

# The Intellectual and Political Legacies of Kwame Nkrumah

by

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## Abstract

Integral to Kwame Nkrumah's vision of Pan-Africanism was the concept of Continental Union Government for Africa. Nkrumah was one of several leading radical Pan-Africanists of the 1960s such as Julius Nyerere, Modibo Keita, Patrice Lumumba, and Sékou Touré. Aside from his passionate commitment to building and realizing Continental unity, Nkrumah's prolific written work and speeches contain other equally important bequests. These intellectual and political legacies are the focus of this article. For analytical purposes, whilst the two i.e. the intellectual and the political are inextricably linked, they will be interrogated separately. They shall be examined in no order of priority. The objective of this article is to critically examine these legacies and illustrate their continuing relevance to acute developmental problems and issues confronting Africans today.

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The first intellectual legacy Nkrumah bequeathed is his employment of the conceptual tool of neo-colonialism and its corollary of class analysis. Nkrumah defined neo-colonialism as follows:

*“The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.”*<sup>1</sup>

He went on to expound that “More often, however, neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means.”<sup>2</sup> Nkrumah was certainly ahead of this time for as far back as in April 1958, during the Conference of Independent States (CIAS), he had warned of “new forms of colonialism which are now appearing in the world, with their potential threat to our precious independence.”<sup>3</sup>

The concept of neo-colonialism remains as valid now as it was in 1965. There is ample evidence of the anti-democratic manifestations and operations of neo-colonialism on the continent, in which an African neo-colonial elite has collaborated and continues to collaborate with Western finance capital, the IMF and the World Bank. Such operations continue to remain a fundamental obstacle to creating Pan-Africanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nkrumah's book, *Neo-colonialism: The Highest Stage of Imperialism* offended the American government to the extent that the US Ambassador, Mennen Williams, registered a formal protest to the Ghanaian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Accra in 1965.<sup>4</sup> Nkrumah writes that, "The State Department followed up its protest with the rejection of a request from my government for 35 million dollars' worth of surplus food shipments."<sup>5</sup> *Neo-colonialism* was a book replete with details on the operations of Western multi-national companies and institutions in Africa and the extent of the imperialist economic stranglehold over African economies that were weighted against African interests and therefore sustained the continuing economic poverty and degradation of African societies. To cite Nkrumah at some length, he wrote in *Neo-colonialism*:

*"American and European companies connected with the world's most powerful banking and financial institutions are, with the consent of African governments, entering upon major projects designed to exploit new sources of primary products. In some cases these are allied to long-term ventures for the establishment of certain essential industries. In the main, however, they are confirming themselves to the production of materials in their basic or secondary stages, with the object of transforming them in the mills and plants owned and run by the exploiting companies in the metropolitan lands. Africa has failed to make much headway on the road to purposeful industrial development because her natural resources have not been employed for that end but have been used for the greater development of the Western world."*<sup>6</sup>

Nkrumah proceeded to examine in detail some of the primary resources such as phosphates, coal, zinc, diamonds, copper, tin, manganese and gold that have been exploited by Swedish, French, American, Belgian, British and West German companies, in many African countries, including the Congo and South Africa where the Union Minière du Haut Katanga and the Anglo-American De Beers groups operated respectively.<sup>7</sup>

He illustrated the complex interlocking commercial links between Western multi-national companies in Africa such as Union Minière du Haut Katanga, which was a conglomeration of numerous companies such as Compagnie du Katanga, Société de Recherche Minière du Sud-Katanga (SUDAT), Katanga Special Committee, Sociétié Général, Anglo-American and many others.<sup>8</sup>

Nkrumah ends chapter 6, which is entitled “Primary Resources and Foreign Interests” with the following prophetic words:

*“Africa is still paramountly an uncharted continent economically, and the withdrawal of the colonial rulers from political control is interpreted as a signal for the descent of the international monopolies upon the continent’s natural resources. This is the new scramble for Africa, under the guise of aid, and with the consent and even the welcome of young, inexperienced States. It can be even more deadly for Africa than the first carve-up, as it is supported by more concentrated interests, wielding vastly greater power and influence over governments and international organisations.”*<sup>9</sup>

