Case Studies:

British West Africa
“From Gold Coast to Ghana”
'Africa’s Economic Reconstruction and Future must be based on Socialism…': Nkrumah’s closing remarks (Congress 1958)

- what did that mean?
Nkrumah’s Vision

From 1967 Paper: both espousing ‘positive’ notion of Socialism and critiquing competing ideas of ‘African Socialism’

- arguing against ideas of African Socialism that were being espoused in early 1960s (Nyerere, Senghor)

- socialism was neither Nyerere’s essentialist ‘traditionalism’, nor Senghors ‘metaphysics of knowledge’
Nkrumah’s Vision

Socialism was:

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

- We postulate 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

- The implications of this 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.

Hence, socialism.
Nkrumah’s Vision

- 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

In Short:

- 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

So the Second Question Becomes ‘How’: Nkrumah also addresses this ...

- 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 . . .
Nkrumah’s Vision

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...

- in many ways a circular argument (and written after-the-fact): what had it meant in practice?
Return to 1950s struggle for independence: not only against British:

- also struggle to agree on what nationalism meant and who was to benefit?

- legacies of colonial administration, practices and economic development played key roles
Already in 1951, as Nkrumah accepted office following first elections, issue of corruption raised:

‘there is a great risk in accepting office under this new constitution which still makes us half-slaves and half-free.’ There would be a great need for ‘vigilance and moral courage’ to withstand the consequent temptations of ‘temporary personal advantage.’ This was 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’.

[from Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden*, pp.162-3]
Conflicting needs of different regions, ethnic groups in those regions soon emerged: legacy of...

- shifting burden of taxation, work onto marginal social groups like former slaves and political/economic dependents

- treating whole regions as ‘labour reserves’, whole ethnic groups as ‘workers’, fostering long-term practices of migration
Gold Coast to Ghana

Northern Region

- largely Muslim, poor
- served as colonial ‘labour reserve’ for commercial cocoa farms and gold mining in south
Gold Coast to Ghana

Asante (former empire)
- Centre profitable cocoa growing
After 1954, CPP followed policy of increasing centralization to achieve goals: generated resistance, opposition political parties
- National Liberation Movement formed: Asante
- Northern People’s Party: Northern Region

- wanted federalist structure
- more autonomy for regions

Parties worked together to undermine CPP
1956 Elections

test for CPP’s ‘Independence Now’ demand

CPP won only 57% vote: but...
  - all of the south
  - enough votes in Asante, North, Trans-Volta (East) to hold 2/3 majority and force Independence from British 1957

- Exacerbated frustration of Federalists
- Encouraged CPP to Centralize More
Culminated in Constitution 1960: Nkrumah became (effectively) President for Life

This Constitution is enacted on this twenty-ninth day of June, 1960 and shall come into operation on the first day of July, 1960.
Nkrumah’s Vision

FIRST PRESIDENT:
Kwame Nkrumah is hereby appointed First President of Ghana

[Appendix C]:
SPECIAL POWERS for the FIRST PRESIDENT

(5) For the purposes of this Article the first President's initial period of office shall be taken to continue until some other person assumes office as President.
Election of President and Assumption of Office

(I) An election of a President shall be held whenever one of the following events occurs, that is to say-

(a) the National Assembly is dissolved, or
(b) the President dies, or
(c) the President resigns his office
Nkrumah’s Vision

THE CABINET:

(1) There shall be a Cabinet consisting of the President and not less than eight Ministers … appointed … by the President.

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

(3) The appointment of a Minister . . . can at any time be revoked by the President.
BILLS and the ASSEMBLY:

Every bill passed by the national assembly shall be passed to the President who shall—

(1) signify his assent to the bill
(2) signify his assent to only a part of the bill and his refusal of assent to the remainder
(3) signify his refusal to assent to the bill
Nkrumah’s Vision

CUSTODY of PUBLIC MONEY

(2) The President may, in relation to any department of State, direct that a separate public account be established for the department and that the revenue of the department be paid into that account.
JUDGES of the SUPERIOR COURTS

(1) The President shall by instrument under the Presidential Seal appoint one of the Judges of the Supreme Court to be Chief Justice of Ghana.

(2) The Chief Justice shall be President of the Supreme Court & Head of the Judicial Service.

(3) The appointment of a judge as Chief Justice may at any time be revoked by the President...

