Competing Narratives of Post-Independence Violence in Ghanaian Social Studies Textbooks, 1987 to 2010

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Introduction[1]

The politicization of education reforms that have taken place in Ghana since independence has exposed the narratives used in pre-university history education to manipulation.[2] Two dominant political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have propagated this politicization over the last two and a half decades.[3] The political parties disagree on the extent of the contribution of Kwame Nkrumah and the "Big Six" to Ghanaian nation-building.[4] The NDC identifies Nkrumah as the founder of Ghana, whose singular efforts led to independence and progress in the country's First Republic (1951–66). The NPP, by contrast, views the policies pursued by Nkrumah – such as the Preventive Detention Act of 1957, which permitted detention without trial, and the creation of a one-party state by banning all political parties except the Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1964 – as fundamental causes of his government's fall in 1966. These pro-Nkrumah and anti-Nkrumah sentiments propagated by the NDC and NPP have found their way into history textbooks since wide-ranging pre-university education reforms commenced in 1987, a moment that coincided with the dying days of the Cold War and broad reforms in sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter sets out to analyze trends in the politicization of history in Ghanaian social studies textbooks since this time.

Reforms in basic education have grown common, particularly after the most comprehensive changes were rolled out in 1987, during the military rule of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). This reform overhauled the subjects and syllabi (and was sustained by the NDC government after 1992) and introduced a three-year Junior Secondary School (JSS), followed by three years of Senior Secondary School (SSS), to replace the eleven-year British

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[1] Many thanks to Professors Rashid Ishmail of Vassar College and Jacob Gordon, the Kwame Nkrumah Chair at the University of Ghana, for their useful feedback on the initial draft of this study.

[2] Tonah, "The Unending Cycle of Education," 45.

[3] The NDC was formed by leaders of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military government, with the aim of contesting the democratic elections of 1992. Jerry Rawlings led the party to two electoral victories until they lost to the NPP's John Kufour in December 2000. The NDC regained power in December 2008.

[4] The "Big Six" refers to six leaders of the first political party in Ghana, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), who came to national prominence after their arrest by the British government in 1948. They are Kwame Nkrumah, Ebenezer Ako-Adjei, Edward Akufo-Addo, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey, and William Ofori Atta. With the exception of Nkrumah, all of these men were founding members of the UGCC.

Middle and Secondary School that had been in force previously – thus eliminating five years of schooling. The NPP took power in 2001 and immediately reviewed the entire syllabus. Six years later, it increased the number of years needed at the SSS to four, maintained the three years of JSS, and renamed the two levels Senior High School (SHS) and Junior High School (JHS) respectively. When the NDC returned to power in January 2009, it reverted to the six-year system but maintained the names JHS and SHS. The media announced in September 2014 that plans were far advanced for another "thorough review" of education, which is expected to reduce the number of subjects taken at pre-university level from twelve to five.[5] The Education Reform Review Committee of 1994 already recognized the importance of having fewer subjects to ease pupils' engagement with and learning of those that remained, but this reform appears only now to be under consideration as a serious option. It is difficult to assess the motive behind the new review, due to the country's history of repeated and radical reform in this area. What is certain is that the reform is likely to be politicized. Successive Ghanaian governments have been dissatisfied with the education system inherited from previous governments and, accordingly, attempted to carry out what they have regarded as improvements, thus creating a cycle of reforms and reviews.

This chapter will analyze the ways in which the violence in Ghana prior to and after independence has been depicted in JHS social studies textbooks since 1987. "Violence" is defined here as any action – imprisonment, assassination, curfews, bloody clashes – that coerce or cause people to physically or psychologically attain less than they could in the absence of force.[6] The study finds that the textbooks published in 1988 and 2005 were each sympathetic toward the policies and ideas of the parties in power at the time. Drawing on the developmental progression thesis proposed by Elie Podeh,[7] this chapter concludes that the most recent textbook in circulation, published in 2007, is more mature and objective than the previous ones. This final version has emerged from many bouts of political manipulation of the curriculum and independence narratives, which have also had some impact on the quality of education in Ghana.

In the next section, I will provide a brief account of events in Ghanaian postcolonial history that have been subject to controversy in the textbooks. This is followed by an examination of evidence for changing independence narratives in Ghana and in the JHS textbooks. The analysis then looks at a number of interviews conducted by the author with social studies teachers, followed by a critical review of the study's findings.