As Africa enters the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is indeed “paramountly an uncharted continent economically.” Since Nkrumah’s death the continent has continued to experience prolonged military conflict, political instability, declining poverty that has been exacerbated if not profoundly worsened by new socio-economic issues that Nkrumah never lived to see. Among these are: economic strangulation in continuing indebtedness; HIV-AIDS, child soldiers used in ethnic conflicts in countries such as Liberia, Uganda, Sierra Leone; the devastating threat and impact of worsening climate change; land lease deals that have initiated what some have called “agri-colonialism” or “land grabbing” in Africa; efforts to entice African countries to introduce genetically modified food production (GMF) and resistance to this by the majority of African countries with the exception of South Africa as well as the rise of Chinese investment in Africa. Many of the aforementioned developments have entrenched the partnership between Africa’s neo-colonial African elite and the industrialized countries to the detriment of the African masses. A current example of this deplorable and rampant neo-colonial devastation is in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Between 2006 to 2010, over 2, 400 oil spills occurred in the region, in addition to gas flares that have released millions of tons of toxic methane gas into the atmosphere of this rural community of farmers and fishermen,<sup>10</sup>

Nowhere more deadly is the current “carve-up” of the African continent continuing at a rapacious pace between Africa’s neo-colonial self-serving leaders and agents and Western companies than in the present day Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In 1967 Nkrumah wrote his book *Challenge of the Congo* illustrating the neo-colonial forces destabilizing the country for political and economic interests. Tragically, those forces remain in a re-configured manifestation to deny material prosperity for the masses of Congolese people who have never experienced prolonged peace since formal independence in 1960 and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961.

The DRC is a country that has borne witness to one of Africa's worst humanitarian crisis of the twentieth century. It has seen over 5 million Congolese people die between August 1998 and April 2000. This figure is approximately the same number of Jews who were killed in the Nazi concentration camps. The devastation of the DRC continues via the 85 companies, (predominantly Western) who retain extensive commercial interests in the DRC. Among them are: Cogem (Belgium), Chpistopa Floss (Germany), Afrimex (United Kingdom), Chimie Pharmacie (Netherlands), Kemet Electronics and Kinross Gold Corporation (United States) and International Panorama Resources Corporation (Canada) – just to name a few.<sup>11</sup> They are all currently involved in the extraction and processing of the DRC's 5 key mineral resources: coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt and gold. The access to such resources by multinationals of the North is facilitated by the warlords inside the DRC. Among them are: the Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR); the Congrès National pour la Défence du Peuple (CNDP); the Patriotes Résistants Congolais (PARECO); several Mai-Mai groups; the Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes (FRF); and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC).<sup>12</sup> In short, these warring factions continue to viciously exploit and control the mines in the country, particularly in the North and South Kivu regions. The minerals are transported to trading houses in Europe and are then sold to these foreign corporations who make colossal profits from such minerals. The factions use the money to buy weapons from Western companies or from the governments neighbouring the DRC to continue to plunder, rape and pillage as they pay their soldiers. Ultimately the wanton looting of the country's enormous economic resources maintains their power bases in the DRC.<sup>13</sup>

The 2006 Hollywood film *Blood Diamonds* starring Leonardo De Caprio and Djimon Hounsou, illustrated the argument, that every lengthy war in Africa is financed by such minerals that gain direct and indirect support from foreign governments or private interests (or both).

Alongside what Nkrumah aptly refers to as “the Trojan horses of neo-colonialism,” which he states “must be stoutly resisted”<sup>14</sup> is the phenomenon of “the Trojan horses” of globalization. In short, the forces of globalization are both negative and positive. “Globalization is positive when it enhances human communication, improves levels of human productivity, enhances our awareness of being inhabitants of a fragile planet, and facilitates empathy between societies across vast distances”, contends Mazrui.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, “ Globalization is negative when it allows itself to be handmaiden to ruthless capitalism, increases the danger of warfare by remote control, deepens the divide between the haves and have-nots, and accelerates damage to our environment.”<sup>16</sup> In our current epoch, the negatives of globalization appear to outweigh the positives.

