

The Impact of the Second World War on Ghana's Independence:  
An Analysis of the Historiography

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## Abstract

This report explores the scholarship considering how the Second World War influenced Ghana's journey to independence. It argues that several key factors led to Ghana's freedom, notably the role of ex-servicemen in Ghana after the war; an intellectual awakening of the educated elite; and the economic impact of the war on Britain also led to a diversion of attention away from British colonies including the Gold Coast, reshaping colonial dynamics, and allowing for increased agitation and resistance. Additionally, the post-war emergence of global organizations like the United Nations provided ideological support for decolonization, paving the way for self-government. By placing Ghana's journey to nationhood within the context of post-war decolonization movements, this report highlights how the war served as a catalyst for various changes ultimately leading to Ghana's independence in 1957, becoming the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from European colonial rule.

## Dedication

I dedicate this report to my mother, Georgina Ayeh who has supported my academic dreams since infancy, and Mr. Yaw Afrani and his family for their financial support towards my undergraduate and master's studies.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: The Impact of the Second World War .....	23
Chapter 3: The Rise of Postwar Nationalists, the Formation of Political Parties, and the Emergence of Kwame Nkrumah.....	44
Chapter 4: Epilogue and Conclusion .....	73
Bibliography .....	86
Curriculum Vitae	

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Introductory Note

The Gold Coast, now Ghana, is a country on the coast of West Africa that shares borders with Burkina Faso to the north, Ivory Coast to the west, and Togo to the east, and to the south are the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, Gold Coast and Ghana will be used interchangeably, as the two terms refer to the same country and people. While Gold Coast was the name used by the British colonial government due to the abundance of gold in the territory until 1957, Ghana was used from 1957 by the nationalists when independence was finally granted.

## Background of the study

There have been many accounts to explain the origins of the present people of Ghana. British anthropologist Eve Meyerowitz and Ghanaian nationalist Dr. J. B. Danquah have suggested that the Akan migrated from the ancient empire of Ghana, located between the Senegal and Niger rivers, encompassing parts of present-day Mauritania and Mali.<sup>2</sup> Before the dawn of European exploration and colonization, the region that is now known as Ghana was home to several powerful and sophisticated African kingdoms and empires, including the Ashanti, Denkyira, Akwamu, Dagbon, Bono, Ewe, and Ga Adangbe kingdoms. These societies laid the foundation for the rich

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<sup>1</sup> Roger S. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (London Greenwood Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 17-25.

cultural heritage and diverse history of modern-day Ghana.<sup>3</sup> In particular the Ashanti people, like other kingdoms in the Akan ethnic group, had a centralized political system with a king ruling over various regions and sub-chiefs.

In pre-colonial Ghanaian society, traditional African religions were prevalent, with each society having its own spiritual beliefs, rituals, and deities. Their beliefs often revolved around the worship of ancestors, spirits, and natural forces. Rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices were integral to their religions.<sup>4</sup> Trade was another vital aspect of Ghanaian societies. The trans-Saharan trade routes facilitated the exchange of gold from Ghana for salt, textiles, and other goods from North Africa and beyond. Gold was particularly abundant in the region, leading to the nickname –Gold Coast which later became the name for the territory when it became a British colony.<sup>5</sup> Though pre-colonial Ghana was administered by different kingdoms with its own leader and laws, these left behind a legacy of rich cultural traditions, languages, and trade networks that continue to shape Ghanaian society during and after colonial rule.

In the late fifteenth century, European traders, primarily from Portugal, began arriving on the coast of West Africa, including present-day Ghana. They established trading posts and forts along the coast to facilitate the exchange of goods, particularly gold and other valuable resources. As trade expanded, various European powers,

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<sup>3</sup> Ivor Wilks, "The rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650-1710." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 3, no. 2 (1957): 25-62.

<sup>4</sup> Ibigbolade S. Aderibigbe, "Religious traditions in Africa: An overview of origins, basic beliefs, and practices." *Contemporary perspectives on religions in Africa and the African diaspora* (2015): 7-29.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy F. Gerrard, "Myth and metrology: the early trans-Saharan gold trade." *The Journal of African History* 23, no. 4 (1982): 443-461.

including the Dutch, Swedes, Danes, French, and British established their own trading posts and forts along the coast, competing with the Portuguese for control of the lucrative trade.<sup>6</sup> Several historians have argued that the search for –the three g’s – gold, glory, and the spreading of God’s message – were the three primary reasons for European exploration and colonization in Ghana, and in Africa more generally.<sup>7</sup> According to Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, the idea of Christianisation and the desire to spread God’s message, particularly by the British, motivated their mission to –civilize and –Christianize the Ghanaian population.<sup>8</sup> Christian missionaries, mostly from European countries, arrived in Ghana to convert the local population. Kwame O. Kwarteng argues that the coastal areas of Ghana provided European powers with strategic positions for trade along the West African coast. The trading of gold and other commodities was highly lucrative, and European powers established trading posts and forts to control and profit from these economic activities.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, major European powers, beginning with Portugal, had established colonies in the Americas and were seeking labourers to work on plantations, mines, and European merchants’ households. The Portuguese decided to use enslaved Africans as their primary labour force, and European trading posts scattered across the African coast, including Elmina and Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, were modified to become slave hosting centers and paved way for the

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<sup>6</sup> Kwame Osei Kwarteng, "The Asante Conquest of Ahafo in the 18th Century: A Historical Legacy," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 6 (2002): 59-66.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Ocheni and Basil Nwankwo, "Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa" *Cross-cultural communication* 8, no. 3 (2012): 46-54.

<sup>8</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Faith, Healing and Mission: Reflections on a Consultative Process," *International Review of Mission* 93, (2004): 370-371.

<sup>9</sup> Kwarteng, "The Asante Conquest of Ahafo in the 18th Century," 59-66.



Transatlantic Slave Trade. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, millions of Africans were shipped from Africa to the Americas as slave labourers, facing horrific conditions on the passage and upon arrival in the Americas. Only very gradually, beginning with Denmark in 1792 and continuing into the nineteenth century, was the slave trade abolished. Slavery itself was abolished both by foundational upheavals such as the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and later the American Civil War (1861-65), and by public mobilization, rebellion, and legislative change, such as in the British Empire.

Yet the end of the slave trade did not bring an end to European imperialism in Africa. In discussing the reasons for the continuing European presence in Africa and Ghana, Marvin E. Gettleman adds that the quest for glory was also a key factor that motivated these Europeans to colonize African countries. He states that the –Scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century was characterized by intense competition among European powers to establish colonial territories and expand their empires.<sup>10</sup> Ghana, with its wealth and strategic coastal location, became a desired territory for these European powers.

The British gradually gained control over the Gold Coast in the late nineteenth century through a series of treaties and military actions. The Dutch ceded their remaining settlements in 1872, but there was also significant local opposition to the British presence, especially from the Ashanti.<sup>11</sup> However, in 1874, the British defeated the

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<sup>10</sup> Marvin E. Gettleman, review of "Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*," *Science and Society* 57, no. 4 (1993): 461.

<sup>11</sup> Kwarteng, "The Asante Conquest of Ahafo in the 18th Century," 64-65.

Asante Kingdom in the Sagrenti War and claimed land extending to the edge of the Ashanti territory. The British annexed the southern vassal states of Asante and combined them into a Protectorate. Afterwards, they converted their forts and settlements on the coast into the British Crown Colony of the Gold Coast in July 1874.<sup>12</sup> The Northern Territories were declared a British crown colony and protectorate, and the Trust Territory of Trans-Volta Togoland was annexed to the Gold Coast by the British. Matthew Craven notes that during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the Europeans aimed to divide the African continent among themselves and manage the ongoing process of colonization in Africa to avoid the outbreak of armed conflict between rival colonial powers. The Berlin Conference was a powerful symbolic event that represented a new phase of European imperialism in Africa.<sup>13</sup> The Berlin Conference is often associated with initiating the partition of or –Scramble for Africa,|| establishing rules to amicably divide resources among the Western countries at the expense of the African people and pave the way for imperial control.

#### Gold Coast under British rule

By the early 20th century, the British had established firm colonial rule over the territory of Gold Coast. From that moment, the colony's resources, such as gold, cocoa, timber, bauxite, and manganese among others were exploited for the benefit of the British

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<sup>12</sup> Albert Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (London: Longman, 1975), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Craven, "Between law and history: the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the logic of free trade," *London Review of International Law* 3, no. 1 (2015): 31-59.

Empire.<sup>14</sup> The British implemented a system of indirect rule, which allowed local chiefs to maintain some authority while the British exercised overall control. Instead of imposing direct rule, colonial authorities utilized existing Indigenous power structures and traditional local rulers to govern on their behalf. Under this system of governance, the British colonial administration delegated administrative and judicial responsibilities to local leaders, such as chiefs, traditional rulers, kings, or tribal institutions, who acted as intermediaries between the colonial authorities and the local population. These Indigenous leaders were given varying degrees of authority by the British colonial government and were expected to enforce colonial policies, collect taxes, and maintain order. Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator who played a significant role in the implementation of indirect rule, described it as –the government of one race by another which is different from it in race and traditions, but which has been brought into subjection by force.<sup>15</sup> Lugard emphasized the idea of governing through local authorities and preserving traditional institutions. The British believed that by governing through Indigenous institutions, they could maintain stability, minimize resistance, and effectively control the colonies. Through indirect rule, the British sought to preserve local customs and traditions, if they did not directly challenge British authority. This approach often had a profound impact on the social, political, and economic dynamics of the colonized societies. It maintained pre-existing power structures, but also reinforced inequalities,

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<sup>14</sup> David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 322-329.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London: Routledge, 1922), 199.

undermined traditional systems of governance, and created a dependent relationship between local rulers and the colonial administration.

Francis Lugard, another British colonial administrator, and the brother of Frederick Lugard further refined the concept of indirect rule. He defined it as –the transfer of a limited number of powers from the central government to provincial, regional, or native governments.<sup>16</sup> Francis Lugard emphasized the devolution of administrative and judicial powers to local rulers while maintaining ultimate control at the central level. In practice, the British appointed or recognized existing chiefs and rulers as –native authorities<sup>17</sup> or –warrant chiefs,<sup>18</sup> granting them limited powers to enforce colonial policies, collect taxes, and maintain order. The colonial administration provided some oversight and guidance, usually through a network of district officers, resident officials, and advisers. Elaborating on Francis Lugard’s definition, Jean Suret-Canale, a French historian, described indirect rule as –the governing technique by which a foreign administration relied on local native authorities, which it had helped to set up and whose powers it retained under its control.<sup>17</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, a prominent African political scientist, provided a critical perspective on indirect rule. He defined it as –a system of rule in which a state rules indirectly through a native elite that it promotes.<sup>18</sup> Mamdani highlighted the role of the colonial state in shaping and promoting a native elite to serve its interests. It is important to note that the specific details and outcomes of indirect rule

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<sup>16</sup> Lugard, 225.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945* (New York: Pica Press 1971), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 62.

varied depending on the context and the specific region being governed, but the principles and practices discussed were all applied in the case of the Gold Coast. The main reason for its adoption was to administer the Gold Coast with minimal direct involvement and cost, so that British could still maintain control and exploit the resources of the territory for their benefit.

Indirect rule, as implemented in Ghana during the colonial era, had several negative effects. While it aimed to maintain traditional structures and involve local elites, it also perpetuated inequalities, undermined Indigenous systems, and furthered the interests of the colonial power.<sup>19</sup> Anthony Asiwaju contends that indirect rule primarily focused on collaborating with existing traditional authorities and elites, often neglecting most of the population. Ordinary people particularly those outside the ruling class or who did not align with the colonial agenda, were often marginalized, and excluded from decision-making processes.<sup>20</sup> Frederick Cooper describes the negative effect indirect rule had on African societies and argues that it often resulted in the erosion of Indigenous governance structures, customary laws, and traditional institutions. The British authorities wielded ultimate control and could override or modify existing systems to suit their interests, leading to a loss of local autonomy and a weakening of Indigenous authority.<sup>21</sup> Hubert Deschamps agreed with Anthony Asiwaju's statement and added that while

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<sup>19</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," *In the Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 211-262.

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland under European rule, 1889-1945: A comparative Analysis of French and British colonialism* (London: Longman, 1976), 5-21.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labour Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43-49.

indirect rule aimed to involve local elites, it ultimately served the interests of the colonial power. The ultimate authority and decision-making power remained with the colonial administrators, who could override or manipulate the actions of Indigenous leaders, leading to limited political autonomy for the Ghanaian people.<sup>22</sup> Deschamps stated that –there were restrictions and the colonial structure kept a close watch over the events of the traditional rulers.<sup>23</sup> These negative features of indirect rule in Ghana contributed to long-term social, political, and economic challenges that the country had to address during and after the colonial era.

However, while indirect rule had negative consequences, there are some arguments by scholars highlighting potential positive impacts of the policy. Kwame Yeboa Daaku argues that British indirect rule in Gold Coast employed a system of training and education for Indigenous leaders to serve as intermediaries between the colonial administration and local communities. This training provided some Ghanaian elites with exposure to Western ideas, administration, and leadership skills.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, William Ernest Frank Ward adds that indirect rule provided opportunities for certain Ghanaian chiefs to participate in the colonial governance structures. According to Ward, the –British preferred to rely on the chiefs, who were bound to be a conservative element in

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<sup>22</sup> Hubert Deschamps, *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, ed. by Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation; and Ile-Ife Nigeria, University of Ife Press, 1970) 162-164.

<sup>23</sup> Deschamps, *West African Chiefs*, 181.

<sup>24</sup> Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970), 48-72.

African society, rather than on the professional men who had been trained in Britain.<sup>25</sup> These chiefs acted as an intermediary between the colonial government and the local people, a policy Ward described as –divide and rule.<sup>26</sup> Roger Gocking adds that indirect rule had a significant impact on the political landscape of Gold Coast. Gocking argues that many traditional rulers and chieftaincies retained significant influence and authority during colonial rule, and this allowed colonial powers to govern through existing Indigenous political structures and traditional leaders even after independence. This helped in preserving local customs, traditions, and institutions, which were deeply rooted in Ghanaian society.<sup>27</sup>

Though both scholars on positive and negative side offered solid arguments, I found those on the negative side more convincing. While indirect rule allowed traditional African rulers and institutions to continue functioning, preserving some aspects of pre-colonial governance, culture, and identity, and helped local chiefs and leaders get involved in the administration of their communities, as argued by Gocking, I agree with Cooper that the traditional leaders' authority and autonomy were often undermined by colonial officials. In certain situations, traditional legal and judicial systems were also altered or replaced by British laws and institutions. Again, colonial officials often exploited Ghana's resources for their advantage, leading to poverty among the African people.

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<sup>25</sup> William Ernest Frank Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Routledge, 1958), 321.

<sup>26</sup> Ward, 321.

<sup>27</sup> Roger S. Gocking, "Indirect rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for office and the invention of tradition." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994): 421-446.

