A Contextual Reassessment of Kwame Nkrumah

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To Grandma and Nana
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I.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1951, Kwame Nkrumah became the Leader of Government Business in what was then the British colony of the Gold Coast. Calls for self-government in the colony had simmered since the end of the Second World War, exploding in 1948 into anti-colonial riots in Accra, the colonial capital, which then set off demonstrations in other parts of the colony. In response to the riots, the British colonial authorities instituted a series of enquiries which culminated in a new constitution. The Gold Coast remained a colony, but the pre-existing thirty-one-member legislative council was remodelled into an eighty-four-member legislative assembly, part of which would be directly elected by universal suffrage. To the surprise of British officials, the Convention People’s Party (CPP), an anti-colonial movement led by Kwame Nkrumah, emerged with a majority in the 1951 elections. Nkrumah was released from prison, where he had been detained for his political activities, to become head of the Gold Coast’s government.

In the aftermath of the election victory, Nkrumah did not rest upon his laurels but maintained the fight for full independence. His goal of independence was achieved in 1957, when the Gold Coast gained its freedom from Britain and became Ghana. Ghana’s independence began a rapid wave of decolonisation across sub-Saharan Africa over the next decade. As Prime Minister, Nkrumah sought to lead Ghana into a new era of progress and prosperity. At the same time, he championed African unification by promoting Pan-Africanist initiatives and anti-colonial activities across the continent. As time went on, however, the promise of independence began to fade. At home, his rule became increasingly authoritarian and repressive. Moreover, as Nkrumah grew more and more desperate to develop the economy, he turned to a state-led and

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1 The institution of universal suffrage was a first for colonial Africa.
planned economy (pursued under the banner of socialism) in order to improve agricultural and industrial output. These efforts produced negligible returns and alienated the private sector. In addition, he was never able to keep fully in check his political rivals, who counted the traditional cocoa-growing elites of Kumasi amongst their ranks. Amidst growing political unrest, Nkrumah was ousted in a coup in 1966. He found refuge in Guinea, then led by the former trade unionist Ahmed Sékou Touré, Nkrumah’s friend and ally, who had been in the embrace of the Soviet Union since Guinea’s independence, from France, in 1958.

From his exile in Conakry, Nkrumah attempted to maintain his high profile on the African political stage through his writings and radio broadcasts, promoting “the African Revolution and the world socialist revolutionary struggle”.2 He issued a call for arms, arguing that “socialist revolution is impossible without the use of force”.3 His principal aspiration: that “[t]hrough socialist revolutionary leadership, Africa can proceed from bourgeois-capitalist ownership of property to arrive at socialist-communist ownership of property and the means of production and distribution”.4 As for Ghana and its new regime, he bemoaned the “abandonment of the principles of socialist planning”.5

Nkrumah’s experiments in socialist, state-led agricultural development, which began in 1961, and his radical rhetoric during his bitter last years in exile (he died in 1972) have exerted a profound effect on how scholars have evaluated the entirety of Nkrumah’s years in power. When it comes to Nkrumah’s time in office, from 1951 to 1966, there is not so much an academic debate as there is a consensus: Nkrumah was from the beginning an inflexible thinker driven by

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4 Ibid., 81.
Marxist ideology, ultimately with disastrous results for Ghana.\(^6\) Nkrumah’s later reflections on his past support the notion that he always followed a “revolutionary path”.\(^7\) Yet scholars miss a great deal when they use works by Nkrumah written after 1961 to read backwards in time and explain his policies before then. As Austin and Serra have shown, Nkrumah underwent a “marked radicalization” in his economic thinking following the coup of 1966.\(^8\) Austin and Serra, however, failed to note that this is even true of his writings after 1961, no less. Thus, when historians use post-1961 works of Nkrumah to account for his policies before 1961, they do not take into account his altered perspective.

In addition to reading backwards with works written after 1961, historians have also tended to base their analyses of Nkrumah on texts and speeches he produced in the 1930s and 1940s during his university days in the United States and United Kingdom. These texts and speeches were fierce denunciations of colonialism couched in Marxist rhetoric. The academic

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analyses of Nkrumah’s condemnations of capitalism from this period, however, do not account for the context in which such statements were delivered. As Chapter One will show, anti-colonial activists of the era relied on Marxist rhetoric because it provided them with an authoritative theoretical framework with which to denounce colonialism. One could rely on this framework without necessarily being an adherent to Marxism.

Chapter Two further complicates the picture of the radical socialist Nkrumah by exploring non-cocoa agricultural policy between 1951 and 1961, a subject neglected in the historiography. Since the late nineteenth century, cocoa has been the mainstay of Ghana’s agricultural sector, and until very recently it remained its biggest foreign exchange earner. Cocoa exports have been of such crucial importance to the economy that Nkrumah’s administration, and all governments since, have feared the instability that tinkering might cause. The nature of Nkrumah’s interventions in the economy is best evaluated elsewhere, and while scholars have studied Nkrumah’s non-cocoa agricultural policies from 1961 to 1966, they have largely ignored the period before. An examination of non-cocoa agricultural policy in the decade before 1961 reveals that, between 1951 and 1961, Nkrumah was receptive to free market economic policies and was thus by no means the dogmatic socialist that he is portrayed as in historiography. Nkrumah may have called himself a “socialist” before coming to power, but for most of his tenure, including for four years after independence, he presided over a pro-market agricultural policy. His turn toward instituting a socialist, command economy came only in 1961, when disappointment with the results of conventional capitalist approaches to economic growth and a collapse in cocoa prices made him impatient for a dramatic solution.

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The overarching argument of this thesis is that Nkrumah was not the rigid socialist that scholars have made him out to be. Accepting the position of the historiography that this thesis has set itself up against makes it all too easy to blame the economic failings of the Nkrumah period on socialism. When we understand that socialism was not the prime mover that it is portrayed as, we can then cast our eyes elsewhere. As chapter three shows, Nkrumah’s decision to reorient the economy in 1961 is attributable to a consensus by development economists on Third World development, more so than to any socialist aspirations Nkrumah harboured. This thesis is a close study of Nkrumah and hence focuses, for the most part, on his policies and outlook. From the earliest days of his rule, Nkrumah exercised a personal dictatorship and had complete control over the CPP. Thus, the policies of the CPP were the policies of Nkrumah. The terms “Socialist” and “Marxist” are used interchangeably in this thesis, as Nkrumah himself used the two terms synonymously. Whenever Nkrumah and Socialism or Marxism are discussed, a contextual analysis is provided of what he meant by those terms at the time in question.

I.2 NKRUMAH AND SOCIALISM

Many scholars have emphasized Nkrumah’s formative years, which were filled with a pro-socialist and anti-capitalist rhetoric in which Nkrumah’s objects of praise or condemnation are ill-defined. These studies leave the impression that Nkrumah’s early interactions with socialism set the stage for his later attempts to build a socialist state once he came to power. There are many different strains of capitalist and socialist thought, however, and Nkrumah’s broad pronouncements at this time about “capitalism” and “socialism” should not be taken at face value. Historian Ama Biney, for instance, writes at length about Nkrumah’s early views of

10 Rooney, *passim.*
left-wing political ideologies, but fails to provide context for these views; Biney reveals statements Nkrumah made on capitalism and socialism, but does not explore what these terms meant to Nkrumah.\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, David Rooney points to Nkrumah’s Marxist leanings during his undergraduate days at Lincoln University in the 1930s and 1940s.\textsuperscript{12} He then asserts that Nkrumah later developed “scientific socialism” as the “ultimate objective of … independence,” but does not specify when “later” was.\textsuperscript{13} Rooney further asserts that Nkrumah’s “overall aim [of a socialist future] remained fairly constant [throughout his time in office]”.\textsuperscript{14} Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, one of Ghana’s foremost political historians, asserts that “the Marxist-Leninist influence on Nkrumah was intellectual and profound”.\textsuperscript{15} This is a general claim which Afari-Gyan does little to historicize; he characterizes Nkrumah’s career as a whole. Moreover, Afari-Gyan draws his evidence almost entirely upon Nkrumah’s later works: \textit{Towards Colonial Freedom} (1961), \textit{Neo-Colonialism} (1965), \textit{Dark Days in Ghana} (1968), \textit{Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare} (1969) and \textit{Class Struggle in Africa} (1970). Thus, Afari-Gyan uses books written after Nkrumah’s political radicalisation to read back in time and account for policies implemented before Nkrumah’s radicalisation. For instance, Afari-Gyan discusses Nkrumah’s understanding of neo-colonialism, the notion that a post-colonial state, ostensibly independent, continues to have its major policies decided by its former colonial power, and the West more broadly.\textsuperscript{16} Afari-Gyan then informs his readers that Nkrumah rejected capitalism and embraced socialism in part because he viewed the latter as the only way to combat neo-colonialism.\textsuperscript{17} Afari-Gyan’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ama Biney, \textit{The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), \textit{passim}.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Rooney, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 169.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Afari-Gyan, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Afari-Gyan, 164.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 165.
\end{itemize}
discussion on neo-colonialism is drawn from Nkrumah’s 1965 book of the same title, i.e., a book written well after the 1961 turn. Afari-Gyan failed to take this into account and gives the impression that using socialism to pre-empt neo-colonialism was on Nkrumah’s mind right from the very start of his time in office in 1951.

