

Rise to Independence, Fall to a Coup D'état: Ghana's New National Military Under Kwame Nkrumah

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Decolonization presented many challenges to new post-colonial African governments. One of the most essential was the question of national defense. The new state governments had to build new militaries from their existing colonial inheritance. These militaries were often poorly funded, under equipped and under manned. However, Ghana experienced initial success as a newly decolonized nation that marked a swift change from a colonial administration and accelerated the decolonization of Africa. By analyzing Ghana's approach to strengthening its military, we gain insight into the post-colonial struggles and decisions the Ghanaian government faced.

Examining Ghana's military provides insight to understanding the national fabric of Ghana from 1957 through to 1966. Kwame Nkrumah was a new militant leader of Pan-Africanism.¹ Rising to power in 1952, he became the first Prime Minister of the Gold Coast from 1952 to 1957. He then created a new national identity for the Gold Coast by renaming the country Ghana and becoming the first Prime Minister of Ghana from 1957 to 1960. Initially, Nkrumah showed interest in working with Western and former colonial powers in the decolonization efforts.² However, in 1960 Ghana transitioned into a Republic and Nkrumah became the first President of Ghana, replacing the Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Realms as the head of state. As president, he had the power to shape his nation as he chose in accordance with his Pan-African ideology, with only limited or controlled political opposition. Ghana became the pacesetter of the decolonization movement.³

In the midst of decolonization, strengthening national self-defense was a priority, not necessarily from physical invasions, but from armed insurrections. Already by 1960 there had been a series of conflicts in decolonized African states as new national governments established independence. This trend would continue throughout Nkrumah's presidency, in particular the Congo Crisis (1960-1965) and the Rhodesian Bush War/Zimbabwe Liberation Struggle (1964-

¹ Denis Laumann, *Colonial Africa 1884-1994. Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 73.

² Ebere Nwaubani, "Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (2001): 601.

³ *Ibid.*, 600.

1979). While Nkrumah was not worried of such conflict in Ghana, playing an active military role throughout African conflicts was seen as a necessity to promote his Pan-African ideology.

Eventually Nkrumah's Pan-African ideology caused his demise because it directly contradicted the colonial legacy, values and traditions of the Ghanaian military. Nkrumah was deposed in 1966 by his own military and police forces. The manner in which Nkrumah sought to strengthen his military, the fallout of the Congo Crisis, accompanied by a swift change in domestic policy in 1961, eventually led to the old guard of Ghanaian British-trained officers to lead the coup against Nkrumah's government.

Nkrumah's aggressive deposal of the Ghanaian colonial legacy was a threat to those who benefitted from, or identified with, the colonial system. The Ghanaian military was the only institution powerful enough to challenge Nkrumah's authority. When their colonial identity and culture was being replaced by Nkrumah's and the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) Africanization of Ghanaian identity and culture, the military determined that the only way to preserve themselves was to depose of Nkrumah.

General Alexander and the Ghanaian Army 1957-1961

Nkrumah set upon strengthening his military in three major ways: modernize the Ghanaian military to be equipped with the best technology available, adequately train the Ghanaian Army to field this equipment for combat and increase the overall size of the Ghanaian military. In doing so, Nkrumah had to find adequate numbers of recruits. The critical step towards this was the Africanization of the military. In 1957 the army was 7000 strong and had an officer corps of 211; of the 211 officers, only 12.8 percent were Ghanaian.⁴

At this time there was an established pattern of coups in former African colonies, in particular French West Africa. However, this was not anticipated in the former British African colonies.⁵ Nkrumah's concern was the strengthening of the military to become the teeth of his continental vision of liberation and unification.⁶ He needed an army to maintain internal security and be available to maintain the Pan-African ideals, promoting African sovereignty and limiting

⁴ J.M. Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order* (London: Chatto and Windus for the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969), 44.