A History of Violence in Perspective: The 1950s and 1960s

The post-1950 history of Africa revolves in large part around the struggles of nations for independence and their mechanisms for establishing and sustaining nationhood. Post-independence clashes and coups erupted across the continent due to unmanaged expectations, mismanagement of state resources by the new leaders, their desire to remain in power for life,

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[5] Mordy, "Gov't to Scrap 7 Subjects."
[6] See Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," 168.
[7] Podeh, "History and Memory."

and, indirectly, Cold War politics. Almost all Africans had accepted the boundaries demarcated at the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, which became the limits within which independence struggles took place.[8] Much of the post-independence violence on the continent can be explained as emerging from one or more of three main sources of conflict.

First, many of the continent's new leaders, including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Seiku Toure of Guinea, and Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, aspired toward a united Africa, with the hope of attaining a political and economic integration of the continent. However, pan-Africanism was not embraced by all African elites, and even those who welcomed the idea were divided on the approach: gradualists, like Nyerere, wanted a step-by-step approach toward a united Africa, while immediate 'Unity Government' proponents, like Nkrumah, advocated for swift action.[9] At the micro-level, Biney and Austin agree that one cause of conflict between Nkrumah and the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) tradition in Ghana was that the former wanted a united Ghana at all costs, while the latter (also United Party or UP tradition) insisted on autonomy for the regions.[10] The UGCC tradition clashed with Nkrumah over his pan-African ideal, viewing it as an attempt by Nkrumah to subdue local socio-political alliances in Ghana, especially within the Asante Kingdom.[11] Incidentally, prominent members of the UGCC died in prison (one example is Joseph Boakye Danquah) and others, like Abrefa Kofi Busia,[12] remained in exile until Nkrumah's overthrow.[13] A second source of tension existed between adherents of capitalism and socialism, supporters of the Western and Eastern blocs.[14] According to Biney, Nkrumah's drift toward the East in 1961 increased animosity against his government, gradually building up pressure until his overthrow in 1966.[15] The third source of conflict centered on the timing of independence. While some wanted gradual progression to independence after adequate development,[16] others saw any help from colonizers as a "Trojan horse" and thus demanded immediate independence.[17] This informed Nkrumah's CPP motto of "Self-Governance Now," opposed to the UGCC's slogan, "Self-governance within the shortest possible time."

Disturbances in the Gold Coast (Ghana) gathered momentum after the February 1948 shooting in Christenburg of three veterans, Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe, and Private Odartey Lamptey, by the army. The three ex-servicemen were marching together with others who fought for the British in World War II, to present a petition to the governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Gerald Creasy, to ameliorate their poor living conditions following repeated failure by the British government to provide adequate settlement upon their return from the war. The three were killed after the colonial police opened fire to stop them from approaching the seat of government, the Christenburg Castle. This ignited the famous 1948 riots in Accra, the release

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[8] Ade Ajayi, "Place of African History and Culture," 209.
[9] Biney, "Legacy of Kwame Nkrumah," 137–38.
[10] Biney, *Political and Social Thoughts*, 89; Austin, *Ghana Observed*; Austin, *Politics in Ghana.*
[11] Allman, *Quills of the Porcupine.*
[12] J. B. Danquah and Abrafah Busia were prominent members of the UGCC and later the UP party, who were conspicuous political opponents in the Nkrumah regime.
[13] Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 87.
[14] Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa*, 1.
[15] Biney, *Political and Social Thoughts*, 89.
[16] Botwe-Asamoah, *Kwame Nkrumah's Politico-Cultural Thoughts*, 90.
[17] Blyden, *West Africa Before Europe*, 73.

of what appeared to be a buildup of public dissatisfaction with the high cost of foreign goods in the city. There was widespread looting, burning of foreign-owned shops, and nationwide strikes. Nkrumah and five founding members of the UGCC were arrested by the British colonial authorities because they had previously sent a telegram to the British authorities in London to complain about the unfavorable policies of the colonial administration. It was this arrest and subsequent public support that spurred them to national prominence; they became known in local parlance as the "Big Six." Nkrumah exited the UGCC and formed the CPP in 1949, marking the beginning of long years of political battles between Nkrumah and UGCC supporters. Nkrumah and those who considered themselves to be of the younger generation were sidelined in deliberations over a constitution for an independent Gold Coast.[18] This led Nkrumah to call for "Positive Action"[19] in 1950, a declaration that precipitated a nationwide outbreak of animosity toward the colonial government.[20] The chaos and lootings that resulted led to the arrest of Nkrumah and other leaders of the CPP.[21] They were released in 1951 after the CPP won a majority of seats in parliament.[22] The UGCC disintegrated after the election.