The reliance on works from before 1951 and after 1961 has meant that scholars have also over-emphasized Nkrumah’s hostility to the private sector during the entirety of his tenure. The impression given by the historiography is that one of Nkrumah’s key aims before 1961 was to discourage the growth of the private sector. Historians have claimed that Nkrumah was especially opposed to African private enterprise because he supposedly saw such undertakings as a threat to his power. He purportedly feared that African entrepreneurship would create powerful figures who would not be dependent on his government for patronage and could thus undermine his administration’s authority. In support of this point, Biney cites Killick and Mohan. In the cited article, however, Mohan simply states that Nkrumah feared the political threat of capitalist interests without providing any evidence in support of that claim. Killick’s source for this assertion is an unsubstantiated contention made after 1966 by an unnamed former advisor to Nkrumah who claimed Nkrumah told him that “if he permitted African business to grow, it will grow to the extent of becoming a rival power to his and the party’s prestige, and he will do everything to stop it, which he actually did”. Callaway and Card are also guilty of Mohan’s error; they state that Nkrumah viewed an indigenous capitalist class as a threat, without giving

18 Rimmer, 85.
20 Mohan, 200.
21 Killick, 66 note 27.
any substance to this claim. Esseks gives a great deal of credence to a (potentially disgruntled) Cabinet minister who recalled Nkrumah remarking, “Any Ghanaian with a lot of money has a lot of influence; any Ghanaian with a lot of influence is a threat to me”. In similar fashion to the case of the anonymous advisor cited by Killick, one cannot rely on an unsubstantiated claim.

Some have noted that Nkrumah specifically feared that financially successful farmers could form a base of conservative opposition to his socialist aspirations. In support of this claim, Biney merely points to Cooper’s iteration of this viewpoint. Cooper, moreover, and in similar fashion to Biney and Mohan, merely makes a claim without elaboration. There is thus no solid evidence that Nkrumah harboured this notion. Killick, a development economist based at the Overseas Development Institute in London, served as a professor at the University of Ghana between 1961 and 1965 and later as an advisor to post-1966 governments. He mentions (but only briefly) Nkrumah’s pre-1961 efforts to spur the growth of an entrepreneurial class, and then dwells on anti-capitalist statements made by Nkrumah after 1961. Even if it is true that Nkrumah feared an African capitalist class, however, the fact that after 1951 he fostered the growth of the private sector shows that any socialist views he had were not as central to his policies as scholars have argued.

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24 Killick, 41.
1.3 THESIS ORGANIZATION

Chapter One examines Nkrumah’s student and anti-colonial activist days. A more nuanced understanding of Nkrumah’s thinking during this time aids this thesis’s overall attempt to reassess Nkrumah’s policies after 1951. There was a marked disconnect between the rhetoric of Nkrumah before 1951 and policies he implemented in the decade that followed. The chapter historicizes Nkrumah’s early political statements regarding capitalism, Marxism, and socialism, rather than letting such statements speak for themselves. In these earlier years, when Nkrumah would demonize capitalism and wax lyrical about socialism, there was a strong undercurrent of economic nationalism. Economic nationalism was inherently anti-colonial because it sought to transfer economic power from Europeans to Africans. This transfer of power necessarily entailed an attack on the colonial system and Marxist language provided a framework through which economic nationalist concerns could be articulated.

Chapter Two assesses Nkrumah’s first decade of government. The chapter argues that, once he assumed office in 1951, rather than insisting on a socialist agenda, Nkrumah was an economic nationalist willing to experiment with various paths to modernity. When it came to the non-cocoa agricultural sector, Nkrumah spent a decade putting government support behind private-sector approaches to improving agricultural production.

Chapter Three assesses Nkrumah’s reasons for shifting to state-led agricultural development in 1961. Nkrumah turned his back on the private sector due to a disappointment in the ability of small farmers to modernize agricultural practices, compounded by a worsening economic outlook. We will see that Nkrumah’s reasons for turning to what he saw as a socialist state-led program were actually upheld by development economists of both free market and Marxist orientations who looked at Third World Development through the framework of
modernisation theory, which ostensibly provided a scientific explanation for the process of
development. Understanding that Nkrumah operated within the context of a global consensus
on Third World development complicates the notion that he sought a socialist transformation of
the economy after 1961.

The Conclusion reviews the argument of this thesis and also offers some lessons from
Nkrumah’s experience. It is suggested that his reliance on the advice of development economists
may not have been the best way forward, as their solutions were not specifically geared to
Ghana’s circumstances.

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25 The term “Third World” originated during the Cold War to describe newly decolonised nations which pursued a
non-aligned foreign policy, i.e. countries which did not align with either the United States or the Soviet Union in the
Cold War.
CHAPTER ONE: NKRUMAH’S IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT BEFORE 1951

1.1 Introduction

Kwame Nkrumah was born on 21 September 1909 in the village of Nkroful, in the southwest of the former Gold Coast, known today as Ghana. After his primary and secondary education, Nkrumah became a teacher. In his spare time, he partook in the cultural life of his community, with the Nzima Literature Society becoming an important fixture in his life. It was through this society that he came into contact with one R.S. Wood, the then-secretary of the National Congress of British West Africa. Wood played an instrumental role in Nkrumah’s early life by writing him a letter of reference, which enabled him to gain admission to Lincoln University in the United States. Nkrumah would go on to complete an undergraduate degree in economics and sociology at Lincoln before enrolling at the University of Pennsylvania for further education. After his stint in America, Nkrumah left for the United Kingdom, where he pursued a law degree and engaged in anti-colonial activism in concert with other such activists. In the late 1940s, he drew the attention of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the main party campaigning for political reform in the Gold Coast. He would take up the position of party secretary before eventually leaving to form a rival party, the Convention People’s Party.

The time Nkrumah spent in the United States and Britain has been of great interest to historians, as the historical record of the period is replete with a myriad of statements made by Nkrumah, which, if taken at face value, point to him being a Marxist. Nkrumah’s autobiography, published in 1957 to coincide with Ghana’s independence, has naturally been of interest to

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27 Founded in 1917, the National Congress of British West Africa was one of the earliest organised political movements in colonial West Africa to campaign for greater political rights for Africans.
historians in relevant fields. In the autobiography, Nkrumah placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance that Marx, Engels, and Lenin had exerted upon his political development as a student in America. The book has frequently been used as a guide to Nkrumah’s thinking during the 1930s and 1940s.

This chapter provides a more nuanced understanding of Nkrumah’s ideological development than that which presently prevails in the academic literature. We will thus re-trace Kwame Nkrumah’s political development from its genesis up to his assumption of power as Leader of Government Business in 1951. (He was named Prime Minister of the colony a year later.) Understanding that during these student and activist years he was not as militant as has traditionally been portrayed provides a foundation for Chapter Two’s discussion of his pro-market approach to non-cocoa agriculture in the decade after 1951.

We would be remiss to draw a connection between Nkrumah’s early political statements and later policy implementations. This chapter breaks with the relevant historiography by historicizing Nkrumah’s early political avowals, rather than letting such statements speak for themselves. These statements have to be situated in historical context and then interpreted upon this contextual backdrop. To that end, this chapter also surveys Nkrumah’s understanding of capitalism, Marxism, and socialism during his student days in the United States and later in the United Kingdom.

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1.2 Nkrumah in America

In attempting to ascertain Nkrumah’s precise political opinions during his student days in the United States, one has to make do with a tapestry of statements which are ill-developed at the best of times. Nkrumah was at Lincoln University between 1935 and 1942. He had a thorough liberal arts education, which brought him into contact with a range of economic and political thinkers across the spectrum, from Adam Smith to Karl Marx. All this reading made Nkrumah quite the opinionated and thoughtful student. We see evidence of his early interest in political theory in his student papers, which reveal that he engaged with the ideas of thinkers such as the aforementioned pair as well as many more. He was very familiar with the work of Karl Marx and used Marx’s theories to frame his analyses of the state of colonial Africa at large. Historians, however, have tended to over-emphasize the importance of Marxist language in such analyses and use this language to assert that Nkrumah was a Marxist at the time. A more thorough appraisal, nonetheless, shows that he was quite sceptical of Marxism in general and only relied on its theory to highlight the economic travails of colonial Africa. We will examine the reasons for this below.

The record of his early days at Lincoln University suggests that he had a complex relationship with Marxism. In an undated student paper titled “The Philosophy of Property”, he observed Marxism’s “idealism and impracticability,” and went further to conclude that it was “at

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29 Nkrumah’s autobiography only makes general references to Marx and fails to mention which specific works of Marx Nkrumah utilised.
30 In the course of researching this thesis, it has not been possible to procure a copy of the student papers by Nkrumah discussed in this section. The only copies of these papers are held at the National Archives of Ghana in Accra. These copies are fragile and therefore have to be viewed in person. There was only enough research funding to visit one destination and it was decided that a visit would be made to the British Library in London, England because of the greater number of sources of interest held in that location. Thus, for our analysis of papers Nkrumah wrote at Lincoln University, we will rely on prior work by Biney and Esseks.
variance with human nature.” Nkrumah, however, did not elaborate upon what he considered to be human nature. It is clear, in any case, that Nkrumah’s view of Marxism was not altogether favourable. Moreover, “The Philosophy of Property” also voiced a belief in individual property rights. In this paper, Nkrumah stated that he “wholly believe[d] in individual rights and ownership”. A belief in private property is certainly at odds with even the most liberal interpretation of Marx’s texts. What is curious here is that, though Biney reveals Nkrumah’s early scepticism over Marxism, she simply mentions Nkrumah’s views in passing and they play no part in her later assertions that he was guided by Marxist thought. Given the implications of this statement of Nkrumah, Biney’s actions are surprising. For our purposes, the most significant implication of the views Nkrumah expressed in the two aforementioned papers is that, writ large, at this point in his life, he was no Marxist.