⁵ David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998), 110.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

external dependence.⁷ To battle neo-colonialism, Nkrumah needed to be able to facilitate coercive power (physical force), to establish and maintain, if necessary, the means of African authority and sovereignty. Nkrumah believed a stronger military would eventually be justified, as his frustrations grew because of the Congo Crisis and growing change in Rhodesia, Portuguese Africa, and South Africa. He believed that these political challenges could only be confronted with military force.⁸

The task of building Nkrumah's military fell onto British Major-General H. T. Alexander. General Alexander was a World War Two veteran having served in various theatres throughout the war. Before arriving in Ghana, he was formally the commanding officer of the 26 Gurkha Brigade from 1955 to 1957. He had vast experience interacting with soldiers from every corner of the British Empire. Upon arriving in Ghana in 1960, General Alexander was appointed Chief of Defence Staff of the Ghanaian Armed Forces. Nkrumah, like most civilian politicians, lacked the knowledge to fully comprehend the costs and complexities of a functioning military.⁹ Nkrumah demanded a modern military to the same standard of western European nations believing that it would make Ghana an equal contributor to international affairs. Yet, Ghana's wealth only represented four percent of the wealth of Britain or France.¹⁰ Ghana also had a limited source of literate manpower available for military employment. Through coercive power, Ghana could become a dominant force in the fight against colonialism and neo-colonialism on behalf of Pan-Africanism. General Alexander had to bridge the gap between Nkrumah's Pan-African vision and the realities of military bureaucracy.

General Alexander's biggest problem was finding sufficient manpower, and then training them to a professional standard. This was a problem inherited from the late colonial administration. The former British colonial administration found it extremely challenging to recruit the best secondary school-educated young men.¹¹ These young men were indifferent to prospects of military life and would rather serve the state in other capacities. The vast majority of the Ghanaian officer corps came from areas of the highest educated coastal areas of Ghana, where there was a longer colonial presence and legacy in terms of infrastructure and educational opportunities.¹²

⁷ Claude Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Military Intervention and Political Change* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 180.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 36.

¹² Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 182.

However, the majority of the Ghanaian rank and file was recruited from the economically stagnant Northern territories.¹³

From 1945 to 1957, the colonial military of the Gold Coast served to maintain domestic security and assist the colonial administration. This role built a wedge between the nationalists and the Gold Coast military personnel, who were perceived as puppets of the colonial administration. Despite some Gold Coast officers being trained at some of the highest military institutions in the British Empire, the civilian masses regarded them with fear and disdain. These sentiments were extended to the first Ghanaian officers and aided in the difficulty of recruiting post-secondary students.¹⁴ General Alexander estimated that Ghana was producing approximately 700 young men per year that were capable of serving in the new Ghanaian military.¹⁵ General Alexander came up with an aggressive plan to extract 100 young men per year, extracting 14 percent of the graduate pool for military service.¹⁶ This would enable the majority of the British Officer Corps to leave by 1965-1966.¹⁷ Nkrumah wanted to speed up the militarization efforts and instead sent 400 new students, 57 percent of the graduate pool, to join military training.¹⁸ By April of 1961, the Ghanaian Officer Corps consisted of 150 Ghanaians and 230 British officers.¹⁹

Another problem experienced by General Alexander was the training of the Ghanaian officers to the standards of their British counterparts. Throughout the late colonial and early post-colonial periods, many Ghanaian officer cadets were sent to the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, Eaton Hall, as well as Mons Officer Cadet School in Britain.²⁰ Up until 1957, 26 officer cadets from the Gold Coast attended these programs, however between 1958 and 1962, a total of 68 Ghanaians participated.²¹ This created discrepancies between the British and Ghanaian educational standards. To ensure that the Ghanaians were adequately prepared for the programs in Britain, the Ghanaians received six months of education before they entered the program.²² This meant that Ghanaian officers could spend up to three and a half years completing educational

¹³ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 182.

¹⁴ Simon Baynham, "Soldier and State in Ghana," *Armed Forces & Society* 5, no. 1 (1978): 156.

¹⁵ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Baynham, *Soldier and State in Ghana*, 157.