The Nigerian economist, Claude Ake correctly defined globalization as the march of capital all over the world in pursuit of profits. It is a process reflected in the reach and power of multinational corporations (MNCs). The committed Pan-Africanist, Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem also defined globalization as a form of re-colonization of Africa. He wrote:

*“What Africa is going through now is a recolonization, not by individual European countries anymore but under the aegis of the IMF/World Bank and the supportive and collaborative service of western bilateral/multilateral aid increasingly run and channelled through Western NGOs”.*<sup>17</sup>

As Horace Campbell writes, “If anything, in the era of globalization the exploitation of the masses of the people has intensified. This exploitation is being carried out under the neo-liberal ideas of liberalization that redistributes wealth from the exploited to the powerful.”<sup>18</sup> Nowhere has the reach of multi-national companies and neo-liberal market ideology penetrated Africa, than in, for example, the neglect and dismantling of African agriculture from the 1980s to the present day. As Holt-Giménez and Patel cogently argue,

*“At the time of decolonization in the 1960s, Africa was not just self-sufficient in food; it was actually a net exporter with exports averaging 1.3 million tons a year between 1966 and 1970 (BBC 2006). Today, the continent imports 25% of its food, with almost every country being a net food importer (Green Revolution 2008). Hunger and famine have been recurrent phenomena, with the last three years alone seeing food emergencies break out in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Southern Africa, and Central Africa.”*<sup>19</sup>

The decade of the 1980s saw the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by African governments seeking loans from this body. The IMF “is basically an institutional surrogate of the United States government”<sup>20</sup> which dictated neo-liberal policies coercing African governments to divest from the health and education sectors in order that private and market forces provide such services; liberalization of trade, which meant removing or reducing tariffs and trade barriers with the consequences of African markets being undercut and often destroyed by companies in the industrialized North. In the words of Holt-Giménez and Patel, *“Trade liberalization simply allowed low-price, subsidized EU beef to enter and drive many West African and South African cattle raisers to ruin. With their subsidies legitimized by the WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture, US cotton growers offloaded their cotton on world markets at 20%-25% of the cost of production, bankrupting West African and Central African cotton farmers in the process (Business World 2003).”*<sup>21</sup>

It is the agrifood complex of the countries of the rich industrialized North, such as Monsanto, the chemical giant, and Dow AgriSciences, that controls 41% of maize seed and 25% of soy production in the world whose domination of the world's food production means hunger and starvation for many in Africa. Similarly, the overproduction of cheap grains by American farmers which are subsidized by the American government undercut African farmers. Companies in the United States continue to dump cheap American long grain rice on the West African market. West African farmers simply cannot compete with such cheap prices. The consequence is an abandonment of farming with an exodus of farmers to the cities to find alternative sources of livelihoods for their families. In essence, liberalization works for large Western agri-corporations but African farmers – wedded to traditional agricultural technologies, dependent on importing Western pesticides, tools and herbicides cannot compete in a rigged system which then determines the price at which African agricultural goods should be sold on the world market.

Currently the entire global production of food is dominated by agribusiness, particularly Monsanto, DuPont, Dow Chemical, Hercules Powder and other large companies who coined the term “Green Revolution” in order to unleash their search for new markets for the American petrochemical industry, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO crops); and grain cartels.<sup>22</sup> Underpinning the objectives of agribusiness is the conviction of former Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, who declared in the 1970s: “Control the oil and you control nations. Control the food, and you control the people.”<sup>23</sup>

In short, neo-colonialism that Nkrumah perceptively analyzed in great detail continues to co-exist with the forces of globalization that presently seeks to homogenize the world at the levels of the economic, ideological, political and cultural. Neo-colonialism continues to manifest as an unequal system that ensures the economic subservience of Africa to the economic interests of the industrialized richer nations in the guise of “free trade” and “neo-liberal policies.” Central to such policies is the dogma of privatization of state services and therefore privatization was made a condition of African states receiving IMF loans. One of the most pernicious privatizations in Africa has been that of water in at least 8 Sub-Saharan African countries in the last ten years. The intense struggle over deregulation of the water supply has been most acute in South Africa, a country whose liberation movement, the ANC, held sacred the conviction that the national wealth of the country belonged to all who live in it. A fierce resistance against water privatization began in 2003. It was led by Richard Mokolo, leader of the Crisis Water Committee in the township called Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg. He declared: “Privitization is a new kind of apartheid. Apartheid separated whites from blacks. Privitization separates the rich from the poor.”<sup>24</sup> In essence, privatization by foreign interests in Africa is a reconfiguration of new forms of economic monopoly of African resources for foreign benefit.

Five years after the publication of *Neo-colonialism*, Nkrumah published a much understated book, but a very important one *Class Struggle in Africa*. It remains as important as *Neo-colonialism* for what he was attempting to do-- that is-- Nkrumah was attempting to analyze class differences in an African context in the era of the 1960s. He argued that five main social classes emerged in the post-independent Africa (however, some had been in existence in the pre-colonial era). They were: the peasants; the rural and industrial proletariat; the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie; traditional rulers; and the bourgeoisie.