Nkrumah nonetheless cannot be said to have been completely dismissive of Marxism. Marx, Engels, and Lenin helped in his search for a solution to what he termed the “colonial question”.

Nonetheless, the reference in Nkrumah’s Autobiography to these three thinkers does not go into any detail about what specifically, or how much, he borrowed from these thinkers. Thus, all that can be said is that, though he appears to have been dismissive of Marxism, he still found the works of noted Marxists useful when approaching issues of colonialism. From the above, it should be clear that the evidence shows that Nkrumah only found Marxism useful when dealing with colonialism.

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31 Biney, 15.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Nkrumah, Autobiography, 45.
After completing his bachelor’s degree in 1939, Nkrumah enrolled at Lincoln University’s theological seminary, as well as at the University of Pennsylvania, where he registered in two graduate programs. According to Rooney, Nkrumah participated in both Democrat and Republican movements. The fact that Nkrumah participated in the activities of bitterly opposed political parties reveals that his political views at the time were not set in stone. He was like a customer at a shoe store trying on different pairs of shoes to see which fit them best.

More insight into Nkrumah’s early economic beliefs can be gained from his unsuccessful dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania titled “The History and Philosophy of Imperialism”, which was written in or around 1943. It has not been possible to view either the original text or a copy; nonetheless, Towards Colonial Freedom, originally published in 1945, is a revised draft of the paper in question. It closely mirrors “The History and Philosophy of Imperialism” and can thus be used as a summation of its contents. Towards Colonial Freedom reveals Nkrumah’s understanding at the time that Europe’s colonial powers were interested in their African colonies primarily because they sought to extract natural resource wealth and also to use these colonies as captive markets for their exports. In the rejected dissertation, Nkrumah was further of the view that freedom from colonial rule could only be achieved through, in his own words, “the complete revolutionary change of the colonial system.” Similar sentiments were repeated in Towards Colonial Freedom. In neither work, however, did Nkrumah elaborate

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35 Rooney, 14.
36 Nkrumah wrote an early draft before presenting a proposal to the philosophy department for approval of the thesis topic. The proposal was rejected.
38 Nkrumah, Towards Colonial Freedom, xv.
39 Biney, 24.
upon what such “revolutionary change” would entail. Perhaps this was because he was not sure of that himself.

According to Biney, the thesis makes it clear that, at the time, Nkrumah viewed the world through a Marxist conceptual lens.\textsuperscript{40} Biney exaggerates, however. Nkrumah was only speaking about European colonialism in Africa. Thus, the most that can be said is that he viewed this colonial relationship through a Marxist conceptual lens. It cannot be said that Nkrumah viewed the world in general through such a lens because he did not discuss broad general matters; he only concerned himself with the colonial situation in Africa. Nkrumah applied a Marxist framework specifically to the economic relationship between the nations of Europe and their respective colonies, rather than to economics in general.

The historian Esseks discovered another paper by Nkrumah entitled “The History and Philosophy of Imperialism and Colonialism”. Esseks put the date of writing sometime between 1941 and 1945. The paper calls for “the return to the West African people themselves of all lands, mines, local industries, plantations, schools and facilities now owned and operated by foreign powers [and] undesirable aggressors,” before going on to call for “the control of the means of production by the people and equal distribution of goods and services to the people.”\textsuperscript{41} With this paper, Nkrumah for the first time provides an insight into the specifics of his economic hopes for the Gold Coast and colonial Africa at large. With this declaration, Nkrumah revealed the trappings of nativism and economic nationalism. What he was advocating for in this paper was a transfer of economic power from Europeans into the hands of Africans. Admittedly, the reference to “control of the means of production” does smack of doctrinaire Marxism. In most

\textsuperscript{40} Biney, 24.
cases, only someone deeply ensconced in the works of Marx would speak in such terms. Indeed, Nkrumah had been ensconced in these works because he was so passionate about undoing the colonial order, and, as we have seen, turned to Marxist texts in order to learn how to do so. At any rate, Nkrumah only referred to the control of the means of production by Africans. This is vague enough to leave the door open for private ownership, which, as we shall see in the next chapter, Nkrumah actively encouraged in the decade after 1951. In sum, “The History and Philosophy of Imperialism and Colonialism” expounds an agenda of economic nationalism, which entailed having the economy in African rather than European hands.

In the same manuscript, Nkrumah also reveals his understanding that capitalist economic activity in colonial Africa entailed resource extraction, followed by the dumping of manufactured goods onto African markets.\textsuperscript{42} That he viewed African colonies as captive markets for their European metropoles implies that European exports to Africa precluded the rise of home-grown African industry. We therefore have further insight into Nkrumah’s economic nationalism. He wished to limit the import of European manufactures and thus protect local industry from competition.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that the Soviet Union’s strong support for the liberation of colonial people made it an obvious point of reference for anti-colonial activists such as Nkrumah.\textsuperscript{43} Furthermore, at the time, one could find nary an anti-colonial activist who did not dress their critiques of colonialism in Marxist rhetoric. For instance, Jomo Kenyatta, a Kenyan anti-colonial activist who would go on to become the country’s first Prime Minister, stated emphatically in 1934 that it was in Kenya that “capitalism is manifested in its most brutal

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
form."  

44 He decried how native Kenyans had lost their lands to white settlers and were now forced to work on such land in service to them.  

45 For Kenyatta, this terrible iteration of capitalism entailed the economic domination of a colony by Europeans, forced African labour, and excessive taxation of the African.  

46 He further took a Marxist analysis of class and transposed it onto race relations in Kenya, with whites and blacks respectively taking the positions of bourgeoisie and proletariat.  

47 Kenyatta relied on Marxist rhetoric because, in the words of Berman and Lonsdale, such rhetoric provided him with an “authoritative [form] of expression”.  

48 Kenyatta, however, was not in fact a Marxist. As someone closely tied to his Kikuyu identity, he could not accept how Marxism abhorred ethnic identity.  

49 Moreover, after independence Kenyatta rigidly adhered to free-market economics and even promised white settlers that their lands were safe.  

50 Likewise, Houphet-Boigny, the first president of the Ivory Coast, had been a trade unionist earlier in his life and was frequently decried as a Marxist by his detractors because of his use of Marxist rhetoric to attack French colonialism. Nonetheless, after Ivorian independence, he, like Kenyatta, stuck to free-market principles.  

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45 Ibid.  
46 Ibid., 803-4.  
49 Ibid., 28-9.  
1.3 Nkrumah in England

In May 1945, Nkrumah left the United States for Britain, where he planned to further his education. He wrote in his autobiography that his “purpose in going to London was to study law and, at the same time, to complete [his] thesis for a doctorate in philosophy”.\(^{52}\) The following year, he enrolled as a PhD candidate in philosophy at University College London (UCL). He quickly developed a taste for anti-colonial student activism and, in October of that year, was named Vice-President of the West-African Students Union (WASU). As he was involved in African student groups campaigning against colonialism, Nkrumah inevitably came into contact with George Padmore, a mainstay of the anti-colonial struggle at the metropole of empire. The two met through a mutual acquaintance and quickly bonded through anti-colonial activities they pursued together. Not too long after Nkrumah’s arrival in England, Padmore offered him the post of Regional Secretary of the Pan-African Federation, in order that Nkrumah could assist in the organisation of the Fifth Pan-African Congress, of which the Federation was the progenitor.\(^{53}\) The Federation, which itself had been formed from the amalgamation of two prior organisations in 1944, was the pre-eminent body of Pan-African anti-colonial activism in the United Kingdom at the time.\(^{54}\) One of the chief objectives of the congress, which took place in October 1945, was to emphasize to the Labour government the need for immediate political reform in Britain’s African colonies.\(^{55}\) The congress itself was divided into a series of sessions, each discussing different issues. According to Padmore, Nkrumah was the chief *rapporteur* of each of these

\(^{54}\) George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London: Dennis Dobson 1956), 149.  
\(^{55}\) Ibid., 155-9 passim.
sessions. Furthermore, Nkrumah had the responsibility of using his reports to construct draft resolutions on constitutional, economic, and social problems in colonial Africa, draft resolutions which were unanimously endorsed by congress participants. The main calls of the agreed upon resolutions were for self-rule and “economic democracy.” The fact that resolutions authored by Nkrumah called for “economic democracy” should strike us as no coincidence, especially in light of the above discussion of his economic nationalism. His earlier-expressed desire for the transfer of economic power to Africans helps us understand what he meant by economic democracy. He was launching a verbal attack on what he perceived to be the centralisation of economic power in the Gold Coast, and colonial Africa at large, in the hands of Europeans. Democratisation in this instance thus refers to a greater say in economic affairs by Africans, a situation which, in Nkrumah’s view, could only be brought about through the transfer of economic control.

