**KWAME NKRUMAHS CONSCIENCISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**

**ABSTRACT**

It is popular knowledge that most counties in Africa were at one time or the other under the control of foreign countries after the Berlin conference that partitioned the continent into various parts and acted as guides for the colonial masters. However, the true sons of the soil who happened to be nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah, Obafemi Awolowo, Kenneth Kaunda and others fought bravely for the independence of these countries and hence came self-governance.

After the granting of independence and the leave of the colonial masters, these educated nationalists went ahead to forge for Africa an ideology that would carry them to the Promised Land. One of these ideologies is the ‘Consciencism’ of Kwame Nkrumah which is to pave way for the economic and political emancipation of the African continent.

In this work, the ideology will be under the spotlight, alongside it will be Kwame Nkrumah himself and finally a critical evaluation will be provided with us supporting either side of the coin, that is, whether or not the ideology is good enough for us in Africa.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

According to African statesmen, the whites even after granting independence to the colonies they were governing left as a parting gift to the Africans the concept of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism is a situation whereby the black man feels inferior to the Europeans and derives psychological satisfaction only by associating with them. Even till today, traces of neo-colonialism are still visible. The African never values any product that is of African origin. He prefers the product which has the label “made in China” or “made in America” and other foreign seals.

This predicament was what prompted African thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe and others to embark on the search for the ‘African identity’ and this they expressed in their works.

Kwame Nkrumah, one of the African statesmen, postulated an ideology known as ‘Consciencism’. This ideology is an exercise in anti-colonialism. It advocated for a social revolution which was to be brought about by an intellectual revolution. This was clearly articulated in the first sentence of the first chapter of the book. He noted that “practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty”1.

This project work will have as its focal point ‘Consciencism’ as presented by Kwame Nkrumah. It must be noted that Consciencism is a summary of Nkrumah’s ideological viewpoint geared towards the economic and political emancipation of the African. It was marked that Consciencism arrived at a stage of development where the vigorous African search for freedom; unity and identity need to be expressed in the form of philosophical statesments2.

Furthermore, the concept; ‘Consciencism’ has been subjected to some criticisms; hence there is need for an overview of the concept with a view to presenting it in the very spirit of African revolution.

**1.2: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Kwame Nkrumah’s ideology which he propounded for the development of the African is based on a foundation of materialism. The minimum assertion of materialism is the absolute and independent existence of matter3. Looking at it singly from this view, it becomes apparent that ‘philosophical consciencism’ as Nkrumah calls it cannot be reconciled with the religious realities found in the African society as the roles of spirits and souls cannot be over-emphasized as far as the African is concerned.

As pointed out by Paulin Houtondji, “consciencism is wrong in treating any political system as interdependent with some specific metaphysical theory”4. For him, if political theories are to need justification, “it must be political justification, belonging to the same level of discourse”5. In other words, there is a problem with bringing metaphysics into the realm of political discourse.

Another problem is that of the realization of Nkrumah’s ideology. Nkrumah himself said that “Colonialism and its attitude are die hard, like the attitudes of slavery, whose hangover still dominates behaviour in certain parts of the western hemisphere”6. For the above reasons, the problem arises as to whether or not philosophical consciencism is not merely a theoretical concept, which will fail in practice.

All these problems are associated with the concept of ‘consciencism’ and its application.

**1.3: PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

A key purpose of this project work is to attempt an exposition of Nkrumah’s solution to the African predicament brought about by colonial presence on African soil.

Another important purpose of this work is that it will evaluate Nkrumah’s proposed solution with a view to deciding whether or not it will be useful in the African quest for moving forward in every sense of it.

**1.4: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study is to show that if ‘philosophical consciencism’ is approached in the way Kwame Nkrumah postulated it, then there will be no stopping the growth and development of Africa.

**1.5: SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The work in its scope will be limited to an overview of Nkrumah’s ideology for de-colonization. Nevertheless, in the process of over viewing his ideology, cognizance will be taken of the influences on him, the work “Consciencism” itself, and circumstances surrounding the postulation of the ideology.

**1.6: METHODOLOGY**

The method we shall adopt in this project work shall be analytical and critical. It shall be analytical in that every concept used shall be broken down into simple words.

**1.7: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this work, we shall be making use of textbooks and also information sourced from websites.

The first book under review is one written by Kwame Nkrumah himself and is titled “Consciencism: A Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization”, published in London in 1964. In this book, Nkrumah makes a case for a re-structuring of the African society away from colonialism and towards economic and political success. He posits an ideology that is capable of processing the old metropolitan ideologies of capitalism and European socialism and according to him “consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of the forces which will enable African society to digest the Western, the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality”.7

The second book to be reviewed is also by Kwame Nkrumah and is titled “Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah”, published in London in 1967 by Thomas Nelson. The book brings together various quotes of Kwame Nkrumah from various books by him and addresses delivered by him either in his official capacity as president of Ghana or simply as Kwame Nkrumah.

Another book that will be used in this work is by Gideon-Cyrus M. Mutiso and S.W Rohio titled “Readings in African Political Thought”, published in London by Heinemann in 1975. The book as the name suggests contains selected topics from various political thinkers and the writings from Kwame Nkrumah featured prominently in the book.

C. Okadigbo’s book titled “Consciencism in African Political Philosophy”, published in Enugu by Fourth Dimension Publishers in 1985 is also under review. In this book, the author provided a review of contemporary African philosophy with Nkrumah’s ‘consciencism’ under the spotlight and according to him “there is here an evaluation of the solution proposed by the same spirit of the African revolution”8.

Another book here under review is Kwame Nkrumah’s “Towards Colonial Freedom”, published in London by Heinemann Educational Books in 1962. Here the author describes this book as “a rough blueprint of the process which colonial people can establish the realization of their complete and unconditional independence”9.

The sixth book under review is Kwame Nkrumah’s “Africa Must Unite”, published in London by Panaf Books in 1963. Here the author makes a case for Pan-African unity. He also urged the people of African descent in the West Indies and in the United States of America to strive for this unity as it will be a very important factor in the political and economic emancipation of the African.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF KWAME NKRUMAH**

**The Continental Union Government of Africa**

If there is one agenda or political framework which occupied Kwame Nkrumah’s attention from his earliest political struggles to his overthrow in the year 1966 and even beyond, it was precisely his vision of a continental union government for Africa. It was in fact his vision and mission to accomplish this. Learning a great lesson from the balkanization of the Ottoman Empire, which was orchestrated by the European powers and which eventually led to the disastrous World War I (1914-1918), Nkrumah realized early in his political life that Africa's independent states, which were artificially carved out at the Berlin Conference in 1884, could not survive if there was no unified front on a continental basis in order to combat the threat imperialism posed. In other words, Africa needed a continental union government that could act as a shield against external interference. Nkrumah submitted that Africa's independent states could either become satellite states of the imperialist countries or collapse one by one as a result of imperialist meddling in their political and economic affairs.

Since some African countries were still struggling to liberate themselves from colonial shackles at the time Ghana gained her political independence, Nkrumah expressed optimism that Africa could be united under one socialist continental government, only if the remaining territories still under colonial domination were liberated. Thus, all resources, human and material, were mobilized in an effort to expel the colonial forces from the African soil. It was against this backdrop that on the eve of Ghana’s independence Nkrumah made his celebrated speech: “The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of Africa” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 100). Thus, with the attainment of Ghana’s independence, Nkrumah reasoned that Ghana as a sovereign state could not isolate itself socially and politically from the rest of the continent, since it could not battle imperialism alone. Nkrumah was therefore determined to see Africa united under a continental union government, just like the USA and the USSR (Nkrumah, 1963).

Nkrumah indicates that up to 1945 when the 5th Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester, England, his idea of African unity was limited to West Africa. In other words, it was his determination to see West Africa united under a single government. Perhaps the basic assumption underlying Nkrumah’s idea of unity was largely motivated by the ontological reality of colonialism, which was mainly divisive. Divisive, in a sense, that colonialism thrived on the theory of divide and rule. Thus the division of colonial subjects into incompatible groups such as subjects and citizens in colonial Senegal for instance, could be remedied by continental unity Nkrumah put forward. In Towards Colonial Freedom for example, Nkrumah reinforced his idea of unity as follows:

There is, however, one matter on which my views have been expanded, and that is regarding African Unity. Since I have had the opportunity of putting my ideas to work, and personally experiencing the bitter and arduous test of wit, patience and endurance that was necessary before our own victory over colonialism was won, I lay even greater stress on the vital importance to Africa’s survival of a political union of the African continent. Twenty years ago my ideas on African unity, important as I considered them even at that time, were limited to West African unity. Today, as I sit at my desk in Accra and glance at the several maps of Africa surrounding me, I see the wider horizon of the immense possibilities open to Africans–the only guarantee, in fact, for our survival–in a total continental political union of Africa (Nkrumah, 1962, p. xi).