Other scholars have tried to assess the impact of British rule on the Gold Coast in more general terms, exploring infrastructure development, education, health care, the legal system, unity, and national identity. Albert Adu Boahen, a historian, professor, and presidential candidate in the 1992 presidential elections in Ghana, looked at the impact of colonial rule from a different perspective. He argues that colonial rule facilitated the establishment of Western-style education systems, which included the training of local teachers and the establishment of schools. This contributed to the spread of literacy and provided access to formal education for some individuals on the Gold Coast. Again, Adu Boahen emphasizes infrastructure development and argues that British colonial rule brought significant improvements to the Gold Coast through the construction of roads, railways, harbours, telephone, and telegraph lines. According to Adu Boahen, the –the basic infrastructure of every modern African state was completed during the colonial period, and in most countries, not even a mile of railway has been constructed since independence.<sup>28</sup> Dennis Austin, like Adu Boahen, highlights the introduction of formal education while under colonial rule. Austin states that the colonial administration established formal education systems on the Gold Coast, introducing Western-style education. This led to the establishment of schools, colleges, and universities, providing access to education for many Ghanaians. The education system laid the groundwork for future literacy, professional opportunities, and intellectual development.<sup>29</sup> I agree with Adu Boahen and Austin on the British colonial government impact on education. While

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<sup>28</sup> Albert Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, vol. 15 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 100.

<sup>29</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 13-18.



the colonial education system in Ghana was primarily designed to serve the interests of the colonial administration and to promote British culture, language, and values among the local population, it played a significant role in the provision of education in training the minds of Ghanaians.

From the healthcare perspective, Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, Edward Brenya, and Peter Nana Egyir add that the colonial authorities introduced Western healthcare practices and established hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities. This led to improvements in public health, the control of diseases, and the introduction of modern medical practices, contributing to a reduction in mortality rates.<sup>30</sup> For Adu Boahen, colonial rule also improved the legal system. According to him, colonialism introduced a formal legal system based on British common law. This brought a more structured and codified legal framework to the Gold Coast, which included the establishment of courts, police forces, and legal institutions. This helped in providing a more organized and accessible system of justice.<sup>31</sup> Prior to this, Ghanaian societies relied on customary law, which was based on traditional norms, values, and practices that were deeply rooted in the culture and history of the community. Though many relied on the traditional ways instead of the court system introduced by the British, the latter gained public support over time. Commenting on how colonial rule brought the people of the Gold Coast together, Adu Boahen emphasized that colonial rule played a role in creating a sense of unity and national identity among the diverse ethnic groups on the Gold Coast. It fostered a sense of

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<sup>30</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, Edward Brenya, and Peter Nana Egyir, "Public health in colonial and post-colonial Ghana: lesson-drawing for the twenty-first century," *Studies in Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2017): 34-54.

<sup>31</sup> Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, 98.

nationalism as well as the intensification of Pan-Africanism, which eventually led to a collective desire for independence and the formation of a cohesive national identity.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to authors noting positive effects associated with British colonial rule, Walter Rodney argues that –colonialism is not a natural development but rather a human-made disaster, which only benefits a handful of people who are not interested in development, who are not interested in the African people’s development, who are not interested in the development of the world, who are only interested in accumulating capital.<sup>33</sup> For Rodney, colonialism is the practice of a nation or state extending its power and control over other territories, usually distant lands, by establishing settlements or exploiting resources for economic, political, and cultural gain. Similarly, Stephen Ocheni and Basil C. Nwankwo stated that –colonialism is a system of direct political, economic, and cultural domination by one country over another, usually by means of force.<sup>34</sup> Nkrumah believes that colonialism often resulted in the loss of land, resources, and sovereignty of colonized populations. Indigenous cultures and institutions were often suppressed or eradicated, and the local populations faced discrimination, exploitation, and even violence by the coloniser. Many colonies experienced forced labour, slavery, cultural assimilation, and other forms of oppression. For Walter Rodney, –colonialism was a system which functioned well in the interests of the metropolises.<sup>35</sup> According to

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<sup>32</sup> Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, 98.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Undeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L’Ouverture 1973), transcribed by Joaquin Arriola (London and Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam 1973), 351.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Ocheni, and Basil C. Nwankwo. “Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa,” *Cross-cultural communication* 8, no. 3 (2012): 46.

<sup>35</sup> Rodney, *How Europe Undeveloped Africa*, 320.

Rodney, colonialism did nothing to benefit the Africans, —it had only one hand — it was a one-armed bandit.<sup>36</sup>

The negative consequences of colonialism on the Gold Coast brought dissatisfaction among the Ghanaian population and were instrumental in shaping a collective consciousness, a growing sense of unity, and intensifying popular resistance. The extraction of natural resources, the imposition of unfair taxation, and the marginalization of Indigenous economic systems created grievances among Ghanaians and fostered a sense of collective injustice.<sup>37</sup> The establishment of Western-style education systems by the colonial authorities had some unintended consequences when they provided access to knowledge, ideas, and exposure to nationalist movements in other parts of the world. Educated Ghanaians, such as teachers, intellectuals, and professionals, played a crucial role in fostering nationalist sentiment and mobilizing the masses. At the same time, the suppression and even eradication of Indigenous cultures by colonial authorities led to a resurgence of cultural pride and a desire to assert a distinct Ghanaian identity. For example, during British colonial rule, several Ghanaian practices were suspended and in certain cases banned. This includes local languages, festivals, and ceremonies.<sup>38</sup> Rediscovering and celebrating cultural heritage became a unifying force

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<sup>36</sup> Rodney, *How Europe Undeveloped Africa*, 321.

<sup>37</sup> Gareth Austin, "Reciprocal comparison and African history: tackling conceptual Eurocentrism in the study of Africa's economic past," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 1-28.

<sup>38</sup> Seth Tweneboah, "A Clash of Legal Norms: Banishment as a Customary Religious Sanction in Ghana," *Journal of law, religion and state* 5, no. 2 (2017): 87-116.

and a basis for resistance against colonial domination.<sup>39</sup> The ideas of Pan-Africanism, which emphasized African unity, self-determination, and resistance against colonialism, also had a profound impact on the development of national consciousness in Ghana. Influential figures such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois helped inspire Ghanaians to envision a future free from colonial rule.<sup>40</sup>

These factors were significant drivers that converged to shape the movement for change in Ghana. It is worth noting that during the 1920s and 1930s, Ghanaians sought participation in the colonial government and not necessarily total independence from the British. The desire for change took the form of proto-nationalism. This involved nonviolent and peaceful protest focused on achieving equality of opportunity between Ghanaians and the British, and constitutional reforms intended to oppose specific discriminatory practices and bad legislation and increase political involvement among Ghanaians in the British colonial government. Its proponents were mostly moderate lawyers, teachers, and other professionals who were living in the urban areas. During this period, they employed constitutional and non-violent methods to channel their grievances, including diplomacy, sending dispatches to the Colonial Office in London,

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<sup>39</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In my father's house: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 173-180.

<sup>40</sup> Fongot Kini-Yen Kinni, *Pan-Africanism: Political Philosophy and Socio-Economic Anthropology for African Liberation and Governance, and Caribbean and African American Contributions*, vol. 2 (Bamenda:Langaa Research & Publishing CIG), 391-456.

employing peaceful protest, and organizing symposia to raise political awareness among Africans.<sup>41</sup>

The leading organizations advocating for reform included the Aborigine's Rights Protection Society (ARPS), which sought to protect the interests of the local population against land dispossession and unfair labour practices. There was also the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), a pan-West African organization with branches in various British West African colonies, including the Gold Coast. It demanded political representation and constitutional reforms. In addition, the Fante Confederation was organized to advocate for political rights and representation for the Fante people in the colonial government.<sup>42</sup> Many of the proto-nationalist movements and organizations in the Gold Coast before Second World War can be classified as pressure groups. Their activities included advocating for political participation, constitutional reforms, land rights, and improved working conditions, among other issues.

Proto-nationalist organizations exhibited several features that distinguished them from other forms of political organizations. Toyin Falola states that a key feature of nationalism during these years before the World War was its elitist nature. Leaders and members were dominated by the small Western-educated elite. As a result, it was limited in its geographical spread and operation because the majority were based in the cities,

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<sup>41</sup> Paddy Emmanuel, "Nationalism in Ghana After 1945: Causes, Actors, and Its Impact on Ghana's Decolonisation Drive" (master's thesis, University of Waterloo, 2021), 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, *The Politics of Chieftaincy: Authority and Property in Colonial Ghana, 1920-1950* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2014) 49-54.

especially Accra, Cape Coast, Takoradi, and Kumasi.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, it is important to note that the leaders did not, in any realistic way, seek to undermine the colonial system. They were only interested in reforms, campaigning against the land bills and protesting increased prices of consumer goods. These organizations provided a platform for Africans to articulate their grievances against colonial rule. In his book, *the Legacies of the Foremost Patriots of African Nationalism*, Arinze Agbanusi describes how proto-nationalist movements advocated for increased political participation for Africans within the colonial framework and called for representation in legislative bodies and governance structures. Apart from proto-nationalists criticizing legislation that was detrimental to Ghanaians and discriminatory toward Africans, attempts were also made to broaden the franchise for Ghanaians.<sup>44</sup> It is important to note that voting was usually restricted to a limited portion of the populace, mostly to those who fulfilled certain property and educational requirements. The eligibility and voting requirements were set by the British colonial administration and these requirements were frequently formulated in a way that benefited the colonial power and restricted the Ghanaian population's ability to participate in politics. As a result, there was a movement for electoral reforms to expand Ghanaian participation in the affairs of the colonial administration.

However, nationalism took a different path due to the Second World War. The end of the war in 1945 and the changing global political climate contributed to a sense of

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<sup>43</sup> Toyin Falola, *Africa*, volume 3: *Colonial Africa 1885-1939* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press 2002), 282.

<sup>44</sup> Arinze Agbanusi, "The Legacies of the foremost patriots of African nationalism," *Mgbakoigba: Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 2 (2018): 96-103.

urgency among nationalists. They saw the post-war era as an opportune moment to press for self-government. Post-war nationalism thus had a different goal in mind, and it worked in a very different way. During this time, nationalists were confrontational, radical, and more willing to contemplate violence rather than limiting themselves to peaceful protests or legal measures adopted by the proto-nationalists. Unlike the proto-nationalists, post-war nationalist leaders articulated a clear and unwavering demand for self-determination. They also adopted mass mobilization strategies, including nonviolent civil disobedience, strikes, protests, and demonstrations, to put pressure on colonial authorities.<sup>45</sup>

The Second World War thus reshaped the Ghanaians' struggle for independence in very significant ways. David Killingray and Martin Plaut argue that the Ghanaian soldiers who were recruited to serve in the British armed forces during the war were exposed to the ideas of democracy, freedom, and self-determination. These experiences contributed to a heightened sense of nationalism and a desire for independence upon their return home.<sup>46</sup> Birmingham concurs with Killingray and Plaut's assertion and concludes that the war created a climate of political awakening and increased political consciousness among Ghanaians. The challenges and sacrifices of the war effort raised questions about the disparities between the ideals of democracy and self-governance promoted by the Allies and the reality of colonial rule.<sup>47</sup> This heightened political

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<sup>45</sup> Prince Adjei Kuffour, *Concise Notes on African and Ghanaian History* (Accra: K4 Series, 2017), 53.

<sup>46</sup> David Killingray and Martin Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer Limited, 2010), 214-220.

<sup>47</sup> David Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 3-6.

consciousness fueled demands for greater self-rule and accelerated the pace of the nationalist movement. It is also worth noting that nationalist movements prioritized political education and raised awareness among the population about their rights, the injustices of colonialism, and the benefits of self-rule.

Economic and social developments in the Gold Coast itself were also crucial. Assessing the impact of the war from an economic perspective, Lynn K. Mytelka concludes that post-war economic demands from the people of Gold Coast increased industrialization and infrastructure development in Ghana after the war. Ghanaians expected economic and social improvements as a reward for their contributions further fuelling nationalist sentiments and the desire for greater control over Ghana's resources and development.<sup>48</sup> Austin argues that the most significant factor which contributed to Ghana's independence was the emergence of influential leaders and nationalist organizations because they played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses and advocating for independence. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and J.B. Danquah, along with organizations like the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention People's Party (CPP), galvanized the population and provided political platforms for nationalist aspirations.<sup>49</sup> These factors, influenced by the Second World War, significantly contributed to the push for independence in Ghana. Wartime experiences, growing political consciousness, internationally influenced campaigns for self-rule, and post-war expectations played a part in accelerating the momentum toward Ghana's

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<sup>48</sup> Lynn Krieger Mytelka, "The unfulfilled promise of African industrialization," *African Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (1989): 77-138.

<sup>49</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 3-28.



independence in 1957, with the new state becoming the first sub-Saharan African colony to attain independence from European rule.

### Objectives of the Study

This research report examines how the proto-nationalism of the 1920s and 1930s, which did not feature formal political organizations but was primarily a social and cultural movement calling for reform and greater African participation, transformed into a postwar nationalism which featured organized political activism and calls for democracy and independence. The paper will also examine how mobilization for the Second World War shaped the movement toward independence and further explore the correlation between wartime developments and the situation in Ghana from 1945 to 1957 to ascertain the extent to which the war contributed to the country's independence. Moreover, the report will discuss what factors prevailed in the Gold Coast that led Kwame Nkrumah to gain independence for Ghana in 1957. In doing so, the report will examine Kwame Nkrumah's involvement in Ghanaian politics, his formation of the Convention People's Party (CPP), and his contributions to Ghana's independence. Among the leaders of the independence movement, Nkrumah was regarded as a hero in Ghana and throughout the larger African continent due to his vision, perseverance, and dedication to the cause of independence.

The report provides a historiographical analysis of the impact of the Second World War on the Gold Coast independence struggle. Some historians have argued that the formation of political parties was the basis for Ghana's liberation from the British, while others attributed it to the economic hardship that befell Gold Coast in the 1940s.

Most scholars agree that the war was a turning point in the history of Ghana's post-war nationalism, but a consensus regarding how the war impacted Ghana's independence has not emerged. This report assesses scholars' existing arguments about the military, socioeconomic, and political impact of the Second World War, with particular reference to the contribution of the war to the Gold Coast independence struggle.

It contends that several factors contributed to post-war nationalism in Ghana. However, all the factors and causes had their roots in the Second World War which led to Ghana's independence in 1957. The war acted as the catalyst for the independence struggle of the Gold Coast. It exposed Ghanaians, especially ex-servicemen, to the ideas of Pan-Africanism, nationalism, and self-determination, which influenced the emergence of political leaders advocating for these principles. This further heightened political consciousness and aspirations for self-determination and independence among Ghanaians. Moreover, the economic hardships that befell the Gold Coast can be traced to wartime developments. Demands for political change and frustration with economic problems encouraged the establishment of political parties that fought for independence and an end to colonial rule. Exploring the interpretations advanced by scholars in Africa, Europe, and North America, this report stresses the centrality of the Second World War in putting the Gold Coast on the path to national independence as Ghana.