*Class Struggle in Africa* written 40 years ago provides a pertinent theoretical perspective that requires updating in our present times. For example, critical questions that need to be asked are: What broad class forces exist in Africa today? What are the intra-class dynamics between these class forces? How do they relate to the ruling and working classes in the Northern countries and elsewhere, for example in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China)? Furthermore, in *Class Struggle in Africa*, Nkrumah contends that class divisions in modern African society became obfuscated in the period leading up to independence. All classes were united with the common purpose of seeking to eject the European colonial master. In the post-independence phase, Nkrumah argued that the African middle class over time came to constitute “the class ally of the bourgeoisie of the capitalist world.”<sup>25</sup> They were a “subordinate partner to foreign capitalism.” Nkrumah appeared to concur with Fanon that “the African bourgeoisie remains therefore largely a comprador class, sharing in some of the profits which imperialism drains from Africa.”<sup>26</sup>

In a series of discussions with ordinary Jamaicans (otherwise known in Jamaica as “groundings”), Walter Rodney remarked that: “the black intellectual, the black academic must attach himself [and I will add - herself] to the activity of the black masses.”<sup>27</sup> The question today is: To what extent are those Africans who work for international NGOs, or African NGO’s and the African middle classes in the universities and other sectors of the economy attached to “the activity of the black masses” –. or are they servicing their own class interests as well as those of neo-imperialism?

A second important intellectual legacy Nkrumah left behind was of “Consciencism.” The central emphasis of the book with the same title is that Africa needs to evolve its own ideology and philosophy to solve “the crisis of the African conscience” afflicting African society.<sup>28</sup> Nkrumah wrote this book in 1964 and edited it in 1970 with a reprint. He contends that Africa needs to harmonise the three cultural currents that exist within African societies. These three currents are: the traditional African, Euro-Christian and the Islamic. Mazrui aptly characterised this triad as “the triple heritage.” In short, like the Japanese who can modernise and industrialise and continue to retain their Japanese identity, Africans must re-assert an African Personality on the world stage in a mode that positively harmonises these cultural currents in achieving the “African Revolution” that Nkrumah called for.<sup>29</sup>

A third important legacy that has fallen into historical obscurity was stated in Nkrumah's *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*, written in 1968. Nkrumah called for the creation of the Organisation of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAL).<sup>30</sup> He did not provide a blueprint for this organisation. He considered it would "provide an organic link with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America who are struggling against imperialism."

It seems the existence of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the World Social Forum (WSF) mirror the kind of organisational and ideological links that Nkrumah wanted to build between Africa, Asia and Latin America. Nkrumah participated in the NAM during the 1960s alongside his contemporaries-- Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia, Josef Tito of the then Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and U Nu of Burma. As the Cold War raged, the NAM was preoccupied with taking a stand against pacts and blocs that divided the world into hostile camps of East and West. With the Cold War at an end, the NAM is currently preoccupied with the issues of: HIV/AIDS, trade, investment and globalization.

Similarly, the WSF is a broad platform upon which progressive forces, social and political movements in the South can build alternatives to the current neo-liberal economic order. Despite criticism in 2007 that it was dominated by "ngo-ization", cooption, lack of participation of real social movements, the challenge for African social and political movements is to align themselves with other progressive movements in the South i.e. in Asia, Brazil and Latin America in order to alter the representation and participation of grassroots movements in the WSF.

The WSF typifies the kind of "organic links" Nkrumah urged people of Africa, India and Latin America to forge in order to challenge what he considered to be the enemy of the time i.e. imperialism. Today it is imperialism in the guise of neo-liberalism and capitalist globalisation that are the enemies of African people and Pan-Africanism. Currently the region in the world where imperialism and neo-liberalism is being directly challenged is in Latin America where a "pink revolution" of progressive/socialist orientated governments have taken power in the last two decades. The governments of Evo Morales in Bolivia, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Fernando Lugo in Paraguay, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Rafael Correa in Ecuador and the successor of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff, can show Africans that there is an alternative to IMF/World Bank market policies that places paramount control of a country's assets in the interests of its poor and underprivileged as paramount to economic development.

