

# Kwame Nkrumah and Pan African Consciousness: 1957 – 1966

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## Abstract

Kwame Nkrumah was a foremost Pan African leader who brought Pan Africanism from the Diaspora to the mother continent after hosting the first All African Peoples Conference (AAPC) in Accra in December, 1958; which took far reaching decisions on African redemption. He had inspiration from Dr. J. E. K. Aggrey, Marcus Garvey, WEB DuBois, George Padmore, etc. on Pan Africa tradition. He demonstrated this during the fifth Pan African Congress in Manchester in 1945 where his paper Declaration to the colonial peoples of the world was approved by the delegates to that conference and this he pursued vigorously when his country attained independence in 1957. It was in this perspective that his influence came to bear on the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 now the African Union (AU) as well as other regional bodies e.g. the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 three years after his death. It was also from this perspective that Nkrumah brought Africans both at home and the Diaspora (through their leaders) e.g. Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammed, Muhammed Ali and Kwame Ture (formerly Stockley Carmichael) together.

**Keywords:** Nkrumah, Kwame, Padmore, Garvey, Pan-African, and Consciousness

## 1. Introduction

Born on Saturday, September 21, 1909 at Nkroful, in Nzima (Nkrumah 1976), into a polygamous family, Kwame Nkrumah was the only child of his mother, Nyanibah. While his mother was a farmer and petty trader in agricultural produce, his father was a goldsmith (Smertin 1987: 13 & Nkrumah 1976:4). About 1912 the young Kwame and his mother moved from Nkroful to Half Assini to join his father. Even as a small child, Kwame Nkrumah showed signs of intolerance of injustice and a determination to fight it (Nkrumah 1976:9). His parents were illiterate but they were determined to give their child western education. That was why his mother personally took him to the Roman Catholic primary school in Half Assini till the small boy developed interest to go to school on his own (*ibid*:10).

Kwame Nkrumah had a brilliant career at the primary school. He had finished top of his class and was appointed a pupil teacher and posted to one of the Roman Catholic schools in Half Assini. It was not academic brilliance alone that got him the appointment as a pupil teacher, his teachers had seen his pedagogical qualities which impressed them (Smertin 1987:16). It was these pedagogical qualities that brought him the recommendation of the principal of the Government Training College (Nkrumah 1976:13). Kwame Nkrumah accordingly entered the Government Training College, Accra in 1927. It was in this college that he met Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey who was the “assistant vice principal and the first African member of the staff” (*ibid*: 14).

## 2. GESTATION PERIOD

Kwame Nkrumah’s coming in contact with Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey had an impact on him. He quickly took to the erudite scholar who became his role model. Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey was a great orator who was “extremely proud of his colour but was strongly opposed to racial segregation in any form” (*ibid*). Not surprisingly, it was through him that Nkrumah’s nationalism was first aroused.

Even though it was Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey who ignited his nationalism and with whom he shared his hatred of racism, yet Kwame Nkrumah even at this formative stage of his life disagreed with his role model’s view of racial harmony. As far as Nkrumah (1976) saw it, Aggrey’s view of racial harmony would be acceptable only when

the black race is treated as equal to the white race, that only a free and independent people a people with a government of their own can claim equality, racial or otherwise with another people. [14]

Nkrumah remained faithful to this view throughout his political life. On the sudden death of Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey, Nkrumah and some of his colleagues formed the Aggrey Students Society in his memory. This society became a forum for speech making by members who prepared lectures and delivered same to other members of the society. This society subsequently became a debating society which Nkrumah used to polish his oratory skills (*ibid*: 19).

Originally Nkrumah had no plan to go far in his educational pursuit. All that changed after his encounter with Kwegyir E. K. Aggrey. His admiration of Aggrey as a man and scholar made him to “form the idea of furthering my studies in the United States of America” (*ibid*: 15). By 1935 Kwame Nkrumah had saved some money even though it was not enough to pay his way to the United States of America where he had gained

admission to study (Lincoln University 1854). Kwame Nkrumah was in England in late September 1935 *en route* the United States of America.

It was while he was in England that Nkrumah got the news of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935. Nkrumah (1976) shows how the Pan African idea was getting firmly established in his psyche:

On the placard I read "MUSSOLINI INVADES ETHIOPIA". That was all I needed. At that moment it was almost as if the whole of London had suddenly declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realize the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. [27]

The nationalism which Aggrey had ignited in him surged forward and Nkrumah made another vow: that he would put in everything he had, brave all odds to acquire all the tools he would need for a successful confrontation with colonialism in Africa (*ibid*).