To buttress the point that Nkrumah was articulating a message of economic nationalism, we have to situate his views within the wider context of the time. It has been argued in academic circles that “[m]uch of the ‘nationalism’ of the 1940s and 1950s was in a crucial sense … economic nationalism,” or, more specifically, “economic grievance nationalism”. At least with respect to the Gold Coast, this is very much true. The United Gold Coast Convention was the first organised political movement formed after the conclusion of the Second World War to advocate on behalf of Gold Coasters. The party was, as the historian Genoud put it, that of the “intelligentsia” and educated urban elite. Indeed, Nkrumah himself used the same term

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56 Ibid., 163.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Biney, 31.  
60 Ibid., 117.  
“intelligentsia” to refer to the UGCC.⁶² Looking back on the 1940s, one of the UGCC’s founders, William Ofori-Atta, explained the impetus for the organisation’s founding in economic terms. He stated that

Every senior or high office in the Civil Service was occupied by an expatriate—a white man. In the commercial field, all the bosses were white. Even in the churches the situation was no different: all the top clergy were white. To add insult to injury, those few Africans who were fortunate enough to attain high office were described as occupying European posts.⁶³

This observation reveals a concern about a lack of jobs for Gold Coasters, i.e. an economic concern. Similarly, A.G. Grant, the UGCC’s main financier, lamented that “we were not being treated right, we were not getting the licences for the import of goods, also we were not pleased with the way our [legislative council] handled matters, because we had not the right people there”.⁶⁴ These concerns had propelled Grant to begin the initial discussions which led to the UGCC’s formation.⁶⁵ Gold Coast traders, who constituted a significant base of support for the UGCC, shared concerns over the activities of European enterprises which mirrored Nkrumah’s concerns. One such trader asserted that in the period after 1945, trade regulations instituted by the colonial government had made it very difficult for African traders to operate whilst privileging European trading concerns.⁶⁶ In fact, at the UGCC’s founding, another of its leading members to be, John Boakye Danquah, bemoaned this exact policy as exerting a debilitating effect on African merchants.⁶⁷ Danquah further lamented the lack of consultation on this matter.

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⁶² Nkrumah, Autobiography, 69.
⁶⁵ Ibid., 52.
⁶⁶ Ibid., 70.
To underline the centrality of economic grievance nationalism to the UGCC, it must be stressed that they sought accommodation within the British Empire, rather than independence. The UGCC sought increased political control, culminating in responsible government, in order to defend and enhance the economic position of Gold Coasters. As Danquah stated, “the conception of a self-dependent Gold Coast nation is compatible with membership of an international or world empire of self-dependent states as in the British Commonwealth”. Thus, as we have seen, the UGCC’s complaints against the colonial order in the Gold Coast were motivated primarily by economic concerns. As a man who had spent the entirety of his time in the Gold Coast in the rural southwest, Nkrumah was obviously not amongst the ranks of the urban elite. Nonetheless, he shared one thing in common with them: his complaints against the colonial order were motivated by an impulse of economic nationalism. The fact that someone like Nkrumah had the same motivations as the urban elite tells us that Gold Coast economic nationalism was something which transcended class. Nkrumah was not a rarity within his class. The bulk of CPP activists on whose backs he rode to power in 1951 were of his ilk and were also motivated to upend the colonial order by economic nationalist compulsions.

That same year, Nkrumah was invited by the Fabian Colonial Bureau to speak at a conference on the theme “The Problems of Confidence: Reasons for Distrust on the Part of Colonial Peoples.” Formed as a division of the Fabian Society in October 1940, the bureau’s members concerned themselves with the study of colonial matters of which numerous reports

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69 Bob-Miliar, passim.
70 The Fabian Colonial Bureau was the colonial wing of the Fabian socialist movement, which sought to achieve democratic socialism in the United Kingdom through incremental reform. See Margaret Cole, The Story of Fabian Socialism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).
were produced over the course of the Second World War. By the time of the 1945 British general election, it had, by virtue of its position as the sole colonial research organisation on the British Left, firmly established itself as the wellspring of Labour’s colonial policy.\textsuperscript{72} As social democrats, Fabianites naturally wished for the colonies to develop into successful social democracies, of which they viewed material prosperity to be an important precondition.\textsuperscript{73}

In a fiery speech to attendees, Nkrumah affirmed that “[he was] fighting against capitalism and imperialism” and then added that “capitalism is no different whether black or white.”\textsuperscript{74} The fact that he stated that he was fighting \textit{both} capitalism and imperialism lends credence to the fact that he viewed the two as a package deal. We see a strikingly similar sentiment revealed by Adegoke Adelabu, a Nigerian businessman and independence activist. Despite the fact that he was a businessman, he had no qualms calling himself a “radical socialist”.\textsuperscript{75} Like Nkrumah, he cautioned against “the replacement of a White Officialdom by a Black Oligarchy” which would continue the economic exploitation which Western colonialists had orchestrated.\textsuperscript{76} This should tell us how powerful Marxist rhetoric was seen to be, so much so that those who stood to lose the most in the event of a hypothetical Marxist revolution nonetheless found use for its vernacular in articulating their disdain for colonialism. Nonetheless, we must ask ourselves what Nkrumah meant by capitalism. Nkrumah was an outsider looking in on a colonial economic system in which Europeans monopolised mining and trading concerns.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{74} Esseks, “Economic Independence,” 36-38.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
From his perspective, it was through colonialism that these capitalist European monopolies had emerged. Moreover, his only experience of capitalism in the Gold Coast had been with large European mining and trading companies in the Gold Coast which did little by way of adding to the local economy. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, when Nkrumah became Leader of Government Business in 1951 and realised the possibilities of capitalism, especially with capitalist agriculture, he was more than willing to use the government to create the enabling environment needed for the private sector to flourish.

1.4 Conclusion

The main goal of this chapter has been to contest the claim that Nkrumah developed a dogmatic socialist inclination during his student days, and that this alleged inclination explains the policies which he implemented from the start of his time in office. We have seen that Nkrumah used the language of Marxism to articulate an agenda of economic nationalism, and that such language was what he found most conducive to his needs. Marxist language went hand-in-hand with anti-colonialism. The fact that Marxists had a solid track-record of critiquing colonialism was, in itself, appealing to those labouring under colonialism. What we must remember, however, is that this language was simply a tool used to address economic grievances. One could use its theoretical lens to examine economic relationships without necessarily becoming ingratiated with Marxism at large. As we have seen, Nkrumah and Kenyatta both had serious disagreements with Marxism and were not in fact rigid Marxist ideologues. Nonetheless, they found a use for its language in their critique of colonial economic circumstance. With this in mind, Chapter Two sheds light on an oft-ignored aspect of Nkrumah’s political career, the liberal policies towards non-cocoa agriculture which his administration implemented in the decade after 1951.
CHAPTER TWO: NKRUMAH THE CAPITALIST

2.1 Introduction

1951 was an *annus mirabilis* for Nkrumah and the CPP. The CPP emerged from the 1951 election with thirty-four seats in the eighty-member legislative assembly. The party now held the most seats; however, it did not command a majority. Nonetheless, with the aid of a few independent assembly members, the CPP was able to form a working majority in the assembly.\(^77\)

After leading the CPP to victory in the 1951 elections, Nkrumah assumed the position of Leader of Government Business, a post which would be renamed Prime Minister the following year. Following initial mutual hesitation, Nkrumah and the colony’s Governor-General, Charles Arden Clarke, established a good working relationship and came to possess a great deal of respect for one another. In the wake of the elections, the CPP would now control six of the eleven cabinet positions. The portfolios held were as follows:\(^78\)

1. Leader of Government Business
2. Health and Labour
3. Education and Social Welfare
4. Commerce, Industry and Mines
5. Agriculture and Natural Resources
6. Communications and Works

Of the remaining five portfolios, Arden Clark held the power of appointment over three (Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Attorney General), with each of the remaining two positions

\(^77\) Dennis Austin, 154.
\(^78\) Rooney, 62.
occupied by a representative from Ashanti and the Northern territories respectively. The colonial civil service, which was entirely British, was under the effective control of the Governor-General, and by extension, Whitehall. Moreover, Arden-Clarke reserved a veto over all tabled legislation as well as responsibility for defence and foreign affairs.

The years which followed saw the CPP strengthen its grip on political power. With further legislative elections in 1954 and 1956, the CPP fortified its hold over the colony and would lead the Gold Coast into self-government in 1957. That day, the Gold Coast became Ghana, a dominion within the British Empire-Commonwealth. Ghana would maintain the British monarch as head of state until the country became a republic in 1960.

This chapter builds upon the previous chapter’s picture of Nkrumah as a man who did not hold a radical socialist agenda before coming to power, much unlike the impression given in the historiography this thesis has set out to redress. Now that we have established that Nkrumah during the 1940s and 1950s was not as militantly socialist and anti-capitalist as historians have traditionally portrayed him, we can review free market agricultural policies he implemented after coming to power in 1951. Nkrumah implemented programs designed to boost the productivity and output of smallholder farmers, who accounted for the bulk of the country’s agricultural activity. These pro-market policies will be the subject of this chapter. This chapter’s organisation is as follows. We will begin with an examination of the travails of peasant agriculture at the time of Nkrumah’s assumption of power in 1951. We then survey agricultural policy in the decade

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79 Ibid. 61.
80 Ibid., 64-5.
81 Ibid., 156.
after 1951. Lastly, we shall address a potential counterargument which could posit that there was a deliberate effort before 1961 to cloak any socialist aspirations.

2.2 The State of Peasant Agriculture in 1951

At the turn of the 1950s, 99.5 percent of peasant farming utilised manpower aided only by the hoe and the cutlass.\textsuperscript{82} Peasant farms, which were on average of very small acreage, suffered inadequate and irregular water supply, as irrigation was entirely rain-fed.\textsuperscript{83} Moreover, seeds and animal stock were of poor genetic quality, husbandry practices remained undeveloped, credit facilities were almost non-existent, and access to markets was poorly organised. We do not have data on how much of the colony’s food production at the time was due to peasant activity; however, after the 1966 coup, it was found that peasants ploughed 99 percent of the country’s cultivated land and grew well north of ninety percent of the country’s food.\textsuperscript{84} Since this finding took the state farms of the 1960s into account, we can therefore infer that, in the 1950s, before the inception of state farms, peasant farmers produced a similar proportion of the country’s food.