#### Organization of the Study

The study is organized into four chapters. The first chapter provides background for the rest of the report and sets out the objectives and organization of the study. The second chapter explores the impact of the war, the recruitment of Ghanaian soldiers by

the British, the return of the ex-servicemen, the rise of Kwame Nkrumah, and the emergence of political parties. The third chapter focuses on the rise of postwar nationalism, the factors that contributed to growing nationalism in Ghana after the war, the rise of United Gold Coast Convention and Convention Peoples Party, the 1948 Accra Riots, Ghana's road to self-government, and the rise of Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister. The fourth and the final chapter discusses the 1954 and 1956 elections and Ghana's path to independence in 1957 and sets out concluding remarks.

## Chapter 2 – The Impact of the Second World War

### Introduction

In the aftermath of the First World War, the prevailing conditions in some European countries indicated that another European war could happen. According to Michael Neiberg, the Treaty of Versailles signed in 1919 at the end of World War I imposed harsh conditions on Germany, including massive reparations, territorial losses, and military restrictions. This treaty created a sense of resentment and economic instability in Germany, laying the groundwork for future conflicts.<sup>50</sup> Fascism was a far-right, authoritarian political ideology characterized by dictatorial power, strong nationalism, suppression of political opposition, and a focus on the supremacy of nation or race, which emerged after the First World War. The years that followed saw fascist leaders coming to power, notably Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany; both leaders had expansionist foreign policies that ultimately led to renewed war.<sup>51</sup> William L. Shirer emphasizes that fascist leaders use extensive propaganda, censorship, and state control of media to manipulate public opinion and suppress dissent. They also sought to expand their influence and restore their countries' power through aggressive territorial expansion and conquest with the use of military strength and viewed war as a

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<sup>50</sup> Michael S. Neiberg, *The Treaty of Versailles: A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1-18.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2006), 35-55.

means of achieving national greatness.<sup>52</sup> The rise of fascist leaders in Europe was a sign of possible conflict on the continent, however, at the time the world did not imagine it could lead to the most brutal war ever fought until Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939. As a result of that invasion, Britain and France declared war on Germany, and the African peoples living under their imperial rule were drawn into the conflict as well, whatever their views on the matter.

### Reasons for the Recruitment of African and Ghanaian Soldiers by the British

During the Second World War, the British decision to recruit African soldiers was influenced by several factors. Samson Ukpabi argues that Africa was of strategic importance during the war due to its proximity to key areas of operation. North Africa, for example, was a crucial battleground where British and Allied forces fought against the Axis powers, particularly in campaigns such as the Western Desert Campaign and utilizing African soldiers allowed the British to defend and secure their interests in the region.<sup>53</sup> David Killingray adds that the recruitment of African soldiers also had political implications. According to Killingray, it was a way for the British to maintain control and stability in their colonial territories by involving local populations in the war effort. Additionally, the recruitment of African soldiers could serve as a tool for cultivating

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<sup>52</sup> William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Random House, 1960), 167-189.

<sup>53</sup> Samson C. Ukpabi, "Military Recruitment and Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century British West Africa," *Journal of African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1975), 87.

loyalty and promoting post-war allegiance to the British Empire.<sup>54</sup> From a different perspective, G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash contend that the British were under pressure to demonstrate their commitment to the war effort and to enlist soldiers from their colonies. The Allies, including the United States and the Soviet Union, were vocal about the need for greater colonial contributions to the war. To maintain strong alliances and international support, the British responded by recruiting soldiers from Africa and other colonial territories.<sup>55</sup>

Gerhard Weinberg offers the most convincing interpretation of the motivation for the British recruitment of African and Ghanaian soldiers. According to Weinberg, the British Empire had significant colonial possessions in Africa, including Ghana, and the territory provided a potential source of military personnel and labourers that could be mobilized for the war effort. The British recognized the need to tap into these resources to bolster their military forces.<sup>56</sup> Rita Headrick adds that as the war progressed, the British Empire faced a shortage of manpower because of the high number of casualties of the British soldiers. For this reason, African soldiers, including Ghanaians, were mobilized to fill the ranks and increase the British forces. Their recruitment was a response to the practical need for additional troops to fight against the Axis powers.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> David Killingray, "Labour Mobilisation in British Colonial Africa for the War Effort, 1939–46," in *Africa and the Second World War*, eds. David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1986), 68-96.

<sup>55</sup> G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash, eds. *The United States and the Second World War: New perspectives on diplomacy, war, and the home front* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 68-98.

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of Second World War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 138-186.

<sup>57</sup> Rita Headrick, "African Soldiers in Second World War," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring 1978), 501-526.

Similarly, Wendell Holbrook points out that the British government recognized the need for military mobilization of its colonial subjects to support the army in the United Kingdom. According to Holbrook, the British government regarded the population of its empire as a major strength and proceeded to brace its colonial possessions for a strengthening of the military forces to support the war effort.<sup>58</sup>

#### Motivation for Ghanaians to join the British Army

The British used propaganda campaigns and appeals to patriotism to encourage Ghanaians to join the war effort. This included posters, leaflets, and radio broadcasts that emphasized the importance of supporting the Allied cause and defending the British Empire.<sup>59</sup> The British colonial authorities in Ghana collaborated with chiefs and traditional rulers as part of their recruitment efforts. Chiefs and traditional rulers continued to serve as intermediaries between the British authorities and the local population. They facilitated communication, addressed concerns, and ensured that the recruitment messages were effectively delivered to the communities.<sup>60</sup> They played a significant role in spreading the message and encouraging enlistment. The British collaboration with chiefs and traditional rulers helped shape the perception of recruitment

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<sup>58</sup> Wendell Patrick Holbrook, "The Impact of the Second World War on the Gold Coast: 1939-1945" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1978), 156-157.

<sup>59</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War*, 35-81.

<sup>60</sup> David Killingray, "Military and labour recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War," *The Journal of African History* 23, no. 1 (1982): 83-95.

efforts within Ghanaian communities since their involvement added a sense of legitimacy and authority to the British recruitment campaigns.<sup>61</sup>

There are, however, different perspectives on how to characterize the role of chiefs and traditional rulers in these circumstances. Some historians believe that chiefs and traditional rulers held significant influence and power within Ghanaian society before the arrival of the Europeans, which made them instrumental in the recruitment of individuals to join the British army. According to Samson Ukpabi, chiefs and traditional rulers held esteemed positions in their communities, commanding respect, and authority. Their social status allowed them to exert influence and persuade individuals to participate in the recruitment process.<sup>62</sup> Agyeman-Duah adds that the chiefs and traditional rulers were often considered custodians of cultural and religious traditions and their endorsement of recruitment efforts carried cultural and spiritual weight, influencing community members to heed their call to join the British army.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Roger Gocking contends that the chiefs and traditional rulers had control over land, resources, and various privileges within their communities. They could offer incentives to individuals considering recruitment, such as access to land or other benefits, which added to their persuasive power.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Samson C. Ukpabi, "Military Recruitment and Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century British West Africa," *Journal of African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1975), 87-107.

<sup>62</sup> Ukpabi, "Military Recruitment and Social Mobility in Nineteenth-Century British West Africa," 88-92.

<sup>63</sup> Ivor Agyeman-Duah, "Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance, and development," edited by Irene K. Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba, *African Affairs* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers 2007), 730-731.

<sup>64</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 75-81.



However, other scholars stress that the power of the chiefs and traditional rulers to act as intermediaries between the British colonial authorities and their communities was defined and limited by the colonial policy of indirect rule. It is important to note that the ultimate authority in the colony rested with the British colonial administration. Frederick Cooper contends that chiefs and traditional rulers were often co-opted into the colonial administration, becoming intermediaries between the British authorities and the local population.<sup>65</sup> In this capacity, chiefs and traditional rulers had significant control and influence over local affairs, but they were also agents of British power.<sup>66</sup> Because they were tied to the British, this led to a system of patronage, where chiefs and traditional rulers who aligned with colonial interests received privileges, rewards, and increased authority, further consolidating their power.<sup>67</sup>

Some scholars draw attention to the significance of other motivations for recruitment. According to Adrienne L. Manns, some Ghanaians felt a sense of loyalty and duty towards the British Empire and considering themselves imperial subjects saw participation in the war effort to demonstrate their commitment and contribute to the defense of the empire.<sup>68</sup> For Killingray, skills development was a major factor that made Ghanaians join the British Army during the Second World War. He emphasizes that joining the military provided Ghanaians with employment opportunities and the chance to acquire new skills and training. It offered a path for personal development and career

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<sup>65</sup> Cooper, *Decolonization and African society*, 43-44.

<sup>66</sup> Cooper, *Decolonization and African society*, 43-47.

<sup>67</sup> Roger S. Gocking, "Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for Office and the Invention of Tradition," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1994), 422-442.

<sup>68</sup> Adrienne Lynette Manns, "The Role of Ex-Servicemen In Ghana's Independence Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, John Hopkins University, 1984), 47-69.

advancement.<sup>69</sup> Economic incentives also played a significant role in recruiting Ghanaians. The British promised higher wages and improved economic prospects for those who enlisted and highlighted the financial benefits and opportunities that would arise from participating in the war effort. Indeed, the war provided job opportunities and improved economic prospects for Africans. It is also worth noting that during this period, there were inequalities in the British colonial administration system where the majority of British were holding high offices, so Ghanaians saw participation in the war as an opportunity to assert their identity and fight for freedom and equality. They believed that their contribution to the Allied cause would help bring about political and social changes in their home countries.<sup>70</sup>

Other historians emphasize the political objectives of Ghanaians who agreed to serve. Even though there was no explicit agreement between the British colonial government and Ghanaians that guaranteed independence for Ghana after the Second World War, there were varying beliefs and expectations among Ghanaians regarding the relationship between their participation in Second World War and the granting of independence. Some Ghanaians hoped that their contribution to the war effort would accelerate progress towards self-rule. Killingray contends that Ghanaians, like other Africans who fought in the war, were aware of their significant contributions to the Allied victory. They believed that their sacrifices and achievements would earn them greater

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<sup>69</sup> Killingray, "Military and Labour recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War," 88-95.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Addo-Fening, "Ghana under colonial rule: An outline of the early period and the interwar years," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15 (2013): 39-70.

recognition and leverage in negotiations for independence.<sup>71</sup> According to Killingray and Plaut, Ghanaians believed their participation in the war would demonstrate their loyalty, capabilities, and commitment to the British Empire. They hoped that this demonstration would lead to greater political rights, improved treatment, and eventually, independence.<sup>72</sup>

Ghanaians thus had various motivations for serving during Second World War, which were shaped by a combination of factors. Personal desires and relationships with the British Crown were the two main reasons. While some joined voluntarily, in some cases, propaganda campaigns and peer pressure from friends and family enlisted in the military also led Ghanaians to join the military service. On the other hand, Holbrook argues that to recruit people from the Gold Coast, the British effectively used some form of conscription in certain areas.<sup>73</sup> He notes that in certain circumstances, intimidation, threats, and promises of punishment for non-compliance, forced Ghanaians to participate in military activities. On the other hand, some Ghanaians saw military enlistment was an opportunity for skill development and were disappointed if they were rejected. For example, Nana Akwapim, a chief from the Eastern Region, noted that the rate of rejections based on health problems had a serious impact on the people and served to -benumb the enthusiasm of the young men.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War*, 213-214.

<sup>72</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 215.

<sup>73</sup> Holbrook, "The Impact of the Second World War on the Gold Coast: 1939-1945," 156-157.

<sup>74</sup> PRO: Colonial Office 98:91 Minutes, Emergency Meeting Provincial Council, Central Province, March 1, 1941, cited in Holbrook, "The Impact of the Second World War on the Gold Coast: 1939-1945," 165.

## The Military Impact of the Second World War on the Gold Coast

The Second World War transformed the Gold Coast socio-economically, militarily, and politically. Davidson states that in military service, the Ghanaian veterans developed a new political awareness that consequently played a significant role in the rapid expansion of nationalist movements during the post-war period.<sup>75</sup> Their experiences in the war, exposure to different political ideologies, and the realization of their contribution to the war effort played a significant role in shaping their political consciousness. According to Vincent Khapoya, the war experience changed how veterans perceived themselves, their social status, and their daily lives. Khapoya notes that for centuries, the idea of white superiority had existed in the minds of Africans. As Europeans established an imperial presence on the coast of Africa and demonstrated their technological and military capabilities, Africans regarded them as superior. This perception was not a belief in European superiority in a broader cultural or racial sense, but was acknowledgement of European technological power, particularly in terms of weaponry. But the Second World War transformed the way Ghanaians saw whites. Khapoya states that –the Africans noticed that, in war, the white man bled, cried, was scared, and, when shot, died just like anyone else... it dawned on the African that beneath the skin, there was no difference between him and the European.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Basil Davidson, *Africa in Modern History: The Search for a New Society* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 203.

<sup>76</sup> Vincent B. Khapoya, *The African Experience*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York: Routledge, 2015), 150.

Davidson argues that African nationalism was strengthened because of the war, and all Africans shared the desire to fight for their liberation.<sup>77</sup> For example, the Gold Coast Regiment of the West African Frontier Force had units representing various ethnic groups. The Ghanaian military's enlistment of personnel from diverse ethnic, regional, and religious origins contributed to the country's sense of identity and cohesion. Many Ghanaian soldiers became more acutely aware of the injustices of colonial rule during their service. They saw that they were fighting for freedom abroad while being denied it in their homeland. These perspectives and experiences of Ghanaian soldiers contributed to the broader political discourse on self-determination and independence in the Gold Coast. Killingray and Plaut contend that the veterans in the Gold Coast formed a cohesive interest group and that their grievances were translated into organized political activity within the nationalist movement. They point out that the ex-military personnel were frustrated for helping the British win war against Germany while being treated unfairly in their homeland. This led to the creation of some unions to represent the interests and views of ex-servicemen.<sup>78</sup> Ghanaian veterans were among the early supporters of nationalist movements and political parties in the Gold Coast after the war and helped achieve mass mobilization. Unlike in some other countries, Ghana did not have a well-established system of veterans' benefits or support for ex-servicemen, leaving many without financial assistance. This led to several unofficial organizations of ex-servicemen

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<sup>77</sup> Basil Davidson, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), 61-65.