The above quotation seems to summarize Nkrumah’s objective in seeking a continental political union for Africa. For among other advantages, such a union would not only give Africans a unified front in terms of diplomacy, foreign policy and defense but would also enhance Africa’s material and cultural progress. It may be appropriate to ask, why political union but not cultural union? Nkrumah answered that it was equally possible to seek cultural and economic unity as opposed to the political unity he canvassed. He opined that political unity backed by a centralized authority would give expression to other social integrations, such as cultural, diplomatic and economic and at the same time safeguard Africa’s hard won independence. He writes,

Since our inception, we have raised as a cardinal policy, the total emancipation of Africa from colonialism in all its forms. To this we have added the objective of the political union of African states as the surest safeguard of our hard won freedom and the soundest foundation for our individual, no less than our common, economic, social and cultural advancement (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xi).

The objectives of continental union as enunciated in the above quotation constitute the benefits Africa stood to gain if it were united under one continental union government. In this regard Nkrumah thought that what Africa stood for, was what the imperialist powers stood against. Hence, he opines, “Just as our strength lies in a unified policy and action for progress and development, so the strength of the imperialist lies in our disunity. We in Africa can only meet them effectively by presenting a unified front and a continental purpose” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xvi). It was therefore against this backdrop that Nkrumah became convinced that unless African leaders met the obvious and powerful threat of imperialism with a coherent and comprehensive united African front, based on a common military and economic policy, the imperialist powers would pick independent African states and destroy them one after the other (Nkrumah, 1963). It must however be recalled that Kwame Nkrumah’s vision of African unity dates back to 1957, when the first conference of independent African states was convened in Accra at his request. This symbolic gesture continued and even gathered much momentum in 1959 when the seed of a continental union was sowed following the Conakry declaration–a declaration which sought to unite Ghana with Guinea as the seminal seed of continental unity. In all these conferences, the message remained the same, namely, African liberation and

unity.

And yet it appeared that unity was destined not to be. Thus, it will be appropriate to ask the question, was the idea of African unity as conceived by Nkrumah utopia? It appears so because the artificial boundaries separating one African state from the other could not be dismantled or done away with, since African leaders were not prepared to surrender the political sovereignties of their small, albeit nonviable, states in favour of a larger union. More generally, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences militated against political unity. In particular, African leaders disagreed on a unified framework or policy on which the African continent was to be united. While some preferred a gradual approach towards unity, others went for an immediate and radical approach to unity. Nkrumah belongs to the latter school. He was unrelenting and went ahead to propagate his views on the continental union government of Africa. These were outlined in his book aptly entitled, Africa Must Unite.

In chapter 15 of Africa Must Unite, titled ‘Towards African Unity,’ Nkrumah dismisses those who thought that Africans could not form a continental union because of certain natural and social differences like race, culture and language (Nkrumah, 1963). In spite of these natural differences, Nkrumah was convinced that those forces which united Africans outweigh those that divided them. Nkrumah was convinced that the development of Pan-Africanism, the

African personality in world affairs and Africa’s colonial past all call for unity (Nkrumah, 1963). In fact, Nkrumah’s vision of African unity and his efforts towards its realisation which dated back to 1945 and was sustained up to 1963 and beyond were reinforced in Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism, a book he published only a year before he was overthrown.

In the above work, devoted principally to the exposure of the imperialist powers’ aim to keep Africa exploited, balkanized and backward, Nkrumah measured the sinister operation of neo-colonialism against the backdrop of African unity. Against this background therefore, he indicated that the evil of neocolonialism is the prevention of the formation of larger territories powerful enough to rival the imperialist countries. According to Nkrumah,

…if Africa was united, no major power bloc would attempt to subdue it by ‘limited war’ because from the very nature of limited war, what can be achieved by it is itself limited. It is only where small states exist that it is possible, by landing a few thousand marines or by financing a mercenary force, to secure a decisive result (Nkrumah, 1965, p. xi).

Since Nkrumah recognised neo-colonialism as an instrument whose deployment was meant to break formerly united large colonial territories into numerous nonviable states which would be incapable of independent development, and must therefore rely on imperial powers for economic and social direction, he proposed that the solution to the neo-colonial situation is a united action. He puts this succinctly, “I propose to show how in practice African unity, which in itself can only be established by the defeat of neo-colonialism, could immensely raise African living standards” (Nkrumah, 1965, p. xx).

Placing emphasis on political unity as a pre-requisite to all other developments, including economic, Nkrumah reminds us that however much the African continent increases its agricultural growth or productive capacity, it will not benefit from such an increment “unless it is sufficiently politically and economically united to force the developed world to pay it a fair price for its cash crops” (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 9). This assertion is right, because an increase in the production of raw materials in Africa without industrialization is tantamount to growing such cash crops to feed the industrial plants of the Western powers, in exchange for pittance. It was exactly this unfair economic relationship between Africa and the imperial powers that validated Nkrumah's call for continental unity, as enunciated in the introduction and concluding parts of Neo-Colonialism.

He writes, “Only a united Africa through an all-African Union Government…is the answer to neo-colonialism, balkanisation and all other internal enemies such as poverty, diseases, ignorance and illiteracy” (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 36 & 259).

It appears pretty clear that Nkrumah’s idea of a continental union government permeated his major works especially towards the end of his life when his political thought became revolutionary. At this period, Nkrumah began to advocate revolution in order to bring about such a union. In my opinion, Nkrumah’s change of views and strategy was quite right, considering that all diplomatic efforts towards bringing his vision of African unity into realisation had not achieved the desired results. It is consistent with the ethical principle that violence or revolution should be seen as a last resort when all diplomatic and persuasive efforts have failed. At this stage too, Nkrumah began to see socialism and African unity as complementary, such that one could not be achieved without the other. Equally important is the fact that such a novel objective as African unity, in Nkrumah’s view, could not be attained without the contribution of African peasants. According to Nkrumah,

The choice has already been made by the workers and peasants of Africa. They have chosen unification; and this can only be achieved through armed struggle under socialist direction. For

the political unification of Africa and socialism are synonymous. One cannot be achieved without the other (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 84).

In his concluding remarks in Class Struggle in Africa, Nkrumah dismissed the idea that Africa could only unite if there were a common language, common culture and common territory. Once again, he opposed this view. He felt that, “The notion that in order to have unity it is necessary for there to be a common language, a common territory and common culture, has failed to stand the test of time or the scrutiny of scientific definition of objective reality” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 88). What then is scientific definition of reality? Nkrumah never answered this question satisfactorily. Perhaps he assumed that it was an obvious issue that needed no further clarification. Nkrumah’s apparent failure to clarify some expressions in his political philosophy poses a problem of clarification. For example, if we are not so clear on the scientific definition of objective reality, to what extend can we successfully interrogate African unity with regard to the diverse ethnic group and cultures? It is more of a debate between philosophical monism and pluralism. These are two parallel schools of thought whose definition of reality does not concur. Monism recognises that reality is fundamentally one, while pluralism recognises that reality is composed fundamentally of multiple objects and existence. Thus, given the diverse people and culture on the African continent, how successful could this pluralistic continent be made monistic through continental union as enunciated by Nkrumah?

All the same, Nkrumah summed up the objectives of his continental union government of Africa as follows: The first objective is the overall economic planning on a continental basis in order to increase economic and industrial power of Africa. The second is the establishment of a unified defence and military command. The third involves the institution of a unified foreign policy and diplomacy, in order to give political direction to the joint efforts for the protection and economic development of Africa (Nkrumah, 1963). To sum up, Nkrumah’s vision of a united Africa was so forceful that when he was writing from exile in Conakry, the Guinean capital, his foreword to Jaramogi Oginga Odinga’s Not Yet Uhuru reads:

It is clear than ever before that the political union of Africa, which has been one of my main pre-occupations since the attainment of independence by Ghana, is the key to Africa’s economic and political stability, peace and progress. A Union Government of Africa backed by organised military power and sound continental and economic planning is bound to compel nations outside Africa to respect our collective interest. States with imperialist tendencies, however powerful, will tremble before taking unilateral decisions to interfere in our affairs (Odinga, 1967, p. xiii)

**Phases in Kwame Nkrumah’s Socialism**

It is interesting to note that up to 1963 when African Must Unite was published, Kwame Nkrumah was preoccupied with the arduous task of building socialism in Ghana as an alternative path to national development. Socialism was therefore seen as an ideology that would be adapted to suit the African environment, African conditions and African communal way of life. Thus, at this stage, Nkrumah believed in African socialism as opposed to scientific socialism.

This marks the first phase of Nkrumah’s socialism. In Consciencism and Neocolonialism however, Nkrumah attempts an elucidation of socialism as a theory, and then defends African communalism- its humanist and egalitarian principles- as the precursor of African socialism. Here, Nkrumah contends that the idea of class struggle is inconsistent with African egalitarianism. He brands Marxian materialism atheistic, because Marxian socialism is contemptuous of spiritual values. He states that “strictly speaking, the assertion of the sole reality of matter is atheistic, for pantheism, too, is a species of atheism. Philosophical consciencism, even though deeply rooted in materialism, is not necessarily atheistic” (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 84).