A fourth important intellectual legacy was Nkrumah's commitment to "scientific socialism." At the Second Conference of Non-Aligned States in Cairo, in October 1964, Nkrumah proclaimed: "Socialism does not belong to the Soviet Union or China, or for that matter to any other country; it is an international idea." Nkrumah had made unequivocal in his writings that he considered capitalism to be antithetical to the interests of ordinary people; he considered it a vulturistic system that relentlessly exploited the labour and economic resources of African people during the colonial era.<sup>31</sup>

In the light of the global economic crisis that was ushered in with the credit and housing crisis during 2008, increases in food prices led to violent food riots in over 20 countries around the world, including Senegal, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, Somalia and Mozambique. The year 2008 saw record levels of hunger for the world's poor, particularly in Africa where the majority of the continent's people live on less than a dollar a day. At the same time, there were record profits for the world's major agri-food corporations in the year 2008.<sup>32</sup> During the crisis, Alan Greenspan, the head of the US Federal Reserve for 18 years, was questioned by the US Congressional hearings. He admitted that he had found a "flaw in the free market theory." When he was probed further by representative Waxman, who asked "that your view of the world, your ideology was not right; it was not working?" Greenspan, responded with candour and said: "Absolutely, precisely. You know that's precisely the reasons I was shocked, because I have been going for 40 years or more with the very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionally well."<sup>33</sup>

The unfolding economic crisis provides Pan-Africanists and progressive forces an opportunity to critique the prevailing economic system and more importantly put forward a more just alternative economic system to capitalism that meets the needs of ordinary people throughout the world. Now is the time for such forces to patiently critique, educate and mobilize ordinary people towards dreaming of a new world; to seek alternative paradigms. This demand for a more just egalitarian economic world order is in keeping with Nkrumah's vision for Africa and the world. As Walter Rodney pointed out in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*:

*"Capitalism has created its own irrationalities such as a vicious white racism, the tremendous waste associated with advertising, and the irrationality of incredible poverty in the midst of wealth and wastage even inside the biggest capitalist economies, such as that of the United States of America."*<sup>34</sup>

Capitalists around the world are currently seeking to sustain an unsustainable economic system. They are trying to fix a system in severe crisis with a variation of further fiscal controls, budgetary austerity, and calls for greater banking regulations. The international financial crisis has eroded the credibility of the neoliberal economics that provided its intellectual underpinnings. Despite this, neo-liberalism continues to exercise a strong influence on economists in Africa (and the South generally) and in the global North particularly (e.g. in the institutions of the IMF, World Bank and WTO).

In other words, Nkrumah's writings, particularly his *Class Struggle in Africa* envisioned a new world economic order in which "scientific socialism" was a central part. He did not provide a detailed blue print of this new economic and social system but outlined that it would be based on particular egalitarian principles in which the profit motive of capitalism would not exist. Nkrumah ends his book, *Class Struggle in Africa* with a call for "The total liberation and unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government." He believed that this "must be the primary objective of all Black revolutionaries throughout the world." Nkrumah states that the total liberation and unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government "will at the same time advance the triumph of the international socialist revolution, and the onward progress towards world communism, under which, every society is ordered on the principle of – from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, Nkrumah's commitment to "scientific socialism" remains profoundly relevant as the current capitalist economic system implodes within and seeks to sustain its globally exploitative character. An alternative equitable economic system is imperative in our current times.

A fifth intellectual legacy is one that we constantly need to remind ourselves and peoples of African descent around the world, particularly as the forces of globalization seek to impose a universal identity on peoples around the world. The current ubiquitousness of Coca Cola and MacDonald's in all four corners of the globe is a manifestation of the economic and cultural impact of globalization with its consequent impact on the health of people of the South. In the diaspora where issues of African identity remain and have manifested in forms of internalized racism, we should not forget we are Africans in a global village of humanity regardless of where we live. Nkrumah proclaimed that: "All peoples of African descent whether they live in North or South America, the Caribbean or in any other part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation."<sup>36</sup>

In addition, on the African continent issues of citizenship have been at the heart of political conflicts in the Ivory Coast, particularly in the expression of "Ivorité" (who is an Ivorian?) and in South Africa where attacks on African immigrants in March 2008 led to deaths of over 60 immigrants in townships close to the city of Johannesburg. These developments indicate the imperative to cultivate a Pan-African citizenship and identity that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of all Africans regardless of where they are born – as possessing a right to live, work, and settle in any part of the African continent. These rights should be protected by African governments but more importantly, African governments are responsible for cultivating a Pan-African awareness and Pan-African global community of peace and tolerance as they fulfill the basic needs of all African people.