<sup>78</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 215

being organized in 1944-1948 to represent their interests and views and find employment for ex-soldiers to cope with the economic hardship.<sup>79</sup>

### The Socio-Economic Impact of the Second World War on Gold Coast

Several historians have demonstrated the significant and multifaceted economic impacts of the Second World War on the Gold Coast. Frederick Cooper argues that the economic hardship that followed the Second World War in the Gold Coast was a result of the shortage of consumer goods caused by the rise in urban population between 1939 and 1947 and the price increases of commodities by monopolistic European-owned firms.<sup>80</sup> Cooper states that the war contributed to urbanization as people moved to cities in search of work, and this shift opened employment opportunities in various industries. Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon show how increased demand and favourable prices led to the growth of certain sectors of the Gold Coast's economy.<sup>81</sup> Bianco Murillo states that the scarcity of goods in post-World War Ghana was a result of shifts in wartime production, and argues that an increase in the prices of the limited goods available to the Ghanaian people led to the rise of nationalism.<sup>82</sup> Gocking agrees with Murillo and adds that the war disrupted agricultural activities on the Gold Coast, leading to labour shortages and decreased production. The wartime economy led to inflation and price

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<sup>79</sup> Adrienne Lynette Manns, "The Role of Ex-Servicemen in Ghana's Independence Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1984), 1-28.

<sup>80</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 49-50.

<sup>81</sup> Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon. "Political distortions, state capture, and economic development in Africa," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 36, no. 1 (2022): 101-124.

<sup>82</sup> Bianca Murillo, *Market encounters: Consumer Cultures in twentieth-century Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 2.

increases, making it more difficult for ordinary people to afford basic goods. For Gocking, –the shortage of shipping meant that it was difficult to import goods and the few consumer goods were available, were expensive for the ordinary people due to the rise in price by the Association of West African Merchants.<sup>83</sup>

In his book, *Ghana: A Historical Survey*, Vincent Okyere investigated the factors that accounted for nationalism in Gold Coast after the Second World War. Okyere mentioned that the factors that fueled nationalism in Ghana included shortages of goods and price increases, unemployment among Ghanaian youth, and Britain’s failure to keep its post-war promises to ex-servicemen.<sup>84</sup> After the war ended, Britain faced significant challenges in managing the Ghanaian economy and addressing the needs of ex-servicemen. Veterans in the Gold Coast and other parts of the British Empire demanded improved conditions, pensions, and employment opportunities upon their return. Alan Booth contends that Britain faced many economic challenges in the aftermath of the Second World War, including high war debt, infrastructure damage, and a need for post-war reconstruction.<sup>85</sup> As a result, there was a conscious effort on the part of Britain to address the issues facing the metropole rather than the colonies, including Ghana. However, Adu Boahen stresses that the excessive exploitation of the Gold Coast’s mineral resources without any attempt to industrialize the colony was a key factor that

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<sup>83</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 82

<sup>84</sup> Vincent Okyere, *Ghana: A Historical Survey* (Accra: Vinojab Publications, 2000), 140-143.

<sup>85</sup> Alan Booth, *The British Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 123-132.

contributed to postwar nationalism.<sup>86</sup> Adu Boahen did not explicitly deny the arguments by Okyere, however, he looked at a different perspective and emphasized the mineral exploitation of Britain on the Gold Coast at the expense of the Ghanaian people. According to him, this led to strong opposition to British rule. Bill Freund contends that the colony's resources that could have been used for local development were instead diverted to support the war effort, resulting in limited investment in infrastructure and services on the Gold Coast.<sup>87</sup> Both authors offered a concrete analysis of the motivations that facilitated the nationalism on Gold Coast, however, Okyere made the most convincing argument. While other factors stated by Booth and Adu Boahen may be true, the issue of high prices of goods and unemployment were persistent among Ghanaians, especially the ex-soldiers.

Another economic factor that increased post-war nationalism in Ghana was the swollen shoot disease which affected the cocoa industry from the 1930s through the 1940s. Swollen shoot disease was a devastating contagion that affected cocoa trees in the Gold Coast during the colonial period. It significantly impacted cocoa production, which was a crucial part of the country's economy. Gocking discusses how the disease stunted the growth of cocoa trees and reduced cocoa bean yields, leading to significant economic losses for cocoa farmers and the Gold Coast economy. He notes that –the spread from infected to healthy trees killed most trees, leading to cutting down and burning of affected

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<sup>86</sup> A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries*(Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Educational Publishers, 2000), 25.

<sup>87</sup> Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society since 1800* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 143-169.



trees.<sup>88</sup> The British colonial authorities undertook efforts to combat the disease, and this included research into the virus and implementing measures to identify and remove infected trees.<sup>89</sup> However, the farmers and larger population regarded such initiatives as an inadequate response to the problem.

According to Gocking, the colonial administration's ineffective response to the swollen shoot illness that impacted the cocoa sector ultimately determined the fate of the British colonial authorities on the Gold Coast.<sup>90</sup> The colonial government's response was in many ways disastrous. The ordering of the removal of cocoa trees was ill-informed. Making sure that all cocoa farmers received the necessary information and that the control measures were successfully carried out presented difficulties. It is possible that some farmers were ignorant about the illness because most cocoa plants were located in remote rural areas, meaning that not all farmers may have seen the advertisements or were aware of the campaigns. Again, given the possibility of losing money, some other farmers opposed taking down their sick cocoa trees. The cocoa sector made up much of the country's export revenue; anything that harmed the cocoa industry would impact a large proportion of the population. The response to the swollen shoot disease met with dissatisfaction and even resistance among cocoa farmers. Although removing the diseased trees was the best approach since there was no cure, the farmers were not given adequate information about the disease's characteristics and the need to remove those that

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<sup>88</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 81.

<sup>89</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 82.

<sup>90</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 82-84.

were affected. Furthermore, the compensation given to farmers was inadequate.<sup>91</sup> Many cocoa farmers considered the financial compensation offered by colonial government to be insufficient to cover the full cost of their losses. While the incentives were intended to mitigate the economic impact of crop destruction, they were often insufficient to fully compensate farmers for lost income, investments in crop cultivation, and future earnings from the affected crops. As a result, protests and resistance sometimes emerged due to perceived inadequacy of the financial compensation.

In some instances, cocoa farmers engaged in protests and strikes to voice their grievances. These actions were localized and reflected the frustrations of affected communities because workers were paid according to the number of affected cocoa trees they removed, which encouraged the indiscriminate removal of both healthy and diseased trees. Some farmers believed rumours that the British intended to wipe out the Gold Coast's cocoa business before leaving the colony. As a result, they were reluctant to cooperate with the colonial government's efforts to manage this cocoa illness. During the war, cocoa prices had risen at times due to increased demand for chocolate and cocoa-related products. This made farmers oppose the colonial government's initiative to remove the affected trees through protests, which were primarily localized and initially distinct from the broader independence movement, but still contributed to an intensification of nationalist pressure.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> John M. Thresh and G. K. Owusu. "The control of cocoa swollen shoot disease in Ghana: an evaluation of eradication procedures," *Crop protection* 5, no. 1 (1986): 41-52.

<sup>92</sup> Francis K. Danquah "Sustaining a West African cocoa economy: Agricultural science and the swollen shoot contagion in Ghana, 1936-1965," *African economic history* 31 (2003): 43-74.

## Conditions During the War Period both Abroad and in Ghana

Many scholars focus heavily on the economic impacts of the war on the Gold Coast. According to Richard Rathbone, the war brought significant changes to Ghana's economy. He argues that during the war period, Gold Coast experienced a surge in the production of commodities like gold, cocoa, and timber, which were in high demand. Rathbone adds that the increased production created economic opportunities, leading to the growth of the mining and agricultural sectors. For this reason, the British colonial government implemented policies to ensure the steady supply of these resources, which contributed to the development of infrastructure and industrialization in Ghana.<sup>93</sup> This development of infrastructure resulted in the construction of roads, railways, ports, and communication networks to facilitate the easy transportation of goods and services. Similarly, Adebayo Oyeade adds that wartime circumstances led to increased global demand for certain commodities, such as agricultural products and minerals, to support the war effort. The Gold Coast, as a British colony, experienced a rise in demand for its primary exports, including cocoa, timber, and minerals.<sup>94</sup>

While these accounts capture the potential positive economic effects of the Second World War on the Gold Coast, it is important to note that the impacts were complex, and the war also brought challenges and disruptions, including price and revenue changes and economic disruptions among the Ghanaian populace. The increased

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<sup>93</sup> Richard Rathbone, "The government of the Gold Coast after the Second World War," *African Affairs* 67, no. 268, (1968), 209-218.

<sup>94</sup> Adebayo Oyeade, "Feeding America's war machine: the United States and economic expansion in West Africa during Second World War," *African Economic History* 26 (1998), 119-140.

demand for commodities during the war created favorable conditions for producers on the Gold Coast in some respects, but the conflict also disrupted global trade patterns, leading to fluctuations in commodity prices and shortages of essential goods on the Gold Coast. The colony faced challenges in accessing necessary imports and faced disruptions in export markets. The war also led to a shift in agricultural production in various regions, including the Gold Coast, from producing crops grown for local use to cash crops like cocoa and palm oil, which were valuable commodities for the British war effort. As a result, farmers on the Gold Coast, as in other colonies, were encouraged to shift their focus from subsistence farming of growing food crops to the production of cash crops. Reginald Green and Stephen Hymer note that British officials developed incentives and implemented regulations to ensure this transition. The shift toward cash crop production had implications for food production and local food security. As more land and labour were allocated to cash crops, the production of food crops for domestic consumption declined, leading to potential food shortages and increased dependence on imported food.<sup>95</sup> The few available consumer goods were sold at exorbitant prices which made it very difficult for ordinary Ghanaians to purchase.

Several scholars, including Lawler, Frankema, Gocking, and Chick have highlighted the social impact the war had on the Gold Coast. Lawler contends that the conflict resulted in social dislocation due to recruitment, conscription, and the movement of people for military purposes. Families were separated, and communities experienced

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<sup>95</sup> Reginald H. Green and Stephen H. Hymer, "Cocoa in the Gold Coast: a study in the relations between African farmers and agricultural experts," *The Journal of Economic History* 26, no. 3 (1966), 299-319.

disruptions and hardships.<sup>96</sup> Tensions arose due to various factors, including disparities in treatment and opportunities, and the management of the Gold Coast by the colonial government. This resulted in Ghanaians expressing their grievances regarding the shortage of consumer goods and other related issues to the colonial government through various means. Frankema notes that Ghanaians, both individually and collectively, wrote petitions and letters to colonial officials and authorities expressing their concerns about the shortage of consumer goods. These petitions often outlined the hardships faced by Ghanaians and demanded action to address the scarcity of essential items.<sup>97</sup> For example, during the colonial period, J.B. Danquah and other leaders of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) petitioned the British authorities about taxation, land dispossession, and high prices of goods, leading to poverty and economic hardship. Gocking analyzes organized protests and demonstrations by Ghanaians to highlight their grievances related to consumer goods shortages and unfair treatment during the war. These protests were often peaceful but aimed to draw attention to the hardships faced by Ghanaians and demand better living conditions.<sup>98</sup> Newspapers, pamphlets, and other forms of media were used to voice grievances and communicate the hardships faced by Ghanaians due to consumer goods shortages to the colonial government. For example, the *African Morning Post*, the *West African Pilot*, and *Accra Evening News* provided a platform for discussing

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<sup>96</sup> Nancy Ellen Lawler, "Soldiers, Airmen, Spies, and Whisperers: The Gold Coast in Second World War," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 49:1 (2002), 63-90.

<sup>97</sup> Ewout Frankema and Marlous van Waijenburg, "Real Wages in British Africa, 1880-1940," *LSE African Economic History Workshop*, 2010, 1-28.

<sup>98</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 51-74.

political issues, advocating for African rights, and critiquing colonial policies.<sup>99</sup> Chick adds that these publications helped raise awareness and galvanize public opinion on the issue.<sup>100</sup> The war and its associated grievances thus fueled political mobilization and activism among Ghanaians. The economic disruptions, including shortages of essential goods, fluctuating prices, and the diversion of resources for the war effort contributed to economic tensions, particularly among Ghanaians who faced difficulties in accessing necessary commodities and experienced economic hardships. This in turn led to the emergence of political activism among the Ghanaian populace to seek political freedom to manage their own country.

Frankema Ewout also notes that the colonial government implemented austerity measures to redirect resources to the war effort. This included reduced public spending on social services and development projects.<sup>101</sup> Financial resources that could have been used for development projects in the Gold Coast, including revenues from taxes and exports, were diverted to support the war effort. The British colonial authorities requisitioned resources such as minerals, timber, and agricultural products from the Gold Coast. These resources were vital for the British war machine, but such policies disrupted the local economy. The colonial government-imposed price controls and established commodity boards to ensure that essential commodities like cocoa and palm oil were

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<sup>99</sup> Yaw Twumasi, "Press freedom and nationalism under colonial rule in the Gold Coast (Ghana)," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 3 (1974): 499-520.

<sup>100</sup> John D. Chick, "The Ashanti Times: A Footnote to Ghanaian Press History," *African Affairs* 76, no. 302 (1977), 80-94.

<sup>101</sup> Ewout Frankema, "Colonial taxation and government spending in British Africa, 1880–1940: Maximizing revenue or minimizing effort?" *Explorations in economic history* 48, no. 1 (2011), 136-149.

available to British forces and allies at fixed prices. This often resulted in lower incomes for Ghanaian producers.

Ghanaians' desire to seek total independence was minimal during the war years because many Ghanaians at the time had a sense of loyalty to the British Empire. British-style education in Gold Coast promoted the English language, British history, culture, and values, and most importantly, curriculum content often portrayed Britain and its colonial enterprise in a favourable way, presenting British rule as beneficial to the people of Gold Coast rather than Britain itself. British education and propaganda efforts had thus instilled a sense of allegiance among a significant portion of the population and this loyalty led many Ghanaians to support the British war effort. Most Ghanaians also had limited exposure to political ideas and concepts of self-determination. Access to education was restricted, and many Ghanaians had not yet developed a strong political consciousness. Again, it is worth mentioning that the economic and social conditions in the Gold Coast were challenging, and many Ghanaians were preoccupied with daily struggles for survival. Economic opportunities were limited, and there were concerns about issues such as inflation and food shortages, which diverted attention from political aspirations. Moreover, the global political context was still characterized by colonialism, and the momentum for decolonization and self-determination had not fully developed. The global shift towards decolonization gained more momentum after the Second World War.

Several authors note that pressure for greater autonomy was growing. Dennis Austin acknowledges that the war years in the Gold Coast witnessed increased political mobilization and aspirations for self-governance. Ghanaians, inspired by their

contributions and sacrifices during the war, demanded greater political rights and representation, especially soldiers returning from the war, who were dissatisfied with the unfulfilled promises of the colonial government.<sup>102</sup> The war years witnessed a rise in education and literacy among Ghanaians, which expanded their awareness of political rights and nationalist movements. Educated Ghanaians like Kwame Nkrumah and other leaders became key drivers of the nationalist movement, using their knowledge and skills to mobilize and advocate for self-rule. Austin adds that economic disruptions during the war, coupled with social inequalities, fueled discontent among Ghanaians and strengthened their resolve for self-government. Ghanaians sought greater control over their economic resources and the ability to shape their own social and political destiny. According to Austin, –educated elites protested not only against colonial rule but against the existing structure of authority in the Colony<sup>103</sup> Though overt nationalist opposition to colonial rule was only gradually emerging, wartime mobilization and the disruptions it caused were crucial factor in the drive for independence.