Finally, the period 1967-1972 marks the last and final phase of Kwame Nkrumah’s socialist discourse. This period saw Nkrumah’s efforts towards presenting a comprehensive and coherent analysis of socialism within the Marxian framework. Nkrumah acknowledges the class antagonism in Marxian socialist philosophy as a fact and he advocates social revolution in order to establish scientific socialism in Africa. In this section of this chapter, we examine the three phases that constitute Nkrumah’s defense of socialism.

However, before we examine the phases in Nkrumah’s socialism, it is worth noting to first of all examine African socialism, a concept which was espoused by most African independence leaders. This, we believe, will throw more light on the phases in Nkrumah’s socialism.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**KWAME NKRUMAH AND AFRICAN SOCIALISM**

In the course of the 1960s, African socialism emerged as a popular version of socialism embraced by the post-independence African leaders. After political independence in Africa there was a rush by African leaders to call their political ideas anything but capitalism. The label “African socialism” came in handy. This was the situation not just because it was fashionable to do so but perhaps also because they thought socialism had different local characteristics, and so Africa had its own version of socialism uniquely African.

Mboya defines African socialism as “… those proven codes of conduct in the African societies which have, over the ages, conferred dignity on our people and afforded them security regardless of their station in life” (Mboya, 1975, p. 60). Mboya further notes that African socialism should be seen as those ideals and attitudes of mind in traditional African norms and customs which regulated man’s conduct, with the social weal as its fundamental objective (Mboya, 1975). Similarly, In Consciencism, Nkrumah argues that the indigenous African society is anti-capitalist and egalitarian in nature. To this effect, socialism in his opinion had a lot in common with traditional African communal past and hence socialism was a suitable ideology for the new African countries.

In justifying his preference for socialism, he argues that such a theory is an advancement and refinement of communalism. Thus humanism and egalitarianism are common features of socialism and communalism. Employing ethical analysis, especially the principle of utilitarianism, Kwame Nkrumah argues that, “under socialism the study and mastery of nature has a humanist impulse and is directed not towards a profiteering accomplishment, but the affording of ever increasing satisfaction for the material and greatest needs of the greatest number” (Nkrumah,1964:68).

These views among other African socialist theories tend to see socialism as a socio-ethical doctrine. Socio-ethical doctrine in a sense that the state will play a critical role by exercising a socialistic control over the economy while discouraging the concentration of wealth in private hands by ensuring the widest form of property decentralisation. Though African socialism will allow private enterprise and public control of the economy, nevertheless, it repudiates both capitalism and communism (Omi & Anyawu, 1981). To be sure, it regards capitalism as too exploitative of human dignity and communism as being contemptuous of African spiritual values. At another breadth most African independence leaders believe that apart from the unethical concerns of capitalism regarding its treatment of man as a means to an end, how could such an ideology which had been responsible for Africa’s underdevelopment be the same ideology for Africa’s advancement? Seydou Kouyate, Mali leader for Development, stretched the argument further. He argued that “You cannot be a capitalist when you have no capital” (Benett, 1964, p. 98). This argument helps explain partly why African states found it difficult to switch directly to the capitalist system of production when independence came. If socialism is the means by which production, distribution and exchange of goods are publicly owned and controlled, what then would be the characteristic content of the African brand?

African leaders did not have a coherent answer to this all important question. Attempts were made to rectify this intellectual confusion. The first attempt to clarify the various ideas construed as African socialism was made at the Dakar Colloquium in 1962. At this conference, several notions were raised about African socialism. Apart from the diverse views expressed as African socialism by Senghor, Nyerere and Kenyatta, Nasser of Egypt also spoke eloquently about Arab socialism.

Nyerere, together with Sekou Toure, and Senghor and Nkrumah insists that traditional Africa exhibited no classes or class struggle. Hence while the existence of occupational castes in West Africa and elsewhere in Africa should be acknowledged; these were not classes ‘founded on wealth’ with conflicting interests in their opinion (Benett, 1964, p. 98). Nyerere and Sekou Toure emphasise the strong community sense of African society. While Nyerere regards Ujamaa (familyhood) as the basis of African socialism, Sekou Toure considers that “Africa is essentially ‘communaucratic’. ‘Collective life and social solidarity,’ he says, ‘give her habits a humanistic foundation which many peoples may envy’ (Benett, 1964, p. 98). Thus African socialism as conceived by its adherents may be summarised under four broad themes, namely, the denial of classes or class struggle in pre-colonial Africa, the rejection of vulgar materialism inherent in Marxian socialism, the desire to return to the African past that never was and the rejection of capitalism on ethical grounds.

The different nuances about the ontology of African socialism put forward by African leaders are well captured in Friedland and Rosberg’s comments that “there was much failure by Africans themselves at the Dakar Conference and elsewhere to present a precise definition of African socialism” (Friedland & Rosberg,1958, p. 50).

The inability of the leaders at the Conference to clearly state what constitute African socialism made it difficult to present a coherent and systematic articulation of the concept. The different perspectives that existed in the name of African socialism make it appear a potpourri of ideas, having little or no coherence. Confused by the oversimplification of the concept of socialism by independence African leaders, the magazine, African Report, accused the delegates of paying lip service to socialism. Nkrumah, of all the leaders who converged at Dakar, saw the need of giving the concept a coherent interpretation.

This realisation however came only after his exile years in Conakry. Nkrumah in Class Struggle in Africa affirms that the basic tenets of socialism are universal and abiding.

**Socialism as a Path to Development**

Shortly after Ghana became a republic in 1960, Nkrumah recognised the urgent need for ideological education that would enhance his socialist agenda. We recall that in Towards Colonial Freedom he underscores the importance of political education as an instrument for winning political independence. To realise this objective, the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba was established in 1961. And in his speech at the launching of the institute, Nkrumah reiterated his commitment to socialism as a framework for national development.

Nkrumah said that “For twelve years, twelve long years therefore, no conscious consistent effort had been made to provide party members with the requisite education in the party’s ideology of socialism–socialism based on the conditions, circumstances and peculiarities of our African life” (Obeng, 1979, p. 6).

What does ‘African life’ in the above quotation imply? One may guess that the communal life of cooperation which is unique to Africans as opposed to the individualism of the West was what Nkrumah meant. Secondly, Nkrumah seems to have bought into the socialist debate among African independence leaders about the viability of African socialism. Nkrumah opines that the ideological training at his institute was meant to equip men and women with analytical knowledge so that “men and women who pass through this institute will go out not only armed with analytical knowledge to wage the battle of African socialism but will also be fortified with a keen spirit of dedication and service to our motherland” (Obeng, 1979, p. 6).

In fact, this was a tacit admission that apart from Marxian socialism, there was another version of socialism called African socialism, and that African socialism encapsulates the African experience, the African conditions and the African way of life. At another point in the same speech, Nkrumah hinted that the structure of his party was to “built up from Ghanaian experiences, conditions, environments and concepts entirely Ghanaian and African in outlook and based on the Marxist philosophy and world view” (Obeng, 1979, p. 12). Nkrumah seems to present a difficulty of interpretation. What does it mean to say “Ghanaian and African experiences and conditions based on Marxist socialist philosophy and adapting it”? Could it mean borrowing Marxism and adapting it to suit Ghanaian conditions? Or integrating African experience into Marxist socialist philosophy? This lack of clarity in Nkrumah’s socialist thought partly explains why Rooney (1988) remarks that “a clear and coherent outline of Nkrumah’s socialist policies is difficult to achieve because, although his overall aim remained fairly constant, his views and attitudes often appear contradictory....” (Rooney, 1988, p. 236)

Again, in a dawn broadcast of April 8th 1961, Nkrumah intimated that the aims and objectives of his party “are the building of socialist patterns of society in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Obeng, 1979, p. 16). If state socialism is defined as the process by which the means of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services are owned and controlled by the state, then Nkrumah implies exactly this: As our party has proclaimed, and as I have asserted time and again, socialism is the only pattern that can within the shortest possible time bring the good life to the people. For socialism assumes the public ownership of the means of production– land and its resources– and the use of those means for production that will bring benefits to the people. Socialist production is production of goods and services in fulfilment of the people’s needs. It is not production for individual private profit, which deprives a large section of the people of the goods and services produced, while their needs and wants remain unsatisfied (Obeng, 1979, p. 70).

Nkrumah however conceded that Ghana was yet to become a socialist state because apart from the unavailability of adequate material conditions in Ghana at the time, the foundation of socialism which he recognises as complete industrialisation and scientific agricultural production had not been built in the country. Hence, “socialism” in Nkrumah’s view needs socialists in order to build it (Nkrumah, 1963).