A sixth intellectual legacy is Nkrumah's principled opposition to nuclear weapons. Today there are nine countries in the world that possess nuclear weapons<sup>37</sup>; in addition, biological and chemical weapons have been added to the accumulated arsenal. In his time Nkrumah made known his condemnation of the explosion of an atomic bomb in the Sahara desert in February 1960 by the French government. He characterised the actions of Charles De Gaulle's government as one of "nuclear imperialism" and "atomic arrogance." He seized French assets in Ghana and recalled the Ghanaian ambassador to France. Nkrumah was relentlessly committed to the principle of peace because he believed that nuclear weapons and the hostile climate it engendered were inimical to security and peace not only in the world but also in Africa. His government hosted the 'World Without the Bomb Conference' in Accra in June 1962. A hundred delegates, largely from the Eastern bloc attended. This example is indicative of one of the lesser known intellectual legacies of Nkrumah, that is, he was opposed to the destructive purposes of nuclear weapons. He believed that financial resources allocated to procuring nuclear, biological and chemical weapons could be diverted to the establishment of schools, hospitals and roads that productively benefit human beings rather than destroy human life. Today, genuine Pan-Africanism must support peace for all of humanity and oppose the insistence of some nations to continue to possess and increase their nuclear weapons.

In summary, Nkrumah's analytical and conceptual contribution to class struggle, neo-colonialism, Consciencism, the necessity for greater and meaningful solidarity between Africa and the social movements of Latin America and Asia, the necessity for socialism and his principled opposition to nuclear weapons – are intellectual legacies that remain highly pertinent to African people today.

In terms of the political legacy of Nkrumah, there are those such as Ali Mazrui who argue that Nkrumah did not score favourably on this front. Mazrui contends that Nkrumah was the progenitor of "black authoritarianism," particularly in his employment of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) to incarcerate his political opponents.<sup>38</sup> "In seeking to challenge this argument – but certainly not to exonerate Nkrumah, there are three reasons that can be presented to account for his actions.

First, Nkrumah's decline into authoritarianism was driven not only by what Mazrui characterises as "pragmatic, cultural and Leninist considerations" but his descent cannot be separated from the real acts of violence pursued by the opposition groups that threatened both the security of the state and Nkrumah personally.<sup>39</sup>

Second, there were a number of intrigues and rumours to overthrow Nkrumah's government in December 1958. In addition to this were the explosions in various public venues from 1951 onwards, as well as the assassination attempts of 1955, 1962 and 1964 – which all justified in Nkrumah's mind the need for strong measures to safeguard his person and the security of the state.

Third, if one compares the political measures Nkrumah adopted between 1958 to 1966 with that of his contemporaries, such as, Sékou Touré of Guinea, Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Modibo Keita of Mali, Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Nkrumah was not the progenitor of single party rule in Africa as Mazrui argues. A critical regional comparison of how various African states sought to wield political order in the postindependence phase of Africa's history, illustrates that none of these post-colonial states could escape the authoritarian structures of the colonial state they had inherited.

Zolberg's study shows that at independence, his contemporaries were also consumed with mechanisms that would produce cohesive nation-states among diverse ethnic communities within the boundaries of the nation-state bequeathed at independence.<sup>40</sup> This was the challenge of all post-colonial African states and it appears authoritarian measures were adopted rather than genuine democratic ones as leaders and parties sought to maintain their grasp on power and the trappings of the state. Nkrumah cannot be accused of what Mazrui defines as "starting the whole tradition of Black authoritarianism in the post colonial era."<sup>41</sup> The contention is that Nkrumah's authoritarianism is more complex than simply attributing it to megalomania. Even if there was some elements of the latter involved in the motivation of his actions and policies, we must equally address the material and political forces of an opposition that even prior to independence used terror to achieve political ends.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of more positive political legacies Nkrumah left behind, several among them are; the CPP's newspaper, the *Accra Evening News* and his sponsorship of the Encyclopaedia Africana Project - were both important institutions in which Nkrumah played an initiating and significant role. His government contributed to the establishment of many primary and secondary schools and therefore raising the levels of literacy in Ghana; the building of roads and motorways; the building of Tema harbour; the construction of the Akosombo dam to provide electricity for Ghana and the West African region in the Volta River Project – as well as many other socio-economic projects that laid the economic foundations of a modern Ghana.