By December, 1935 Kwame Nkrumah had started his programme of study at Lincoln University. It was in the United States of America that Nkrumah came face to face with the sorry plight of the Blackman in America. The Blackman in America had given his all to the social, economic and political development of the country, yet he was denied civil rights, intimidated and despised. His study of black life in America was an eye opener to the racial problem in the United States. Smertin (1987) avers that The Black were

The most deprived group in the "equal opportunity society" occupying the lowest rung on the social ladder. They were the first to fall victim to unemployment...to be a Negro in America is often to hope against hope...This is truly an island of poverty in the midst of an ocean of plenty. [38-9]

Not surprisingly, Nkrumah came to the conclusion that the policy the American government pursued in relation to the African-American had "a great deal in common with the colonial policies pursued by European powers" (*ibid*).

It was also while he was in the United States that Nkrumah knew Paul Robeson, the great performer who, not only contributed greatly to his understanding of the sources of America's racial problems, but also through whom Nkrumah knew black American artists, writers, composers and performers (*ibid*: 46). All these, in addition to his own studies, enabled Nkrumah to form his firm belief that the capitalist system was incapable of guaranteeing genuine equality and freedom. Consequently, he opted for the socialist path of development of his continent (*ibid*: 47).

The last impact his study in the United States had on Kwame Nkrumah was Garveyism. Unfortunately for Nkrumah, Marcus A. Garvey had been deported over mail fraud before he arrived to start his studies at Lincoln University. Garvey was one of the most ardent champions of the back-to-Africa movement and self-help. According to Skinner (1982) Garvey once cried out that:

...As four hundred million men, women and children worthy of the existence given us by the Divine Creator, we are determined to solve our own problems by redeeming our motherland Africa from the hands of alien exploiters and (to) found there a government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world and compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth. [24]

What was more, race pride, racial unity, self-confidence and economic independence formed the main themes of Garvey's preaching on the pages of the *Negro World* which was the organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the street corners of Harlem (Edunam 1984: 183). Garvey had minced no words, he had called on all blacks all over the world to prepare themselves for the conflict that he saw was bound to ensue between the rival forces for the ultimate domination. "...of our country – Africa. For we are not going to give up easily and allow these European intruders to rob, exploit and dominate the land of our fathers" (Uya: 1982). To show that he really meant what he preached, Marcus A. Garvey floated a number of economic ventures among which was a shipping line named the Black Star Line (Okonkwo 1978:98). Undoubtedly, it was for all these activities that Nkrumah argued that of all the literature he had studied, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* did most to fire his enthusiasm. But then Nkrumah did not believe in or share Garvey's views on the purity of the black race and so supported W.E.B. DuBois – a staunch opponent of Garvey who condemned all racism whether black or white (Smertin 1987:43). Garvey had also gone beyond words in his campaign for racial co-operation, self-help and union government. He had produced a union flag and had

declared himself “the President elect of Africa (Okonkwo 1978:110). He had earlier made a clarion call for African solutions to African problems.

These were the influences and mindset that Kwame Nkrumah brought with him to England after he had completed his studies in the United States. He decided to go to London to pick a law degree and finish his doctorate in philosophy. It was in London that Nkrumah met the West Indian journalist, Malcolm Ivan Nurse alias George Padmore with whom he had corresponded while he was in the USA. Padmore’s articles had impressed Nkrumah (Nkrumah 1976:49) and helped to bring the two together. Not surprisingly, it was George Padmore who met Nkrumah at the railway station on his arrival in London and made his settlement in London less difficult than it would have been.

It was also Padmore who introduced Nkrumah to the West African Students Union (WASU) through securing a room in WASU’s hostel as a temporary measure in his quest for accommodation (*ibid*). Nkrumah wasted no time in becoming a member of the West African Students Union. He eventually became the vice president of the Union. As it were, Nkrumah had cut his teeth in politics on the West African turf as he went to work immediately and turned the almost moribund union into an effective organization; not only solving students’ problems generally, but also sending petitions to the Colonial Office for the amelioration of the living conditions of West Africans back home (*ibid*: 53). WASU had become more than a students union. It was now a political association for African students as Nkrumah related with other African students and personalities among whom were R. T. Makonnen, an Ethiopian and Peter Abrahams, a South African writer (*ibid*:52).