Supporters of the erstwhile UGCC formed the National Liberation Movement (NLM), an Akan-based party,[23] in 1954.[24] The Avoidance of Discrimination Act banning ethnically based political parties was passed in 1957. The NLM and other sectarian parties coalesced into the United Party (UP), led by Busia and Danquah.[25] Further legislative measures curtailed the influence of traditional chiefs, as unelected representatives, in national life.[26] The Preventive Detention Act (PDA) was passed by parliament in July 1958, empowering the government to "detain a person for five years (without right of appeal to the courts), for conduct prejudicial to the defence and security of the state and its foreign relations."[27] The combined effects of these measures made legitimate opposition impossible under Nkrumah, who lived in fear of revolt and attack,[28] especially as he was the target of bombs in 1956 and was targeted again in Kulungugu in 1962.[29] Nkrumah declared a one-party state in 1964; this notwithstanding, pressure mounted on the CPP government until its overthrow by the military in 1966. Nkrumah was given political asylum by President Seiku Toure of Guinea soon after his overthrow and was made co-president of Guinea until his death in 1974.

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[18] Many members of the Committee working on the constitution were considered to be of the older generation, which the younger generation believed did not represent their interests.

[19] "Positive Action" is a nonviolent strategy of forceful demonstration of power from ordinary people, modeled after Mahatma Gandhi's "Satyagraha," meaning "soul force." It is the opposite of armed struggles for power.

[20] Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 87.

[21] Powers, *Protest, Power and Change*, 215.

[22] Munene, "Leadership: Kenyatta and Nkrumah," 105.

[23] The Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana, located mainly in the southern part of the country.

[24] Allman, *Quills of the Porcupine*, 11–12; Austin, *Politics in Ghana*.

[25] Kosack, *Education of Nations*, 196.

[26] Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*, 100.

[27] Biswal, *Ghana, Political and Constitutional Developments*, 64.

[28] Salm and Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana*, 25; Biney, *Political and Social Thoughts*, 85; Kosack, *Education of Nations*, 196.

[29] Ghana Web Online, "UP was behind Kulungugu Bombing."

Politics, Historical Memory, and Education in Postcolonial Ghana

The repeated writing, rewriting, and revision of social studies textbooks in Ghana since 1987, which has been unable to escape the notice of anyone interested in history education, has centered on defining and detailing the role of Nkrumah and the Big Six in the fight for Ghana's independence and the shaping of contemporary Ghanaian identity. Despite leading Ghana to independence and heading the country's administration between 1951 and 1966, Nkrumah and his place in formal textbook narratives have become contentious; and this is no different from the formulation of historical narratives about him in both national and local circles.

Nkrumah became a major source of conflict among Ghanaians in the period leading up to and immediately after his overthrow in 1966. Between 1966 and 1981, sustained attempts were made to shroud him and his legacies in oblivion. Nevertheless, the multiple coups d'état, victimization of political opponents, massive corruption, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions[30] that marked this period brought about a "nostalgic revival" of the pro-poor and pro-youth policies of Nkrumah's regime.[31] Nkrumah's rule came to represent an antithesis to military rule, as the reasons traditionally cited for his overthrow no longer seemed tenable. By the late 1970s, there was a renaissance of Nkrumahism, especially among radical university lecturers and students. The sixth successful military coup d'état in Ghana occurred in 1981, led by Jerry Rawlings and the PNDC. The PNDC government ushered in sustained efforts to rehabilitate and promote Nkrumah's memory, ideas, and legacies with initial support from students, lecturers, and the general population.[32] The Rawlings regime established a mausoleum in memory of Nkrumah and renamed a prestigious university for science and technology as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). As part of the drastic education reforms in 1987, narratives in the social studies syllabus for school students were suddenly used to glorify Nkrumah and his legacies. This revival and rehabilitation of Nkrumah occurred within an autocratic political framework and a culture of political silence that had been characteristic of the various Ghanaian military regimes since 1966. Like its predecessors, the Rawlings regime showed little tolerance for dissent or alternative views, not even for those of radical Nkrumahist students and lecturers. Nonetheless, the regime contributed to establishing the longest period of political stability in postcolonial Ghana – partly because the end of the Cold War in 1989–90 ushered in a new era of global governance, which made coups d'état increasingly unattractive to potential coup makers. The Rawlings regime held on to the reins of power for eleven years before opening up the space for multi-party democracy in 1992. After that it ruled as a constitutionally elected government for eight more years.