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<sup>102</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 11-28.

<sup>103</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 12.



## Chapter 3: The Rise of Postwar Nationalists, the Formation of Political Parties, and the Emergence of Kwame Nkrumah

### Introduction

Ghanaians began actively calling for independence from British colonial rule in the years following the Second World War. While there were earlier movements and demands for reform, it was during the post-war period that the struggle for full independence gained significant momentum. During the war years, Ghanaians called for better economic opportunities and African representation in the colonial administration. However, after the post-war, Ghanaians' message changed, and people started advocating for self-rule and independence. Several factors paved the way for Ghana's independence struggle, and among these was strong nationalism in Gold Coast; the development of democratic ideals from those who participated in the war; enhanced levels of education for some; a broader intellectual awakening, influenced by Pan-Africanism; and the Civil Right Movements in the United States of America. All these factors shaped the formation of political parties in the Gold Coast and the subsequent push for independence. Here, authors emphasize different factors. For example, while Antony Anghie and Dennis Austin emphasized self-determination, a process by which the people of Gold Coast freed themselves from colonial rule and won the right to determine their own political, economic, and social systems, Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood stressed education and intellectual awakening. Tunde Adeleke, in contrast, argued that the Civil Rights

Movement in the United States of America played a key role in Ghana's independence struggle.<sup>104</sup> Among them, Adi and Sherwood gave a sounder argument. This is because almost all the leading members of those who led Ghanaian nationalism were individuals with higher level formal education. Among these were Kwame Nkrumah and other leaders of the UGCC.

#### Factors that contributed to Ghana's nationalism after the Second World War

The experiences of Ghanaians who participated in the war, along with the post-war global shift toward self-determination, fueled a growing sense of nationalism. The exploitative economic policies of Britain, which focused on extracting Ghana's natural resources for the benefit of the colonial metropolises, created social and economic disparities for the people of Gold Coast. These resulted in nonviolent but significant resistance, featuring civil disobedience among the larger population to channel their grievances against the colonial government. Ghanaians sought to gain control over their resources, improve their economic conditions, and have control over their affairs. Austin points out that desire for the rule of law and improved governance played a significant role in Ghana's independence struggle.<sup>105</sup> In his book, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Kwame Nkrumah states –We are faced here with the problem of uneven economic growth.<sup>106</sup> Nkrumah's statement was referring to the disparities and imbalances in economic development in Ghana and critical issues associated with

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<sup>104</sup> Tunde Adeleke, *Unafrikan Americans: Nineteenth-century black nationalists and the civilizing mission* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 111-152.

<sup>105</sup> Austin *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 49-60.

<sup>106</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, 1965), 26.

colonial economic policies and their general impact on the country. This kind of colonization resulted in the subjugation of Africa societies and economies. Nkrumah's quote highlights the impact of colonialism on African nations and the desire to break free from oppression.

According to Austin, the expansion of education in Ghana during the colonial period played a crucial role in nurturing a new generation of intellectuals and leaders. Educated Ghanaians began to critically analyze the impact of colonialism on their society and identity. They questioned the legitimacy of colonial rule and sought to challenge it through intellectual and political means.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Rathbone notes that intellectual and political leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, J.B. Danquah, and others, emerged as influential leaders who played a crucial role in articulating and mobilizing nationalist aspirations. They advocated for self-governance and organized political movements to achieve independence.<sup>108</sup> The influence of Pan-Africanism has also been identified as a key factor. Kumah-Abiwu and Ochwa-Echel contend that the ideas of Pan-Africanism, a socio-political and cultural movement that advocates for the unity, solidarity, and empowerment of people of African descent, both on the African continent and within the African diaspora, gained traction in Ghana and other African countries. Prominent Pan-African leaders like Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois inspired Ghanaian nationalists to view their struggle for independence as part of a broader African liberation movement.

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<sup>107</sup> Austin *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 13-18.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-60* (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 9-28.

Kwame Nkrumah embraced Pan-Africanism and emphasized its significance in his nationalist discourse.<sup>109</sup>

Other historians highlight the influence of the Civil Rights Movement campaign in the United States of America on Ghana's independence struggle. Mina Yakubu points out that the Civil Rights movement promoted the ideals of human rights, equality, and social justice. These principles resonated with Ghanaian nationalists who were also fighting against colonial oppression and seeking equal rights for all citizens.<sup>110</sup> The Civil Rights movement in the United States, as well as criticism of colonial rule in the Caribbean, garnered international recognition and support, which had implications for the Gold Coast and other African colonies. The exposure of racial injustices and human rights abuses in these regions put pressure on colonial authorities to address issues of inequality and discrimination. Yakubu adds that the Civil Rights movement brought inspiration and solidarity to African nationalists in Ghana. According to him –the Civil Rights Movement in the United States transcended their respective borders to the anti-colonial movements on the African continent. These leaders [believed] the freedom of one group was entwined with the liberation of the other.<sup>111</sup>

For example, in his speech, –African Fundamentalism,<sup>112</sup> published on June 6, 1925, the political activist Marcus Garvey discussed economic empowerment and

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<sup>109</sup> Felix Kumah-Abiwu, and James R. Ochwa-Echel, “Rethinking the ideas of Pan-Africanism and African unity: A theoretical perspective of Kwame Nkrumah’s leadership traits and decision making,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* (2013), 122-127.

<sup>110</sup> Mina Yakubu, “The Interconnectedness of Black Liberation: The Cross-Political Relationship of African and African American Leaders in the Struggle for Independence and the Civil Rights Movement (1950–60),” *Global Africana Review* 6, no. 1 (2022), 26-27.

<sup>111</sup> Yakubu, “The Interconnectedness of Black Liberation,” 26.

stressed the importance of economic self-reliance and independence for black communities. Garvey's advocacy for Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism emphasized the need for Black people to build strong, self-sustaining communities and institutions. He believed that Black people should take responsibility for their destiny and believe in the unity and cooperation of all African people, regardless of their location. Ghanaian nationalists admired the determination and resilience of Africans in the diaspora, especially in the Americas, and their achievements motivated them to fight for their rights and liberation.<sup>112</sup> Manning Marable argues that the Civil Rights movement in the United States and critics of imperialism in the Caribbean fostered connections between activists in these regions and their counterparts in Africa. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah were inspired by African American Civil Rights leaders and Caribbean nationalists. These connections facilitated the exchange of ideas, strategies, and support for their respective struggles for freedom and equality.<sup>113</sup> While in the United States, Nkrumah was influenced by prominent Pan-Africanists and Civil Rights leaders, including W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, and Paul Robeson advocating for the rights of African people worldwide. These contacts introduced him to the struggles for racial equality and civil rights in the United States.<sup>114</sup> While Nkrumah may not have met many Pan-Africanists and Civil Rights movement leaders in person during his time studying in the United States, he was exposed to their ideas and philosophies through their writings and the

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<sup>112</sup> Marcus Garvey, *African fundamentalism* ed. by Tony Martin in *African Fundamentalism: A Literary and Cultural Anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance*. No. 5 (Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1991), 4-6

<sup>113</sup> Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (London: Penguin, 2011), 175-186.

<sup>114</sup> Manning Marable, "The Pan-Africanism of WEB Du Bois," in *WEB Du Bois on Race and Culture*, ed. Bernard Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 193-218.

intellectual environment of the time. Nkrumah's experiences in the United States, including his education and interactions with African American leaders, played a significant role in shaping his political and ideological outlook and had a lasting impact on his leadership and his vision for Ghana and Africa as a whole. For example, Garvey's Black Star Line ideology, which was intended to facilitate the transportation of goods and eventually Africans in the Diaspora, especially from the Americas to Africa, inspired Nkrumah. Following independence, Nkrumah paid tribute to Garvey by incorporating a black star in the center of Ghana's flag. He also nicknamed the national soccer team the -Black Stars and ordered the construction of Black Star Square and Gate – a public square in Accra representing the freedom of all black people. For this, Nkrumah envisioned Ghana to be a country in the spirit of Garvey's vision, and the first independent nation in West Africa was going to be a country for Africans.

While the above factors contributed greatly to Ghana's independence struggle, I agree with Austin that the role of education and intellectual awakening, and the return of the ex-servicemen played the most significant factors in independence movement. As mentioned earlier, education in Gold Coast exposed Ghanaians to the ideas of democracy and nationalism, leading to a growing awareness of injustices of colonial rule and the desire for independence. Like the educated elites, the ex-servicemen articulated their grievances through organized protests and demonstrations, critiquing colonial policies and advocating for self-governance, inspiring others to join the struggle for independence. Austin argues that the formation of political parties such as the United

Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and later the Convention People's Party (CPP) was crucial to the independence struggle.<sup>115</sup>

The UGCC primarily focused on political and constitutional methods of achieving self-government, though there were instances when it organized strikes, protests, and demonstrations in collaboration with other organizations and individuals. For instance, Austin points out that although the UGCC did not directly organize the 1948 Accra Riots, its leaders were involved in the events leading up to the riots.<sup>116</sup> Gocking notes that in 1951, the UGCC and other political parties protested the British colonial authorities' decision to exclude illiterate citizens from participating in the general elections. The protests were aimed at ensuring broader political participation.<sup>117</sup> In terms of goals, however, the UGCC adopted the slogan, "Self-Government in the Shortest Possible Time," emphasizing their objective of achieving autonomy and independence through constitutional means, negotiations, and the gradual transfer of governance from the colonial authorities to the people of the Gold Coast. The CPP, on the other hand, adopted the slogan "Self-Government Now." This slogan reflected a more radical stance, specifically the party's commitment to progress, advancement, and the continuous pursuit of its goals through confrontational methods if they were deemed necessary.

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<sup>115</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 52.

<sup>116</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 72-79.

<sup>117</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 95-98.

## The Formation of Political Parties in Ghana

Angela Howard contends that the experiences of Ghanaians during the Second World War, where they fought alongside soldiers from other countries and witnessed struggles for self-determination in other parts of the world, contributed to a growing sense of nationalism. Ghanaians became more aware of their identity and desired greater control over their affairs, leading to the formation of political parties to advocate for independence.<sup>118</sup> Justice Tankebe points out that the post-war era saw increased global criticism of colonialism and demands for self-determination. The changing geopolitical landscape influenced the decolonization process in various African countries, including Ghana. The formation of political parties in Ghana was part of the broader wave of nationalist movements across Africa during this period.<sup>119</sup>

Dennis Austin and Johannes Kneirzinger emphasized the significance of an intellectual awakening in the Gold Coast. Austin notes that educated Ghanaians were exposed to the ideas of individuals like the merchant and politician Paa Grant; a Ghanaian political activist, businessman, and founding member of the UGCC who played a crucial role in articulating and mobilizing nationalist aspirations. According to Austin, Grant provided the intellectual basis for the establishment of the UGCC – the first political party in Gold Coast – and is often regarded as the father of Gold Coast

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<sup>118</sup> Angela Howard, "When the People Decide: A Study of the Independence Movement in Ghana," *African Diaspora ISPs*, 41 (1999), 9-14; accessed at [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african\\_diaspora\\_isp/41](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african_diaspora_isp/41).

<sup>119</sup> Justice Tankebe, "Colonialism, Legitimation, and Policing in Ghana," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 36, no. 1 (2008): 67-84.



politics.<sup>120</sup> Kneirzinger contends that Ghanaians sought political representation and participation in the decision-making processes that affected their lives. They wanted to have a say in their governance and break away from the exclusionary colonial administration.<sup>121</sup> According to Austin and Knierzinger, an intellectual awakening amidst an economic crisis were the basis of the formation of political parties in Ghana. The war disrupted traditional authority structures and exposed the contradictions of colonial rule. Ghanaians, who had made sacrifices during the war, demanded better treatment and greater rights. This heightened demand for change and political empowerment.

#### The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)

The formation of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) can be traced back to a series of events and the efforts of various individuals and groups who came together with a shared vision of advocating for self-government and independence. Among the founding members of the UGCC was Joseph Boakye Danquah, who was a lawyer, politician, and intellectual. He later served as the General Secretary of the UGCC following Nkrumah's exit and as a member of the Legislative Council.<sup>122</sup> Kwame Nkrumah began his political career as the General Secretary of the UGCC. However, as previously noted, he later became the founder of the CPP, a political party that led Ghana to independence. While he served as Ghana's first Prime Minister and President, he is

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<sup>120</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 49-52.

<sup>121</sup> Johannes Knierzinger, "Chieftaincy and development in Ghana: From political intermediaries to neotraditional development brokers," *Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz* 124 (2011), 6-9.

<sup>122</sup> Kwame Okoampa-Ahoofe, Jr, "Dr. J. B. Danquah: Architect of Modern Ghana," New York: iUniverse, Inc. (2005), 1-6

known for his Pan-Africanist ideology and vision of African unity.<sup>123</sup> Like J. B. Danquah, Edward Akufo-Addo was a lawyer, judge, and politician who helped to establish the UGCC. However, following the collapse of the party, he co-founded the National Liberation Movement (NLM), a political party that opposed Nkrumah and his government. Akkufo Addo became Chief Justice of Ghana and later President.<sup>124</sup> Other founding members of the UGCC included: Ako-Adjei, a lawyer, politician and businessman known for his advocacy of democratic principles and constitutional reforms; William Ofori Atta, a politician, businessman, and a traditional leader; and Ofori Atta, who like Ako-Adjei was known for his advocacy of democratic principles and constitutional reforms. The UGCC's other co-founder, Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamprey, was a politician, businessman, and journalist who played a key role in Ghana's independence struggle.<sup>125</sup>

Rathbone analyzes how in 1945 these individuals, who later became known as the -Big Six, protested the decision of the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Alan Burns, and his administration to introduce the so-called Burns Constitution. The Burns Constitution aimed to increase African representation in the Legislative Council but fell short of providing genuine self-government.<sup>126</sup> The new document did introduce some political reforms and increased African representation in the colonial administration. With the

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<sup>123</sup> Basil Davidson, "Black star: a view of the life and times of Kwame Nkrumah," *VRÜ Verfassung und Recht in Übersee* 8, no. 2 (1975): 284-288.

<sup>124</sup> Obed Yao Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950-2013): The experience of a non-conformist* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2014), 1-25.

<sup>125</sup> Gocking, *History of Ghana*, 37-75.