The close relationship that developed between Nkrumah and Padmore meant more than widening Nkrumah’s political turf to cover the West Indies – indeed a Pan African environment-to operate. Padmore was a staunch believer in socialism and it was from him that Nkrumah gained a great deal of understanding of socialist ideas and became attracted to Marxism – Leninism partly because of its militant condemnation of “imperialism, colonialism, and racial and national oppression” (Smertin 1987:47). Another fall out of their close relations was the meeting of Nkrumah and the doyen of the Pan African movement, W.E.B. DuBois.

### 3. THE MANCHESTER CONGRESS

It will appear that Nkrumah came to London shortly before preparations for the fifth Pan African Congress billed to take place in Manchester, England started. It is not exactly clear from Nkrumah’s own account how he became involved in the organization of the Congress. Whatever the situation was, clearly his links with George Padmore gave him a chance of very favourable consideration as the Congress was convened by WEB DuBois and George Padmore (*ibid*:56). Along with his close associates, R. T. Makonnen, P. Abrahams and George Padmore, Nkrumah was deeply involved in the preparation for the fifth Pan African Congress which preparation demanded sending hundreds of letters to organizations around the world intimating them of the aims of the Congress and political tactics to be adopted to achieve liberation in the colonies (Nkrumah 1976:52). The “tremendous success” of the Congress, having been attended by “over two hundred delegates from all over the world,” attested to how thorough the preparation for it had been. The Congress opened as scheduled in Manchester Town Hall under the joint chairmanship of WEB DuBois and P. Milliard, a physician from British Guiana, then practicing in Manchester (*ibid*).

The Congress adopted two Declarations one by W.E.B. DuBois and the other by K. Nkrumah. Kwame Nkrumah’s Declaration inter alia:

- a. believed in the rights of all peoples to govern themselves
- b. affirmed the right of colonial peoples to control their destiny
- c. agreed that the object of imperial powers was to exploit the colonial people and so they would never grant colonial peoples the right to govern themselves. Hence the struggle for political power by colonial peoples was the first step towards and the necessary “prerequisite to complete, social, economic and political emancipation”.
- d. Called on the workers and farmers of all colonies to organize themselves effectively with the workers being at the front line of the battle against imperialism.
- e. Called on the intellectuals and the professionals classes of the colonies to wake up from their slumber and take on their responsibilities – fighting for trade union rights, the right to form co-operative organizations, freedom of the press, assembly etc., and advised them that the only road to effective action was organization of the masses.

The Declaration ended with a call in bold letters on colonial and subject peoples of the world to unite (Nkrumah 1972:43-4).

For the first time Africa was adequately represented at the Congress and most of these representatives were soon to become important in one capacity or the other in their own countries (Esedebe 1980:162). Equally, issues discussed ranged from the Atlantic Charter through imperialism to African problems in central and south Africa and Ethiopia (*ibid*: 164-7). The old belief that the struggle for freedom could be waged and won in Europe was abandoned. A new strategy was adopted. Hence forward the struggle “must be conducted in the homelands as the

Indians were already doing”. The adoption of the new strategy reflected the socialist influence of George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah (*ibid*: 172).

The Congress had drawn up a programme for Pan African nationalism and a working committee was set up to give effect to that programme. W.E.B. DuBois and Kwame Nkrumah were appointed chairman and general secretary respectively. In its wisdom, the committee at its maiden meeting decided to set up a headquarters of the Pan African Congress in London to be a sort of clearing house for the political movements that would take shape in the colonies in response to its Declarations (Nkrumah 1976:34). Although Nkrumah failed to get accommodation to house the proposed headquarters, yet after a discussion with his West African colleagues, it was decided that a West African National Secretariat be set up to give effect to the new Pan African nationalism with particular regard to West African nationalism, among other issues incidental to self-government for all West African colonies (*ibid*: 55). Kwame Nkrumah was appointed and he accepted the secretaryship of the West African Secretariat. Nkrumah was not only able to set up a secretariat but also to launch a monthly journal, *The New Africa*. Although the journal did not survive long after its debut largely because of lack of funds, yet Kwame Nkrumah had the opportunity of discussing with West African nationalists from the French colonies. As a direct fallout from the fifth Pan African Congress, Kwame Nkrumah had occupied the strategic post of secretary of three committees; each charged with enormous responsibilities; which posts enabled him to acquire invaluable administrative and organizational experiences that were to stand him in good stead in his later political life.