²⁰ Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 125.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 36.

programs in Britain.²³ This would require increased Ghanaian expenditure and time prolonging the Africanization of the military.

To lessen the training time and travel, the Ghanaian military established a two-year officer training program in Teshie, based on the structure of the British Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.²⁴ The British model that General Alexander and his predecessors were employing was designed to build the Ghanaian military under the same ideological principles as their British counterparts. The military would be dedicated to a unitary democratic state, with strict loyalty and a high standard of service to the government, serving the general public.

Nkrumah quickly became frustrated with the slow pace and cost of implementing British training standards and began looking for alternatives to quicken the militarization process and rid Ghana of all signs of its colonial past.²⁵ Since Nkrumah was now president of Ghana, Britain had no means to stop him from this path of action. Upon returning from visiting the Soviet Union in 1961, who openly criticized the British presence in Ghana, Nkrumah fired General Alexander and removed all British officers serving in the Ghanaian military.²⁶ He was replaced by a Ghanaian - recently promoted Brigadier Otu. The official reasoning behind the replacement of Alexander was the desire to fully implement the Africanization of the Ghanaian military and end growing distrust between Britain and Nkrumah caused in the Congo Crisis.²⁷ Nkrumah then turned to the Soviet Union who promised they could mobilize the Ghanaian military faster with reduced financial cost.²⁸ Ghana formed ties with the Soviets by purchasing four Soviet aircraft.²⁹ This rejection of British educational practices established in the colonial period transcended the Ghanaian military and extended throughout Ghanaian secondary education systems.³⁰ Nkrumah strived to abolish all neo-colonial influences.

As a result of this transition, the Soviet model of militarization saw a rapid rate of premature promotions within the military. The removal of British officers left major gaps in the

²³ Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁵ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 89.

²⁶ Henry Alexander, *African Tightrope: My Two Years as Nkrumah's Chief of Staff* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 91-93.

²⁷ Nkrumah to Gen. Alexander, 22 September 1961, reprinted in Alexander, *African Tightrope*, Appendix E, 149.

²⁸ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 90.

²⁹ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 605.

³⁰ John Harrington, & Ambreena Manji, "Africa Needs Many Lawyers Trained for the Need of their People": Struggle over Legal Education in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana," *American Journal of Legal History* 59, no. 2 (2019): 166.

Ghanaian leadership complex. This resulted in Ghanaian junior officers who lacked experience, tradition, and training, being placed in higher command and staff duties.³¹ A rivalry was formed between the old guard of Ghanaian officers trained in the colonial and immediate post-colonial period under General Alexander, and the new generation of Nkrumahists trained under the Soviets with Nkrumah's Pan-African values.³² This rivalry was incited by the events of the Congo Crisis and its effects on the Ghanaian military.

The Congo Crisis 1960-1965

The Congo Crisis presented Nkrumah and the Ghanaian military with a unique opportunity to take a leading role in continental affairs. As the Belgian Congo neared independence, Belgian companies made massive withdrawals of capital, while maximizing the export of Congolese resources and minimizing Congolese imports.³³ This caused extensive economic strain in the Congo, that was itself on the verge of decolonization. Before the crisis, the Congolese Army consisted of 24,000 soldiers and 1,000 Belgian officers.³⁴ After independence was declared, the Belgian colonial administration did not demonstrate its desire to leave the Congo, as the Congolese military was still under the control of Belgian officers.³⁵ In early July 1960, Congolese soldiers rebelled against their Belgian commanders, demanding that Belgium leave the Congo.³⁶ In this process, the rebelling Congolese military promoted violence against white Belgians in the Congo.³⁷ This violence prompted a Belgian intervention in the Congo. At the same time, the mineral rich region of Katanga attempted a secessionist movement from the rest of the Congo.³⁸ Between the internal turmoil, Belgian intervention, and Katanga secession, the Congo was teetering on the edge of a total collapse.

