History and Political Change

TERMS & NAMES
coup d'état
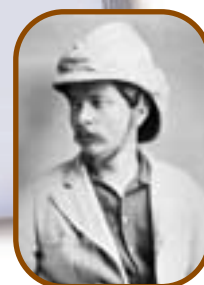OAU
mediate
ECOWAS

MAIN IDEA

Since gaining independence, some of the countries of Western and Central Africa have had trouble establishing stable governments.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Unstable governments are the basis for many conflicts in Western and Central Africa.

DATELINE

EXTRA

BERLIN, GERMANY, FEBRUARY 26, 1885
The competition for the riches of Africa has caused growing conflict. But today, the countries of Europe finally agreed on the rules for dividing up the African continent. The rules will enable the countries to claim land in Africa without going to war with one another.

When the powers of Europe take land in Africa, they must make sure that no other country has already claimed that land. Also, the agreement will allow open trade among the colonies. All countries will be able to freely move goods on the Congo River. At last, the takeover of Africa will be orderly.

Region • This political cartoon makes clear that European nations have been fighting for control of African lands and resources. ▲

Human-Environment Interaction •
Explorers, such as Sir Henry Morton Stanley, have helped Europeans learn about Africa. Sir Henry is the first European to explore the entire Congo River. ▲

Dividing Western and Central Africa

European nations divided the African continent in the late 1800s. They were not thinking about creating new nations. Their goal was to control Africa's rich resources. To avoid war with one another, the European powers made trades. They traded one advantage—such as coastal land—for another.

New Maps of West Africa

When Europeans divided Africa, they ignored traditional borders between Africa's ethnic groups. They used other factors to draw new maps, such as the location of rivers or lakes.

Let's Make a Deal Look at The Gambia on the political map of Africa on page 280. The country is only 30 miles across at its widest point. How was a country with such strange borders formed? In 1816, the British bought an island at the mouth of the Gambia River. They used the island as a base to extend their control over the banks of the river. However, France claimed all the land around the river. When the Europeans drew borders in the late 1880s, the British kept The Gambia, with access to the river. In return, the French got more land for Senegal.

Dividing the Congo Basin European interest in a river affected borders in Central Africa too. The Congo River is the second-longest river in Africa. Belgium, France, and Portugal all wanted to claim the river and the lands around it. That rivalry was the main reason for the conference in Berlin that you read about on page 317. At the conference, the three nations agreed to divide the huge Congo Basin. King Leopold of Belgium took the land that is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo as his personal property. France possessed what is now the Republic of the Congo. Portugal controlled what is present-day Angola.

Human-Environment Interaction • The Gambia's width was in large part determined by the firing range of the British gunboats that patrolled the Gambia River. ▲

Reading Social Studies

A. Analyzing Motives Why was controlling a river so important to the Europeans?
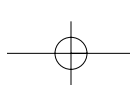
Governments in Western and Central Africa

When African nations became independent, many of their colonial borders stayed the same. These borders split ethnic groups and regions that historically had been united, making it difficult for many modern African nations to establish stable governments.

The Congo Basin, 2001

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
CAMEROON
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE
Equator
GABON
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
Brazzaville
ANGOLA
Congo R.
Stanley Falls
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
RWANDA
BURUNDI
Kinshasa
Lualaba R.
Luvua R.
ANGOLA
ZAMBIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
N
0 200 400 miles
0 200 400 kilometers

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

1. **Region •** What physical feature forms the border between the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo?
2. **Place •** What is the capital of the Republic of the Congo?

Since 1963, about 200 African governments have been ousted by coups d'état (koo day·TAH). A **coup d'état** is an overthrow of a government by force. Two of the many countries that have struggled to create stable democratic governments are the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana.

Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 1960, the former Belgian Congo gained independence, but a series of coups d'état toppled each established government. Five years later, an army general, Joseph Désiré Mobutu, took power. Mobutu tried to wipe out all traces of colonialism. He changed the name of the country to Zaire (ZEYE·eer) and his own name to Mobutu Sese Seko (SAY·say SAY·koh). He made people wear African-style clothing and take names that were African instead of Belgian.

Place • This banknote was printed in 1993, four years before Zaire became the Democratic Republic of the Congo. ▼

Mobutu ruled as a dictator, calling the people of Zaire his "children." He allowed no criticism of his rule. At the same time, he built up a personal fortune by stealing government money intended for roads, schools, and hospitals.

BACKGROUND

Joseph Kabila was not elected president. He was chosen by his father's handpicked parliament.

