trusteeships to be handled separately by France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R.
- France recommended returning Libya to Italy.
- Great Britain recommended immediate Libyan independence.



<sup>1</sup>Shows the Italian vision of their empire in 1941.

The ultimate outcome of United Nations deliberations about Libya was the establishment of a sovereign state by January 1952. This nation included the three historically and geographically divided regions of Libya. The success of the emerging country was challenged not only by the different desires of the three regions, but also by

- minimal opportunities for economic development,
- extremely high rates of illiteracy,
- severe differences in generational views on political structures, and
- a rise in pan-Arab political nationalism.



<sup>2</sup>Flag of Libya, 1951-1969

Nevertheless, King Idris I proclaimed the independence of the United Kingdom of Libya on December 24, 1951.

By the 1950s, nearly every remaining colony in Africa had an organized nationalist party demanding political independence.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: This image from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ProgettoImperoItaliano.jpg> is in the public domain.

<sup>2</sup>Source: This image from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag\\_of\\_Libya\\_\(1951\).svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Libya_(1951).svg) is in the public domain.