[see Full Text in ‘Resources’]
Nkromah’s Vision

1961 “Dawn Speech”:

- 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

Visited Soviet Union: impressed with speed of industrialization, saw ‘new model’
1964: 7-Year Development Plan means of putting into practice ideas latter articulated

“Only under socialism can we reliably accumulate the capital we need for our development and 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 . . .
Nkrumah’s Vision

The main tasks of the Plan are:

- firstly, to speed up the rate of growth of our national economy.

- secondly, … to enable us to embark upon the socialist transformation of our economy through the rapid development of the State and cooperative sectors.

- thirdly, … to eradicate completely the colonial structure of our economy.
Nkrumah’s Vision

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

The Party has always proclaimed socialism as the objective of our social, industrial and economic programmes.

Socialism, however, will continue to remain a slogan until industrialisation is achieved.

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.
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.
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.
Emergence of the One Party, Authoritarian State:
- early tendencies to ‘centralization’ in order to diffuse regional, ethnic and religious differences had become the political model for the One-Party State
- constitution enshrined authoritarianism and likelihood of embedded corruption
- 7-year plan provided resources for both
Nkrumah’s Vision

Key to 7-year plan: Volta River Dam Project
- 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’…
By [c. 1960/2]... it had already become quite clear to us that the only real solution to the reconstruction of Ghana lay in the long run, in the adoption of a socialist and cooperative programme for industry, and the mechanisation and diversification of our agriculture.

*Our hopes in this regard lay in the Volta River Project,* ...
Completion of the Volta Project will enable us to develop the industrial potential of Ghana. Indeed, the possibilities for our agriculture and industry will be completely revolutionised.

First and foremost, the Volta Project will increase by nearly 500 percent, the installed electrical capacity of the country. Nearly one half of this new capacity will be taken up by the aluminium smelter in Tema.
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.
Nkrumah’s Vision

Volta River Dam Project:

- goal was to create hydro electricity for country

- potential clear and had been since early in colonial era: costs were prohibitive for returns

- need: an industry that could use the electricity to process a locally present resource – in this case, bauxite
Nkrumah's Vision

- Nkrumah negotiated interest of consortium aluminum producers, headed by US Kaiser Industries

- with industry on board, international financing for dam was 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
The Volta Dam Project
Volta River Dam
Nkrumah’s Vision

Lake Volta: Eastern Region
Lake Volta: mostly affected 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
Nkrumah’s Vision

- 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

Long Term: considered major environmental, human, health disaster
Nkrumah’s Vision

February 1966:

- while on state visit to North Korea and China, Nkrumah overthrown by well-planned military coup d’etat

- Moscow provided Nkrumah with ‘evidence’ that coup was CIA supported: no proof

- Ghana had now become yet another model for Africa: the Military Dictatorship
Nkrumah’s Vision

Video


[YouTube, ‘Readings – Recommended’, 00:0- 6:40]
1966-1979: period of political instability
- army coup overthrowing Nkrumah
- introduced new Constitution

- political parties functioning in 1968

- 1969: democratic elections

- former opponents of Nkrumah occupied most significant positions, formed majority of Progress Party (PP) in government
Busia Regime: inherited legacies of Nkrumah

- exacerbated class tensions

- regional differences

- normalization of corruption

- most importantly: INTERNATIONAL DEBT
Post- Nkrumah

Inherited US$580 million medium, long-term debts

- equaled 25 % GDP in 1969

- by 1971:
  - debt further inflated by US$72 million accrued interest payments
  - US$296 million in short-term commercial credits

- Internal debt fuelling domestic inflation
Post- Nkrumah

Collapsing Economy: austerity measures

- from 1960s cocoa no longer fuelling economy: lack of investment, competition (especially from Cote d’Ivoire), misguided price controls generating smuggling...

- attempts by Busia to address issues included Structural Adjustment policies recommended by IMF

- alienated most supporters, including army
Post-Nkrumah

National Redemption Council: another military coup 1972

- failures of democracy convinced many military-run state was only way to deal with cleavages and competing interests of ‘civilians’

- reversed many previous economic policies but still unable to control inflation, create non-existent industry, cope with Oil Crisis (1974 OPEC)
Supreme Military Council 1975:
- control remained firmly in hands of military
- rising complaints of corruption, favouritism
- referendum 1978: introduced ‘union’ government involving mix of civilian and military
- 1979: new constitution being drafted in May, elections promised for July
[see ‘1979 Constitution’, in Readings—takes time to download]
First Rawlings Coup d’Etat