Lastly, Nkrumah's most important political legacy lies in his vision of Continental Union Government of Africa or Pan-Africanism. His vision of African unity is not only a political legacy seeking to empower Africans and the African continent but an intellectual one. Integral to his notion of African unity was the establishment of a Joint African Command which he first called for during the Congo crisis of 1960. Nkrumah is the ideological father of the notion of an African Command and the formation of the US Africa Command or AFRICOM by George Bush Jr in October 2007 is an anathema to Nkrumah's memory and must be resisted by all Pan-Africanists.

Nkrumah's vision of an African High Command was one wholly organised by Africans and for Africans against the enemies of imperialism, neo-colonialism and balkanisation of the continent. He did not envisage that such a command would be established as a guise to conceal America's global war against terrorism (GWOT), or that AFRICOM would be set up as a means to secure America's oil supply from Africa as the US seeks to lessen its oil dependence on the Middle East in the forthcoming decades.

Nkrumah has left a valuable intellectual legacy comprising an essential analytical framework in which to comprehend our present reality. Such a legacy and framework remains unmitigatedly relevant for Africans and the African continent today.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Panaf, 1965, p.ix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.ix, hereafter, referred to as *Neo-colonialism*.

<sup>3</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Conference of Independent States*, 15 April 1958, Second Edition, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, Panaf, 1973, p. 311.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 310.

<sup>6</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism* p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, see chapters 6 and 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 205.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> See *Where Vultures Feast Shell, Human Rights and Oil*, Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas, Verso, 2003.

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<sup>11</sup> See ‘The Vile Scramble for Loot How British Corporations are Fuelling War in the Congo’ by Robert Miller, November 19, 2009, <http://www.zcommunications.org/the-vile-scramble-for-loot-by-robert-miller> (accessed 18 December 2009) for a list of these 85 corporations.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, Panaf, 1970, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> A. Mazrui, *Nkrumah’s Legacy and Africa’s Triple Heritage between Globalization and Counter Terrorism*, Ghana Universities Press, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> T. Abdul-Raheem, ‘An African Perspective on Globalization’ in *The Society for International Development*, 1998, pp.23-26.

<sup>18</sup> H. Campbell, *Pan-Africanism, Pan-Africanists, and African Liberation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Two Lectures*, New Academia Publishing, 2006, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> E. Holt-Giménez & R. Patel, *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*, Pambazuka Press, 2009, pp.45-46.

<sup>20</sup> C. Johnson, *Blowback The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, Sphere an imprint of Little & Brown, 2000, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Holt-Giménez & Patel, *Food Rebellions!*, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> See *Seeds of Destruction The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation* by F. William Engdahl, Global Research, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.xiv.

<sup>24</sup> P. Bond “A Battle over water in South Africa” in <http://africafiles.org/printableversion.asp?id=4564> Accessed 16.12 2010.

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<sup>25</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>27</sup> W. Rodney, *Groundings With my Brothers*, Bogle-Ouverture, 1975, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, 1970 edition, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, pp.84-88. Nkrumah discusses the objectives of the “African Revolution” and how it will be a contribution to anti-imperialist struggles around the world.

<sup>30</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*, Panaf, 1968, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom*, Panaf 1962. This small book is a critique of capitalism and particularly what Nkrumah defined as the damaging operations of “colonial economics.”

<sup>32</sup> E,Holt-Giménez & R. Patel, *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*, Pambazuka Press, 2009, p 6,

<sup>33</sup> Cited in, Y. Tandon, *Development and Globalisation: Daring to Think Differently*, Pambazuka Press, 2009, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1982, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa*, 1970, p. 88.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in *Class Struggle*, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> The nine countries currently in possession of nuclear weapons are: Russia (15,000); US (9,600); France (350); China (200); Israel (100-200); United Kingdom (160); Pakistan (60-70); India (50-60); North Korea (2-10); see *New Internationalist*, June 2008, p. 9

<sup>38</sup> A. Mazrui, *Nkrumah's Legacy & Africa's Triple Heritage Between Globalization & Counter Terrorism*, 2004, p. 4.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> A.R. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order The Party-States of West Africa*, The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

<sup>41</sup> Mazrui, *Nkrumah's Legacy*, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> In a forthcoming article to be published by the Ghana Studies Council, I examine Nkrumah's use of Preventive Detention and contest the argument that he started "the whole tradition of Black authoritarianism" as posited by Mazrui.