During his sojourn in the US and England, Kwame Nkrumah had taken time to study not only the crucial importance of political parties and their working, but also the techniques of organization. He knew that he would be faced with the problem of political organization on his return to his homeland (*ibid*: 45). By the end of 1946 Kwame Nkrumah had got all the tools he would need in the epic battles he envisaged he would wage against colonialism and imperialism. What was more, along with some of his colleagues, he had formed a group *The Circle* of which he was chairman. Membership of *The Circle* was restricted to only those known to be “genuinely working for West African unity and the destruction of colonialism...” (*ibid*: 60-1). The members had started to train themselves in order to be “able to commence revolutionary work in any part of the African continent” (*ibid*: 61).

#### 4. RETURN HOME

Ako Adjei and Kwame Nkrumah had been colleagues during their days in the United States. They had worked together at *The African Interpreter*. (*ibid*: 61) He had gone ahead of Nkrumah to England to pick a law degree Nkrumah met him in London and they resumed their friendship. He again left Nkrumah in England and returned to the Gold Coast, where nationalist agitation was gaining momentum under the direction of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) founded by J. B. Danquah and his associates. There was a sort of disconnection between the UGCC leadership and the masses. Being aware of Nkrumah’s ability to resolve such a problem, he wrote Nkrumah inviting him to take up the post of general secretary of the UGCC (*ibid*: 62).

Kwame Nkrumah subsequently got a letter from J. B. Danquah formally offering him the appointment of general secretary of the UGCC. He accepted the offer after some reflection. From the outset, Nkrumah had an all Africa perspective but the exigencies of real politics in the continent demanded that he started his activities in his native land (Editor 1975:16). So Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast” with the intension of using the Gold Coast as a starting off point for African independence and unity (Nkrumah 1972:136). En-route home, he addressed crowds in Freetown, Sierra Leone and held discussions with Liberian politicians in Monrovia. His encounters here convinced him that effective organization was the only key to a successful confrontation with colonialism. He delivered his maiden address to a rally in Accra on February 22, 1948. The tempo of nationalist activities soon changed to an upbeat note (Nkrumah 1976: 75-87). Regrettably, a disagreement developed between Kwame Nkrumah and other top members of the UGCC leadership which ended in the departure of Nkrumah and his admirers from the UGCC and the formation of the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) (*ibid*:88-109) by Nkrumah and his supporters. The squabble between the UGCC and CPP did not lead to any lessening in the tempo of nationalist agitation and the Gold Coast was granted her full political independence on March 6, 1957 (*ibid*: 285).

#### 5. THE QUEST FOR AFRICAN POLITICAL UNITY:

Long before the attainment of independence by the Gold Coast, Kwame Nkrumah had argued that on attainment of freedom, he would pursue vigorously two major issues: a Pan African policy to advance the African revolution and the adoption of measures to construct socialism in Ghana (Nkrumah 1972:125). Nkrumah (1976) had made it very clear that

African nationalism was not confined to the Gold Coast – the new Ghana. From now on it must be Pan African nationalism, and the ideology of African political consciousness and

African political emancipation must spread throughout the whole continent, into every nook and corner of it...our task is not done and our own safety is not assured until the last vestiges of colonialism have been swept from Africa. [290]

As far as Nkrumah saw it, political freedom was a necessary prerequisite for economic and social progress in Africa; which progress would be meaningless so long as any part of the continent remained under colonial rule and while African masses were exploited by domestic and international monopoly finance (Nkrumah 1972:125).

The first step that Nkrumah took in his quest for African political unity was the reactivation of Pan Africanism on African soil by hosting a conference of Independent African States in April, 1958 in Accra barely a year after independence. In a welcome address to the delegates, Nkrumah (1972) argued that they had gathered

Out of our own free will to speak our minds openly to argue and discuss, to share our experiences, our aspirations, our dreams and our hopes in the interest of Mother Africa. [128]

The purpose of this historic conference was to explore ways and means of safe guarding and consolidating their hard won independence, strengthen the economic and cultural ties between their states, find workable arrangements to help “our brothers still languishing under colonial rule”, the need to know more about the old and new forms of colonialism, the need to deal with racialism and to find ways to secure world peace (*ibid*). Nkrumah (1972) ended his address thus:

Today we are one. If in the past the Sahara divided us, now it unites us. And any injury to one is an injury to all of us. From this conference must go the message. Hands off Africa! Africa must be free! [125]

At long last Pan Africanism had moved to the African continent where it really belonged. Speeches that were delivered were similar in content. The overall affect was “a great upsurge of interest in the cause of African freedom and unity.” (*ibid*: 136) What was more, Nkrumah and some of his colleagues followed up this conference with a tour of some states where they were “enthusiastically received” and they discussed ways and means of strengthening further, not only their friendship, but also how to improve their cultural and economic relations (*ibid*).