There were very real problems with peasant production which inhibited the smallholder farmer’s ability to spearhead any attempt at agricultural improvement.\textsuperscript{85} These were issues which Nkrumah’s administration had to grapple with in any attempt to reform peasant agricultural production. Multiple scholars have placed the blame for low peasant agricultural output

\textsuperscript{82} John Alfred Dadson “Socialized Agriculture in Ghana, 1962-1965” (PhD Diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1971), 47.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, 23.
principally at the feet of the land tenure system. Amongst the most acute issues were the disincentive to leave land to lie fallow and an inheritance system which discouraged farmers from investing in their land. The results of such practices were that, with each successive generation, tilled plots grew progressively smaller, and the lack of clearly delineated boundaries fomented land disputes. These land disputes periodically forced farmers to spend money, which would otherwise have been reinvested in their farms, on expensive litigation.  

It has therefore been argued that, “in sum, the defectiveness of Ghanaian agriculture lies, in great measure, in the defectiveness of the system of land tenure.”

The insecurity of land title stemmed from the traditional methods of boundary demarcation, which are notoriously defective as they are dependent on waterbodies, hills, and other geographical features. Moreover, the lack of documents on valid titles and absence of cadastral data only made matters worse, since without such records, the same piece of land could be sold to multiple parties, and purchasers were unsure whether they were dealing with the legitimate land owner. Land could also be willed to offspring without any documentary evidence, which often led to litigation further down the line. It has been further noted that, since farmers did not have title to their land, they could not use their holdings as collateral to secure credit. For peasant farmers, their farmland was all they had to potentially offer as collateral, since it was the only asset they could possibly lay claim to.

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87 Ibid., 197.
88 Dadson 64.
89 Ibid., 7.
90 Their homes could not be accepted as collateral as they were semi-permanent structures.
The travails of the land tenure system were recognised by men on the ground at the time. There was an official understanding that farmers’ lack of collateral prevented them from attaining credit and also that the scattered nature of peasant land holdings - a result of the inheritance system - was another inhibitory factor on agricultural improvement. On the eve of independence, John Quashie, then Chairman of the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC), referred to the land tenure situation as a “tricky business” due to the perennial litigation it engendered.

In 1952, the colony’s Minister of Finance commissioned Dudley Seers and Claud Ross, two noted development economists of the time, to enquire into mounting administrative costs in the colony. The pair, however, interpreted their terms of reference quite widely and ended up producing a general economic report of the Gold Coast. Seers and Ross highlighted the preclusive impact of poor infrastructure on economic growth (and agricultural output specifically), and recommended a shift of focus towards infrastructure spending in the hope that such an outlay would stimulate private sector investment in agriculture as well as other sectors of the economy. Seers and Ross further noted that rural water supplies would have to be improved

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92 The Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) was set up in 1951 to oversee agricultural improvement efforts—Dadson, 208.
in order to facilitate a rise in agricultural output.\textsuperscript{96} Such investments, their report sourly noted, had “scarcely begun”.\textsuperscript{97}

Furthermore, peasant farmers in many instances deliberately limited production due to the lack of roads necessary to transport any agricultural surplus to markets. These farmers thus failed to see the point in growing more than a subsistence level of food, as any surplus would go to waste.\textsuperscript{98} The scholar H.P. White, who wrote about the relationship between good roads and agricultural output, asserted that investment in roads would catalyse private sector investment in cash crops.\textsuperscript{99}

\textbf{2.3 The First Development Plan}

Shortly before Nkrumah’s victory in the 1951 elections, the colonial authorities approved a ten-year development plan which had the object of fostering an environment that would incentivise private investment in the colony’s agricultural sector.\textsuperscript{100} Nkrumah elected to proceed with the inherited plan, rather than scrap it and replace it with another plan. This decision evinces a degree of flexibility which scholars do not give Nkrumah credit for. His only alteration was to halve the plan’s duration. Thus, what was originally a ten-year plan was folded into a five-year plan.

The 1951 development plan aimed to raise agricultural productivity by providing the infrastructure necessary for its success.\textsuperscript{101} The belief here was that agricultural production was

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{98} Anyane, 196.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
something best left to private farmers, rather than the government.\textsuperscript{102} The importance of enterprise and perseverance on the part of farmers was very much emphasized.\textsuperscript{103} The plan’s explicit reliance on the initiative of indigenous farmers is remarkable given the low opinion that British colonial authorities at the time held of African farmers.\textsuperscript{104} The infamous groundnuts scheme, for instance, is notorious for paying little to no credence to local farmers in Tanganyika.\textsuperscript{105}

Another main objective of the 1951 plan was to introduce farmers to new cash crops.\textsuperscript{106} This was to be achieved through investments in extension services,\textsuperscript{107} by way of more agricultural stations,\textsuperscript{108} and additional investments in agricultural education.\textsuperscript{109} Significant sums were respectively allocated for agricultural stations and agricultural education.\textsuperscript{110} By 1955, eighteen of the planned twenty-one stations were in operation.\textsuperscript{111} It was clear that the official hope was that farmers would take advantage of these new stations. The \textit{1955 Progress Report} reported that stations were now to be found across the country, and that these stations were engaged in the study of agricultural issues in their respective locales. It was further noted that farmers had access to the specialised agricultural knowledge of those manning the stations.\textsuperscript{112} The hope now was that farmers would show initiative and utilise the newfound opportunities at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 73.
\item \textsuperscript{106} Gold Coast, \textit{Development Progress Report}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Agricultural extension is the implementation of scientific principles and new agricultural knowledge and tools through farmer education.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Agricultural stations are field outposts which conduct scientific research into agricultural challenges in their locales.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Gold Coast, \textit{Development Progress, Report}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
their disposal to improve their farming practices and generate wealth in the process.\textsuperscript{113} This certainly was not an automatic process. The \textit{Progress Report} further observed that farmers would have to be convinced that the new agricultural methods being encouraged were for their own economic good.\textsuperscript{114}

As far as cash crops were concerned, the government identified oil palm and coffee as holding the most promise. Between 1954 and 1955, the agricultural stations distributed eleven-thousand oil palm and coffee seedlings to farmers at no charge. It was understood that the seedlings would begin to bear fruit by the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{115} There were further plans to distribute between two and three million seedlings per year from 1955 onwards and increase acreage annually by 5,000 acres. It was stated that this could only be achieved with the aid of the farmers themselves.\textsuperscript{116} Despite these ambitious plans, 1959 and 1960 respectively, the number of coffee seedlings distributed was only 12,390 and 43,408 (much less than the two to three million per year which was anticipated),\textsuperscript{117} not that these figures themselves are not respectable. Farmers were certainly harvesting more coffee. The Agricultural Development Corporation’s purchases of the crop more than tripled from five hundred and eighteen (518) tonnes in 1958, to one thousand, eight hundred and five (1805) tonnes by 1959, and two thousand, one hundred and eighteen (2118) tonnes by 1960.\textsuperscript{118} Farmers exhibited very healthy interest in oil palm in 1960, requesting three hundred and eighty-seven thousand seedlings from their extension officers.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
Aside from oil palm and coffee, agricultural stations also distributed thirty thousand coconut seedlings to farmers between 1954 and 1955. Further, banana production increased from one thousand, six hundred and forty-nine (1649) stems in 1953, to five thousand, eight hundred and seventy-nine (5879) in 1955, to ninety thousand, two hundred and thirty-five (90,235) in 1959. It was reported that banana farmers were so successful that a “shipping problem” loomed on the horizon, and that “other shipping facilities and overseas markets should be explored to cope with the rapid expansion”.

Thus, a development program for agriculture and infrastructure, started by colonial administrators, but kept in place for years by Nkrumah, proved enormously successful by many measures. Nkrumah certainly had the power to make modifications to the plan (we see this from his decision to compress the plan’s implementation period from ten to five years). Yet, his administration took ownership of a private-sector focused plan, which promoted smallholder farmers, and managed to yield very good results.

2.4 The Second Development Plan

By July 1957, the first development plan was understood to have run its course. Rather than following up immediately with a second development plan, the government decided that a period of consolidation was needed in order to complete outstanding projects resulting from the initial development plan. Thus, it was only in 1959 that a new development plan was launched. Nkrumah stated that all his development plans hinged on agricultural modernization

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123 Ibid.
and diversification. Philosophically, the plan followed its predecessor by working under the assumption that the government’s role was to supply the infrastructure and incentives necessary in order to incentivise private investment in agriculture.

The second development plan aimed to create large cultivated areas of rubber and bananas, establish a cattle industry, raise cereal yields, and study and promote the use of fertilizers. Under the plan, the incentives for farmers to produce the targeted produce included capital grants and operational loans for the planting of selected crops and the use of recommended practices and the supply of improved planting material at subsidized rates. Moreover, mechanized services (e.g., ploughing, processing, corn shelling, produce haulage) were to be offered at subsidized rates under a hire-purchase scheme. The plan also made provisions for guaranteed pricing for certain crops.