When the crisis broke out in the Congo during July 1960, the leader of the new state was Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, a socialist and Pan-African like Nkrumah. Lumumba asked the United Nations (UN) for assistance. The United States (US) saw Lumumba as a communist puppet

³¹ Baynham, *Soldier and State in Ghana*, 157.

³² Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 90.

³³ K. Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Pub., 1966), 219.

³⁴ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 607.

³⁵ Charles Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo: A Pan-African Explanation," *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2020): 472.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Ludo De Witte, "The Suppression of the Congo Rebellions and the Rise of Mobutu, 1963-5," *International History Review* 39, no. 1 (2017): 107.

³⁸ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 472.

and the driving force behind the crisis, while Nkrumah saw him as a nationalist serving the Pan-African cause.³⁹ Nkrumah's decision to participate in the crisis was driven by undermining colonial and neo-colonial influences, his desire to trigger independence movements, project African solidarity and unity, and grow his influence in African affairs.⁴⁰ By mid-July 1960, the vanguard of the UN force had arrived in the Congo. The mission was led by US diplomat Ralph Bunche and Swedish General Carl von Horn, but until their arrival General Alexander was to command the UN force.⁴¹ The vanguard consisted of General Alexander and 25 Ghanaian soldiers.⁴² They were accompanied by Ambassador Djin and (then) Colonel Otu.⁴³ Djin was a prominent political asset to Nkrumah, and held multiple important positions throughout Nkrumah's rule.⁴⁴ By the end of the month, the Ghanaians made up the largest UN contribution with 2,340 soldiers and 370 police.⁴⁵ Nkrumah was anxious to fight for the new freedoms achieved by newly decolonized African state. This also presented an opportunity for Ghana to make an alliance with Lumumba's Congo and continue to develop Nkrumah's Pan-African intentions.⁴⁶ The shared political ideology between Nkrumah and Lumumba made an alliance based on Pan-African principles feasible. Congo's resource rich export economy would aid in African political leverage if in the hands of African governments rather than neo-colonial powers.

Initially, the Ghanaians were met with some success in the Congo. Their initial mission statement was to prevent attacks on civilians in Léopoldville, convince the Congolese Army to return to barracks, and replace the presence of the Belgian military in the region.⁴⁷ The shortcomings in the Ghanaian army became apparent early on. They did not have adequate means of radio communications to Léopoldville nor adequate transport planes able to fly soldiers into the Congo.⁴⁸ Luckily for the Ghanaian Army, General Alexander was able to use his status and affiliations to allow the Ghanaian forces to enter the Congo. General Alexander was able to borrow transport from the British Royal Air Force that happened to be in Accra, with permission from the

³⁹ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 620.

⁴⁰ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 474-5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 472.

⁴² Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 105.

⁴³ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 477.

⁴⁴ Paul Darby, "Politics, Resistance and Patronage: The African Boycott of the 1966 World Cup and its Ramifications," *Soccer and Society* 20, no.7-8 (2019): 939.

⁴⁵ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 612.

⁴⁶ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 105.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 105-6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

British government.⁴⁹ Once on the ground, the Ghanaians and the British officers had to navigate a language barrier.⁵⁰ The logistical support that the American Embassy offered to General Alexander was not adequate, and Alexander was forced to look for other means of support. As more UN forces entered the country, the Congolese prepared for a civil war.⁵¹ Stability was impossible for Lumumba as the Katanga secessionist movement, supported by the Belgians, and his own government's turmoil, brought the country to the precipice of war.

By September 1960, the Congolese Colonial Joseph Mobutu took control of Léopoldville and in December ordered the kidnapping and execution of Lumumba.⁵² Mobutu was able to maintain power because of his staunch anti-Communist policies that gained the support of the US.⁵³ As the Congo Crisis continued, the Ghanaian Army experienced decreased success after General Alexander and the British officers were relieved by Nkrumah in December of 1961.