Eight months after this conference, Kwame Nkrumah hosted the first conference of All African Peoples in Accra. The primary purpose of this conference was to encourage the nationalist movements in colonial Africa as a means toward continental unity and a socialist transformation of society (*ibid*: 130). After a cross fertilization of ideas, the delegates among whom were trade union leaders, agreed: that the delegates should work actively for a final assault on colonialism and imperialism; on the setting up of a permanent secretariat to co-ordinate the activities of the nationalist movements; that nonviolent means be employed to achieve political freedom but to be prepared to resist violence if colonial powers resorted to force; condemned racialism and tribalism and agreed to work for the ultimate attainment of a union or commonwealth of African states (*ibid*:131). It can be seen clearly that African unity, to Nkrumah, was a consuming passion and at the same time “a potent and rational formula for solving the intricate and urgent problems facing Africa and the world.... In it his entire philosophy lived and moved and had its being” (Editor 1975:70).

On November 23, 1958 Ghana and the Republic of Guinea took the first practical step in African unity by creating “a nucleus for a Union of African States.” (Nkrumah 1972: 141) They established a system of exchange of ministers. In July, 1959 the presidents of Liberia, Guinea and Ghana met at Saninquelle to discuss the whole question of African emancipation and unity. At the end of their deliberation, a declaration of principles was signed which carried the name of the body: “The Community of Independent African States”. The Declaration provided for separate national identity and constitutional structure, non-interference in the internal affairs of members, building a free and prosperous African community, help for African peoples to gain their independence and open membership to all independent African states and federations. The motto of the union was “Independence and Unity.” (*ibid*) This union was followed in April 1961 with the signing of the charter that brought into existence the Union of African States (UAS) that comprised Ghana, Guinea and Mali. This union had four basic objectives: a common orientation in domestic policy, common defence system, concerted foreign policy and common economic planning and wealth development. (*ibid*: 142)

Women also had a piece of the action. A conference of African women took place in Accra in July, 1960. Formally opened on July 18, the conference discussed common problems facing womanhood in Africa, freedom and unity and the urgent need for social and economic progress. (*ibid*:138) In fact this women conference came after the April 1960 conference which was hosted by Nkrumah in consultation with other states. This conference was called to discuss “Positive Action and Security in Africa.” The issues that engaged the delegates were those of the moment: the situations in Algeria and South Africa; the atomic tests in the Sahara and the need to plan action to stop these tests; the total liberation of Africa and to plan how to guard against neo-colonialism and

balkanization which would impede African unity (*ibid*). In point of fact, this April, 1960 conference came shortly before the Congo crisis erupted, which crisis the conference had foreseen.

The second All African Peoples Conference took place in Cairo in early 1961 with over two hundred delegates in attendance with Nkrumah playing crucial roles. The conference warned independent African states to be aware of Western countries and Israel because these were associated with neo-colonialists, and imperialist agents in the guise of religious or philanthropic organizations. It adopted a number of resolutions that called for the expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations, release of Jomo Kenyatta from jail, dissolution of the Central African Federation and immediate independence of the Rhodesians and dismissal of Dag Hammarskjold. It also called on “the anti-imperialist bloc to help in the development of African economies by granting long term loans at low interest rates to be paid in local currencies”. (*ibid*: 139) The conference also criticized the policies adopted by the colonial authorities in Angola, the Congo and Cameroon, and it affirmed that the M. Gizenga’s regime in Stanleyville was the legitimate Congo government.<sup>67</sup>

In January 1963, Kwame Nkrumah sent out proposals for the setting up “of a unified political organization” to the heads of state and government of independent African states that is the union of the radical (Casablanca) and moderate (Monrovia) Powers (Nkrumah 1976:229). Nkrumah went on to persuade his colleagues who eventually bought the idea and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) came into being on May 23, 1963 which act Nkrumah saw as a first step to the formation of an African Union Government.

So why was the quest for African unity or African union government such a consuming passion of Kwame Nkrumah? First, African unity or an African union government would advance the African revolution which started in 1957 with the independence of the Gold Coast colony. Second, an African union government would help liberate African territories still under colonial rule. In fact, the unity of Africa according to Nkrumah (1972) was:

Above all, a political kingdom which can only be gained by political means. The social and economic development of Africa will come only within the political kingdom. [235]

To convince his colleagues, Nkrumah cited the USA and USSR which grew out of political decisions before they became “mighty realities of social power and material wealth.” (*ibid*). Besides, an African Union Government would help create world conditions favourable to African prosperity, independence and happiness of mankind.