In chapter 14 of Africa Must Unite, titled ‘Building socialism in Ghana,’ Nkrumah outlines the topmost priorities of his government as consisting in fighting “poverty, ignorance, illiteracy and improving the health services” to the people. Given the colonial legacy his government inherited, Nkrumah realised that such objectives were long term objectives which were not amenable to legislation. All the same, he was firm in his conviction that working to achieve these objectives was a justification for winning independence from the erstwhile colonial masters. So he spells out his socialist objective as follows:

Production for private profit deprives a large section of the people of the goods and services produced. If, therefore, we are to fulfil our pledge to the people and achieve the programme set out... socialism is our only alternative. For socialism assumes the public ownership of the means of production, the land and its resources, and the use of those means in fulfilment of the people’s needs (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 119).

Nkrumah opted for socialist organisation of the mode of production and distribution of the wealth of the state. This was so because he believed it was such mode of production that would bring social and economic equity to the masses as opposed to socio-economic inequalities associated with the capitalist mode of production. This sums up the first phase of Nkrumah’s socialism, namely, socialism as an ideology or a path to development. The second and third phases of Nkrumah’s socialism are mainly enunciated in Consciencism and Class Struggle in Africa.

**Nkrumah’s Defense of African Socialism**

In Consciencism, Kwame Nkrumah recognizes that “the traditional face of Africa includes an attitude towards man which can only be described in its social manifestation as being socialist. In Africa man is [fundamentally] regarded as a spiritual being who is originally endowed with a certain inward dignity, integrity and value” (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 68). We aver that the idea of the original value of man imposes duties of a socialist kind upon Africans. Thus, this constitutes the theoretical basis of African communalism. Besides, this theoretical basis of socialism was expressed in the clan, the tribe and the family which together constitute the social group in which every African found himself. In this kind of social formation therefore, it was extremely difficult if not impossible for class antagonism to arise. Nkrumah thinks that, in this social situation, it was impossible for classes of a Marxian kind to arise (Nkrumah, 1964). Nkrumah was not alone in the belief that traditional Africa was a classless society. Julius Nyerere expressed similar remarks when he contends that "...the idea of class or caste was non-existent in African society" (Nyerere, 1987, p. 10).

Nkrumah claimed that in traditional African society, no interest of a particular section of society could override others; nor was there any legislation or executive authority that aided the interests of any particular group at the expense of another. In fact, in Nkrumah’s view, the welfare of the people was supreme. But he was quick to add that colonialism should take the blame for altering this traditional system. We can safely say that Nkrumah was actually appraising pre-colonial Africa in his work. Like Aristotle, who was appraising the Greek city states which had become obsolete as a result of the conquests of Alexander, Nkrumah was equally appraising a pre-colonial African civilisation that had been tremendously transformed by the colonial contact.

Recognising a bond between communalism and socialism, Nkrumah draws an analogy between the two as follows:

*…if one seeks the socio-political ancestor of socialism one must go to communalism. Socialism has characteristics in common with communalism, just as capitalism is linked with feudalism and slavery. In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expressions in modern circumstances (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 73).*

As communalism is linked to modern socialism, Nkrumah does not hesitate to express his preference for socialism. He thinks that socialism had the capacity to abolish inequalities that had been created by the colonial system. Nkrumah considers the evil of capitalism as consisting in its alienation of the fruit of labour from those who with the oil of their body and the sweat of their brow produce this fruit. This aspect of capitalism in his view makes it irreconcilable with those basic principles which animate traditional African society. Thus, capitalism is not merely unjust and too complicated to be workable in the Africa which was regaining its independence, “it is also alien,” he concludes (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 76).

Nkrumah further recognises that the restoration of Africa’s humanist and egalitarian principles requires socialism, whose guiding philosophy he terms philosophical consciencism. He defines philosophical consciencism as “the map in intellectual disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality” (Nkrumah, 1964, p.

72). And the “African personality is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society” (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 79). The proposed process of harmonising the combined presence of the three religious experiences which have created a crisis in the African conscience is what Nkrumah calls Categorical Conversion (Nkrumah, 1964). Philosophical consciencism takes dialectical materialism to be its operating methodology.

Nkrumah’s dialectical materialism acknowledges the duality of matter and spirit. It further takes matter to be the “primary reality not the sole reality” (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 88). But Nkrumah rejects the idea that matter is apathetic to motion (inertia). For him, matter is simply a plenum of forces and its dynamism lies in the fact that every quantitative transformation results in a qualitative change in the elevation of the human condition from lower to a higher form of existence (Okoro, 2010). This summarises Nkrumah’s second phase of socialism.

**Nkrumah’s Defense of Scientific Socialism**

It has been stated that in a letter to Engels, Karl Marx betrayed scientific socialism when he stated that “he” (Marx) was not a “Marxist” (Senghor, 1964, p. 102). But in a way that is not exactly similar to this assertion, some writers have argued that in spite of allegations that Nkrumah was a Marxist or communist, Nkrumah actually became a Marxist after his overthrow. This is borne out by the fact that Nkrumah fully embraced Marxian Socialism and repudiated his earlier study on African socialism and communalism. In other words, Nkrumah tried to correct his earlier idealisation and glorification of the African communal past. In “African Socialism Revisited,” an article written in 1967, a year after his overthrow, Kwame Nkrumah recognises ‘socialism’ as a slogan that unites African leaders in their quest to restore Africa’s past humanist and egalitarian principles. He expresses skepticism about the real meaning of socialism in the context of African political discourse. Thus, as at 1967, Nkrumah felt that socialism had lost its objective meaning “in favour of a distracting terminology and in favour of a general confusion. Discussion centres more on the various conceivable types of socialism than upon the need for socialist development”

(Nkrumah, 1967, p. 1)

In this article, Nkrumah classifies African leaders into two distinct schools of thoughts, namely, African socialists and socialists in Africa. Socialists in Africa refer to those who use socialism with the aim of remolding African society in the socialist direction; to reconstruct African society in such a manner that the humanism of traditional African life re-asserts itself in a modern African community (Nkrumah, 1967). In other words, Nkrumah thinks that socialists in Africa are those who believe that true economic and social development cannot be promoted without the real socialization of the means of production and distribution. African socialists on the other hand are those who use the term with the belief that it would smoothen the path to economic development. On

hindsight, this distinction appears to be a distinction without a difference. All the same, of the two schools of thought, Nkrumah espouses the former and despises the latter. In other words, he identifies himself with those who believe in the universal validity and applicability of socialism as an ideology of development. Nkrumah therefore denies the view which he held earlier that African society was a classless society in which no sectional interest reigned supreme over group welfare. He considers this view as an idealization and glorification of traditional

African society, which traditional Africa neither claims nor deserves. In brief, Nkrumah rejected or denounced his initial socialist study as follows:

Today, the phrase ‘African socialism’ seems to espouse the view that the traditional African society was a classless society imbued with the spirit of humanism and to express nostalgia for that spirit. Such a conception of socialism makes fetish of the communal African society. But an idyllic, African classless society (in which there were no rich and no poor) enjoying a drugged serenity is certainly a facile simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such society. I am afraid the realities of African society were somewhat more sordid (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 73).

Thus, Nkrumah rejected, as fanciful, such African socialist movements as Nyerere’s Ujamaa, Senghor’s Negritude, Nasser’s Arab ‘socialism’ and concludes that “it is the elimination of fancifulness from socialist action that makes socialism scientific. To suppose that there are tribal, national, religious or racial socialisms is to abandon objectivity in favour of chauvinism” (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 10). With this quotation and certain assertions Nkrumah made elsewhere in this article, he had by then made considerable progress towards abandoning the previous socialist study he defended in Consciencism. Nkrumah's later book, Class struggle in Africa, came to complete his departure from African socialism and his migration to scientific socialism. As the title speaks for itself, Nkrumah acknowledges that Africa cannot lie outside the ambit of class struggle in the world. It can only be considered as a continuation of the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. He argues that military coups and outbreak of civil wars in some parts of the African continent are indications of class struggle between oppressors and oppressed. And that the existence of class struggle in Africa is mirrored in the “unity between the interest of neo-colonialism and the indigenous bourgeoisie” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 9). Though Nkrumah recognises the existence of classes in Africa, his definition of a class as a group of people united by an interest which they try to protect, is inadequate.

The founder of the Soviet Union, Lenin (1870-1924), who was a Marxist, gives us a scientific and comprehensive definition of classes. According to Lenin, …classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy (Daglish, 1982, p. 258).

In keeping with the definition advanced by Lenin, Nkrumah defines class as “the sum total of individuals bound together by certain interest which as a class they try to preserve and protect” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 17). This definition seems deficient because classes of different social standing could be bound by the same interest. Nkrumah further thinks that political systems such as parliamentary democracy, one party system, or open military dictatorship reflect the interest of a certain class or classes in such a society.