Through the Congo Crisis, Nkrumah began believing that the international community was only interested in the Congo for neo-colonial purposes. Neo-Colonialism, as defined by Nkrumah, is when a sovereign state is economically and politically dependent and directed by external powers.⁵⁴ The ultimate goal of the neo-colonial state is to maintain power without responsibility, thus increasing the gap between rich and poor nations.⁵⁵ Nkrumah's own General Alexander was accused of neo-colonial influence when he ordered his soldiers to disarm the Congolese soldiers in an attempt to quell violence against white Belgians in the Congo, which led to concerns that General Alexander was pro-Belgian.⁵⁶ As previously mentioned, British sympathies for the Katanga separatists created strife between Nkrumah and the British presence in Ghana.⁵⁷ Nkrumah was becoming frustrated with the political friction between General Alexander and Ambassador Djin.⁵⁸ Djin would repeatedly undermine General Alexander's authority by getting Colonel Otu and Colonel Ankrah to act without General Alexander's or the UN's authority.⁵⁹

⁴⁹ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Laumann, *Colonial Africa*, 80.

⁵³ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 610.

⁵⁴ Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, x.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, x-xi.

⁵⁶ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 472.

⁵⁷ Nkrumah to Gen. Alexander, 22 September 1961, reprinted in Alexander, H. T., *African Tightrope*, Appendix E, 149.

⁵⁸ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 479.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

By this point, Nkrumah began to realize that Ghana's involvement in the crisis through the UN was slow, complex, and frustrating. In comparison to the European and Western states involved in funding the UN, Ghana's influence was minimal.⁶⁰ The Congo Crisis prompted Nkrumah to remove General Alexander and the British officers from the Ghanaian military by December of 1961. Without General Alexander and the support of British officers, the Ghanaian Army had to weather the trials of combat on their own and soon realized that the cost of taking part in peacekeeping missions such as the Congo was not worth Nkrumah's Pan-African vision.

Nkrumah saw Ghana's inability to influence the Congo Crisis as a threat to his Pan-African objectives.⁶¹ Despite being the first UN soldiers in Léopoldville, they were totally dependent on the Western and colonial powers to achieve this objective.⁶² When Western support withered in the Congo, Nkrumah turned to the Soviets who volunteered two large transport aircraft.⁶³ In 1960 the US had little investment in the Congo but as the conflict prolonged US investment dramatically grew.⁶⁴ Nkrumah became suspicious of US interests in the Congo, driving a wedge between Nkrumah and the West. By backing Mobutu over Lumumba, the US contributed to Nkrumah's resentment of neo-colonialism and confirmed his suspicions.⁶⁵ The Congo Crisis became dreaded by the militaries from Pan-African idealist states. This Pan-African failure fueled Nkrumah and the CPP's leadership to pursue socialist policies domestically and internationally.⁶⁶

1961 A Swift Change in Policy

Due to the setbacks and frustrations Nkrumah was facing because of the ongoing Congo Crisis, he began a radical shift in domestic policies in 1961. This shift affected all of Nkrumah's branches of government.⁶⁷ As mentioned, in late 1961 Nkrumah set upon the Africanization of the army.⁶⁸ This materialized in the firing of General Alexander and the displacement of the British Officer Corps by December of 1961. After Ghana became a republic in 1960 with Nkrumah as its first president, he and the CCP had more power to intervene in bureaucracy by bringing

⁶⁰ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 107.

⁶¹ Asante, "Ghana and the United Nations' 1960s mission in the Congo," 480.

⁶² Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 613.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, 212-214.

⁶⁵ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 618.

⁶⁶ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 172.

⁶⁷ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 69, 90.

⁶⁸ Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 124.

departments directly under the presidents control.⁶⁹ Between 1963 and 1965, only 12 cadets were sent to the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, Eaton Hall and Mons Officer Cadet Schools.⁷⁰ Nkrumah began practicing non-alignment, which is based on co-operation with all states whether their political policies were capitalist, socialist or a mix of both.⁷¹ This policy involved foreign investment from all political spheres. This explains the rapid decrease of British support but not the total severing of support. The Ghanaian officer program in Teshie under British guidance was intended to graduate a maximum of 30 officers per year.⁷² However, under new pressures from the government and the necessity to replace the British officers, the program was streamlined to provide platoon commanders for the Ghanaian Army.⁷³ The lack of platoon commanders was crippling for the Ghanaian Army that was fighting in the Congo at the time.