Third, an African union government would be in a better position to deal with racialism in the continent. Fourth, African unity was very necessary for a successful confrontation with imperialism and neo-colonialism – a confrontation in which unity would be Africa’s strongest weapon. Nkrumah (1972) warned his colleagues that colonialism and imperialism were very close relations and were acting out of the same script and that African leaders

Would be deceiving ourselves in the most cruel way were we to regard their individual actions as separate and unrelated. [235]

So African states should likewise unite to confront successfully colonialism and imperialism.

Fifth, African unity would give political direction to joint efforts for the protection and economic development of the African continent. He cited the industrial revolution in Germany which came only after her unification; which provided the stimulus to expanding capitalism and gave “a suitable population basis for the absorption of manufactured goods”. (Nkrumah 1974a:n.p). Finally, African unity or an African union government would enable Africa to “speak with one voice in the councils of the world” which was so obvious, vital and imperative that comment was hardly necessary. (Nkrumah 1972:226). Besides, having a common foreign policy and diplomacy would take away the enormous burden of separate diplomatic representation, remove the artificial colonial borders, and restore a semblance of Old Africa.

Clearly, according to Nkrumah (1972) a continental union of African states was a *sine qua non* if African leaders were

Determined to move forward to a realization of our hopes and plans for creating a modern society which will give our peoples the opportunity to enjoy a full and satisfying life. The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart. [227]

Nkrumah urged his colleagues to embrace and work for African unity for the sake of the trusting African masses and take them out of the poverty, ignorance and disorder left behind by colonialism (*ibid*). It was this passionate feeling for and determination to attain a union of African States that Kwame Nkrumah offered to surrender Ghana’s sovereignty to an African Union; an offer that Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – the Nigerian prime minister-laughed off (Clark 1991: 419).

The eruption of the Congo and Southern Rhodesian crises of 1960 and late 1965 respectively were

particularly distressing to Kwame Nkrumah. Very distressing because African states could not speak, let alone act as one in the face of neo-colonial intrigues with regard to the former and British prevarication with regard to the latter. Nkrumah saw clearly the unholy alliance between imperialism and racialism in the Southern Rhodesian crisis orchestrated by Ian Smith. It was a British problem and Nkrumah held the British government squarely responsible for its resolution; although he had wished an African solution in the face of British prevarication, in the form of a military invasion and occupation of Southern Rhodesia (Nkrumah 1976b: 144).

## 6. THE QUEST FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The second quest of Kwame Nkrumah was Africa's economic integration. Africa was and is even today very rich in mineral resources. In Nkrumah's (1974a) view during his days, Africa boasted of:

96% of diamonds (excluding the USSR), 69% cobalt, 63% gold,  
48% antimony, 37% manganese, 34% chromite, 32% phosphate  
rock, 24% copper, 19% asbestos, 15% tin, 4% iron, 4% bauxite,  
85% columbite from Nigeria? [150]

Besides these, the continent had the greatest reserves of uranium ore and water potential in the world. Her coal reserves were estimated at 45 million tons; while oil had been discovered in the north, western and central parts of the continent. She also had 27% of world forests and vast agricultural potential among other assets (*ibid*: 152).

These and more were the propelling factors of colonial acquisitions. What was more, her rivers made for irrigation and transportation. So much was neglected by colonialism that would have benefited imperial interests had their concern not been limited to developing the best land and the most lucrative mines (*ibid*: 152-3). Without any doubt, colonial powers disrupted the patterns of economic exchange gearing it to suit their own respective needs: ferreting minerals and cash crops from their sources to the ports for shipment. Second, after independence, these colonial communication networks: rail, road, and river could no longer sustain the increasing demands.

During the colonial era, the native population was encouraged to cultivate cash crops needed by the metropolitan factories; which cash crops prices the European purchasers fixed. This native population was sold manufactured goods at prices fixed by the sellers. Either way the European buyers and sellers made huge profits. In addition, while prices of primary goods were always on a downward slide, those of manufactured goods were on an upward spiral. Mineral exploitation brought colonial powers immense profits e.g. the Rhodesian copper belt and the Anglo-American concern in South Africa with regard to gold and diamond exploitation respectively. All this enormous wealth was systematically shipped away instead of being used to develop Africa (*ibid*: 23).