The reopening of the political arena provided an opportunity not only for the articulation of alternative political visions and programs for Ghana, but also for a reappraisal of the country's history. While Rawlings's PNDC transformed itself into the NDC, supporters of the Big Six legacy, regarded as the Danquah-Busia traditions of the United Gold Coast Convention

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[30] The country has embraced IMF economic recovery programs such as the structural adjustment program (SAP) designed for Africa in the 1980s (see Shillington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor*) and the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) program in 2001.

[31] Ninsin, "Elections, Democracy and Elite Consensus"; Gyimah-Boadi, "Ghana's Fourth Republic," 1; Munene, "Leadership: Kenyatta and Nkrumah," 108.

[32] Lentz, "Ghana@50," 8.

(UGCC) and United Party (UP),[33] came together to form the NPP. Both parties were aware that memory reinforces history, and that history is formulated by the powerful to create a mindset for present and future generations.[34] In its political campaigns and during its time in office (2001–8), the NPP propagated a pro–Big Six agenda, countering the NDC's pro-Nkrumah discourse. A leading member of the NPP described Nkrumah as "a personified tragedy of twentieth-century Africa," a symbol of the "political freedom that was won and lost, the promise that was missed, the economic experiment that led to to our detriment."[35] By contrast, Nkrumah was voted the BBC African of the Millennium in December 1999. Nkrumah's global fame supersedes that of the Big Six due to the pan-African policies he championed so vehemently.

The contention surrounding the creation of collective memory and narratives of Ghana's independence indicates the degree to which contrasting informal narratives compete in public discourse. Formal narratives have been unsuccessful in reconciling these because of the frequent changes in government and the erratic nature of official narratives prior to 1981. Unofficial narratives have found outlets in official spaces whenever an opportunity has presented itself. Mausoleums and museums have been built in memory of Nkrumah; Nkrumah has been declared the only founder of Ghana; and national monuments have been named after him by the NDC. Today, despite the fierce criticism of Nkrumah within the NPP, the party realizes that it cannot write him out of Ghanaian history. The extensive rehabilitation of Nkrumah by the NDC and his prominence in popular historical memory has driven the NPP strategy to hinge on diminishing his prominence while increasing the overall visibility and public memory of the UGCC and the Big Six. To this end, the NPP government printed images of the Big Six on five of Ghana's Cedi notes after the currency was revalued in 2007 (see figure 1). It further erected effigies of the Big Six at the main entrance to the only international airport in Ghana, Kotoka International Airport. The NDC challenged the use of the Big Six images on the five currency notes by redesigning and printing an additional currency note with only the image of Nkrumah (see figure 2).

Figure 1: Bank of Ghana Redenominated Currency Notes during the NPP Era, 2007

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[33] Danquah-Busia traditions have come to represent these persons and their ideologies of liberal democracy and capitalism.

[34] See Araújo and dos Santos, "History, Memory and Forgetting," paragraph 11; Lebow, *Politics of Ethnic Identity.*

[35] Gabby Otchere-Darko, quoted in Danquah Institute, "Tragedy of 20th Century Africa."

Public monuments and national currency have not been the only sites of confrontation in the struggle to shape Ghanaian popular historical consciousness; all Ghanaian governments since the 1980s have made attempts to influence the social studies curriculum to reflect their own narratives and interpretations of Ghana's past, as this chapter will demonstrate. The major educational reforms of 1987, carried out by the PNDC and left in place by the NDC, glorified Nkrumah and downplayed the contributions of the UGCC and its leadership. Subsequent implementations of curricular reviews and educational reforms by the NPP, once it assumed power, have reduced the significance of Nkrumah in the narratives. The two dominant parties clearly recognize the utility of education in championing allegiances to historical narratives; the intrinsic links between memory, remembrance, and education mean that history education is highly susceptible to use as a tool to gain political influence.

Figure 2: Additional Currency Notes Printed by the Bank of Ghana during NDC Era, 2010

The study of history is mandatory for pre-university education in Ghana, and it is part of the social studies syllabus at the JHS and SHS levels. This is consistent with best practices worldwide, in which social studies syllabi are designed to instill notions and cultures of citizenship in young people and bring them up to speed on the historical, social, and cultural realities of the state in which they live.[36] The Ghanaian Ministry of Education asserts that social studies should aim to help shape the attitudes and behavior of students toward the state and enable them to "appreciate the impact of history on [the] current and future development efforts of the country."[37] For these reasons, the stakes are high for politicians when historical narratives in social studies syllabi and textbooks are not designed to suit their agenda.[38] Podeh argues that in history education textbooks may play a dual role, transmitting acceptable historical narratives from the past into the present and altering "the past in order to suit contemporary needs."[39] The

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[36] Kissock, *Curriculum Planning*, 28–30; Ross, "Struggles for the Social Studies Curriculum," 21; Whelan, "Teaching History," 38; Mehlinger, "International Textbook Revision"; Podeh, "History and Memory."
[37] MoESS, "Social Studies Teaching Syllabus," ii.
[38] Apple and Christian-Smith, *Politics of the Textbook*, 10; Ross, "Struggles for the Social Studies Curriculum," 27.
[39] Podeh, "History and Memory," 66.

events described above have been represented in a variety of conflicting ways in social studies textbooks since 1987, as the next section will discuss.

