Case Studies: Ghana

Negotiated Independence; Challenged Paths
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Contradictions of Colonialism: where successful, colonial education educated future nationalists

- point made [Text]: majority of African colonies ‘negotiated’ their path to nationhood
- negotiations were with generation of Africans trained in ‘West’ – primarily US, Britain, France
- 1930s Great Depression radicalized nationalist movements
- 1940s WWII radicalized people – civilians, returning soldiers
[see lecture ‘Cold War & Decolonization”]
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Direction, pace of reform influenced by post-war domestic politics: Britain

- creation of domestic ‘welfare state’: democracy with ‘socialist’ programmes to respond to post WWII conditions (e.g. national health)
- saw Africa in need of real development even as Britain dependent on drawing out African resources
- began speaking of ‘moderate reform’ in colonies like Gold Coast
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Meanwhile: British Domestic Will to Continue Colonialism Waning:
- Independence of India (1947) reflected shifting ‘mood’ of British public
- influenced policy in Africa, accelerated by events in British East African settler colonies*

Churchill (looking back):
“I could have defended the British Empire against anyone except the British people.”

*['Case Study: Kenya']
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Post WWII: Britain sought ‘moderate’ reform:

- looked to reshape colonial relationships through imposition new political frameworks
- encouraged political expression through elected parties
- supported moderate leaders as allies
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Colony of Gold Coast, West Africa:
- exemplified ‘moderate’ colony working with colonial power to achieve independence in best possible circumstance
- if India ‘Jewel’ in British Empire Crown – Gold Coast ‘model’ West African colony
- done relatively well under colonial rule: relied on mono-crop (cocoa)
- large middle-class, well-off elite: both well educated
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Experienced ‘typical’ political development:
- early ‘nationalists’ worked with British
- post-war ‘nationalists’: frustrated with British reluctance to move towards independence
- one ‘young radical’ returned and challenged the ‘older generational, overly moderate’ party working too closely with the British
- formed the Convention Youth Organization, then Convention People’s Party (CPP)
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

CONVENTION PEOPLE’S PARTY
FREEDOM
Forward Ever, Backward Never
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

Kwame Nkrumah:
- attended Achimota College (Gold Coast): one of first post-secondary institutions in West Africa
- university educated in US - Pennsylvania
- moved to London: politically active
- associated with international Pan-Africanists before returning to Gold Coast in 1947
Form I-134
(U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE)
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM:
The records of this Service show that Francis Nwia-Kofi Nkrumah, born in British Gold Coast, entered the United States at the port of New York on 10/31/35 as a nonquota immigrant student under Section 4(e) of the Immigration Act of 1924 with Visa No. 257 issued by the American Consulate at London and destined to or now in attendance at your school. When reporting this alien's attendance in accordance with agreement with this office it would be appreciated if you would refer to the file number appearing in the upper right-hand corner of this card. It is further requested that a separate report be submitted for the individual student.

Very truly yours,

CHIEF, Certification Branch.
Nkrumah in Pennsylvania

Kwame Nkruma, University of Pennsylvania, 1935
Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism

Association with educated elite in London, especially George Padmore, [pictured below] led him to *Pan-Africanism*
Pan-Africanism*

Pan-Africanism*: established in 19th century by West Indian of African origin
- first congress 1900: spoke to colonialism and role of ‘Blacks’ in colonial empires

* Text says ‘black-pride movement’. No.
Pan-Africanism

‘Address to the Nations of the World’: 1st Pan-Africanist Conference (London, 1900):

“Let the German Empire, and the French Republic, true to their great past, remember that the true worth of colonies lies in their prosperity and progress, and that justice, impartial alike to black and white, is the first element of prosperity.”

“Let the Congo Free State become a great central Negro State of the world, and let its prosperity be counted not simply in cash and commerce, but in the happiness and true advancement of its black people.”
Pan-Africanism

“Let the nations of the World respect the integrity and independence of the first Negro States of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, and the rest*, and let the inhabitants of these States, the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the world their incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of Mankind. ...”