This fundamental shift in policy in 1961 resulted in the removal of dependence on the British and the Africanization of Ghanaian society, with the support of Soviet programs. This new Soviet relationship was not limited to the military, as it included cultural and academic exchange agreements between 1960 and 1966.⁷⁴ Through this new relationship with the Soviet Union, the Ghanaians were able to develop with increased independence from British support and still maintain a large footprint in continental affairs. This did not sit well with the US, whose policy was to ensure that Ghana neither sought nor accepted assistance from any country who rivalled American interests.⁷⁵ The US was concerned by Nkrumah's policies of "positive neutralism," paired with his non-alignment policies, Pan-Africanism ideology, and Nkrumah's relationship with the Soviet bloc.⁷⁶

Nkrumah believed that Ghana would not become fully independent of Britain until they became decolonized in their minds, which involved the destruction of the colonial mentality.⁷⁷ He set upon reshaping the Ghanaian nationalist psychology by imbedding Pan-African characteristics

⁶⁹ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 174.

⁷⁰ Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 125.

⁷¹ Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, x.

⁷² Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order*, 124.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Derrick Charway, & Barrie Houlihan, "Country Profile of Ghana: Sport, Politics and Nation-Building," *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 12, no. 3 (2020): 499.

⁷⁵ Nwaubani, *Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis*, 600.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 602, 604.

⁷⁷ De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway, "'There is a New African in the World!' Kwame Nkrumah and the Making of a 'New African (Wo)Man' in Ghana 1957-1966," *Comparative* 28, no. 5 (2018): 61.

and attitudes.⁷⁸ Nkrumah targeted the education system to indoctrinate this ideological training. He also did so through the establishment of the Ghana Youth Pioneers Movement (GYP) and the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute (KNII) in 1960 and 1961 respectively.⁷⁹ These programs trained to youth and adults alike. Such programs were implemented by the Armed Forces Bureau and used to lecture the military about Nkrumahist philosophies.⁸⁰ The senior Ghanaian officers were dissatisfied with Nkrumah's efforts to implement the CPP as a partisan political institution within the Ghanaian military.⁸¹ Nkrumah's psychological strategy was present in all aspects of Ghanaian life.⁸² As a result the Nkrumahist officer cadets had a fundamentally different ideological foundation compared to their older British trained counterparts. This shift in ideology was designed by the CCP to directly challenge the old guard who favoured western ideological practices.⁸³ Many of the Nkrumahist officers were educated solely in Ghana, while the old guard had witnessed and experienced the ideological practices passed down by the British colonial and post-colonial training programs.

By the end of 1961, economic difficulties began adding significant political pressure to Nkrumah's government.⁸⁴ With increased political opposition to Nkrumah's policies, his government had to utilize constitutional and extra-constitutional means to maintain control and continue developing Ghana's Pan-Africanism.⁸⁵ In response to the questionable legality of Nkrumah's policies, the US and Britain began seeing Nkrumah as a dictator with Soviet sympathies.⁸⁶

A critical component of Ghanaian military subculture was its exposure to British military professionalism, through British military institutions and professional development.⁸⁷ Most Ghanaian officers respected their British counterparts and were not prepared for nor desiring of the sudden Africanization of the Ghanaian military.⁸⁸ Their educational background, economic status and sense of military professionalism made the old guard of the Ghanaian officer corps a

⁷⁸ Botchway, "There is a New African in the World!," 61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁸⁰ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 185.

⁸¹ Baynham, *Soldier and State in Ghana*, 158.

⁸² Botchway, "There is a New African in the World!," 65.

⁸³ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 170.