Competing Narratives in JHS Social Studies Textbooks

This section will analyze two social studies textbooks, one published subsequent to the 1987 reforms (in 1988) and one following the 2001 reforms (in 2005). The 2007 reforms and the textbooks published in 2008 are also discussed to show the progression in the narratives. The 1988 textbook was authored and published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, while the 2005 version was written by Kofi Quansah and Charles Otu with approval from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education exclusively published, printed, and distributed all pre-university textbooks prior to 2001. However, the government's inability to fund the process led to the privatization of textbook publication and printing after this date. Under the current system, non-government authors need prior approval from the Ministry for their books to be purchased for circulation in schools. Approved social studies textbooks include those authored by Quansah and Otu (2005), Amoah et al. (2008), and Abane et al. (2008).[40]

While the 1988 textbook depicts Nkrumah as a flawlessly patriotic figure with unique leadership qualities, the 2005 textbook points out flaws in Nkrumah's approach to national politics, presenting him as aggressive. The choice of words in the 2008 textbooks is also distinct from the 2005 textbook. The latter generally avoids derogatory remarks, especially against Nkrumah, as this paper will describe.

The Text

The 1988 version of the book downplays the achievements of the UGCC, stating that "in general, the U.G.C.C. did not achieve much" due to disunity among its leaders.[41] At the same time, the book acknowledges the UGCC as the first political grouping that successfully galvanized the population to support a common political agenda against the colonial government, after earlier unsuccessful attempts on the part of the Fante Confederation and Asante Kingdom. The 2005 version disagrees that the UGCC capitulated to disunity. It notes that its executive membership was composed of "lawyers and people from the educated elite," which caused it to alienate young people and the working class.[42] This constitutes an emphasis on the intellectual profile of the UGCC and subsequent traditions such as the UP. Another notable characteristic of the description in this version of the book is its spotlight on the UGCC's founding members, especially the Big Six; it frequently places Nkrumah's name last whenever the Big Six is listed. This arrangement contrasts with the order in the 1988 version, which consistently lists Nkrumah's name first among the six.

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[40] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*; Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 3*; Abane et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools*; Amoah et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools 1*; Amoah et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools 3*.
[41] MoEC, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools*, 19.
[42] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*, 51.

The 1988 version idolizes Nkrumah as an exceptional leader, a "great" man who "was intelligent, brave and handsome . . . hardworking,"[43] who abandoned better options overseas to help forge a national and pan-African agenda. The 2005 version disagrees, asserting that the seeds of independence had already been sown by the UGCC before it invited Nkrumah to become its general secretary on the recommendation of Arko Adjei, that Nkrumah opportunistically used this invitation as a springboard, and that he stabbed the party in the back by pursuing his own agenda. It further alleges that he was disrespectful to the executive members of the UGCC, leading to his dismissal from the secretary position "just eight months after" taking the job.[44] Among his wrongdoings, as listed in the textbook, is the establishment of the *Evening News* newspaper and the Accra Workers College in 1948 without consulting the UGCC executive.[45] Nkrumah also harbored communist ideologies, which was unacceptable to the UGCC.[46] To further emphasize his alleged disloyalty, the narrative states that he launched his own political party, the CPP, "the very next day" after resigning from the UGCC in June 1949.[47] Although the book acknowledges Nkrumah as "a good politician, a good organizer and a good speaker," it stops short of giving credit to his personal charisma.