*[ ‘Abyssinia’ (Ethiopia) was overrun by Italians in 1935 – this ties back into point made earlier about huge impact it had upon Africa and ‘beginning of WWII” from its perspective]
Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism: in 20th Century...
- turned to Black American experience: interest in recovering ‘roots’, African origins
- became concerned with appropriate political positions for Black Americans, West Indians in North America
- W.E.B DuBois vs Marcus Garvey
Pan-Africanism

- Should Blacks work to move up in mainstream (white) American society (DuBois) or ...
- seek to build Black Society based on African Roots: “Back-to-Africa” movement (Garvey)?
- much discussion about shared ‘African Roots’ because of Atlantic Slave Trade history

By 1945: Pan-Africanists recognized that ‘roots’ meant they needed to support all international self-determination
Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism

Fifth Pan-African Congress (Manchester, 1945): supported decolonization
- pronounced that armed struggle could be justified to overthrow colonialism
- Kwame Nkrumah was a leader at this Congress
Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism

Fifth Pan-African Congress (Manchester, 1945): supported decolonization

“We believe in the rights of all peoples to govern themselves. We affirm the rights of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control, whether political or economic. . . We say to the peoples of the colonies that they must strive for these goals by all means at their disposal.”

[see ‘Nkrumah’s Vision’, Discussion Documents]
Fifth Pan-African Congress
VIDEO:

From Gold Coast to Ghana
[Basil Davidson, ‘Africa: Rise to Nationalism]

[YouTube, Add’l Rdgs. 7:40 – 15:15min]
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Gold Coast: 1951 Constitution*
- involved local elections, Assembly to work with British
- Governor General to oversee self-governance of colony
- military, foreign affairs, currency control: remained in British hands

* [similar to constitution introduced in other major British West African colony, Nigeria]
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

Constitution ‘compromise’ Raised Crucial questions: articulated by Nkrumah

-what did nationalism really mean?
- who would really benefit from this interim step?
- given the inherited colonial legacy, what were the real dangers embedded in this policy?
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

Nkrumah’s Party (now the ‘Convention People’s Party – CCP) won 1951 elections: immediately raised these questions

“... there is a great risk in accepting office under this new constitution which still makes us half-slaves and half-free.” [there is a great need for] “vigilance and moral courage” [to withstand the consequent temptations of] “temporary personal advantage.” [This is because] “bribery and corruption, both moral and factual have eaten into the whole fabric of our society and these must be stamped out if we are to achieve any progress”.

[Davidson, The Black Man’s Burden, pp.162-3]
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Faced Conflicting Needs Different Regions, Ethnic Groups: Colonial Legacies

- burden of taxation, forced labour/work had been placed on marginal social groups: especially slaves/former slaves, political ‘clients/dependents’

- whole regions created as ‘labour reserves’: fostered long-term migration, ethnic issues – in Gold Coast, northern Muslim region main focus
Northern Region

- largely Muslim, poor
- served as colonial ‘labour reserve’ for commercial cocoa farms and gold mining in south
Asante (former empire)
- Centre profitable cocoa growing
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

Nkrumah Believed that “Africa’s Economic Reconstruction and Future must be based on Socialism”: What did he Mean? (1958)

- “a form of social organisation that, guided by the principles underlying communalism, adopts procedures and measures made necessary by demographic and technological developments . . .”

- “each man to be an end in himself, not merely a means; and we accept the necessity of guaranteeing each man equal opportunities for his development. . . .”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “The implications of this [socialism] for socio-political practice have to be worked out scientifically, and the necessary social and economic policies pursued with resolution.”

- “Any meaningful humanism must begin from egalitarianism and must lead to objectively chosen policies for safeguarding and sustaining egalitarianism.”
Most Importantly:

- “the defeat of colonialism and even neo-colonialism will not result in the automatic disappearance of the imported patterns of thought and social organisation. For those patterns have taken root, and are in varying degree sociological features of our contemporary society. . .”

- “Modern African societies are not traditional, even if backward, and they are clearly in a state of socio-economic disequilibrium. They are in this state because they are not anchored to a steadying ideology. . .”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

Nkrumah’s Prescription:

- “socialism was a ‘scientific’ restructuring of society in such a way as to embrace its various influences over time – Islam, Europeanism, ... retain humanitarianism and egalitarianism, while simultaneously becoming ‘modern’ and progressive”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

How did Nkrumah suggest to proceed?

- “Only under socialism can we reliably accumulate the capital we need for our development and also ensure that the gains of investment are applied for the general welfare.”