⁸⁴ Harrington, & Manji, *Africa Needs Many Lawyers*, 159.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 182.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

socially conservative group.⁸⁹ These were not only in military norms, but also in ideology and life styles.⁹⁰ This was especially the case in the officers with training experience in the UK and other parts of the Commonwealth.⁹¹ These shared views of professionalism and culture were disdained by the CPP, as a result Nkrumah and his regime were regarded by the old guard as self-serving, corrupt, repressive, and dictatorial.⁹²

The Later Years 1962-1966

Part of Nkrumah's Pan-African vision was to rid Africa of white minority rule. The Pan-African vision was being suppressed by white minority governments in southern Africa. This was demonstrated by South Africa's refusal to allow South West Africa to decolonize, and the Portuguese persistence in defeating rebel forces in Angola starting in 1961 (Angolan War of Independence 1961-1974).⁹³ Nkrumah believed that Portugal was only able to maintain these colonies because of the strength it gained from NATO support.⁹⁴ In 1965, white settlers in Southern Rhodesia rebelled and established a white minority state independent from the British called Rhodesia. Facing too many logistical problems in a proposed military campaign, and a lack of political and general will in the aftermath of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya (1952-1960), the British chose to let their colony fall to the settlers. Unlike the Mau Mau Rebellion, the British soldier would not have been fighting Kikuyu indigenous people, they would have been fighting white settlers who were perceived as their former kin.⁹⁵ Nkrumah was shocked that the British would not intervene in this armed resurrection but believed that it served as a critical opportunity for his Pan-African vision.

Britain did not support any African attempts to intervene against the white minority government.⁹⁶ Nkrumah believed that Britain was influenced by neo-colonial interests since they still benefitted from trade relations with Rhodesia.⁹⁷ This essentially created a second South Africa in the heart of white minority-ruled southern Africa.⁹⁸ Birmingham describes that "this was where

⁸⁹ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 182.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 107.

⁹⁴ Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, 21.

⁹⁵ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 109.

⁹⁶ Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism*, 22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Nkrumah met his ultimate challenge.”⁹⁹ Nkrumah believed that the job of ridding Africa of this white rogue state fell to all fellow Africans.

Nkrumah began preparing his army for a new military campaign that was believed to be similar to the Congo Crisis. The Ghanaian military was in disbelief that Nkrumah proposed this military campaign. Unlike the Congolese, the white settlers in Rhodesia were well equipped, well trained, determined, and strategically located three thousand miles from Ghana in the heartland of sympathetic white minority colonies and states.¹⁰⁰

The Army, Why They Did It

Nkrumah wanted people to learn about Africa’s precolonial past to guide them through the problems of post-colonial society.¹⁰¹ However, this narrative neglected the history, traditions and standards that the old guard of the Ghanaian military was built upon. Without the inclusion of the colonial history, the old guard was facing an identity crisis. Instead, Nkrumah’s Pan-African vision, mortared with the blood of the military in the Congo Crisis, was taking hold in the new Nkrumahist junior officers who were rapidly being promoted to fill the British void.

Nkrumah believed that the colonial mentality exposed Ghana to neo-colonialism. He purged Ghana of colonial symbols and replaced them with images of himself and other influential Pan-Africanists.¹⁰² Due to the high illiteracy rates in the country he believed that Ghanaians needed to be physically shown that they were completely independent.¹⁰³ Part of this strategy of showing Ghanaians their independence was expelling the British Officer Corps and General Alexander. This rejection of British military education transcends the Ghanaian military and was a radical shift in all aspects of Ghanaian society especially secondary education.¹⁰⁴ This was a battle over Ghanaian nationalism, development and social progress, that was threatened by the ambivalent legacy of the British, and the growing influence of the US and Soviets in African affairs.¹⁰⁵

Nkrumah’s dictatorial tendencies became more pronounced after 1961. The legacy of the Preventive Detentions Act 1958 in particular raised suspicions of Nkrumah’s dedication to liberal democracy. The Preventive Detentions Act allowed Nkrumah to arrest political opponents without