Relating the concept of class to Africa (post-colonial Africa which Class Struggle appraises), Nkrumah identifies three main classes in Africa, namely, indigenous African bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasant class. The indigenous African bourgeoisie, Nkrumah observes, comprises “intellectuals, civil servants, members of the professions” as well as officers in the armed forces and the police. He notes, “it is the indigenous bourgeoisie who provide the main means by which international monopoly finance continues to plunder Africa and to frustrate the purposes of the African Revolution” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 63). Nkrumah indicates that there was significant absence of capitalists among the national bourgeoisie, precisely because the colonial authorities discouraged local business enterprise. In other words, vital aspects of the economy such as the extractive industry, manufacturing industries, banking, wholesale trade and largescale farming were owned by the colonial authorities. In this regard, the indigenous African bourgeoisie remained essentially a petty bourgeoisie (Nkrumah, 1970). Thus, it was due to the restrictions imposed on local businesses by the colonial authorities that led the indigenous bourgeoisie to oppose colonialism. However, the upsurge of national liberation movements in the aftermath of the Second World War saw the admission of the indigenous African bourgeoisie into spheres from which it had been previously excluded. More Africans were allowed into the state machinery and into foreign companies. With this measure, new African elite, otherwise called indigenous African bourgeoisie was created (Nkrumah, 1970).

Nkrumah observes that during the national liberation struggle, the African bourgeoisie could be classified into three main categories as follows: (1) There were those who were heavily committed to colonialism and to capitalist economic and social development. These were mainly those in the professions–lawyers, doctors, civil servants and engineers. (2) The second category comprises what Nkrumah refers to as “revolutionary petty bourgeoisie”. This group is composed of nationalists who wanted to end colonial rule but who did not want to transform society along socialist direction. (3) The third category comprises those who were sceptical of victory being won by the national liberation movements as symbolised by vanguard parties like the Convention Peoples Party in Ghana. Members of this group avoided any confrontation with the colonial authorities such as the colonial police force and so, sat on the fence as passive onlookers (Nkrumah, 1970).

In spite of the split roles the categories of indigenous African bourgeoisie played during the struggle for national liberation, they remained for the most part a comprador bourgeoisie class, “sharing in some of the profits which imperialism drains from Africa” (Nkrumah 1970, p. 57). Nkrumah further reveals that under conditions of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the African bourgeoisie will never be encouraged by either neo-colonial or colonial authorities to strengthen its base in economic circle, since this would amount to creating indigenous business that would compete with foreign markets. In this direction, the African bourgeoisie largely remains a subordinate partner to foreign capitalism. Because of this constraint, the African bourgeoisie cannot, in Nkrumah’s view, achieve power as a class or administer affairs without the support of reactionary feudal elements within a neo-colonial country, or without the political, economic and military support of international capitalism.

In essence, Nkrumah observes that the indigenous African bourgeoisie is connected in spirit and flesh to imperialism, and hence provides the fundamental means by which international monopoly finance continues to plunder Africa. ...the bourgeoisie as a whole cannot be seen in isolation from imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. While representing only a very small fraction of the population it is nevertheless a great danger to the African masses because of the strength it derives from its dependence on foreign bourgeois capitalism which seeks to keep the peasants and workers of Africa in a condition of perpetual subjection (Nkrumah 1970, p. 63).

The second socio-economic class which Nkrumah identifies in Class Struggle is the proletariat. The proletariat in post colonial Africa comprises workers who worked in mines and industries in some urban centres in Africa, prominently in South African mines. Nkrumah underscores the view that on the eve of independence, a modern proletariat already existed in Africa, though its number was relatively small. He recognises this class as a class that can be relied upon in building socialism in Africa. Thus, the proletariat in Africa must be seen within the context of the international working-class movement, a movement from which the proletariat in Africa derives its strength.

Nkrumah associates the emergence of the working-class in Africa with foreign capital and colonialism. Since colonialism discourages the establishment of large scale industrialisation in overseas territories, the size of the working-class in Africa had remained relatively small. However, though the size of the workingclass was insignificant at the time of independence, nevertheless, it played a significant role in the national liberation struggle. Employing non-violent measures such as boycotts of European goods, demonstrations and protest movements, the working-class in Africa succeeded in disrupting economic activities in the colonies and engendered great embarrassment to the colonial administration (Nkrumah, 1970). Nkrumah cites Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea, as examples of countries in which demonstrations and boycotts organised by the working-class gradually led to political independence. For the purpose of illustration, Ghana is exemplified by the 1948 riots and the subsequent declaration of Positive Action in 1950. Nigeria is exemplified by the 1930 Aba riots and other riots similar to the Aba Riots. The Mau Mau movement in Kenya equally kept the British busy until independence was won.

Nkrumah points out that the African working class or proletariat remains largely illiterate and so, it is not conscious of itself as a class. This explains why it is not revolutionary. Thus, political education was needed to awaken them, so that they could become revolutionary. Though this class supported independence movements against the colonial power during the struggle for political independence, such support was provoked by the racist and discriminatory practices perpetrated by colonialism. In other words, the African proletariat suffered racism; it was discriminated against and abused in mining areas and other manufacturing and service industries. Nkrumah cites Senegal as an example of African countries where the illiteracy problem which prevents the African working-class from becoming revolutionary abounds. For instance, in post- colonial Senegal, 99 percent illiteracy rate amongst women and 95 percent men illiteracy were conditions that did not help the working-class to become conscious of itself as a class (Nkrumah, 1970). In view of this obstacle, Nkrumah strongly believes that the working-class in Africa, who lives and works in urban centres, can be relied upon to carry out the socialist revolution which will in turn lead to the establishment of a socialist society. His reason is that the combination of the urban proletariat with the peasant class in the rural areas would swell up the number in order to bring such a revolution about (Nkrumah, 1970)

The third category of class to be discussed or analysed by Nkrumah is the peasantry. Nkrumah credits the peasantry as a class capable of carrying out a socialist revolution, partly because it was alienated from the fruits of its labour and was therefore discontented. In Nkrumah’s opinion therefore, this class needed education to activate its dormant revolutionary potentials. Nkrumah recognises that though the African peasant class constituted 80 percent of the African population in the post-independent era, it was “dispersed, unorganised and for the most part unrevolutionary” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 75). Nkrumah observes that the peasantry constituted the largest contingent of the working-class, and so it should be seen as a potential class for socialist revolution in Africa. Its weakness lay in the fact that it is, in Nkrumah’s estimation, dispersed, unorganized and for the most part unrevolutionary (Nkrumah, 1970). More so, in the rural areas the peasantry is exploited by capitalist absentee land lords through rent. Nkrumah identifies the absentee landlords to be African land proprietors

…who live in the urban areas in luxury, while with the aid of capital, they control vast stretches of land in the rural areas [as a major means of production]. They live by exploiting the farm worker… Thus the farm labourer does not get guaranteed wages. He almost lives from hand to mouth. Hence the struggle between capital and labour…” (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 76).

Nkrumah sees the peasant class as a class that owns the smallest property in the rural areas. In other words, the peasant works a little land with or without livestock. The situation was however different in some southern African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya in East Africa, where large plantations were owned by corporations and individuals affiliated to the metropolitan colonial power. Generally, the peasant in Africa is largely dependent on natural factors; reasonable rainfall pattern brings him bumper harvest; bad weather or drought ruins him and forces him to become a paid agriculture labourer, who has to work on somebody’s large plantation or farm in return for pittance. Like primitive societies that we find in Marx’s historical classification that depended entirely on natural forces of production with their accompanying risks for either agricultural activity or domestication of animals, the peasant in Africa seems to face similar risks.

As a result of the ever rising cost of living among other things, for instance, soaring prices of manufactured goods bring more difficulties to the peasant. Moreover, since the peasant produces practically all the basic necessities of life at home, and rarely requires exchange of his product so that he could accumulate capital for use as insurance against future contingency, the onset of natural factors such as excessive rainfall, floods and drought affect the peasant’s standard of living. In short, the peasant’s life is governed by insecurity for the most part (Nkrumah, 1970). However, Nkrumah recognises this class as a

potentially revolutionary class, if only it is led by the urban and rural proletariat. He thinks that the revolutionary potential of the peasants and agricultural labourers must be developed because it is this class that is capable of providing the African socialist revolution with its main strength. Nkrumah therefore thinks that it is the task of the revolutionary cadres to politically awaken the peasant class to the realities of its revolutionary potential, and to win the peasant class and other petty farmers over to socialist form of organising agricultural production and distribution (Nkrumah, 1970). This objective, in Nkrumah’s opinion, could be accomplished through the development of agricultural co-operatives backed by modern, mechanised and socialist form of production.