<sup>126</sup> Richard Rathbone, "Businessmen in politics: Party struggle in Ghana, 1949-57," *The Journal of Development Studies* 9, no. 3 (1973): 391-401.

introduction of direct elections, the African members became the majority in the Legislative Council. In this respect, the Burns Constitution was an improvement on the 1925 Guggisberg Constitution, but it fell short of the hopes of the educated elites. The governor retained significant powers, and the new constitution was seen by many nationalists as inadequate and not fully addressing their demands for self-determination and increased political representation.<sup>127</sup> Agbodeka states that the 1946 Burns Constitution's failure to grant Ghanaians full responsibility for self-government was a major factor contributing to growing nationalism.<sup>128</sup>

Gocking provides additional insight into the significance of the 1946 Burns Constitution, noting that it provided for only limited political representation for Ghanaians in the Legislative Council; many council members were still appointed rather than elected, which fell short of the nationalist demand for greater self-government.<sup>129</sup> Figures like Kwame Nkrumah and J.B. Danquah argued that the Constitution did not go far enough in addressing the aspirations of the Gold Coast's people. As a result, the educated elites disregarded the constitution and termed it as –outmoded at birth.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, the Burns Constitution was seen as intentionally giving more power to the chiefs, and thus seeking to co-opt the traditional leadership and maintain indirect rule while marginalizing the new political class. Boafo-Arthur adds that the 1946 Burns

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<sup>127</sup> Jon Olav Hove and Kofi Baku, "Conservatism in Gold Coast Politics: From Ku-Hee (New Party) to the National Democratic Party, 1943-51," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 17 (2015), 27-62.

<sup>128</sup> Francis Agbodeka, *The Rise of The Nations States: A History of the West African Peoples 1800-1964* (London: Thomas Nelson Printers Limited, 1965), 133.

<sup>129</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 87-88.

<sup>130</sup> Richard Rathbone Richard, "The government of the Gold Coast after the Second World War," *African Affairs* 67, no. 268 (1968), 215.

Constitution provided for the establishment of the House of Chiefs, a body that allowed chiefs to advise the colonial government on certain matters. It also maintained the traditional authority of chiefs in local governance and administration.<sup>131</sup> Nationalists expressed concerns that the increased powers for chiefs might lead to co-optation and collaboration with the colonial authorities, undermining the broader nationalist struggle for full independence.

The intelligentsia, the ex-servicemen, and the youth saw the traditional rulers' majority in the constitution as a return to 'indirect rule';<sup>132</sup> a system of colonial government in which the day-to-day government and administration of areas both small and large were left in the hands of traditional rulers. Additionally, many nationalists felt that other towns and villages should have been included in the political franchise, which was only granted to the municipalities of Accra, Cape Coast, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Kumasi under the constitution. Many young people of Gold Coast after the war had no voice in how the colony was governed politically. This implied a cooperative connection between the colonial administration and the traditional chiefs. While the 1946 Burns Constitution represented a step towards reforms, it was seen as insufficient by many nationalists who sought full independence. This discontent and the perceived inadequacy of the constitution played a role in intensifying the nationalist agitation.

Following this development, there was a growing realization among nationalist leaders that they needed to coordinate their efforts to effectively advocate for self-

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<sup>131</sup> Kwame Boafo-Arthur, "Chieftaincy in Ghana: Challenges and prospects in the 21st century," *African and Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2003), 125-153.

<sup>132</sup> W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, 323-350.

government. On August 4, 1947, the -Big Sixll leaders, along with other nationalist groups and individuals, officially founded the United Gold Coast Convention at Saltpond, a coastal town in the Central Region of the Gold Coast.<sup>133</sup> Arden-Clarke argues the UGCC was established with the primary goal of advocating for self-government in the Gold Coast. The party sought constitutional reforms that would lead to greater African representation and participation in the government. While the UGCC's ultimate objective was self-government leading to independence, it initially pursued constitutional changes and negotiation with the colonial authorities.<sup>134</sup> The leadership of the UGCC was initially composed of the -Big Sixll leaders, with J.B. Danquah as the party's chairman and Kwame Nkrumah as secretary. The party soon began to organize political rallies, initiate petitions to the colonial authorities, and advocate for constitutional reforms.

In discussing the significant contributions of the UGCC in the early stages of Ghana's independence struggle, Austin points out that the UGCC brought together various nationalist groups and individuals, who had previously operated independently, including Kwame Nkrumah. Austin stated that -the working committee of the UGCC invited Nkrumah from abroad to assume the position of general secretary in the partyll.<sup>135</sup> Austin further argues that the party's formation provided a platform for different factions to unite and present a common front in advocating for self-government and independence; its founders wanted -to ensure that by all legitimate and constitutional

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<sup>133</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 52.

<sup>134</sup> Charles Arden-Clarke, "Gold Coast into Ghana: Some Problems of Transition," *International Affairs* 34, no. 1 (1958): 49-56.

<sup>135</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 54.

means the direction and control of government should pass into the hands of the people and their chiefs in the shortest possible time.<sup>136</sup> Arden-Clarke acknowledges that the UGCC effectively articulated the aspirations of Ghanaians for increased political representation and control over their own affairs. The party called for constitutional reforms that would lead to greater African participation in governance, paving the way for self-government. Acheampong and Gates believe that the UGCC's activities helped raise political consciousness among Ghanaians and instilled a sense of national identity and unity. They encouraged political education, fostering a growing awareness of the nation's collective aspirations and the need for self-determination.<sup>137</sup> The mobilization of Ghanaians by the UGCC was possible because of the establishment of local branches, engaging with people at the grassroots level, and mobilizing support for their objectives. This decentralized organizational structure helped to spread the nationalist message throughout the country and build a broad-based political constituency. Manu concludes that while the UGCC did not lead Ghana to independence, its influence on subsequent political movements was significant. He believes that it was the foundation of the party that paved the way for other political parties, notably the CPP, to flourish.<sup>138</sup>

#### The 1948 Accra Riots and Kwame Nkrumah's Exit from the UGCC

Killingray and Plaut analyze how many ex-servicemen, facing economic challenges, became politically active and formed associations to advocate for their rights

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<sup>136</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 53.

<sup>137</sup> Dennis Austin, "The Working Committee of the United Gold Coast Convention." *The Journal of African History* 2, no. 2 (1961): 273-281.

<sup>138</sup> Yaw Manu, "Decolonization and Independence: the problems of Nation-Building," *Ghana's Transition to Constitutional Rule* (1991), 1-9

and better economic prospects. This led to several unofficial bodies of ex-servicemen being organized in 1944-1948.<sup>139</sup> Among them, for example, was the Gold Coast Ex-Servicemen's Union (GCESU), which promoted the welfare, rights, and economic interests of ex-servicemen.<sup>140</sup> The ex-servicemen's associations also became involved in broader political movements and the struggle for independence in Ghana. Growing unrest, the result of the failure of the colonial government to control inflation and thus curb the price of imported goods, and by high levels of unemployment among the ex-soldiers, fuelled nationalist aspirations. The Watson Commission reported that the goods were scarce, and prices were high; even those with money were not finding goods to buy.<sup>141</sup> The Ex-Servicemen's Union sought work for its members, encouraged investment in local African-owned businesses, and acted as a 'union' for the unemployed.<sup>142</sup>

The 1948 Accra riots, also known as the 'February 28th Incident' or 'Christianborg Crossroads Shooting,' were a series of violent protests and demonstrations that occurred in the capital of the Gold Coast, on February 28, 1948. Expectations for better opportunities and conditions increased with the return of Ghanaian ex-servicemen from the war and on that day, these ex-soldiers gathered in Accra to voice their disapproval of the economic challenges and the slow progress of political reform by the British colonial authorities. During this protest, the ex-servicemen clashed with police resulting in violence and casualties. Though the exact number killed

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<sup>139</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 215-216.

<sup>140</sup> Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 215.

<sup>141</sup> Watson Commission Report 1948, para. 195 & App. 17., as cited in Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 67.

<sup>142</sup> David Killingray, "Soldiers, ex-servicemen, and politics in the Gold Coast, 1939-50," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1983), 523-534.

on that day is unknown, it is estimated that in addition to the deaths of three leading veterans, Sergeant Adjete, Corporal Attipoe, and Private Odartey Lamptey, some twenty-five to thirty other people lost their lives.<sup>143</sup> It is important to note that the ex-servicemen had been promised pensions and jobs after the war; but, when they returned home, jobs were scarce, and their pensions were never disbursed. Manns adds that there was growing political frustration with British colonial rule and a desire for self-determination and independence among the Gold Coast's population, reflected in the attitude of the marchers. He further states that apart from the three fatalities, a further 60 ex-servicemen were wounded and today the three Ex-Servicemen who died have been memorialized in Accra to remember their sacrifice in the fight for justice and fair treatment of African soldiers, and general contributions to Ghana's independence struggle.<sup>144</sup>

The riots marked a turning point in Ghana's struggle for independence from British colonial rule because it intensified demands for self-determination, culminating in a more radical and urgent push for independence. Israel argues that the riots were triggered by growing discontent among Ghanaians over social and economic inequalities, political representation, and the lack of progress toward self-government despite their contributions during Second World War.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Austin adds that Ghanaians felt a sense of frustration with the colonial administration's refusal to address their grievances and implement meaningful reforms.<sup>146</sup> Eugene P. A. Schleh describes how the riots were

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<sup>143</sup> Adrienne M. Israel, "Ex-servicemen at the Crossroads: Protest and Politics in post-war Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (1992), 359-368.

<sup>144</sup> Manns, "The Role of Ex-Servicemen in Ghana's Independence Movement," 1-28.

<sup>145</sup> Israel, "Ex-servicemen at the crossroads: Protest and politics in post-war Ghana," 359-368.

<sup>146</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 11-13.



initially sparked by a peaceful march of ex-servicemen, veterans of the Second World War, who were demanding the payment of promised back pay and improved living conditions, but the British colonial authorities responded with violence, using tear gas and batons to disperse the protesters, which led to clashes and an escalation of tensions.<sup>147</sup> Both Austin and Schleh agreed on the impact of the march but Schleh more fully addressed the question of the responsibility for the violence.

This situation quickly escalated, and violence spread throughout Accra. Rioters targeted European-owned properties and symbols of colonial authority, leading to looting and destruction. The British colonial authorities declared a state of emergency and deployed military forces to restore order, resulting in further clashes and casualties. According to Austin, the exact number of casualties remains disputed, but it is estimated that several dozen people were killed, and hundreds were injured during the riots. He noted that –between 28 February and 16 March, there were 29 deaths and over 200 injured.<sup>148</sup> This led to a significant shift in the nationalist movement, with many Ghanaians becoming more radicalized and committed to the struggle for independence. Russen W. Howe contends that the 28 February incident was –the straw that broke the camel’s back, marking the beginning of the process that led the Gold Coast to become the first African colony to achieve independence on 6 March 1957.<sup>149</sup> Collectively, these authors highlighted the deep-seated grievances and aspirations of the population that

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<sup>147</sup> Eugene P. A. Schleh, “The Post-War Careers of Ex-Servicemen in Ghana and Uganda.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1968), 203-220.

<sup>148</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 11

<sup>149</sup> Russell Warren Howe, “Gold Coast into Ghana,” *The Phylon Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1957), 155-161.

served as a catalyst for further political activism and agitation against colonial rule. The Accra 1948 riots were not led by a single individual or a specific group. Instead, they were a spontaneous and widespread eruption of civil unrest involving many ordinary Ghanaians who were frustrated with social and economic inequalities, political representation, and the lack of progress toward self-government. Though the riots did not have a single leader, and key nationalists, including members of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) such as J.B. Danquah and Kwame Nkrumah, did not directly participate in them, they refused to openly condemn them. However, the UGCC's goal was to advocate for self-government and independence through peaceful, gradual reform, and constitutional means, and its leaders tended to view the riots as an impediment to their cause, weakening their efforts to negotiate with the British for independence. At the same time, however, these leaders used the grievances of the Ghanaian people as leverage to press for constitutional reforms.

Though there is no direct connection between Kwame Nkrumah leaving the UGCC and the Accra 1948 riots, the riots played a role in his eventual exit from the party. At the time of the riots, Nkrumah was the General Secretary of the UGCC, and his role in the organization made him a prominent figure. Some members of the UGCC leadership criticized Nkrumah and held him responsible for the escalation of the riots. They accused him of being too radical and blamed his speeches and actions for inciting violence. Obetsibi Lamptey stated that -the General Secretary (Kwame Nkrumah) had been carrying on certain correspondence inimical to the interests of the convention he has been

interdicted from duty.<sup>150</sup> However, Nkrumah defended himself, stating that the root cause of the riots lay in the grievances of the people and the failure of the colonial administration to address their demands.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the Accra 1948 riots and the subsequent blame game within the UGCC contributed to growing tensions between Nkrumah and the other leaders. Austin points out that after the Commission of Inquiry report on the 1948 Riots, –the return to civilian life of groups of dissatisfied ex-servicemen, the shortage of housing accommodation in the main towns, the steep rise in the price of imported goods, and poor handling of the cocoa shoot diseases contributed to the riot.<sup>152</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note that throughout the period of the riots, there were several key divisions within the UGCC. Birmingham notes that Kwame Nkrumah had a more radical and assertive vision for achieving independence for the Gold Coast. Nkrumah believed in the power of mass mobilization, direct action, and the need for immediate self-government. However, the UGCC leadership, including J.B. Danquah and others, favoured a more moderate and gradualist approach, seeking to negotiate with the colonial authorities for self-government over an extended period.<sup>153</sup> Austin adds that Nkrumah desired a strong, centralized leadership structure for the nationalist movement, with a focus on a unified, disciplined, and tightly organized political party. On the other hand, the UGCC had a more decentralized leadership structure, with power distributed among various members and leaders. This difference in leadership style contributed to

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<sup>150</sup> Austin, "The Working Committee of the United Gold Coast Convention," 286.

<sup>151</sup> June Milne, "Kwame Nkrumah: Life After the Coup and the Conakry Period," *New Directions* 14, no. 4 (1987), 6.

<sup>152</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 12.

<sup>153</sup> David Birmingham, "History in Africa," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997), 692-708.

conflicts within the UGCC.<sup>154</sup> Nkrumah was seen as a dynamic and charismatic leader who appealed to the masses, while some UGCC leaders preferred a more traditional and elite-driven approach. Nkrumah believed in mobilizing the masses and involving them directly in the struggle, which some UGCC leaders were hesitant about. Disputes over funding and resource allocation further strained relations, as Nkrumah had concerns about transparency in financial matters. These internal conflicts reached a breaking point after the 1948 riots, culminating in Nkrumah's exit. Vincent Dodo, looking at Kwame Nkrumah's vision beyond the Gold Coast, argues that Nkrumah was influenced by Pan-Africanist and socialist ideologies, advocating not only for Ghana's independence but also for a united Africa and socialist principles to address social and economic disparities. These views were not entirely aligned with the more cautious stance of some UGCC members.<sup>155</sup>

Although there may not be a document that directly condemns Kwame Nkrumah for his radical approach to independence from other United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) leaders, there are historical accounts and writings, including Austin's book *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960* and Immanuel Wallerstein's "Implicit ideology in Africa," which explore the differences in approach and ideology between Nkrumah and some UGCC leaders.<sup>156</sup> Austin states that after the 1948 Accra Riots, the UGCC passed a resolution expelling Nkrumah from the party. This resolution cited his "authoritarian

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<sup>154</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 78-82.

<sup>155</sup> Vincent Dodo, "Kwame Nkrumah's Mission and Vision for Africa and the World," *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 4, no. 10 (2012), 64-65.