Civil War A brutal civil war began in Zaire in 1994. It resulted in Laurent Désiré Kabila overthrowing Mobutu's government. Kabila changed the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the country was not a true democracy, and civil war started again. Kabila was assassinated in 2001. His son, Joseph Kabila, replaced him as president.

Place • Kwame Nkrumah is shown here, at left, shortly after Ghana gained independence. ▼
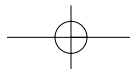
Government in Ghana

In 1957, the British colony of Gold Coast became the first independent country in Africa south of the Sahara. The new nation took its name, Ghana, from a great ancient empire. The country's first leader was Kwame Nkrumah (uhn·KROO·muh). Nkrumah wanted to make Ghana modern. He built a new seaport, roads, and railroads to make shipping natural resources to factories and sending manufactured goods to stores easier and cheaper. Foreign trade improved. Ghana also became the first country in Africa south of the Sahara to have compulsory primary education.

Reading
Social Studies

B. Drawing Conclusions Why do you think some African leaders have decided to change their nations' names?

Place • This billboard in Accra, Ghana, showed Jerry John Rawlings (center) with the two candidates for the presidency in 2000. ▲

Military Rulers Although Nkrumah helped the new nation, he ruled as a dictator. He sent his opponents to prison. Some were tortured and killed. In 1966, the police and the army organized a coup d'état against Nkrumah. The coup d'état leaders freed political prisoners. They tried to help small businesses. Still, conditions in Ghana grew worse. People lost their jobs and did not have money for food. They went on strike to protest. When military leaders tried to take control, fighting began, and more coups d'état followed. In 1979, Jerry John Rawlings, a soldier, took power.

The Coming of Democracy In 1992, Rawlings allowed an election to take place. Ghana then became more democratic. A new constitution and parliament put limits on his power. In 2000, Rawlings became the first modern African military ruler to give up power peacefully. Elections brought in a new president. Today, Ghana is one of the most stable nations in Africa. In 1998, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan commented on Ghana's success.

Reading **Social Studies**

C. Forming and Supporting Opinions What do you think of Rawlings's decision to give up power peacefully? Why might he have decided to do so?

A VOICE FROM GHANA

I grew up in Ghana at the time when we were fighting for independence, and so I saw lots of changes in my youth. I saw that it was possible to challenge the status quo and do something about it. And change did occur.
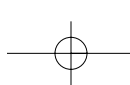
Kofi Annan, 1998

Vocabulary

status quo: existing state of affairs

Citizenship IN ACTION

Aid for Children In cities all over Africa, growing numbers of children can be found living on the streets. In Accra, Ghana, which has thousands of street children (shown at right), two local organizations are working to help them: Street Girls Aid (S.Aid) and Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS).

CAS provides places where children can wash, eat, rest, take classes, or simply play. For teenage mothers with children, S.Aid offers daycare so the mothers can work. Both groups provide health care and counseling to help children cope with the harshness of life on the streets.

Region • In 2001, the OAU was being transformed into the African Union, whose new general secretary, Amara Essy, is shown here on the right. ▶

Nations Helping Nations

Like Ghana, many African nations have had to struggle for peace and democracy. Some nations are working together to help one another. In 1963, the **OAU,** or the Organization of African Unity, was formed. The organization tries to promote unity among all Africans. For example, the OAU would like to establish a single currency for Africa. The OAU also mediates disputes between countries. To **mediate** means to help find a peaceful solution.

ECOWAS The nations of Western Africa also cooperate economically. **ECOWAS,** or the Economic Community of West African States, was formed in 1975. It works to improve trade within Western Africa and with countries outside the region. ECOWAS also has mediated disputes between countries in Western Africa and tried to end government corruption.

SECTION ❶ ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names
1. **Identify:** (a) coup d'état (b) OAU (c) mediate (d) ECOWAS

Taking Notes
2. Use a chart like this one to compare the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana.

Democratic Republic of the Congo	Ghana

Main Ideas
3. (a) What was the impact of European colonization on the governments of modern Africa?

(b) What example was given in this section of a government with unlimited power? What example was given in this section of a government with limited power?

(c) How did Kwame Nkrumah influence Ghana?

Critical Thinking
4. **Making Inferences**

Why do you think it was important for the power of Jerry John Rawlings, the former president of Ghana, to be limited?

Think About
◆ other dictatorships around the world
◆ the progression of human rights

ACTIVITY -OPTION- Pretend you have been commissioned by the OAU to design a common currency for all of Africa. Draw a **model** or write a **description** of your design.