Mineral concessions were fraudulently acquired at almost nominal rents. Yet these concessions became money spinners for their shareholders in Europe. Stifling of colonies' industrialization was a deliberate policy of the metropolitan powers even where the raw materials were plentiful in the colonies; on the weird excuse that "they wished to safeguard the social system of the African tribes against disintegrating influences of urban conditions." (*ibid*: 28). This view was widely held by European administrators in Africa. Equally, the income tax system was skewed against the colonies – deliberately kept at low level. While companies were registered in metropolitan capitals and so they received the tax benefits from the enormous profits made out of African wealth and labour. In the last thirty years of British colonial rule in the Gold Coast, British trading and shipping interests "took out of our country a total of £300,000,000" (*ibid*:29).

Every effort was made to make the colonies dependent on exports from the mother country. Such imports from the mother country apart from bringing in huge financial profits, kept citizens of the mother country employed and its society tranquil. All of which were the reverse in the colonies and which situation neo colonialism held out, but only at a less harsh level. So colonialism and neo colonialism held no good prospects for African happiness or development. Hence for African social, economic and industrial development, a different approach was imperative and urgent.

Kwame Nkrumah saw African salvation in central economic planning. This system of economic development entailed the elimination of customs barriers. He did not see any problems here if African leaders were not set against their solution. To demonstrate this, the custom barriers between Ghana and Upper Volta were removed in 1961. (*ibid*: 157) The second benefit of central planning was to have been the creation of an African common market of 300 million producers and consumers. Which market would be devoted to uniquely African interests: common trade policy both within and overseas. This would have enabled Africa to square up with European buyers who regulated their affairs with their oversea suppliers through combinations (*ibid*: 162). Central planning would have also eliminated competition among African states. This would have enabled African states to get the best prices because of the pooling of their products and adoption of a common selling policy.

The resultant revenues would have been ploughed into industrialization. Hence the total integration of the African economy on a continent scale was the only way in which Africans would have achieved anything like

the levels of the industrialized countries (*ibid*: 163). In any case, none of the African countries was able to stand on its own and those that attempted to stand on their own were forced to return to the fold of the former colonial masters (*ibid*: 242). What was more, Africa had the resources, energy and talents only the will to harness these on a continental basis was lacking. The first step in this direction was the creation of a monetary zone with an agreed common parity for their different currencies.

A common African market with a central bank, common currency and monetary zone would have commanded foreign investments (*ibid*: 169) as foreign investors would have been sure of the market. More importantly, it would have eliminated the need for loans which did not come without conditionalities such as tying of loans to purchase of goods from donor countries, lower trade barriers in favour of donor countries, determination of how the loans be used, etc. by donors (*ibid*: 327) Often loans were used to pilfer poor states e.g. between 1961 and 1962 these developed states earned \$11.8 billion from the \$6 billion they had put in developing states as aid. Also between 1956 and 1962 the developed world earned \$15 billion in interest and profits on an investment of \$30 billion (*ibid*: 326).

Nkrumah also hated financial handouts from the European Economic Community (EEC); which handouts from an African Common Market would have eliminated. First, such handouts were designed to maintain the historical relationship between industrial Europe and Africa – the supplier of primary products. Second, because success of the industrial states depended on upward review of industrial goods and low cost of primary products, the financial benefits from the developed states would be “out balanced by a gradual decline in the national revenues from primary products” (*ibid*:161). So, as far as Nkrumah was concerned, salvation laid in African leaders taking a bold step to establish an African union government and effect full economic integration at continental level, and so free themselves from imperialist and neo-colonialist mechanizations.

#### **7. QUEST FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION:**

Kwame Nkrumah believed that political freedom was the prerequisite for economic and social progress in Africa. He also saw socialism and African unity as being organically complementary (Nkrumah 1974b:28). He also believed that it was under socialism that one could reliably accumulate the capital to be applied to development and to ensure that the gains of investment are applied to the general welfare and so achieve “our goal of a free and united continent” (*ibid*:28). It was in this context that he saw the attainment of genuine independence by an African state was part of the overall process of continental decolonization. In his analysis of African society, Nkrumah ignored the fact that in various regions of Africa feudal relations and social stratification existed (*ibid*: 184). He therefore used the term “class” only in reference to relations between the imperialists and African countries (*ibid*:186). Consequently, he devoted a great deal of his attention to developing ethical principles for an African society that had chosen socialism as its goal. Among these ethical principles are repulsion of greed, vanity and adoration of modesty and moral purity (*ibid*: 193). The survival of Africa’s social and political structure of his dream was to be guarantee by a military organization – an African High command-that would be strong enough to deter imperialist and neo colonialist intrigues (*ibid*).