⁹⁹ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 108.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰¹ Botchway, “There is a New African in the World!,” 65.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁴ Harrington, & Manji, *Africa Needs Many Lawyers*, 157.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

trial.¹⁰⁶ By 1966, over 1,000 people had been detained. Former United Gold Coast Convention and independence leader J.B. Danquah died in custody in 1965, cementing the disdain for this Act in the hearts of Ghanaians who favoured liberal democratic values.¹⁰⁷ The Preventive Detentions Act opposed the liberal democratic values that the British had instilled in the old guard of the Ghanaian military throughout their colonial and post-colonial relationship. Reflecting upon Nkrumah's policies in Ghana, in 1965 General Alexander stated that, "We have been through the period of arbitrary power and of confining our enemies to the Tower (of London): Ghana is now going through that period."¹⁰⁸

Nkrumah banned political parties based on ethnic, religious, and regionalism, centralizing his political opponents into the United Party.¹⁰⁹ He then linked the expanding government with CPP authority, including the military. After 1961 the Ghanaian military's old guard had become increasingly alienated by Nkrumah's government after the removal of the British officers. This directly interfered with the Ghanaian military's internal decision-making abilities. By January of 1964, Nkrumah had created a one-party state with the CPP monopolizing legitimate authority of all aspects of Ghanaian government practices.¹¹⁰

Nkrumah had established the President's Own Guard Regiment (POGR) in 1960, and a military counterintelligence agency was formed to spy on the military.¹¹¹ The POGR was completely separate from the regular chain of command and was loyal directly to Nkrumah.¹¹² This unit was equipped and trained by the Soviet Union.¹¹³ These units were actively challenging the authority and legitimacy of the military centralizing loyalty strictly with Nkrumah.

Outside of the military realm there was a host of domestic political grievances that undercut support for the president in the civilian populace.¹¹⁴ These grievances ranged from electoral manipulation and corruption to a deteriorating economy.¹¹⁵ Many of these grievances were also affecting Ghanaian military personnel. By 1966 the old guard of the military and the police were

¹⁰⁶ Harrington, & Manji, *Africa Needs Many Lawyers*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Alexander, *African Tightrope*, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 169.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170, 175.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹² Baynham, *Soldier and State in Ghana*, 158.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the only remaining institutions capable of challenging Nkrumah's regime.¹¹⁶ With the growth of the POGR and the promotions of Nkrumahist officers this ability was ever decreasing. The old guard of the Ghanaian military speculated that removing Nkrumah would be widely accepted throughout the Ghanaian populace. In February 1966, Nkrumah was in Vietnam negotiating peace when the National Liberation Council (NLC) led by (now) Major General Ankrah overtook the government and POGR. The NLC led the Ghanaian government until 1969 with Western support. Nkrumah never returned to Ghana and lived in exile in Guinea until his death in 1972.

Conclusion

The methods by which Nkrumah tried to strengthen his military eventually turned the old guard of the Ghanaian military against him. By seeking the support of the Soviets as part of the Africanization of the military, Nkrumah began alienating himself from the old guard which was built on the colonial legacy. This radical and forceful change in tradition, paired with Nkrumah's firm control of the army, broke bonds between the old guard of the Ghanaian Officer Corps and Nkrumah. The Africanization of the Ghanaian military led to poorly trained and unexperienced junior Nkrumahist officers getting promoted to important command and staff duties within the military, impeding Ghana's military effectiveness and causing a rivalry with the old guard.

As Nkrumah took on more dictatorial characteristics, the British officers, Ghanaian military, and Ghanaian society became subject to Nkrumah's rigid Pan-African demeanour, causing strife within Ghanaian military, society and the international community. With the prospects of going into a new African conflict, the old guard of the Ghanaian military perceived the only way to survive Nkrumah's Pan-African ideology was to sever him from his leadership position. While Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism was a primary character trait and attributed to his rise to power, it also became his final ruin when he attempted to detach Ghana from its colonial legacy.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Welsh, *Soldier and State in Africa*, 180.

¹¹⁷ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 109.

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