Points of disagreement also exist in the narratives of the 1948 Accra Riots and Nkrumah's 1950 call to Positive Action (see table 1). The 1988 textbook version justifies Positive Action as a measure of last resort adopted by Nkrumah to force the British colonial government to relinquish power. Its narrative of the events proceeds as follows: First, the J. H. Coussey Committee, which was mandated in 1949 by the colonial government to draft a constitution aimed at facilitating a transition to independence, proposed a constitution that gave too many "reserved powers" to the colonial government, which had the sole aim of prolonging colonial rule.[48] Second, neither Nkrumah nor the youth of the Gold Coast were represented on that committee, heightening their fear that the colonial government was not acting in their interests. Third, Positive Action was a last resort aimed at forcing immediate self-governance and the inclusion of Nkrumah and young people in the political process. The narrative defines Positive Action as a "nationwide political strike and boycott"[49] and supplies a systematic account of how Nkrumah toured the country to insist that Positive Action aimed to achieve a peaceful handover of power. To demonstrate that Nkrumah attained the desired results, the narrative directly links Positive Action to the 1951 victory of the CPP, which saw Nkrumah's release from incarceration after winning a parliamentary seat from inside prison. The textbook's justification of the 1948 violence and Nkrumah's declaration of a one-party state is consistent with the position held by Rawlings's PNDC regime, which was in power at the time of the education reforms and had undertaken coups d'état in 1979 and 1981. Both coups d'état were justified at the time as being actions of last resort to bring the nation out of an economic, social, and political abyss.[50]

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[43] MoEC, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools*, 22.

[44] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*, 53.

[45] Ibid.

[46] The UGCC/UP tradition extends to the current NPP, which remains a pro-capitalist, liberal political party.

[47] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*, 53.

[48] MoEC, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools*, 25.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Shillington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor*.

Table 1: Summary of the Narratives as Presented in the Two Versions of the Textbooks

	1987 Narratives (PNDC/NDC)	**2001 Narratives (NPP)**
1	Nkrumah idolized	Nkrumah is aggressive, opportunistic
2	Contributions of the Big Six and UGCC downplayed	Contributions of Nkrumah downplayed
3	1948 riots praised	UGCC absolved of riots
4	Positive Action as civil strike	Positive Action as violent disorder
5	Violence led to the declaration of a one-party state	Declaration of a one-party state led to violence

Conversely, the 2005 version of the textbook depicts Positive Action as highly destabilizing, defining it as "strikes, boycotts and other forms of non-cooperation and civil disobedience" and highlighting the nationwide chaos that resulted.[51] The book thus considers Nkrumah's arrest and incarceration to be justified. It emphasizes what it depicts as the UGCC's respect for the rule of law by listing its founding members as part of the J. H. Coussey Committee. The textbook narrative states explicitly that Nkrumah was not part of this committee. It further absolves the UGCC of any involvement in planning the 1948 Riots and portrays the arrest of the Big Six as a mistake by naming Nii Kwabena Bonnie III, Osu Alata Mantse of Accra, as the initiator of the riots. This narrative is consistent with the position of the NPP, which disseminates its self-image as being the "custodian of the rule of law." This rule-of-law narrative was especially significant for the John Agyekum Kufuor–led NPP government, which, in 2001, inherited power from the PNDC/NDC government that had transformed itself from a military into a civilian regime.[52] The constitutionally elected government of the NPP needed to depict itself and its affiliates as law-abiding, a departure from the previous era.

The 1988 version of the textbook dedicates much of its discussion on social development to Nkrumah's Five-Year Development Plan, initiated in 1951.[53] By contrast, the post-2001 version devotes considerable space to the discussion of "Citizenship and Human Rights" and portrays Nkrumah as being guilty of numerous human rights abuses. It states, for instance, that "From 1960, Kwame Nkrumah's government became very oppressive. No one could say what he liked against the government without fear of being arrested by the security agencies."[54] It accuses Nkrumah of stifling political freedoms:

> From 1964, Kwame Nkrumah made a law which made [the] CPP the only political party in the country. No one could form or belong to any other political party. This brought a

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[51] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*, 54.

[52] Kufuor was the first successful NPP leader to win presidential elections in Ghana. He led the country from 2001 to 2009.

[53] MoEC, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools*, 35–39.

[54] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS, PB 1*, 64.

lot of trouble into the country. Now that this freedom has been restored to Ghanaians, they can now join any political party they like.[55]

It further regards Nkrumah as responsible for much of the violence in post-independence Ghana, citing his declaration of a one-party state as the cause of instability: "In 1964 Dr. Kwame Nkrumah banned all political parties and the CPP became the only party in the country. Ghana then became a one-party state. This was enough to create instability in the country."[56] By contrast, the 1988 version justifies the declaration of a one-party state as a response to instability:

> From 1964 onwards, [Nkrumah] allowed the CPP to become the only political party in Ghana. This was because members of one political party regarded members of other political parties as enemies. This brought many dangers and made people feel unsafe. There were even attempts to kill the President. In these attempts, many innocent people were killed. Nkrumah therefore felt it was better to have only one party to unite all the people. It however was not liked by many people.[57]