July 1979: Military coup overthrew Union Gov’t and released Jerry Rawlings and followers from jail

- Rawlings and other junior officers Air Force attempted coup in May; faced court-martial

- established Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)
First Rawlings Coup d’Etat

Hailed as ‘Saviour’: controversy around many followers

- had eight generals executed immediately to remove influence of ‘corrupt’ older generation

- next few months described as ‘popular but chaotic’

- international response mixed—generally ambivalent [see ‘Rawlings: the Legacy’, in Readings]
September 1979: AFRC returned power to democratically elected gov’t
September 1979: AFRC returned power to democratically elected gov’t
- ‘king makers’ removed from military positions military

- inability of government to deal with 70% inflation, Trade Unions’ opposition and strikes

- resulted in another coup December 1981

[see video ‘Ghana’s History – 1966-2000: 33:00- 43:29 for overview of this era]
Second Rawlings Coup d’Etat

Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC): Rawlings at head

- suspended 1979 constitution
- dismissed President and Cabinet
- dissolved Parliament
- proscribed opposition political parties

Headed up eighth government since fall of Nkrumah!
Second Rawlings Coup d’Etat

Second Rawlings Coup d’Etat

The Rawlings Regime: why another Coup?

- civilian government described as: “period of regression during which political parties attempted to divide the people in order to rule them”

- Rawlings wanted: “chance for the people, farmers, workers, soldiers, the rich and the poor, to be part of the decision-making process.”
Rawlings Regime

Rawlings: ‘Man of the People’

- PNDC dedicated to achieving goals different

- takeover was not a military coup, *but rather a "holy war"* that would involve ‘the people’ in transforming the socioeconomic structure of society [listen to ‘coup speech’, term is used]

- served notice: any interference with the PNDC agenda would be "fiercely resisted"
Decentralization: established PNDC committees locally

- ‘grassroots power to the people’

- many advisors explicitly Socialist

- Rawlings denied ideological commitment:
“Don't ask me what my ideology or economic programme is . . .

I don't know any law and I don't understand economics, but I know it when my stomach is empty.”

[from ‘Rawlings: the Legacy’, in Readings]
Rawlings Regime: ‘Man of the People’

[see ‘Ghana’s History – 1966-2000]
The Honeymoon Ends:
- ‘Man of the People’ actively engaged in local level rebuilding infrastructure, agriculture
- internationally: resurrecting Nkrumah in terms of Pan-Africanist vision
- reinforcing international socialist networks previously established by Nkrumah
- but: economic issues continued to dominate
Rawlings Regime

- 1984 fall of Soviet Union forces Rawlings to look back to West for funding

- quickly accused of ‘selling out’ revolution

- strongly opposed (including coup attempts): opposition forcefully dealt with – executions (three in 1982 that had been investigated), others fled into exile

- not only ‘leftist’ objections: middle class, educated also felt persecuted
“Darling of the West”: profile in West changed when he agreed to controversial Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)

- $US 5 billion invested

- social services re-established, import/export commerce grew

- many previously nationalised industries now (re) privatized
Rawlings Regime: Democracy

Democracy Comes to Dictatorship: 1992, 1996

- under pressure (both international, domestic) to ‘try’ civilian government again...

- democratic elections held 1992

- Rawlings ‘man of the people’ became exactly that: elected President
Rawlings Regime: Democracy

- policies, style changed little

- re-elected 1996

- stepped down after two terms (2000) without resistance: following constitution
1992 - 2000: Democratic President Rawlings

“Over the last eight years, he has managed an uncanny diplomatic balance act between coddling Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha and speaking on behalf of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, and receiving US President Bill Clinton and the Queen of England.

… he was gifted not only with a sixth sense, but also an extra pair of nostrils, for survival.”

[from ‘Rawlings: the legacy’, in Readings]
Rawlings Legacy? controversial as Nkrumah!

“The PNDC days were a period of sheer terror and repression.” [newspaper publisher jailed by Rawlings]

“Rawlings has been good to Ghana. This country would have been in ruins without him.” [long-time aide]

"He's turned Ghana into a colony…He is like a comet which we all looked up to for extra light only to be engulfed in darkness.” [one of Marxist group working with Rawlings in early 1980s]
Legacy Today: still no Consensus

- radical revolutionary who worried the west then became its staunchest supporter
- finally and successfully launched Ghana on path of Democracy

In this sense remains THE success story in Africa!
Rawlings Regime: return to roots?