Nkrumah laments that the peasantry in Africa still lives under conditions which are not visibly different from conditions in pre-colonial and colonial periods. This is so because, apart from the economic, social and political exploitation the peasants suffer in the hands of neo-colonial firms, imperialism, and the national bourgeoisie, they bear heavy tax burdens, and in some cases and areas, they are compelled to do forced labour in order to subsist. Nkrumah therefore stresses education as a significant step towards the liberation of the peasantry from their ignorance. Due to the high rate of illiteracy among the peasant class, the colonial authorities exploited this weakness by co-opting the rank and file of the peasants into the coercive arm of the state, namely, the armed forces, the prison service and the police service. The reason for this decision was that the peasants were regarded by the colonial authorities as submissive, conservative and more loyal to the colonial government than their native traditional authorities.

Nkrumah expresses optimism that the supposed loyalty of the peasantry, its conservative nature and its submissiveness to regimes of erstwhile colonial countries can be overcome through political education. Thus, just as peasant revolutions resulted in the overthrow of bourgeois governments in countries such as China (1948), Russia (1917), Cuba (1959), and Vietnam (1960), Nkrumah contends that if the peasant class is awakened through political education and brought into alliance with the rural proletariat, which together form the overwhelming majority of the African population, the socialist revolution he wished to see could be realised. He writes: “The countryside is the bastion of the revolution. It is the revolutionary battlefield in which the peasantry in alliance with their natural class allies–proletariat and revolutionary intelligentsia–are the driving force for socialist construction and transformation” (Nkrumah, 1970, p.79).

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**A CRITIQUE OF KWAME NKRUMAH’S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

We have shown in the previous chapters that political philosophy entails a reaction to an existing socio-political and economic order and a proposal of the way forward. Kwame Nkrumah diagnosed the problems confronting Africa as imperialism, capitalism and neo-colonial forces which militated against the realization of peace, political stability and socio-economic progress in Africa.

Against this background, Nkrumah proposed three remedies for the progress of Africa, namely, political independence, continental unity and the socialist system of production and distribution. The object of this chapter is to carry out a critique of these three themes, which constitute the core of Nkrumah’s political philosophy.

First, Nkrumah’s much celebrated statement, ‘seek ye first the political kingdom and all other independences will be added unto you’ appears problematic (Mazrui, 1963). There is no doubt that sound economic planning on a continental scale could only be realised if the whole of the African continent were united under one federal democratic state. Nevertheless, if political emancipation is sought not as a means to an end but as an end in itself, any other independence such as cultural and economic independence would be made superfluous. In other words, what advocates of political independence, including Nkrumah, overlook is a distinction in the science of logic. The flaw inherent in Nkrumah’s political philosophy is his inability to distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions.

Political independence was certainly a necessary condition for Africa to realise any of her fundamental aspirations- be they spiritual, material or technological. But by itself, the political kingdom as advocated by Nkrumah is not a sufficient condition for the attainment of all other independences.

Writing as far back as 1945, Nkrumah appeared to have embraced the Marxist study when he indicates in Towards Colonial Freedom that “the imperialists powers need the raw materials and cheap native labour of the colonies for their own capitalist industries …” (Nkrumah, 1962, p. 16). The above conviction appears to be consistent with the central Marxist hypostudy of economic determinism, which claims that the ultimate basis of social behaviour and distribution of power lays in the realm of economics. Nevertheless, as Nkrumah got involved in the nationalist liberation struggle, he retreated in a significant manner from economic determinism. Nkrumah perhaps felt that it was no longer economic power that determined political matters. He argued that “political power is the inescapable pre-requisite to economic and social power” (Nkrumah, 1961, p. 162).

Nkrumah tried to reconvert to economic determinism when he remarked that “political independence is but a facade if economic freedom is not possible also” (Nkrumah, 1961, p. 44). Perhaps, this realisation on Nkrumah’s part is an indication of the fact that the attainment of political independence, if not accompanied with a change in economic relationship, would give rise to what Nkrumah himself calls ‘client states’(Nkrumah,1965). Thus, the whole doctrine of neo-colonialism seems to support the idea that real power ultimately lies with those who are economically powerful. Perhaps, economic independence had proved Nkrumah wrong in his old optimism of “seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things will be added to you”. Nkrumah appears to have come to the realisation that political independence on its own lacks the power to add the other independences to itself. It is therefore important to stress that the publication of Neo-colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism was an attempt by Nkrumah to reconcile his dilemma about what was more primordial– political independence or economic independence.

In his foreword to Jaramogi Odinga Oginga's Not yet Uhuru, Nkrumah summed up his continental union vision as follows:

It is clear than ever before that the political union of Africa, which has been one of my main pre-occupation since the attainment of independence by Ghana, is the key to Africa’s economic and political stability, peace and progress. A Union Government of Africa backed by organized military power and sound continental and economic planning is bound to compel nations outside to respect our collective interest (Odinga, 1967, p. xiii)

Though the continental union dream which is clearly illustrated by the above statement was a noble idea, nonetheless the strategies, methods and procedures employed by Nkrumah towards its realisation were to a large extent flawed. For instance, prior to the European incursion into and subsequent colonisation of Africa, Africans were not united on a continental scale. Empires and kingdoms in Africa such as the Oyo Empire, the Asante kingdom, the Songhay Empire, as well as the Mali Empire, among others, rose and fell. Their rise and decline could perhaps be attributed largely to internal wranglings that eventually became hindrances to the growth and further development of these empires and kingdoms. For instance, the sultan of Morocco, Ahmad al-Mansur Saadi invaded and destroyed the Songhay Empire when he suspected that the bulk of gold reaching the Middle East came from that region. This invasion did not come from Europe but was inflicted by one kingdom in Africa on another. Hence, to present the case as if Africa was united prior to the European advent but was disbanded during the colonial contact with Africa is to distort the historical facts. And yet when it appeared that factors like race, language, common culture and common territory constituted a bulwark against continental unity, Nkrumah remained unrelenting and idealistic, and kept arguing as follows : "there are those who maintain that Africa cannot unite because we lack the three necessary ingredients for unity, a common race, culture and language …yet in spite of this I am convinced that the forces making for unity far outweigh those which divide us" (Nkrumah,1963, p. 132). Repeating his conviction of unity in the midst of the above factors, Nkrumah argues in Class Struggle in Africa that “The notion that in order to have unity it is necessary for there to be a common language, a common territory and a common culture, has failed to stand the test of time or the scrutiny of scientific definition of objective reality" (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 88). But it is significant to stress that it was basically some or all of the above factors that made continental unity difficult to realise. It is therefore a wonder as to why Nkrumah failed to consider these factors as militating against continental unity and take measures towards addressing them. How could the Islamised and Arabised North Africans be incorporated into Sub-Saharan, southern and East African communities without any clash of cultures? In terms of language, what was going to be the preferred language of the continental union government? It appears Nkrumah down played the effects the above factors could play in the continental unity he envisaged.

Nkrumah's conviction that the forces allowing for unity outweigh those forces which were against unity was a conviction which did not reflect the existing reality at the time. All the same, one could still argue that the most important development that could perhaps consolidate the economic and political independence of a continent which was emerging from colonial rule was the continental unity Nkrumah proposed. Continental unity would have given Africa an upper hand in the handling of such issues like diplomacy, security threats, potential civil wars, sound economic planning and a unified political front. More so, Nkrumah can be faulted not on the basis of his vision for Africa, but on the appropriateness of the means which he relied upon in order to bring about the continental unity. In other words, though Nkrumah’s vision of a united Africa was desirable, the tactics he employed to realise this dream antagonised other African heads of states who combined to form a formidable opposition against him.

Nkrumah employed diplomacy and subversion to help him realise the continental union dream. The reliance on subversion as a strategy for unity for instance did more to harm that objective than Nkrumah probably realised. Those independence African leaders who found it politically imprudent to support the concept of African unity could concentrate the attacks on the means which Nkrumah had employed–and that is precisely what happened. Indeed it was their combined opposition which ultimately guaranteed the stagnation of continental union (Tunteng, 1973)

Not only was the tactic of subversion pointless, the men whom Nkrumah relied for its realisation and implementation made the situation more complicated. The men Nkrumah relied upon were generally referred to as fellow freedom fighters (Tunteng, 1973). However, within the rank and file of these fellow freedom fighters were nationalist leaders from southern Africa, refugees, anarchists and political exiles. Apart from trying to liberate dependent territories, some tried to overthrow legitimate governments in Black Africa. These were mainly opposition elements who failed to win power in their countries. Rather than submit to the authority of their leaders, they came to Ghana and hoped to overthrow legitimate governments in their respective countries, in order to take over the political leadership. Indeed, Nkrumah supported some of these disgruntled opposition elements with the hope that they could carry out a simultaneous task of overthrowing governments that were not favourable to Nkrumah's goal of African unification and sympathising with Nkrumah’s continental union objective. African leaders who failed to subscribe to Nkrumah’s continental union dream were labelled by Nkrumah as agents of neo-colonialism. The overall negative effect of the use of subversion as an instrument of African unification was that it made Nkrumah’s fellow independence leaders suspicious of him and so they made sure that African unity never became a reality.