In its 2008 version, the textbook no longer places specific blame. This change was likely related to the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of independence in 2007 and the renewed debates that emerged at the time surrounding Nkrumah and the Big Six. The year-long Golden Jubilee celebration of independence (2006–7) cast a positive light on both Nkrumah and the Big Six. It became clear from prolonged national debates that both Nkrumah and the Big Six shared some of the blame for the violence, but also some credit for their respective contributions to nation-building. In this context it would not have been prudent for the Kufuor–led NPP government to retain negative remarks about Nkrumah in the textbooks. Derogatory remarks that associated Nkrumah with instability were eliminated from the textbooks. The picture of J. B. Danquah presented alongside the Big Six in the 2005 textbook[58] no longer appears after 2007. Textbooks began to place emphasis on the Big Six as a whole.[59] Lentz refers to the Kufuor government's gesture as "neutralization," aimed at ensuring that neither Nkrumah nor other members of the Big Six received undue publicity.[60]

The general positive attitude toward Ghana's past was also evident in the way one of the books describes Rawlings' second successful coup d'état as a source of political stability in Ghana: "From 1981, when the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings came to power [until] today, Ghana has enjoyed a period of political stability."[61] This is a reasonably complimentary description considering that over the years, the NPP had vilified Rawlings and his military regimes. In its attempt to create continuity in the independence narratives, the 2008 textbook attributes the attainment of independence to the combined efforts of members of the UGCC and CPP and reconciles their mottos as follows:

[55] Ibid.
[56] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS: PB 3*, 22.
[57] MoEC, *Social Studies for Junior Secondary Schools*, 32.
[58] Quansah and Otu, *BECE Social Studies for JSS: PB 1*, 48.
[59] It is during this time that images of the Big Six were printed on the redenominated Ghanaian currency.
[60] Lentz, "Ghana@50," 8.
[61] Amoah et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools 3*, 83.

> The earlier leaders did not ask for independence but [rather for] changes in the colonial system which would improve the condition of Ghanaians. However, through their activities, they prepared a suitable battle ground for the founding leaders who later won independence for us.[62]

The JHS1 edition cites the names of the Big Six and some founding members of the CPP as the leaders of Ghana, listing Danquah first, Nkrumah second, and then the others.[63] Thus, following a change of attitude by the NPP government on the occasion of Ghana's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2007, the harsh narratives against Nkrumah in the textbooks were revised. It is yet to be seen whether the proposed overhaul of pre-university curricula by the present NDC government will have any impact on these narratives.

The Perspectives of Teachers and Students

This section examines the ways in which some teachers and students in Ghana perceive the changes in historical narratives that have taken place over the years. A total of nine social studies teachers were interviewed, in public or state schools, three each from Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale.[64] The longest-serving teacher in the sample had taught since 1991, while the teacher with the shortest service had taught since 1998. The perspective of teachers is crucial to any understanding of what is actually taught in Ghanaian classrooms, since teachers' attitudes toward historical narratives influence what they tell students in class. The interviews were unstructured and ranged from the sources of their social studies textbooks to their appreciation of the independence narratives in the books. Further, three second-year JHS students were interviewed in each school, with permission from their teachers and principals. The purpose of this part of the research was to cast light on the attitudes of students toward Nkrumah and other members of the Big Six.

Textbooks Teachers Use

All of the teachers agreed that the information provided in the available social studies textbooks is scanty, and that students would be at a disadvantage if these books were their only sources of information. The teachers rely on other textbooks, even if these are unapproved, including the Aki Ola and Approaches series. Dovlo,[65] for instance, stated:

> I buy other books, like the Aki Ola and Flamingo series, and then I go through them to find which of them responds to the needs of the syllabus. This is because the approved textbooks give summarized information. The students themselves cannot comprehend the content of those textbooks. I think the textbook only provides pointers.[66]

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[62] Ibid., 85.
[63] Amoah et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools 1*, 84.
[64] These three major cities were chosen to represent views of people from the southern, central, and northern regions of Ghana.
[65] All teachers' names have been changed.
[66] Dovlo (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Tamale, July 11, 2014.

Dovlo also expressed frustration about the frequently late delivery of textbooks to schools; to him, exclusive reliance on government textbooks is a luxury he cannot afford, and he felt that students would suffer if he were to only use these books. Ransford, a teacher with almost two decades of experience in the Asante Region, agreed with the view that these books' content is insubstantial:

> The volume of government textbooks is very small. They are more like a summary. The Aki Ola series, for instance, gives more analysis and examples than the books approved by the ministry. The government should commit more resources to improve the quality and increase the volume of textbooks.[67]

All of the teachers agreed that a lot of discretion is needed in the use of historical narratives from unapproved books.