<sup>156</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "Implicit ideology in Africa: a review of books by Kwame Nkrumah." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 4 (1967): 518-522.

attitudell and –dictatorial and dividing methods.<sup>157</sup> Though this is not a direct accusation of radicalism, it reflects the tensions within the UGCC. More traditional elements within the party viewed Nkrumah’s stance as too radical and potentially disruptive to the existing colonial order. These tensions, along with other factors, led to Nkrumah’s decision to part ways with the UGCC and form the more assertive Convention People’s Party (CPP) in June 1949. The formation of the CPP marked a significant shift in the nationalist movement, as Nkrumah’s more radical approach gained popularity and momentum, ultimately leading Ghana to independence.

#### Kwame Nkrumah and the Formation of the Convention People’s Party (CPP)

Nkrumah’s calls for immediate self-government resonated with a broader segment of the Ghanaian population, especially the working class and rural communities. George Bob-Milliar concludes that Nkrumah broke away due to ideological differences, as he sought independence with immediate effect.<sup>158</sup> Gocking interprets the establishment of the CCP from a different perspective, stating that its formation was the result of the 1948 riots and subsequent events, such as the creation of the commission of inquiry that found Kwame Nkrumah to hold communist views, resulting in his exclusion from the Coussey Committee, which had been established after the riots, to draft a constitution towards self-rule for Gold Coast.<sup>159</sup> As Nkrumah established his new party, the CPP adopted a populist approach, appealing to the masses, workers, farmers, and the youth. Nkrumah

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<sup>157</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 77.

<sup>158</sup> George M. Bob-Milliar, "Verandah Boys versus Reactionary Lawyers: Nationalist Activism in Ghana, 1946–1956," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014), 287-318.

<sup>159</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 81-84.

recognized the importance of mobilizing the ordinary people and presenting the party as a vehicle for their aspirations and rights.<sup>160</sup>

How did the Convention People's Party gain popularity and support on the Gold Coast within the shortest possible time? Arden-Clarke argues that the vision of Nkrumah's –vision of Self-Government Now for Chiefs and People of the Gold Coast,<sup>161</sup> through a democratic government resonated with many Ghanaians. The CPP effectively addressed the grievances of the people and channeled their frustrations with colonial rule into a cohesive political movement. In addition to its appealing program, the CPP was also very energetic in promoting its message. Biney describes how the CPP focused on grassroots organizing and mass mobilization. The party established local branches and engaged in extensive door-to-door campaigns, reaching out to people in various homes, villages, communities, and regions of the Gold Coast. This direct engagement with the population helped build strong grassroots support.<sup>162</sup> According to Adi and Sherwood, the CPP made skillful use of media channels available at the time, including newspapers, radio, and public rallies. Nkrumah's speeches were widely covered in the media, spreading the party's message to a broader audience both in Ghana and abroad.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 92-98.

<sup>161</sup> Charles Arden-Clarke, "Gold Coast into Ghana: Some problems of transition," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1958), 49-51.

<sup>162</sup> Ama Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 29-45.

<sup>163</sup> Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), 143-146.

Biney adds that strong youth support and a nonviolent approach to protest and civil disobedience was a major approach contributing to the quick rise of the party. She contends that the CPP had significant support from youth, who saw Nkrumah and the party as representing a new and progressive direction for the Gold Coast. In addition, the CPP advocated for nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to challenge colonial rule. This approach garnered sympathy and support from both within Ghana and internationally.<sup>164</sup> The CPP's Youth League, also known as the Youth Brigade or Young Pioneers, played a crucial role in organizing protests, demonstrations, and political campaigns. For example, during the -Positive Action campaign in 1950, which called for non-cooperation with the colonial authorities, youth played a prominent role in strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations.<sup>165</sup> The CPP invested in the political education and training of young activists. They were taught the party's ideology, organizational skills, and the importance of the struggle for independence.

The CPP utilized various sources of financing to support its activities during the struggle for independence. Austin notes that the CPP collected membership dues from its supporters and members. Party members, especially those who could afford it, made additional contributions to support operations and activities.<sup>166</sup> People often donated money and resources in addition to paying dues to support the CPP and its efforts toward independence. These donations were often made in cash or kind. Biney points out that the

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<sup>164</sup> Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 29-45.

<sup>165</sup> Richard Asante, Megan Hershey, Phoebe Kajubi, Tracy Kuperus, Colman Msoka, and Amy Patterson, "What motivates young African leaders for public engagement? Lessons from Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 34 (2021), 309-333.

<sup>166</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 126-127.

CPP also organized fundraising events, including rallies, dinners, and cultural performances, to generate funds. These events brought together party supporters and the public, encouraging them to contribute financially and through the sale of party publications. The CPP published newspapers, pamphlets, and other materials to promote its message to generate income.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, the CPP had close ties with labour unions, which provided crucial financial support to the party. Biney also emphasizes that the CPP received international support, especially financial assistance from sympathetic individuals abroad who supported the vision of Ghanaian independence.<sup>168</sup> However, the primary sources of financial and moral support for the independence movement came from within Ghana, including donations from individuals and contributions from party members. International support was often more in the form of moral and diplomatic backing rather than substantial financial aid. The CPP operated in a resource-constrained environment, and its financial resources were often limited compared to those of the colonial administration. Nevertheless, the party's resourcefulness and ability to garner public support contributed to its success in mobilizing the people and advancing the struggle for independence.

#### The Road to Ghana's Internal Self-Government in 1951

The CPP soon gained prominence and popularity during this period, emerging as the primary political force in the Gold Coast's struggle for self-government and independence. Kwame Nkrumah's visionary leadership and the party's mass appeal,

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<sup>167</sup> Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 29-45.

<sup>168</sup> Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 29-45.



coupled with their nonviolent approach and grassroots organizing, proved to be crucial factors. On January 8, 1950, Nkrumah, as part of his party's immediate demand for self-government from British colonial rule, declared a Positive Action campaign. This was a series of political protests and strikes in pre-independence Ghana launched to fight imperialism through nonviolence and education. However, when Nkrumah launched the campaign, riots erupted throughout Accra. The outcome of the Positive Action campaign was multi-faceted and had far-reaching implications. While it resulted in a surge of mass mobilization and support from ordinary Ghanaians where people from all walks of life participated in strikes, boycotts, and protests, demonstrating their commitment to independence, it also led to the arrest of Kwame Nkrumah and several leading members of the CPP.<sup>169</sup>

Historians such as Austin, Addo-Fening, and Biney have explored the motivation for self-government among Ghanaians. Austin states that the British colonial administration had been slow in responding to the demands for self-government and was perceived as being unresponsive to the aspirations of the people of the Gold Coast. This frustration led Nkrumah and the CPP to adopt a more assertive approach to pushing for independence.<sup>170</sup> Addo-Fening contends that the Nkrumah drew inspiration from nonviolent resistance movements like Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence. Positive Action was intended to peacefully protest and challenge colonial

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<sup>169</sup> Bob-Milliar, "Verandah Boys versus reactionary lawyers," 293-302.

<sup>170</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 88-92.

authority without resorting to violence.<sup>171</sup> According to Biney, Nkrumah believed that by declaring Positive Action, the CPP could mobilize large numbers of Ghanaians to join the cause for independence. Mass rallies, strikes, and civil disobedience were used to draw attention to the nationalist movement and to demonstrate the widespread support for self-government.<sup>172</sup> It is worth noting that the authors differ in their opinions and interpretations. While some looked at the causes of the Positive Action, others highlighted its impact.

Eric Opoku Mensah argues that the Positive Action Campaign resulted in a surge of mass mobilization across the Gold Coast. The campaign galvanized large numbers of Ghanaians to join the cause for self-government and independence. Mass rallies, protests, and strikes drew widespread attention to the nationalist movement.<sup>173</sup> Mensah adds that the campaign marked a shift in the struggle for independence from peaceful protests and negotiations to a more assertive and direct demand for self-government. The campaign demonstrated the determination of Ghanaians to achieve independence and their willingness to take nonviolent direct action to challenge colonial rule.<sup>174</sup> As noted by Gocking, these protests received a repressive response from the British colonial authorities as numerous people and leaders of the CPP were arrested and imprisoned, including Nkrumah himself. However, the arrests only further fueled public support for

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<sup>171</sup> Roberts Addo-Fening, "Gandhi and Nkrumah: A Study of Non-violence and Non-co-operation Campaigns in India and Ghana as an Anti-colonial Strategy," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 13, no. 1 (1972): 65-85.

<sup>172</sup> Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 29-45.

<sup>173</sup> Eric Opoku Mensah, "Collective memory, merging enemies, consistency of word and place: Nkrumah's rhetorical artefacts in the "Positive Action" protest," *African Yearbook of Rhetoric* 7, no. 1 (2016): 21-32.

<sup>174</sup> Mensah, "Collective memory, merging enemies, consistency of word and place: Nkrumah's rhetorical artefacts in the "Positive Action" protest," 21-32.

the nationalist dream.<sup>175</sup> The intensified pressure created by Positive Action eventually prompted the British government to engage in constitutional talks with the CPP leadership, leading to the granting of limited self-government and the establishment of the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly in 1951. Overall, Positive Action was a pivotal campaign that used several methods including mass mobilization, boycotts and strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violent protests to advance the nationalist movement in Ghana and accelerated the process of decolonization. It highlighted the power of nonviolent resistance in effecting political change and contributed to shaping the trajectory of Ghanaian history and the broader African decolonization movement.

#### The Election of 1951 and the Rise of Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minister

The British colonial government's actions and responses to the Positive Action Campaign are well-documented. This response included arrests, the declaration of a state of emergency, and the use of force to quell protests. Aside from Nkrumah himself, other prominent figures arrested following the Positive Action Campaign included Komla Gbedemah, a prominent CPP member, and Kojo Botsio, Kofi Baako, and Edward Akuffo Mensah, also key party members and close associates of Nkrumah. In discussing the reasons behind their arrest, Austin points out that the British colonial authorities considered Positive Action as an act of defiance against their rule. They perceived it as a direct challenge to their authority and a potentially destabilizing force in the colony.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, Gocking notes that the civil disobedience and strikes associated with Positive

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<sup>175</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 91.

<sup>176</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 114.

Action disrupted public order and posed challenges to the functioning of colonial institutions and services. The British administration viewed these actions as undermining law and order and was concerned that the Positive Action campaign could inspire broader unrest and protests across the colony. They wanted to prevent the movement from gaining further momentum and attracting more widespread support.<sup>177</sup> Davidson also notes that Nkrumah and the CPP had become increasingly popular, and their influence was growing rapidly. The British administration feared the rise of the CPP and its potential to become a dominant political force in the Gold Coast.<sup>178</sup>

At the same time, due to the civil disobedience and unrest created by the Positive Action campaign, the British colonial administration recognized the growing demand for greater political representation and local autonomy. As a result, elections were held to allow Ghanaians to choose representatives to the newly created Legislative Assembly and were part of a broader process of constitutional reforms aimed at devolving some powers from the British colonial administration to the elected representatives of the Gold Coast. This marked a departure from the previous system, where colonial officials held significant decision-making authority.<sup>179</sup> The people of the territory were allowed to vote and choose their representatives, thereby playing a role in shaping the political landscape and governance of their country.

Following the 1951 elections, the CPP emerged as the dominant political party in Ghana. Nkrumah's popularity and the party's effective organization solidified its position

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<sup>177</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 94.

<sup>178</sup> Davidson, *Africa in Modern History*, 200-202.

<sup>179</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 103-152.

as the leading force in the nationalist movement. The CPP, under Nkrumah's leadership, achieved a landslide victory in the 1951 Gold Coast Legislative Assembly elections. In the first election organized by the British colonial government in the Gold Coast, the CPP won 34 out of the 38 African seats contested, representing 89.47% of the total. This impressive victory marked a turning point in the Gold Coast's political landscape and set the stage for the country's journey towards self-government and eventual independence. Through a combination of political achievements, popular support, and negotiations with the British colonial authorities, Kwame Nkrumah's vision, charisma, and relentless commitment to the nationalist cause played a significant role in his ascent to becoming the first Prime Minister of Ghana.

## Chapter 4: Epilogue and Conclusion

In February 1951, the first government was formed after the elections, and the CPP was tasked with leading it. Kwame Nkrumah was appointed by Governor Sir Charles Arden-Clarke as the Leader of Government Business and later Prime Minister in 1952.<sup>180</sup> Nkrumah's tenure was marked by several significant achievements and initiatives that shaped Ghana's path to nationhood. Gocking emphasizes that Nkrumah continued to advocate for full independence. The country underwent a transitional period during which further negotiations took place with the British government to finalize the terms of independence.<sup>181</sup> Nkrumah played a key role in introducing constitutional reforms that aimed to favour Ghanaians and pave the way for increased self-government and eventual independence. These constitutional reforms were significant steps in shaping Ghana's political landscape and advancing the aspirations of the Ghanaian people.

Austin argues that one of the primary objectives of Nkrumah's constitutional reforms was to ensure greater African representation in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly. It is worth mentioning that both Austin and Birmingham agreed on the significance of the constitutional reforms adopted by Nkrumah. However, Austin points out that among the constitutional reforms, the primary one was for greater African representation in the legislative assembly. Before the reforms, the Legislative Assembly

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<sup>180</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 154-156.

<sup>181</sup> Roger S. Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 95-108.

was dominated by appointed and indirectly elected officials who were often not accountable to the Ghanaian population. Nkrumah's tenure saw the constitution expand the number of elected representatives, allowing more Ghanaians to have a voice in the legislative process.<sup>182</sup> The 1951 elections introduced universal adult suffrage, allowing all adult citizens, especially persons aged 21 and over, regardless of gender or wealth, to participate in the electoral process. This move was a significant step towards democratization, giving Ghanaians a direct say in the selection of their representatives and the governance of the country.<sup>183</sup> This electoral reform sought to give voting powers to the local and regional levels. This decentralization aimed to empower communities to partake in development initiatives.

As government leader, Nkrumah implemented various social and economic development plans aimed at transforming the country and improving the lives of its citizens. These plans were part of his broader vision for Ghana's progress and development. Austin explains that Nkrumah's economic policies focused on promoting industrialization and reducing Ghana's reliance on imports. He aimed to build a self-sustaining industrial base by establishing state-owned industries and encouraging domestic production of goods and services. Nkrumah's vision, according to Austin, motivated his government to create the Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board to regulate the cocoa industry, which was a crucial source of foreign exchange for the country. The board ensured fair prices for cocoa farmers and managed cocoa export revenues to

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<sup>182</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 200-212.

<sup>183</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 109-110.

support development projects.<sup>184</sup> Gocking adds that Nkrumah's government also invested in expanding healthcare facilities and services across the country. Initiatives included the establishment of new hospitals and health centers, training of medical professionals, and the improvement of public health programs. Again, due to his socialist vision, Nkrumah pursued a policy of nationalization, whereby key sectors of the economy, such as mining, banking, and transportation, were brought under state ownership and control. This move aimed to consolidate economic power and prioritize development goals.<sup>185</sup> These social and economic development plans reflect Nkrumah's commitment to modernizing Ghana, reducing dependency on external influences, and creating a self-reliant, industrialized nation.