It is also significant to stress that in his quest for African unification, Nkrumah was dealing with leaders of sovereign African states and not aspiring revolutionaries. These leaders were as much eminent nationalists to their followers as Nkrumah was to Ghanaians. Through hard struggles against colonialism, most of these leaders had attained enviable rewarding leadership positions which they could not be expected to surrender in favour of African unity. Besides, such leaders had national commitments such as economic development, social development and the security and well-being of their people. Such leaders were therefore not prepared to unilaterally commit their countries to the pursuit of continental unity. It was this factor that Nkrumah never carefully considered. His idealism goaded him to perceive continental union government as a glorious objective, but his impatience made him hostile to those who proposed and favoured gradual approach to African unification.

To conceive of Africa as an indivisible entity is an unassailable PanAfricanist ambition, but to rely on this vision as a basis for policy may be a major miscalculation (Tunteng, 1973). This appeared to have been the bane of

Nkrumah's strategy. He drew little distinction between his vision of an indivisible

Africa and the diplomatic necessity to effect its realisation. Nkrumah’s reliance on subversion appeared to have guaranteed the futility of his diplomacy. He failed to realise that subversion and diplomacy are not complementary strategies. Once he attempted to oust some African leaders through subversion, such strategy made his diplomatic moves suspicious. We can conclude that continental unity never became a reality mainly as a result of Nkrumah’s simultaneous application of incompatible methodologies, namely, diplomacy and subversion. Other strategies such as cautious diplomacy might have proved more rewarding.

In Consciencism, Nkrumah tried to demonstrate that two cultures, namely, Euro-Christian and Islamic culture have exercised tremendous influence on the mind of the African. At independence, therefore, Nkrumah felt that such a disoriented African mind needed to be addressed. The ideal remedy for this situation is what Nkrumah referred to as philosophical consciencism. He defines philosophical consciencism as "...the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 78). Nkrumah's consciencism is what Mazuri has referred to as the triple heritage, which is perhaps implausible as the original concept itself, because if heritage is seen as a positive legacy bequeathed to one by one's ancestors, it is a wonder how Islamic and EuroChristian cultures constitute a heritage to the African.

The proposition of philosophical consciencism as the remedy to the confused African psyche is quite implausible. We agree with Nkrumah that by accident of European colonial advent and Islamic intrusion into Africa, post-independence Africa harbors two filaments of patriarchal monotheism; to wit, Islam and Christianity. These two strands of monotheism are antagonistic to African traditional culture and religion, because they recognise only a single path to salvation. The one recognises Christ as the only route to salvation while the other recognises Mohammed. But African indigenous religion recognises several routes to salvation. Nkrumah fails to recognise that the metaphysics underpinning the thought process of African traditional world view is basically a pluralistic metaphysics (Okoro, 2010). And this kind of metaphysics recognises that nature or reality is multiple; this kind of metaphysics cannot be easily reconciled with the monistic metaphysics of Euro-Christian and Islamic cultures. It is therefore a puzzle as to how the proposed harmony of the triple heritage Nkrumah envisaged was going to be harnessed in order to achieve a harmonious co-existence? This leaves an analytical vacuum Nkrumah did not fill.

We think that philosophical consciencism as a theory of decolonisation is fraught with metaphysical discrepancy. Granted, Nkrumah had argued in "African Socialism Revisited," that we should not recapture the structure of traditional African society but its spirit, for the spirit of communalism is crystallised in its humanism (Nkrumah, 1967). Nevertheless, the programme outlined by Nkrumah in order to achieve the goal of winning back the disoriented African psyche is quite inappropriate. This probably explains why colonial structures and institutions were not reformed or adopted to suit Africans in general when political independence was won. For instance, a vital element of state's life such as education was still left in the hands of colonial missionaries. What was worse, the medium of instruction in most African schools remained fundamentally foreign language.

There is no doubt among scholars that Kwame Nkrumah was a socialist.

However, what is contestable in scholarship is exactly what type of socialist Nkrumah was. What even makes the situation more difficult is Nkrumah's wavering approach towards various conceivable brands of socialism. Nkrumah appears to have demonstrated gross inconsistency in his socialist theorising. At one point Nkrumah expresses preference for African communalism, which he equates with socialism, but at another point he dismisses such conception and labels it a fetish thought because "... to suppose that there are tribal, national or racial socialisms is to abandon objectivity in favour of chauvinism" (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 208). In one instance, Nkrumah tries to prove that because Africa never experienced the Industrial Revolution, socialism could be achieved through reforms. In his later works, like Class Struggle and Revolutionary Path, Nkrumah now argues that the realisation of socialism in Africa was solely dependent on revolution. Nkrumah appeared to have been proved wrong by the prevailing development of the social conditions of his time. Even so, one could still argue that Nkrumah's inconsistency about the socialist debate regarding the right way to achieving socialism in Africa could be blamed on his idealisation of the glorious history of traditional African society, a mistake he realised rather too late in his political career. While Nkrumah was busy expounding the basic tenets of socialism, some members of his government appeared to have ignored him and were amassing wealth for self-aggrandisement. As he writes:

...the basic organisation of many African societies in different periods of history manifested a certain communalism and that the philosophy and humanist purposes behind that organisation are worthy of recapture....Thus what socialist thought in Africa must recapture is not the structure of traditional African society but its spirit, for the spirit of communalism is crystallised in its humanism and its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 203).

Perhaps, Nkrumah's inconsistency lies in the fact that he was trying to ancientise and at the same time modernise the post-colonial African society with the kind of socialism he envisaged. But this is incompatible with scientific socialism which recognises a discontinuation with the past through the adoption of more sophisticated and scientific means of production. What is more, the postcolonial African society is a confused society. The assurance of the old ancestral society is no more. The African tradition and religion of the old society had been utterly undermined by Western colonialism, science and technology, industrialisation as well as Christianity and Islam. The institutions which our ancestors fashioned over the centuries to cope with the problems of their environment have been rendered almost obsolete and indeed anachronistic. It was therefore simplistic for Nkrumah to suppose that the scientific socialist state he wanted to build could co-exist easily and harmoniously with the spirit of traditional African communalism.

Nkrumah can be said to have committed the error of reductionism by reducing most of Africa's problems to crisis of religion resulting from the combined presence of the Islamic tradition, Euro-Christian and traditional African culture. It can be argued that the combined presence of the above three religions in Africa cannot constitute a sufficient condition for the African psyche to be disoriented. In other words, even if the above factors constitute a sufficient basis for the African psyche to be disoriented, it is possible for psychological, social, political and economic progress to exist alongside the combined presence of the three religions. The argument can even be stretched further. One can argue that in post-colonial Africa there were perhaps far-reaching socio-economic and political problems that required more attention than the religious factor Nkrumah identified. It might have turned out that if other problems such as the basic needs of life had been given more attention, the religious factor may have perhaps become superfluous. The economic needs or the basic necessities of man may have been the motivating factor behind Obafemi Awolowo's saying that the central problem of man is economic: all other problems whatsoever are ancillary (Awolowo, 1977). Here, Awolowo, a contemporary of Nkrumah, was underscoring the primacy of economic independence as against political independence. Thus, the challenges of the post-colonial African state are much more than psychological crisis caused by the combined co-existence of the above three religions. It would have been useful for Nkrumah to look beyond the confines of religion in his search for cure for the post-colonial African state.

Besides, Nkrumah's critique of religion invites more questions than it provides answers. In keeping with Marxian tradition, Nkrumah's sees religion as false consciousness and so he could remark that "I am an Orthodox Marxist and a non-denominational Christian and I have seen no contradiction in that" (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 135). Nkrumah however glorified African communalism as one of the best socio-political and economic systems in traditional Africa which was devoid of a class structure and exploitation of man by man. Though Nkrumah later corrected his idealisation of the past African traditional system, nevertheless he failed to realise that African communalism thrived on African religious ethics ̶ a body of norms which admonishes everyone to be his or her brother's keeper. It was this religious ethic of African communalism which frowns on individualism by threatening potential greedy people with calamitous happenings. People in traditional Africa were afraid to incur the wrath of a god should they become individualistic. This religious ethic sustained African communalism and made it appear egalitarian. Thus, Nkrumah's critique of religion in general amounts to a veiled attack on African Traditional Religion, a kind of religion whose ethics sustained the supposed egalitarianism of African communalism ̶ a productive system Nkrumah idealised. What Nkrumah should have done was to defend the view as postulated by Mbiti that the African is deeply spiritual and not necessarily religious because the two terms are not co-terminous.