The government also made concerted attempts to court foreign investment in agriculture. The investment promotion section of the Agricultural Development Corporation hired an agricultural investment liaison officer to spearhead efforts to attract local and foreign capital towards agriculture. To this end, a national agricultural show was held in Accra in 1959. In the wake of the show, potential foreign investors who demonstrated interest in Ghanaian agriculture were provided with a summation of the most lucrative agricultural investment opportunities, and liaisons were established between these foreign investors and the government to provide assistance with land acquisitions and also to ensure that adequate tax incentives were in place.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{124}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{iii}.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{125}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{iii-iv}.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{126}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{5-13}.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{127}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{128}}\text{Ghana Agricultural Development Corporation, Fourth Report and Accounts for the Period Ended 30th June, 1959, 32.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{129}}\text{Ibid.}\]
Extensive contact was made with trade and other attachés of foreign missions resident in Ghana regarding businessmen and private firms in their countries who might have been interested in investing in Ghanaian agriculture.\textsuperscript{130} An international agricultural investment roadshow was also planned. It was envisaged that this tour would cover six unnamed European countries and Scandinavia as well. It was to start in July 1959.

2.5 A Counterargument

If one were to do a bit of digging, it would be possible to posit a counterargument that, rather than being an economic moderate, Nkrumah was a socialist who nonetheless felt the need to pursue a free-market approach in order to ensure that the British did not put any obstacles in the way of eventual self-government. Nkrumah himself coined the term “tactical action” to describe the overarching theme of CPP political decision making between 1951 and 1957. This was a “contest of wits” with the CPP on one side and the colonial authorities on the other, with the former aiming to secure the gradual possession of more and more political power from the latter up until the point of independence.\textsuperscript{131} It is true that as far as Nkrumah was concerned, it was of the utmost importance that the British authorities did not have cause to take with one hand what they had given with the other.\textsuperscript{132} Avoiding such an end required Nkrumah and the CPP to avoid any actions which would give London the impression that the colony was moving towards the Socialist Bloc. In Mohan’s words, this necessitated “giving colonial officials … unimpeachable evidence of [the party’s] own moderation and ‘statesmanship’, politically and economically [my emphasis].”\textsuperscript{133} We must remember, however, that Clement Atlee’s Labour

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Nkrumah, \textit{Autobiography}, x.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Hart, 7; Esseks, “Economic Independence,” 56-7; Rooney, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Mohan, 196.
\end{itemize}
government in Britain had vigorously pursued a nationalisation campaign as well as introduced socialised healthcare. Market socialism, as was pursued in Britain, was an option which was open to Nkrumah. Nonetheless, it was not an option he pursued. If Nkrumah did indeed harbour socialist impulses, he could very well have pursued policies which mirrored that of Atlee’s government in Britain. Nonetheless, he eschewed such a course of action in favour of explicit free market policies.

One could also argue that the CPP drew lessons from the experience of British Guiana in 1953, where, after initially granting the territory internal self-government, Britain quickly invaded that same year to remove the communist-leaning People’s Progressive Party (PPP) from office (the PPP had come to power after initial political concessions from London). British Guiana even found its way into the CPP’s 1954 election manifesto, which warned against the colony “[becoming] another British Guiana.” The PPP, however, was a communist leaning party. In contrast, as we saw in Chapter One, Nkrumah did not hold a favourable opinion regarding communism’s efficacy. He did not mirror the PPP’s actions, not out of fear for British reaction, but because he did not believe in communism.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shone a light upon pro-market agricultural policies which Nkrumah’s administrations implemented in the decade between 1951 and 1961. We have seen that when Nkrumah saw the possibility of aiding the private indigenous farmer, he did not hesitate to do so. His free market agricultural policies were in line with the undercurrent of economic nationalism, which permeated the rhetoric of his student days. In the previous chapter, it was argued that

Nkrumah’s denunciations of capitalism in the 1930s and 1940s, were a product of the fact that his only experience with capitalism had been with big European mining and trading concerns. As this chapter has shown, however, when Nkrumah realised that capitalism could be used to increase the economic power of those involved in Ghanaian agriculture, he was quick to seize this opportunity. However, by 1961, the efforts to develop agriculture through the private sector failed to yield the desired ends. The reasons why will be examined in the next chapter. Nkrumah was understandably frustrated by the lack of progress. His frustration happened to coincide with an economic downturn. It was this confluence of frustration at a decade of free market policies, which seemed to have achieved little, coupled with economic uncertainty that caused Nkrumah to look to other solutions.
CHAPTER THREE: THE BACKGROUND TO THE 1961 TURN

3.1 Introduction

In 1961, Ghana faced an economic crisis linked to a collapse in cocoa prices. The economic crisis coincided with Nkrumah’s disappointment that liberal economics had failed to bring Ghana any closer to modernity than it had been in 1951. Nkrumah therefore decided to pursue an alternate course of action: a socialist, state-led course. This entailed a dramatic reduction in the assistance given to the private sector. From 1961 onward, the government would directly attempt to foster economic growth by taking on an ever-increasing role in the economy.

Chapter Three elaborates upon the factors which motivated the dramatic policy shift away from private-sector driven solutions towards a command economy and assesses Nkrumah’s reasons for embracing a socialist centrally planned approach to development. Most importantly, we will situate Nkrumah’s reasons for deciding in favour of state-led growth against the backdrop of development theory of the era. In 1963, the Ghanaian government invited noted development economists of both capitalist and Marxist outlooks to a conference in Ghana, which had the purpose of reviewing the country’s new socialist development plan.\(^{135}\) What is noteworthy is that, despite their divergent economic outlooks, these economists suggested minor alterations but agreed in principle with the aims and methods of the plan.\(^{136}\) Moreover, Nkrumah’s post-1961 defences for the state-led economic policies in the last years of his reign are replete with references to development economists of his day of both free market and Marxist


\(^{136}\) Ibid.
persuasions.\textsuperscript{137} Neo-Colonialism, in particular, reveals that Nkrumah’s preference for what he saw as a socialist approach to development was based on his reading of development economists of both capitalist and Marxist spheres. Development specialist Tony Killick, who advised governments after Nkrumah’s, has explored the congruence between Nkrumah’s decisions for embarking on a socialist course and the consensus in development economics at the time, in which mainstream pro-free market development economists and their Marxist counterparts offered near-identical prescriptions for Third World development.\textsuperscript{138} This chapter builds on Killick’s observations by introducing the notion of modernisation to the discourse. To Nkrumah, modernisation entailed achieving economic parity with the industrialised world.\textsuperscript{139} It is not simply enough to understand that Nkrumah’s socialist turn was influenced by a consensus between the era’s pre-eminent Capitalist and Marxist development economists on Third World development. If we choose to end our analysis here, we miss the larger context: the lens through which these development economists looked at the Third World. Rather than dismissing the post-1961 Nkrumah as a dogmatic socialist ideologue, we must understand that it was the high priests of modernisation in the industrialised Global North who preached dogmatic axioms from their pulpits of modernisation. This development consensus was based on what the scholar James Scott calls a “high modernist ideology.”\textsuperscript{140} According to Scott, high modernist faith was a rigid belief in scientific and technical progress, coupled with a desire to order human civilisation according to scientific understanding.\textsuperscript{141} When it came to Third World development, the


\textsuperscript{138} Killick, 12-59.


\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
capitalist and Marxist spheres both extolled modernisation theory as the way forward. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, modernisation theory sought to provide a scientific model for Third World development. This saw all human civilisations as beginning as hunter-gatherer societies and slowly rising up the ranks until they became industrialised. Specific prescriptions were given at each stage of a society’s development, and it was understood that these prescriptions offered the only way to industrialised modernity.\(^{142}\)

Understanding that Nkrumah’s policies after 1961 were based on a high-modernist consensus on Third World development complicates the notion that he sought a socialist transformation of the economy. As this chapter will show, though Nkrumah himself believed he was pursuing a socialist course, he was, in fact, pursuing a high modernist solution. Furthermore, the dividing line between capitalist and socialist economic transformation of the Third World starts to blur when we understand that everything was guided by the dogma of high modernism. Thus, when scholars critique Nkrumah for choosing a socialist development strategy in 1961, rather than a capitalist strategy, they miss the fact that, as a man working in the context of a high modernist consensus on Third World development, there was no alternate course.

We will begin by examining the factors which caused Nkrumah to lose faith in a market-driven approach to development, and will then review Nkrumah’s reasons for choosing an ostensibly socialist developmental framework. This will be followed by an investigation of the consensus between East and West on Third World development, and how the leading developmental economists in capitalist and Marxist thought gave credence to the 1961 turn. We

will then examine the high modernist foundation on which this consensus was built and the implications of this basis of agreement between capitalist and Marxist development economists.

3.2 Factors Precipitating the 1961 Turn

The land tenure system was the principal reason that free market agricultural policies between 1951 and 1961 failed to significantly boost peasant productivity and output. Under the second development plan, provisions were made to provide credit to farmers; however, access to this credit required collateral.\textsuperscript{143} As we have previously seen, firstly, farmland was the only form of collateral which farmers could offer. Secondly, the land tenure system made it difficult for farmers to use their land as collateral; the fact that the land tenure system precluded individual land title meant that farmers had no collateral to offer and thus could not secure credit. By the time that the second development plan was implemented, Nkrumah and other policy framers understood that official efforts meant to help smallholder farmers secure credit were failing because of the land tenure regime. The Agriculture Development Corporation’s 1959 report noted that the loan scheme had been greatly impeded mainly by the lack of collateral on the part of the farmers.\textsuperscript{144}

What is perplexing is that, despite official knowledge of the impediment that land tenure was to credit access, the loan programs did not address the land tenure question in any way. It was well understood that any attempt at land tenure reform could well spark a political storm in the country.\textsuperscript{145} Although Nkrumah saw the need for land tenure reform, he admitted that it would

have to be “very carefully worked out.” The fact that when state farms were eventually introduced, they were set up on unused land, rather than through the collectivisation of peasant farms, shows how sensitive Nkrumah was to the political ramifications of any attempts to modify the land tenure system. One must keep in mind that after 1961 Nkrumah was at the height of his power; the country had been declared a one-party state with himself as president for life. Even at this point of supreme power, however, he was hesitant to tinker with land tenure.