- “There is only one way of achieving socialism; by the devising of policies aimed at the general socialist goals . . .”

- “Socialism is Required for Economic Development, which in turn is required for ‘social welfare’ (egalitarianism)”

- “And to Achieve (the required) Socialism, policies must be devised to this end.”
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

After 1954, CPP increasing centralized to achieve goals:

- opposition political parties, general resistance grew
- National Liberation Movements formed: Asante, Northern Region
- wanted federalist structure, autonomy for regions

Worked together to undermine CPP, Nkrumah
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

1956 Elections:
- CPP demanding ‘Independence Now’
  [echoed Ghandi’s India – not coincidental!]

CPP won only 57% vote: but...
- all of the resource-rich south
- enough votes across other regions to take 2/3 majority
- enough votes overall to force Independence from the British in 1957
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Independence: celebrated but ...

- Federalists frustrated that all power now in hands of South [remember in India, issues over where power would lie with Independence led to Partition]
- New ‘Democratic, Parliamentary’ government aware of dissension: increased centralization to control opposition developing far from coastal capital of Accra
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

Culminated in Constitution 1960: Nkrumah became (effectively) President for Life

[excerpts drawn from the Constitution itself*]

- the first President's initial period of office shall be taken to continue until some other person assumes office as President.

- There shall be a Cabinet consisting of the President and not less than eight Ministers ... appointed ... by the President.

- Subject to the powers of the President, the Cabinet is charged with the general direction and control of the Government of Ghana.

[full document in ‘Resources’ – Decolonization]
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

- Every bill passed by the national assembly shall be passed to the President [who shall assent, dissent to portions of said bill, reject]

- President may, in relation to any department of State, direct that a separate public account be established for the department; revenue of the department shall be paid into that account.

- President shall . . . appoint one of the Judges of the Supreme Court to be Chief Justice of Ghana.

- Chief Justice shall be President of the Supreme Court & Head of the Judicial Service.

- Appointment of a judge as Chief Justice may at any time be revoked by the President...
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Non-Alignment Movement 1961:

- Nkrumah one of six ‘founding fathers’
- along with Pan-Africanism guided Ghana’s foreign policy
- meant complete independence from policies, alliances of both East and West
- support for a worldwide union of non-aligned nations as a counter to both East and West power blocs
- ‘freedom’ to seek Ghana’s own path!
Nkrumah and Family with Abdel Nasser, 1965. Nkrumah’s wife was Egyptian.
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

1961 “Dawn Speech”:
- same year: visited Soviet Union
- impressed with speed of industrialization, ‘new socio-economic model’
- lashed out at "self-seeking“, "careerist" comrades
- forced resignation of potential rivals, followed by 100s political arrests
- ejected British officers assigned to train his army
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

1964: 7-Year Development Plan means of putting into practice ideas to...

- speed up the rate of growth of our national economy
- enable us to embark upon the socialist transformation of our economy through the rapid development of the State and cooperative sectors
- eradicate completely the colonial structure of our economy
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “Our aim ... is to build in Ghana, a socialist State which accepts full responsibility for promoting the well-being of the masses.”

- “Our national wealth must be built up and used in such a way that economic power shall not be allowed to exploit the worker in town or village, but be used for the supreme welfare and happiness of our people.”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “Socialism demands a very different kind of planning and economic structure from the type that was evolved by the colonial administration.”

- “... It has long been apparent that the administrative machinery which we inherited was not designed for a country working within the framework of an overall plan, and in which the activities of individual agencies of the nation are directed to clearly defined goals of development.”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “An effective reform of the governmental machinery is therefore needed, if the Seven-Year Plan is not to falter on the inadequacies of administration. The first task in this regard will be to attune more closely, the policies and actions of every agency or organ of Government to the overall national policy as defined in the Seven-Year Development Plan.”
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “It may be that, in the course of the next seven years some of us will from time to time attempt to change the choice of emphasis that we have made and try to direct proportionately more of our national resources into immediate welfare services and proportionately less into agriculture and industry.”