#### **8. HIS FALL**

Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup d’état on February 24, 1966 while he was away in Peking, China where he had gone in search of peace – an end to the Vietnam War. While the masses of Ghana and “...the Western diplomats rejoiced, the militant left in Africa could hardly believe what was happening.” (Fitch & Oppenheimer n.d)

Ocran A.K. (1968:24-5) argues that Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown for many reasons among which were the gigantic plans into which he plunged concerning “Pan African affairs long before the Ghana base had been secured”. He regretted that these Pan African issues took Nkrumah’s attention and energy away from “his own home and he could do justice neither to his domestic nor to his adopted continental constituency”.

In fact, Kwame Nkrumah (1972) paid a lot of attention to Pan African issues because of his belief that

No part of Africa is free while any of our national territory remains unliberated. There can be no co-existence between African independence and imperialist and neo-colonialist domination between independent Africa and racist, minority, settler government. [432]

Nor did he believe that there can be a peaceful and thriving Africa in the midst of a world ravaged by hunger, disease and imperialist intrigues and aggression. Which was why he went to the Far East in search of an end to the Vietnam War and in the absence of which he was overthrown.

Pan African issues were not weighty enough reasons why Nkrumah was overthrown. His Ideological Research Institute at Winneba drew most of its students from within Ghana (Nkrumah 1972:170-80). The foreign students would not have constituted a heavy drain on Ghana’s financial resources. Nor did those students become Nkrumah’s agents in their homelands (*ibid*).



According to Akintoye (1976:121), Nkrumah's fall can be traced to his compliance with the recommendations of the Arthur Lewis Report of 1953. To accelerate economic development, the Report requested the government to provide economic infrastructures, education and make Ghana attractive to foreign investors, through separating industries for foreign only and joint investments, and employment guidelines. In compliance, Nkrumah gave "all sorts of attractions of foreign investors" e.g. tax exemptions, low rates of taxation on profit, low duties or no duties on imported raw materials, low tariffs on goods produced, safety of foreign capital and promises to help foreign businessmen etc. (*ibid*:123).

The result was catastrophic for Ghana as only 15% of total investment envisaged came in from abroad, world price for cocoa started to fall and so between 1952 and 1961 Ghana imports rose 115% while exports increased by only 34% (*ibid*). Ghana now had a balance of payment problem. This was worsened by foreign companies and banks which took advantage of the government's liberal policies and repatriated their profits as to injure the economy. More wealth was flowing out of Ghana than coming in or was being produced. Consequently, Ghana began to draw heavily from her foreign reserves which fell rapidly. By 1961 Ghana economic situation was grim (*ibid*: 124).

The Five Year Development Plan (1959-64) was abandoned and replaced in March 1963 by a new socialist seven year plan 1963-70 which aimed at attaining a socialist state within twenty years. It provided for a yearly investment of £190 million (*ibid*). The funds were to come from both direct and indirect taxes, profits from state enterprises and the Cocoa Marketing Board. But the state enterprises started to fail because, among other reasons, the funds to establish them were borrowed mainly from abroad. No funds came from the Cocoa Marketing Board because the price of cocoa continued to fall in the world market and attempts to raise indirect taxes led to a strike in 1961 (*ibid*:124-5). By 1965 Ghana was faced with drastic food shortages and consumer goods became very inadequate. While the hardships of the people grew, government and party leaders were flaunting their ill-gotten wealth (*ibid*: 127). All of which made Nkrumah and his government very unpopular; which explain why the people welcomed his overthrow when it came.

## 9. CONCLUSION

As a Pan Africanist, scholar and statesman, Kwame Nkrumah was head and shoulders above his compatriots. In his analysis of the economic and political problems of Africa and the solutions he proffered, Nkrumah was living in the twenty-first century. The African Union (AU) was established on July 9, 2002 not necessarily in imitation of the European Union (EU) but out of a sober analysis of the failure of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to meet the aspirations of the African masses. The African Union (AU) has been grappling with the issues of African union government, economic integration of Africa, African central bank etc. since its inception. Issues that Kwame Nkrumah initiated and fought for their realization throughout his life and partly for which he was overthrown and exiled. His posthumous rehabilitation and burial in his native land and the foundation of the African Union (AU) are fitting testimonies that Kwame Nkrumah was indeed a great Pan Africanist.

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