Still on Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism, the theory can be seen to be incoherent when it is examined carefully. It is interesting to note that philosophical consciencism is constructed on the word 'conscience' and yet not once is this word from which consciencism is derived is mentioned. It is interesting to note that sine Democritus, in whose fragments the word conscience was first considered, it has been consistently used to refer to the remorse that humans experience after a wrong deed, and the cause of joy and hope for people who lead just lives. Hence the etymology of the expression philosophical consciencism is conscience, an inner psychological or mental state which gives one a sense of remorse for a wrong act and a sense of hope and happiness after executing a good act. The word 'conscience' upon which philosophical consciencism derives its foundation and meaning is nonmaterial. However, Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism is grounded on vulgar materialism of the Marxian kind. This is unacceptable. Philosophical consciencism can therefore be seen as a half-constructed theory which neither reflects the spiritual nature of the African, his world view and his politics, nor the original word from which it was coined. Thus the whole of Consciencism is more of a disquisition on the history of philosophy than of a political philosophy addressed to the African people groaning under estrangement.

Political philosophy that is addressed to the administrative, organisational and intellectual leadership of Africa, and which hopes to appeal to the African conscience must perhaps begin with contemporary African problems couched in a more comprehensive form. Pretentions to specialisation in the history of Western philosophical systems in a manner that does not reflect the concrete realities of contemporary African experience would appear to be pointless (Okadigbo, 1985).

To be sure, the pressing need for change and development in post-colonial Africa can perhaps be properly articulated and tackled within the matrix of a concrete redefinition of the objectives and the strategy of the political struggle, in which the concrete goals of the liberation and subsequent reconstruction of the African nation-state could be determined.

Again, Nkrumah's examination of African communalism vis a vis its humanist impulse is based on a fundamental error. For instance, Nkrumah assumes without proof that "If one seeks the socio-political ancestor of socialism, one must go to communalism.... In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 72). But this assumption and conclusion could not have been borne out of a careful and objective inquiry into African communalism. A careful look at African communalism and its modes of production reveals that Nkrumah's position on the egalitarian structure of African communalism was far from the truth. Nkrumah's observation was based on a faulty logic because he appeared not to have worked out the basic features of African communalism yet he made reference to its egalitarianism and humanism and then proceeded in an arbitrary fashion to identify these tenets with orthodox Marxian postulations. In fact, Gyekye points out with ample evidence that the concept of the capitalist system of production was existent in traditional African ways of managing the economy. So in failing to appreciate the individualist aspects in traditional thought process, Nkrumah and his contemporary independence leaders may be described as "unrestricted, radical and extreme in their philosophical position on the communitarian idea…." (Gyekye, 1997, p. 149).

Gyekye's profound insights into the difference between communalism and socialism is worthy of note. We recall that in Consciencism Nkrumah pointed out that socialism is a continuity of communalism and that the principles underlying these two theories are the same. This is an assertion without proof. But this relation is not a logical relation because the relation between the two systems can logically be negated on the grounds that ''... not everything that can be asserted of communalism can be asserted also of socialism, and vice versa" (Gyekye, 1997, p. 148). Therefore, Nkrumah's argument that there is a ''continuity of communalism with socialism'' should be seen as unfounded. With regard to land ownership, this assertion by Nkrumah is also false. This is so because modern ownership of land under a socialist government cannot be seen to be the same as the ownership of land under a communalist government.

More over, contrary to the supposition by most of the independence African leaders, including Nkrumah, that the African in traditional Africa did not exhibit individualism, many studies in the traditional African system of production have proven this assertion to be false. Various fields of life in traditional Africa have shown that individualism is not necessarily a Western lifestyle but is manifested by the entire human race. In the area of religion, petitions requested the gods to grant material blessings such as protection from danger, riches and health. Land was also perhaps not communally managed but owned by family heads, stools or clan heads as pertained in Asante (Gyekye, 1997). It would also be observed that the African desire for personal wealth and particularly for profit found expression in the field of commercial activities. This is exemplified in the history of the Trans-Saharan trade, where African traders plied the trade routes from West Africa to North Africa. These African traders traded in kola, gold, salt and other commodities. These were private individuals who acquired wealth and made profits. Hence, Nkrumah's view that ''the presuppositions and purposes of capitalism are contrary to those of African society'' was not supported if one scrutinises the ideas and practices of economic thought and management of the traditional system. We agree with Gyekye that ''capitalism was already a palpable feature of the pre-colonial system of economic management'' (Gyekye, 1997, p. 157).

Throughout his political treatise, one gets the impression that Nkrumah was out to blame all the evils of Africa on Western imperialism and colonialism and that he saw socialism as the ultimate prescription for the cure of the ills in Africa such as poverty, inequality and illiteracy. His preference for scientific socialism seems to suggest that the evils of exploitation which is inherent in the capitalist system of production or the free market economy are checked in the socialist system of production. This conclusion ignores the view that exploitation is a human phenomenon, irrespective of whatever system of production is adopted. Thus, what should be checked for the purpose of eliminating exploitation is not the system but the human beings who operate the system. All the same, capitalism should take much of the blame because it enhances the modes by which individualism can be unleashed.

Finally, on the one party system Nkrumah adopted in independent Ghana, which attracted several criticisms from some political commentators and historians, such as the Kenyan foremost historian, Mazrui, one can raise a major objection against Nkrumah's choice of the one-party system. We assert that it is against the soul of every human being to be in bondage or to have his or her freedom stifled. And so to make it virtually impossible for an alternative method of changing Nkrumah's one party government is to stifle human freedom and soul. And once the craving of the human soul for freedom explodes, it virtually eclipses everything on its way. It was this human craving for freedom that in the long run ousted Nkrumah from power.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

**Summary of the Study**

It is the contention of this study that since the Golden Age of Greece, and especially since Plato, the primary aim of political philosophy concerns how the ideal state could be attained. Thus, theorising on the ideal political philosophy suitable to post-colonial Africa did not escape the intellectual curiosity of most African independent leaders including Kwame Nkrumah. African leaders reasoned that much of the progress that Africa stood to make would largely depend on the kind of political philosophy it adopted. Thus, we dedicated Chapter one of this study to examining and clarifying the subject matter of political philosophy as it was used by African independence leaders and especially, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

In Chapters two and three, the study carried out an exposition of Nkrumah’s political philosophy, concentrating on the three themes we have identified, namely, political independence, African unity, and socialism. The objective in carrying out this exposition was to isolate the weaknesses inherent in Nkrumah’s political philosophy, in order to inform and enrich our critique. In this exposition, we realized that political liberation which was dear to Nkrumah and which he expressed in "seek ye first the political kingdom and all others shall be added unto ye", constitutes for him, both the necessary and sufficient condition for all other independences, including social and economic progress. Apart from political independence, Nkrumah reasoned that African territories such as Ghana and Nigeria that had regained their political freedom could not stand on their own, politically and economically, unless they were welded into a continental union government with common defense, sound economic planning and central political administration. This is what Nkrumah referred to as African unity or the continental union government of Africa. Since Nkrumah blamed the capitalist system of production for Africa’s economic and social backwardness, he proposed the socialist system of production as the panacea to Africa’s underdevelopment. In other words, Nkrumah felt that the continental union Government of Africa could stand on its own only if it was backed by the socialist system of production. As Nkrumah succinctly puts it in Class Struggle in Africa, “...the achievements of African Union and socialism are organically complementary; the one cannot be achieved without the other” (Nkrumah 1970, p. 84).

**Conclusion**

We concluded our study of Nkrumah’s political philosophy by carrying out a critique in chapter four. We discovered, among other weaknesses, that Nkrumah’s call for continental unity is premised on a historical distortion, largely because Africa was not united on a continental scale before the advent of European colonisation. This historical fact is contrary to Nkrumah’s assertion that Africa was balkanised by the European colonial powers during the advent of colonialism. We also discovered that consciencism as an ideology for Africa’s decolonisation is flawed on two grounds: the combined presence of the ‘triple heritage’ (Islamic culture, Euro-Christian culture and traditional African culture) constitutes only a necessary but not a sufficient basis for the disorientation of the African conscience. Besides, the presence of the three cultures in Africa does not appear to constitute the only fundamental national reconstruction challenge in post-colonial Africa. Other equally significant challenges such as economic and social factors needed much more attention and redress even more than the religious question. It is the contention of this study that the political kingdom Nkrumah advocated as the way to all other independences only constitute a necessary but not a sufficient condition for all other indices of progress. This is so because considered in itself, political liberation falls short of other independences.

We realised also that significant as Nkrumah’s conviction of continental unity appeared to be, the political tools such as diplomacy and subversion which were simultaneously and somewhat arbitrarily deployed towards the realisation of this kind of unity were inappropriate as they failed to address challenges of the continental union vision.

We have also seen that Nkrumah’s idealisation of Africa’s history did not leave him much space and time to objectively elucidate the socialist study he puts forward. In his attempt to Africanise Marxian socialism, Nkrumah ended up affirming the basic tenets of Marxian socialism (historical and dialectical materialism). Class struggle in Africa and Handbook on Revolutionary Warfare, two of Nkrumah later books that lean heavily on Marxian socialism, further exemplify this ambivalence in Nkrumah's political philosophy.

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