During his early years as Prime Minister, Nkrumah recognized education as the primary driving tool to educate Ghanaians and instill national unity and identity. His vision for educational development aimed at creating opportunities for all Ghanaians, regardless of their background. The goal was to foster a sense of shared progress and prosperity. Among the notable schools built was the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) located in Kumasi established in 1952. According to Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, and Addo, Nkrumah's government made efforts to reform the education system to incorporate Ghanaian history, culture, and languages into the curriculum. He encouraged the celebration of Ghanaian arts, literature, and traditions as a way of preserving and promoting the country's cultural heritage. The authors further note

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<sup>184</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 157-176.

<sup>185</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 118-142.



that Nkrumah promoted the use of local languages alongside English to facilitate communication and participation in governance. This linguistic inclusivity aimed to strengthen connections between different ethnic and linguistic groups.<sup>186</sup> Nkrumah's commitment to promoting the educational system in Ghana cannot be understated. To stimulate and inspire the youth of Ghana, his government made primary education free and compulsory and established new secondary schools, universities, and technical institutions. Nkrumah stated that -his government was going to make it possible for every child to go to school and it would be a criminal offense for any parent not to send his child to school.<sup>187</sup> Through these initiatives and policies, Nkrumah sought to create a cohesive national identity that transcended ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences. He envisioned Ghana as a beacon of hope for the African continent, demonstrating the potential for a united, independent, and prosperous Africa.

The British recognized Nkrumah's position and his role as Prime Minister. Ghana and Britain entered a new phase of diplomatic ties and put an end to direct colonial control. Though there may have been some individuals within the colonial administration who did not like Nkrumah and his policies, there were no records indicating that the colonial establishment both in the Gold Coast and Britain were against Nkrumah. They recognized the circumstance and supported Nkrumah's control over the nation's affairs.

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<sup>186</sup> Adu-Gyamfi and Addo, 160-167.

<sup>187</sup> Adu-Gyamfi and Addo, 163.

## Final Steps to Independence

Although there might not have been a single instance where the British explicitly promised a specific date for independence, it was widely believed that the decision to hold the 1951 elections was the key starting point, and thereafter the gradual process of constitutional reforms, negotiations, and nationalist pressure eventually culminated in the formal declaration of independence. A second set of elections, held in 1954, were a significant step in the process of granting increased self-government to the Gold Coast.<sup>188</sup> Nkrumah's CPP emerged as the clear winner, as it had in 1951. It won a significant majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly, 72 out of a total of 104 legislative assembly seats, solidifying its position as the dominant political party in the country.<sup>189</sup> Other parties also participated but with limited success, and the opposition parties subsequently had little influence. Nkrumah's victory in the elections further strengthened his political influence and paved the way for increased demands for self-government and independence. Austin points out that –the election results indicate the CPP was still the only political movement in the country capable of forming a government<sup>190</sup>

Thereafter, nationalist sentiments continued to intensify, creating a sense of momentum towards full self-governance. The gradual transition of powers from the colonial administration to Ghanaians continued, and in 1956 a third set of elections was held. The CPP won again and in fact increased its vote share compared to the 1954 elections and held on to 71 seats in the 104-seat legislature. This convincing victory

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<sup>188</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 103-114.

<sup>189</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 243.

<sup>190</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 244.

resulted in the CPP dominating the legislative assembly, with the opposition parties having little influence.<sup>191</sup>

After the 1956 elections, there were growing demands for full independence in Gold Coast among Ghanaians and leaders of the Legislative Assembly led by Kwame Nkrumah. Due to political negotiations, constitutional reforms, elections, and growing public pressure, the British colonial authorities decided to heed the call of Ghanaians and finally grant them full independence. Though there were plans on the part of the British colonial government to grant Ghanaians their independence in the long run, they had not expected it would come so soon. During the colonial era, the British saw their colonies as an extension of the British Empire and did not prioritize the independence of these countries because their primary objective was economic exploitation. Yet just six years after the first election was held in Gold Coast, Britain granted Ghana's independence. On March 6, 1957, Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Gold Coast, together with some members of the CPP in Accra, declared independence from British colonial rule, making Ghana the first sub-Saharan African country to do so.<sup>192</sup>

The declaration ceremony was attended by thousands of Ghanaians who gathered to witness the historic moment. Dignitaries and representatives from various countries were also present. As a symbolic act, the British colonial flag was lowered, signifying the end of British rule in Ghana. Afterward, the new flag of Ghana was raised for the first time, with its black star symbolizing African freedom, unity, and independence. At the

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<sup>191</sup> Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*, 329; "Election," in *Historical Dictionary of Ghana*, 132-133.

<sup>192</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 109-112.

event, Kwame Nkrumah delivered a powerful speech, famously stating, –At long last, the battle has ended! And thus, Ghana, your beloved country, is free forever!|| Again, it was during this ceremony Nkrumah stated that –the independence of Ghana is meaningless until there is the total liberation of Africa,|| signifying his vision for not only the freedom of Ghana but the African continent in general.<sup>193</sup> The declaration of Ghana’s independence marked a moment of great pride and jubilation for the Ghanaian people. It signaled the beginning of a new era of self-determination and sovereignty for the nation, and it inspired other African countries in their struggles for independence. The date, March 6, is celebrated annually in Ghana as Independence Day, a national holiday commemorating this historic event.

Ghana’s journey to independence was led by a combination of political leaders, nationalist movements, and the collective efforts of the Ghanaian people. However, Kwame Nkrumah stands out as the central and pivotal leader in the struggle for independence. Nkrumah’s leadership, dedication, and commitment to the cause of Ghana’s independence made him a revered figure not only in Ghana but also in the broader African continent. His legacy as the –Father of Ghanaian Independence|| and a prominent Pan-Africanist leader continues to be celebrated in the history of Africa’s struggle for liberation and unity. Despite this praise, Nkrumah has also received criticism from various quarters. Arhin stressed that one of the key criticisms of Nkrumah’s leadership was his move toward one-party rule and his consolidation of power,

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<sup>193</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, “Africa Must Be Free,” in *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah*, vol. 2 comp. S. Obeng (Accra, Ghana: Afram Publications, 1997), 67.

personality cult, and restrictions on dissent, which were criticized as undemocratic.<sup>194</sup> Ghanaians complained that the one-party state limited political pluralism and suppressed opposition voices, undermining freedom of expression and political participation. The concentration of power within CPP and the executive branch could potentially lead to dictatorship, abuse of power, and lack of checks and balances. Others also criticized Nkrumah's economic policies, including state control of key industries and central planning, inefficiency, and mismanagement. Nkrumah's foreign policy, including his support for liberation movements in other African countries, was both praised and criticized. Some felt that resources should have been focused more on domestic issues.

Crucial though Nkrumah's contribution was, developments during the Second World War provided the necessary impetus for Ghana's journey towards nationhood. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the war had several notable impacts on the colony's political and social dynamics which contributed essentially to its independence. The process of the British losing control over Ghana did not start after 1945; it can be traced back to the early war years. Britain had not fully recovered from the Great Depression, and the economy was still struggling when war broke out. High unemployment rates and economic instability were problems affecting the British people. As Britain shifted to a wartime economy, the costs associated with building up the military and producing armaments posed significant financial challenges for the government which had major implications for colonial policy, including control over Ghana. It is also worth

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<sup>194</sup> Jeff Haynes, "One-party state, no-party state, multi-party state? 35 years of democracy, authoritarianism and development in Ghana," *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 8, no. 2 (1992), 41-62.

mentioning that the outbreak of war disrupted international trade. Britain relied heavily on imports, and wartime conditions hindered the flow of goods. This affected the supply of essential resources and goods, contributing to economic difficulties and making it difficult for the British to maintain their colonial holdings. Resources were often directed toward financing the war, and Britain neglected the Gold Coast, which in turn made Ghanaians call on the colonial government for reforms, particularly in their economic and social life.

Ghanaian soldiers who served in the war were exposed to the principles of freedom, democracy, and self-determination. They interacted with soldiers from various parts of the world and learned about the struggles for independence in other countries. This exposure led to a heightened awareness of the rights and aspirations of nations, fueling a desire for similar self-determination in Ghana upon their return to the Gold Coast.<sup>195</sup> The recruitment process during the Second World War in the Gold Coast was characterized by a deliberate effort to involve individuals from diverse ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds. This inclusivity aimed to harness the collective strength and commitment of the Gold Coast population in support of the war effort. Specific regiments and units were often organized along ethnic or regional lines, allowing recruits to serve alongside people from their communities. Together, soldiers trained and fought, and they frequently forged close relationships that went beyond racial or geographic boundaries. Especially in times of national struggle and conflict, Ghanaians' shared experience of serving in the military fostered a feeling of unity and saw themselves as one people.

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<sup>195</sup> Rita Headrick, "African Soldiers in Second World War," *Armed Forces & Society* 4, no. 3 (1978), 501-526.

Recruitment was not limited to one social class. People from various social strata, including farmers, labourers, civil servants, and professionals, were enlisted. However, social backgrounds often determine the roles and responsibilities assigned to recruits. For instance, those with education or technical skills might be assigned to specialized tasks. Communication with recruits was conducted in various local languages and dialects to ensure understanding and cooperation. Language barriers were addressed through language training and the use of interpreters. This sense of cultural and language cooperation often extended to post-war benefits and opportunities. This experience of working together towards a common goal fostered a sense of unity and national identity among Ghanaian soldiers, reinforcing the idea of a united Ghana, and intensifying nationalism after the war.<sup>196</sup> The international community also recognized that colonialism often resulted in the denial of basic human rights and freedoms to colonial subjects. As a result, decolonization was seen as promoting global peace and stability. The end of colonial rule and the establishment of sovereign nations were expected to reduce conflicts and tensions related to colonial territories.

The strong desire for self-determination and ultimately independence was a driving force behind the formation of political parties. Ghanaians sought to govern themselves and break free from colonial rule. The educated elite and intellectuals who emerged during this time played a crucial role in the formation of political parties including the UGCC and the CPP. These nationalists were well-versed in political ideologies and sought to mobilize the masses for political change. The pressure exerted

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<sup>196</sup> Manns, "The Role of Ex-Servicemen In Ghana's Independence Movement," 73-100.

by the political parties, especially the CPP, through protests and negotiations, influenced British colonial authorities to accelerate the process of granting independence.

There had been calls for change prior to the Second World War, from proto-nationalists. Most of the pressure groups and associations brought up concerns of social fairness, economic rights, and political representation and served as a foundation for political activism. However, their organizations lacked a cohesive national goal and were largely focused on regional or ethnic issues. Again, these pressure groups were not widely supported because their members were mostly professionals and educated elites. There was a notable change following the Second World War, when nationalist actions became more politicized. Postwar nationalists attracted both the masses and educated elites, and they earned widespread support. Postwar nationalism also featured a new set of leaders, with a different outlook from the proto-nationalists.

The path to Ghanaian independence was characterized by a significant amount of non-violent resistance. Some Ghanaian intellectuals and thinkers were influenced by pacifist ideals and advocated for non-resistance or peaceful protest. J. Demerath and Karen S. Straight point out that religious leaders, including Christian and Muslim clerics, sometimes encouraged their followers to pursue peaceful means to achieve social and political change. Religious leaders thus played a role in shaping the moral and ethical dimensions of the struggle for independence.<sup>197</sup> According to Akosua A. Ampofo, Ghanaian women also played a significant role in the struggle for independence through

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<sup>197</sup> N. J. Demerath III and Karen S. Straight, "Religion, politics, and the state: Cross-cultural observations," *Crosscurrents* (1997), 43-58.



non-violent means. Despite women's initially limited political influence in Gold Coast at the time, they contributed greatly to Ghana's independence struggle by mobilizing and people from grassroots, and participating in political rallies, demonstrations, and protests. Women's organizations and leaders such as Ama Nkrumah, Efua Sutherland, and others were actively involved in advocacy, peaceful protests, and non-violent political activities.<sup>198</sup>

However, while the struggle for independence was primarily non-violent, there were instances of armed resistance against British colonial authorities. Notable examples are the Accra 1948 riots and the 1950 Positive Action Campaign. Peter Schwab argues that there were various instances of violent protests and strikes, especially when peaceful means did not yield the desired results. These protests often resulted in clashes with the colonial authorities.<sup>199</sup> After the 1951 elections in Ghana, the level of unrest declined. Nationalist leaders and the Ghanaian people engaged in constitutional negotiations with the British colonial authorities. These negotiations were largely peaceful and diplomatic in nature. The transition from more confrontational approaches in the pre-1951 period to non-violent methods as Ghana approached independence was influenced by the successes of other anti-colonial movements worldwide, as well as the desire to present a peaceful and united front in the struggle for self-determination. Leaders such as Nkrumah drew

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<sup>198</sup> Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Josephine Beoku-Betts, and Mary Johnson Osirim. "Researching African women and Gender Studies: New Social Science Perspectives," *African and Asian Studies* 7, no. 4 (2008): 327-341.

<sup>199</sup> Peter Schwab, *Designing West Africa: Prelude to 21st-Century Calamity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2004), 99-115.

inspiration from the nonviolent methods of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian independence movement and served as an inspiration for Ghanaian nationalists.<sup>200</sup>

The Second World War played a crucial role in accelerating decolonization in various parts of the world, including Ghana. The war weakened European colonial powers, including Britain, economically and militarily. This led to a reassessment of colonial policies which made Britain recognize the need to grant more autonomy and self-government to their colonies after the war, especially those in West Africa, to focus more on domestic issues. The post-war era witnessed a changing political climate, with an increased focus on human rights and self-determination. This climate favored the demands of nationalist movements. While it is impossible to definitively state whether Ghana would have eventually achieved independence in some other way, the war clearly had a formative impact on the pace and context of Ghana's path to independence, through the ultimate achievement of independence was the result of the determination of the Ghanaian people and the nationalist leaders. The fight for Ghanaian independence was a long and tiresome struggle, but Ghana and its people prevailed. Basil Davidson stated that the Second World War –began as a conflict between Europeans,<sup>||</sup> but it developed into more than that: it became, at least to some extent, an anticolonial and anti-racist war as well.<sup>201</sup> Many of these nationalist movements around the globe might not have succeeded had it not been for the lasting impression that the Second World War had on the world.

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<sup>200</sup> R. Addo-Fening, "Gandhi and Nkrumah: A Study of Non-violence and Non-co-operation Campaigns in India and Ghana as an Anti-colonial Strategy," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 13(1), 65-85.

<sup>201</sup> Davidson, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*, 66.

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2022-23 UNB Magee-Third Century Postgraduate Merit Award

2022-23 UNB Magee Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences

2022 Faculty of Social Sciences Dean's Award at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.