- “It will be the duty of those who are charged with the implementation of the Plan to ensure that these pressures are resisted.”
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Emergence of the One Party, Authoritarian State:

- early tendencies to ‘centralization’ to diffuse regional, ethnic, religious differences became political model for the One-Party State
- constitution enshrined authoritarianism, likelihood of embedded corruption
- 7-year plan provided resources for both
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

**Volta River Dam Project: Key to Development**

- history reflected post-colonial international financial and political environment
- implementation crucial factor in ultimate defeat of ‘Nkrumahism’
- Ghana became ‘model’ of 1960s

Modernization/Development Theory: the ‘big project’ ... serving needs of Gov’t to make visible impact and foreign Gov’ts to get ‘foot in African Development door’...
Case Study:
Gold Coast - Ghana

- goal was to create hydro electricity for country
- potential clear but costs prohibitive for calculated returns
- need: an industry that could use the electricity to process a locally present resource – in this case, bauxite
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana  

- Nkrumah negotiated interest of consortium aluminum producers, headed by US Kaiser Industries  
- international financing for dam now forthcoming: built between 1961-5 [note: 7-yr. plan came a year before completion]  
- created Lake Volta: world's largest man-made lake, covering 8,502 square kilometres (3,283 sq mi) -- 3.6% of Ghana's land area
Nkrumah’s Vision: Ghana

- “I would like in this context to point out the degree to which the Volta Scheme fits into our chosen combination of a mixed economy with socialist and co-operative goals.”

- “A major part of the scheme is being financed by the Ghana Government; but the American and British Governments have joined in the financing of it, together with the World Bank, and we have had the most helpful and fruitful collaboration with American enterprise in the shape of the Kaiser Group of Industries.”
The Volta Dam Project
Volta River Dam
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

Lake Volta: affected mostly Eastern Region

- necessitated relocation 80,000 people
- 700 villages relocated into 52 resettlement villages two years prior to the lake's completion
- most were subsistence farmers, some were fishermen
Case Study: 
Gold Coast - Ghana

Long Term: considered major environmental, human, health disaster

- Insufficient planning resulted in relocation into areas that were not capable of providing for their former livelihoods, traditions
- Fertile soils lost, contributing to overall decline (not increase) agricultural production
- Soon diseases associated with aquatic weeds along shore, tributaries increased: bilharzias, river blindness, malaria
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

- as recently as 2008 remains social and environmental disaster in need or ‘remediation’

Volta Lake, (far left)
Weeds in Lake and Tributaries had to be manually removed using canoes (left and below)

[see ‘Impact Volta Dam’ in ‘Resources – Decolonization’]
Case Study: Gold Coast - Ghana

February 1966:
- While on state visit to North Korea and China, Nkrumah overthrown by well-planned military coup d'état
- Moscow provided Nkrumah with ‘evidence’ that coup was CIA supported: no proof

Ghana had now become yet another model for Africa: the Military Dictatorship
Ghana Coup—Nkrumah Out, People Joyous

From Cable Dispatches

The last resistance to a military coup that President Kwame Nkrumah crumbled yesterday as thousands of people poured into the streets of Accra.
Case Study: Ghana

- exemplified difficulties of becoming truly independent
- Nkrumah key intellectual/spokesperson for Pan-Africanism, socialist ‘humanist’ development, Non-Alignment Movement
- unable to overcome inherent contradictions posed by post-colonial world and cold war politics
Case Study: Ghana

- economic legacies of Colonialism (mon-crop dependency, poor infrastructure, lack educational facilities, regional/ethnic ‘inequities’ – economic, social) necessitated external investment
- tied to ideas of modernization, development even across the cold-war communications gap: the ‘big’ project
Case Study: Ghana

- Volta Dam Project in all its facets – political, economic, social, health, environmental – as much part of Nkrumah’s downfall as corruption, authoritarianism

- in many ways: symbolized the challenges facing post-colonial leaders and societies

- Nkrumah’s (1969) statement directed at Africa, unfortunately still has much applicability in the (former) Third World:
Nkrumah’s Vision

- “A recent development in the psychological war is the campaign to convince us that we cannot govern ourselves, that we are unworthy of genuine independence, and that foreign tutelage is the only remedy for our wild, warlike and primitive ways. Imperialism has done its utmost to brainwash Africans into thinking that they need the strait-jackets of colonialism* and neocolonialism** if they are to be saved from their retrogressive instincts. Such is the age-old racialist justification for the economic exploitation of our continent.”

[e.g. Case Studies *Kenya, **Cuba]