

# How and why did european states abandon or redefine their empires in the 1950s an...

[History](#), [Empires](#)



The Decolonization of European Empires during the 1950s and 1960s There were a number of European Nations that dissolved their empires during this time period. After WWII many European nations tried to reassert their control over many colonies. However they soon realized that they lacked the power to sustain these empires. Also, mother nations faced pressure from Communist Russia. An economic collapse was France in Africa. Between 1946 and 1952, the labor movement pushed for equal rights for all colonies with success. However, in 1956 the demand for labor became too much. According to Cooper (2005) a French minister stated citizenship meant, "equality in wages, equality in labor legislation, in social security benefits, equality in family allowances, in brief, equality in standard of living" (p. 15). In 1956 France passed laws that allowed elected officials in colonies to decide labor legislation. The French would continue to give sovereignty to these colonies until France many colonies in Africa their independence in 1960, and then Algeria at the end of the Algerian War in 1962. The case was different in colonial Sudan under Britain. America once supported British imperialism. However, according to White by the 1950' the Americans came "to view controlled decolonisation as an essential element in Cold War strategy; the continuance of European imperialism would only drive nationalist movements into the arms of the Soviet Union" (p. 68). After the United States withdrew its promise to help construct the Aswan Dam due to Egypt's increasing relationship with the U. S. S. R. the Egyptian president nationalized the canal, leading to the Suez Crisis. After the crisis and America failing to step in and aiding its allies, the U. S. S. R. accused the West as being weak and divided. Several colonies in Africa, including the

British colony Anglo-Sudan gained their independence in the following years. The European empires, greatly hurt by the effects of WWII were unable to sustain their empires. The two principle reasons for the decolonization of European nations in the 1950s and 1960s was the lack of power to sustain their colonies, coupled with pressure from the U. S. S. R. References Cooper, Fredrick. (2005). *Alternatives to Empire: France and Africa after World War II*. New York University Press. 15. Nicholas J. White. (1999). *Decolonisation: The British Experience Since 1945*. London and New York: Longman. 68.