We now understand why farmers were not able to take advantage of government efforts to help them, but we also need to ascertain why entrepreneurs in general did not take advantage of the infrastructure put in place by the development plans and invest in agriculture. A feature of the local investment climate seems to have been its chronic undercapitalisation. In the words of Komla Gbedemah, who served as finance minister between 1954 and 1961, the number of Ghanaians with enough capital to invest in the economy “could be counted on the fingers of one hand.” In *Africa Must Unite* (1963), Nkrumah offered his own personal explanation for Ghana’s undercapitalisation. He surmised that colonial rule had precluded the rise of an indigenous monied class since all business interests were monopolised by Western companies, thus leaving no opportunities for Africans. He blamed British banks during the colonial era for their reluctance to extend credit to African entrepreneurs. Nkrumah further blamed colonial rule for preventing Africans “from accumulating as individuals the reserves of capital necessary to

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146 Ibid.

147 Komla Gbedemah, *It will not be “Work and Happiness for All!” An Open Letter, Being Also an Appeal to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah*, 1962.

148 This book was a clarion call for African unification on the basis that doing so would bring together the requisite capital required in order to lift the continent out of poverty.

establish on a private basis those major enterprises which lay the foundations of a sound
industrialized economy and expand and diversify agriculture.”

In addition to low levels of domestic investment, by 1961 efforts to attract foreign
investment into the agricultural sector had seemingly failed. As early as 1955, the Economic
Survey for that year observed that there had been negligible foreign investment in the country’s
agricultural sector since 1951. By 1959 there was a noted uptick in the level of foreign
investment into agriculture; however, this was still not at a significant enough level.
Expressing a gloomy outlook on the prospect of foreign investment, the 1961 Economic Survey
suggested that the bulk of capital investment would have to come from within the country.
There are a myriad of reasons for the disappointing levels of foreign investment in agriculture.
The Ministry of Finance recognised that the small size of the local market served as a deterrence
to foreign investors. This is a problem which the pro-market development economist Ragnar
Nurske recognised on a more general level. According to Nurske, investors are more inclined to
invest in foreign markets which are well developed. With specific respect to Ghana at the
time, there is substance to this claim. The fact that Ghana was a Third World country meant it
had a small domestic market, which was not enticing to foreign investors. They were thus
unwilling to invest in agricultural concerns geared towards feeding the home market. Moreover,
the export of food crops to industrialised countries was untenable, given protectionist import

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150 Ibid., 101.
1960), 25.
153 Ibid.
154 Ragnar Nurske, Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries (Oxford: Basil
tariffs. The only potentially alluring agricultural investment opportunity would have been tropical crops for export. In this regard, however, Ghana was competing against South American countries, which already occupied entrenched positions in this industry.

We have surveyed the failures of free-market policies instituted between 1951 and 1961, and can now turn to the economic downturn and angst which also caused Nkrumah to look to other solutions for the economy. In 1961, a simmering balance of payments crisis reached a head and threatened the country’s economic future. The importance of cocoa exports to the economy can hardly be understated. From the end of the Second World War to the end of the Korean War, cocoa exports averaged seventy percent of the total value of the colony’s exports.\(^{155}\) Furthermore, between 1950 and 1958, cocoa accounted for over two-thirds of exports and consequently provided the lion’s share of government revenue.\(^{156}\) After independence, there was a significant emphasis of increasing cocoa production, which yielded significant dividends. Cocoa exports grew dramatically, from two-hundred and six thousand (206,000) tonnes in the 1957/58 season to five-hundred and seventy-two thousand (572,000) tonnes in the 1965/66 season. This increase was primarily attributable to government subsidies on insecticides, fertilizer, and fertilizer spraying machines.\(^{157}\) The increased yields, however, exerted an unintended downward pressure on the world price of cocoa. Between the 1956 and 1960 financial years, the country witnessed a current account deficit in every year bar 1958. By 1961, cocoa prices had fallen to their lowest level since 1947. Ghana’s total revenue was not substantially affected since the fall in prices had largely been due to an increase in Ghanaian


\(^{156}\) Rimmer, 54-5.

\(^{157}\) Ibid., 75-6.
production; however, the elaborate payment structure in place meant that more of the proceeds went to farmers than to the government.158

The effect of the balance of payments crisis was to turn the government’s attention towards import substitution in order to avoid the further depletion of the nation’s foreign exchange reserves.159 Agriculture’s primary role in this new strategy was to produce the agricultural raw materials necessary to feed local industry, and it was thought that the best way to develop the agricultural sector would be to bring it under the aegis of the state rather than through private farmers.160 The introduction of modern production techniques would, it was presumed, be easier and faster on state farms because the services and resources for improvement would be centralized and distributed over fewer units. State farms would also be large enough to capture the economies of scale associated with high-priced capital equipment and capital-intensive investments such as irrigation.161

Rising unemployment was an additional factor which led to the 1961 turn. In April, 1961, Nkrumah implored the need for “full employment” to eliminate “the sorry plight of students – boys and girls leaving school and roaming the country – who gravitate towards Accra and other big towns in search of work and who, when they cannot get work, fall into bad ways.”162 State

159 Fitch and Oppenheimer, 82-3, 94; Andrzej Krassowski, Development and the Debt Trap: Economic Planning and External Borrowing in Ghana (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 43-5.
160 Krassowski, 64.
161 Dadson, 80-1.
farms were seen as means to alleviate unemployment.\(^{163}\) It was therefore common to situate state farms in rural parts of the country which were sources for urban migration.

### 3.3 Why Socialism?

Nkrumah at this time was a man in a hurry. His back was firmly against the wall and he felt under pressure to deliver the fruits of independence which he had promised during the days of anti-colonial struggle. As early as 1958, Nkrumah was clearly burdened by the need to live up to his promises. He wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the Ghanaian people were anxious for rapid economic development which he had to deliver on in order to prevent the country from splitting apart.\(^ {164}\) This is a likely reference to what was then a very strong opposition movement centred on powerful cocoa producers; Nkrumah hoped that economic prosperity would sate the opposition.\(^ {165}\) The sense of urgency Nkrumah felt is best articulated in his own words:

> We cannot tell our peoples that material benefits and growth and modern progress are not for them. If we do, they will throw us out and seek other leaders who promise more. And they will abandon us, too, if we do not in reasonable measure respond to their hopes. Therefore[,] we have no choice. Africa has no choice. We have to modernize.\(^ {166}\)

Nkrumah’s solution to the above conundrum was a socialist strategy.\(^ {167}\) He favoured socialism due to his overarching emphasis on rapid economic growth and his understanding that socialism was the quickest and most effective means to achieve such growth. He did not have the luxury of a slow and measured approach to development. He wanted to catch up with the


\(^{165}\) Rooney, *passim*.

\(^{166}\) Nkrumah, “African Prospect,” 53.

developed world “within the shortest possible time”.\textsuperscript{168} He elsewhere added that “as our party has proclaimed, and as I have asserted time and again, socialism is the only [my emphasis] pattern that can within the shortest [my emphasis] possible time bring the good life to the people. For socialism assumed the public ownership of the means of production – the land and its resources – and the use of the means of production that will bring benefit to the people”\textsuperscript{169} In the Seven-Year Plan, it was further added that “only a socialist form of society can ensure Ghana a rapid [my emphasis] rate of economic progress without destroying that social justice, that freedom and equality which is a central feature of our traditional way of life”\textsuperscript{170}

Nkrumah saw the country’s economic condition as a product of a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty.\textsuperscript{171} As he understood this cycle, the country’s poverty was a result of the lack of a strong entrepreneurial class which in turn was a result of general privation. As the only entity able to bring significant capital to bear, the government had to play the role which the Ghanaian entrepreneur, for lack of capital, was unable to.\textsuperscript{172} From the early 1960s onwards, Nkrumah was of the view that it was his government’s responsibility to “take the place of the adventurous entrepreneurs who created the capital basis of industrialization in the advanced countries.”\textsuperscript{173}

3.4 Development Economists and the Third World

We may now turn to observe how Nkrumah’s views vis-à-vis a socialist developmental path aligned with the teachings of contemporary mainstream capitalist development economics. In the preceding section, we remarked that Nkrumah was of the opinion that socialism was his

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{168}] Nkrumah, \textit{Building a Socialist State}, 1.
\item[\textsuperscript{169}] Ibid., 2.
\item[\textsuperscript{170}] Ghana Planning Commission, \textit{Seven-Year Plan}, 1-2.
\item[\textsuperscript{171}] Nkrumah, \textit{Africa Must Unite}, 167.
\item[\textsuperscript{172}] Ibid.,
\item[\textsuperscript{173}] Ibid., 110.
\end{itemize}}
only option. This belief was buttressed by the fact that his reasons for choosing socialism were echoed and supported by capitalist development economists, whose work he was very much on top of, as we saw in this chapter’s introduction.

As mentioned above, from Nkrumah’s point of view, the country was embroiled in a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty which only the state apparatus could rescue it from. This opinion was also voiced in free market development literature with general respect to post-colonial states more broadly. For instance, Leibenstein’s concept of the low equilibrium trap was a theory of self-perpetuating poverty, which posited that low-income economies provided little incentive for entrepreneurial activity, and therefore suffered a dearth of entrepreneurs.¹⁷⁴ This understanding was premised on a belief that poverty was characterised by a set of intertwined and near-immutable factors.¹⁷⁵ These factors included the aforementioned lack of incentives for entrepreneurs and the resultant deficiency in entrepreneurs. It therefore followed that for a poor country to rely on its private sector to develop would be ill-conceived, since any efforts to do so would fail to reach the critical mass needed to launch a sustained climb out of poverty.¹⁷⁶

We see a similar opinion when we turn to W.W. Rostow, the pre-eminent thinker in the study of modernisation who used the term “traditional society” as a synonym for a developing country. To him, it was clear that, in a traditional society, “a ceiling exist[s] on the level of attainable output per head”.¹⁷⁷ Rostow understood this state of affairs to be due to either the complete lack of modern science and technology or a failure of systematic application thereof.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Killick, 18-19.
¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 94.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 95.
¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
Ragnar Nurske, a free market development economist we initially encountered above, who was of a similar persuasion to Leibenstein and Rostow, asserted that the small size of a low-income economy made nationals of that country unwilling to make the large investments needed for the “big push”\(^{179}\) required to break an economy out of poverty.\(^{180}\) Nurske posited that in poor countries, entrepreneurs were few and far between and that, consequently, the demand for capital was low.\(^{181}\)

The prescriptions made by free market development economists to the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty necessarily entailed a larger role for the state, a role in line with what Nkrumah had in mind. A common theme in these prescriptions was the tacit or explicit admission that “a massive investment effort [by the state] was needed to break out of the poverty trap”.\(^{182}\) In 1957, for instance, Myrdal wrote that “[b]ecause of the various deficiencies in a backward country it is also accepted by everyone that the government will have to take over many functions which in most advanced countries in the Western world were left to private business”.\(^{183}\) A more tacit variation can be found in Rostow’s *The Stages of Growth*. According to Rostow, reaching the take-off point required an investment rate of 10 percent of national income.\(^{184}\) Any development economist worth their salt would have concerns over the private sector’s ability to do so in a developing country.

After establishing that Nkrumah’s reasons for choosing a socialist course were echoed in capitalist development literature, we must now survey how Marxist development literature

\(^{179}\) The big push, or “critical minimum efforts”, as Leibenstein put it, refers to the notion that “in order to achieve the transition from the state of backwardness to a more developed state … it is necessary … that the economy should receive a stimulus to growth that is greater than a certain critical minimum size” – Ibid., 16.
\(^{180}\) Nurske, 10.
\(^{181}\) Ibid., note 1.
\(^{182}\) Killick, 21.
\(^{183}\) Ibid., 24.
\(^{184}\) Rostow, 8.
identified the same issues and offered the same solutions. This additional layer of congruence demonstrates a consensus in the capitalist and Marxist schools of Third World development. Marxist development thought also regarded poverty as a self-perpetuating cycle which required structural transformation to be broken.\textsuperscript{185} In a strikingly similar fashion to Leibenstein, Dodd remarked that “with a wretchedly low standard of life, there is no more than a narrow and restricted home market to encourage private capitalists to [make investments in industry] and that [investing in industry] has too many uncertainties to be attractive for the capitalist entrepreneur”.\textsuperscript{186} Furthermore, Marxist development economists also agreed with the notion of an enhanced economic role for the state in Third World countries.\textsuperscript{187} Marxist economists were perhaps quicker to approve of this than were their free market counterparts.

3.5 Reassessing the Notion of Ghana’s Socialist Transformation

We have observed that when it came to development economics, the capitalist and socialist approaches were effectively two sides of the same coin. These development economists operated against a backdrop of high-modernist faith, an idea we discussed in this chapter’s introduction.\textsuperscript{188} By way of recap, Scott defines high modernism as a self-confidence about scientific and technical progress and a desire to order human society according to ostensibly scientific principles.\textsuperscript{189} Modernisation theory is the application of high modernism to the issue of Third World development. Its adherents provided what they thought were scientific explanations for third world poverty, as well as scientific prescriptions for progress from poverty to

\textsuperscript{188} Scott, 199.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 4.
The consensus between capitalist and Marxist development economists on economic growth in the Third World was due to the fact that they were looking at the issue through the framework provided by modernisation theory. What made modernisation theory so attractive was its emphasis on providing scientific assessments and solutions. At a time of high modernism, when ‘being scientific’ was in vogue, it is perhaps only natural that development economists looking at the Third World would turn to a theory whose progenitors had so greatly emphasized its scientific nature. This emphasis on modernisation theory’s scientific perspective led to a near-devout adherence to it by economists of both free market and Marxist orientations. This is where Scott’s notion of high modernist faith becomes especially relevant. The definition of faith is belief without evidence. Thus, the consensus on modernisation theory was a sort of dogma. Carried further, Nkrumah was not being a dogmatic socialist ideologue when he embarked on the 1961 turn. Rather, he was buying into a global dogma on modernisation. In the final analysis, Nkrumah himself, in articulating what he thought was socialist transformation, was actually articulating high modernist transformation.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter showed, first of all, that Nkrumah’s decision to re-orient Ghana’s economy in 1961 was motivated by a combination of failed previous policies as well as an economic crisis. These two issues, rather than a deep-seated desire to implement socialism, were what caused Nkrumah to seek alternative solutions to Ghana’s economic plight. We then reviewed Nkrumah’s reasons for choosing what he saw as a socialist development strategy and how these reasons coincided with the prescriptions that capitalist and Marxist economists gave to Third

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World countries. It was argued that the congruence between free market and Marxist development economists was based on the fact that they were both assessing Third World development through the lens of modernisation theory, and that they were attracted to modernisation theory because, in an age of so much emphasis in all spheres of life on scientific approaches, modernisation theory’s reputation for providing a rigidly scientific approach to the issue of development made the theory too appealing to ignore. Thus, high-modernist ideology, rather than socialist ideology, was at the root of the 1961 economic turn.
THESIS CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to contest the prevailing view in the historiography of Nkrumah that, from his student days in the United States and Britain to the end of his tenure, he was driven by Marxist ideology. In Chapter One, we saw that though Nkrumah was often quick to turn to Marxist rhetoric, he only did so because it provided him with a framework with which to attack colonialism. Moreover, we came to understand that Nkrumah only relied on such rhetoric when criticizing the economic element of the colonial relationship between Europe and Africa. Nkrumah stopped short of adopting a broad Marxist worldview. We also saw that, at Lincoln University, Nkrumah voiced deep-seated concerns about Marxism’s viability. Thus, he cannot be considered a fellow traveller, let alone a Marxist adherent.

In Chapter Two, we shone a light on Nkrumah’s capitalist agricultural policies in the decade between 1951 and 1961. This chapter built upon the first chapter’s argument that Nkrumah in his student days was not a Marxist. Chapter Two revealed that Nkrumah was amenable to free market policies, so much so that he stuck to them for a decade. We focused on non-cocoa agricultural policies because this is an area which has traditionally been ignored by historians, perhaps due to the predominance of the cocoa sector to the economy. Nonetheless, the neglect of non-cocoa agriculture has helped to solidify the view that Nkrumah was not open to market solutions. Thus, it was of the utmost importance to survey his non-cocoa agricultural policies in order to remedy this erroneous impression.

Chapter Three surveyed Nkrumah’s reasons for his 1961 decision to turn his back on capitalism. We saw that the move was due to a sense that the decade-long free market experiment had failed, coupled with an economic crisis which necessitated a change of economic approach. Thus, the point was made that rather than being driven by a deep-seated and long-held
desire to implement socialism, it was economic concerns as well as the seeming failure of
capitalism that prompted 1961’s change in policy. Understanding that Nkrumah’s motivations
were based on economic urgency rather than socialist ideology gave credence to our argument
that Nkrumah was not the doctrinaire socialist that historians have portrayed him as.

It was then revealed that Nkrumah consulted, in their works and in person, noted
development economists of the era on his new development strategy. We came to understand
that development economists, of both capitalist and Marxist persuasions, supported Nkrumah’s
reasons for embarking on an ostensibly socialist development strategy. It was then necessary to
delve into why economists of such radically different dispensations would be of the same mind
when it came to Third World development. Our study revealed that the reason for this alignment
of thought was that the pre-eminent development economists of the era, regardless of economic
outlook, had bought into modernisation theory, a theory which was promoted as providing a
scientific analysis of development. To understand why these development economists had
gravitated towards modernisation theory, it was necessary to look at the zeitgeist of the time. We
saw that the Post-War era was the high-water-mark of what Scott calls high modernism, a belief
in ordering the world according to what were considered to be scientific principles. Thus, the
point was made that, if one is keen to provide an ideological explanation for the 1961 turn, they
have to look at high modernist ideology which formed the base of a development consensus
which Nkrumah bought into, rather than any socialist inclinations Nkrumah might have had.

Nkrumah’s reliance on a consensus, and the resultant economic failure
culminated in his ouster in 1966, provide at least one timeless lesson for all leaders. It may not
necessarily always be right to follow the advice of “experts.” These economists were people who
provided blanket solutions to Third World poverty without accounting for the various differences
between each country. Policies, however, must always be tailored to specific circumstance and take local knowledge into account.


Gbedemah, Komla. 1962. It will not be “Work and Happiness for All!” An Open Letter, Being Also an Appeal to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.


**SECONDARY SOURCES**