On Changing Narratives in Textbooks

The teachers were divided on the reasons for the changes in the narratives. Some are convinced that these changes have merely cast more light on events or eliminated irrelevant material, without affecting the core ideas the books represent. Ransford stated: "If there are any changes at all, it is just due to the need to reduce cost and summarize the content, but not because of the politics around the public narratives."[68] Linda agreed and further noted: "Now the narratives depart from individuals to events which individuals participated in. Neither Nkrumah nor the Big Six is the focus in the current textbooks, but [rather] the events leading to independence."[69]

Farouk, from Accra, shared similar thoughts, and added that the only change he recognized in the textbooks was that geographical and physical features of West Africa and Africa have been eliminated. The emphasis, according to him, is presently on Ghana, democracy, political parties, the constitution, and other organs of the state; narratives of independence have not been affected.[70]

Some interviewees saw the presence of bias and manipulation in the changing narratives. Dovlo noted:

> Even if the ministry which awards the contract for a textbook has no intention of being biased, the different authors have different political leanings, either towards Nkrumah or Danquah and his people. . . . Some of the scholars are not fair to Ghanaians. Those of us who were born after independence are not fed with the full version of events.[71]

Agreeing with this, Alhassan thought that Nkrumah's role has been over emphasized:

> In all the different versions, Nkrumah's image and deeds are given too much prominence. Nkrumah is made [out] to be a saint, with little or no taint on his actions

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[67] Ransford (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Kumasi, July 2, 2014.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Linda (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Kumasi, July 2, 2014.
[70] Farouk (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Accra, June 25, 2014.
[71] Dovlo (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Tamale, July 11, 2014.

and inactions. Even though the 2005 version attempted to place some spotlight on the Big Six too, this is still inadequate.[72]

However, according to Farouk, the contributions of the founding fathers varied, and it would be unfair if textbooks treated all of them equally. He asserted: "J. B. Danquah only formed a political party; Nkrumah ruled Ghana for one and half decades. Where is the fairness if Nkrumah is given equal space like the others?"[73]

Thus, the social studies teachers who teach history in the JHS are divided on whether there have been substantial changes to the narratives in the textbooks. Some take the view that the changes are only for lexical purposes and convenience on the part of the authors; others assert that the changes have political undertones. More research is needed to ascertain how the teachers' varying perceptions shape what they teach, and how this impacts the behavior of students.

Time with Students

As part of this study, I spent time with a small number of students to gain a sense of their knowledge on the narratives of the events at the focus of this study. An informal conversation with some of the students showed that they had a fair degree of knowledge about Nkrumah, other members of the Big Six, and other prominent Ghanaians. They were familiar with events leading to the 1948 Riots in Accra, Nkrumah's declaration of Independence in March 1957, and the establishment of the Republic in 1960. However, the students demonstrated little knowledge beyond those key moments. For many, the independence narrative was a single story that started with the UGCC and Nkrumah. Together with the UGCC, some students recounted, Nkrumah led Ghana to independence, making him the founder of Ghana as the leader of a group of willing members from the Big Six, the UGCC, and the CPP. The uniformity of student knowledge as represented by the sample is likely due to the recent "neutralization" policies, which have sought to defuse the tension inherent in the previously competing narratives.

Teachers and Extracurricular Influences on Students

Every person carries their socialization with them, but it is difficult to show precisely how teachers' backgrounds influence what they teach. Cole and Barsalou contend that any such influence cannot be easily quantified, since behavioral change takes time to occur.[74] Different teachers handle students throughout their early years in school, and so it is difficult to know exactly how particular teachers influence one student or another. In a quick test to find out how teachers' perspectives might influence students' views, I noted the following views from one teacher about independence:

> Our independence was premature. We have not added any value to what the British left in 1957. . . . At independence, Ghana didn't have experienced ministers to govern the

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[72] Alhassan (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Tamale, July 11, 2014.
[73] Farouk (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Accra, June 25, 2014.
[74] Cole and Barsalou, "United or Divided?," 12–14.

state. The hasty search for independence has been the [cause] of Ghana's underdevelopment and overreliance on foreign aid.[75]

Yet, none of the three students interviewed from this teacher's class demonstrated any sign of disapproval of independence. Teachers and the classroom are evidently not the only sources of influence on students' beliefs. In Ghana, social studies is a composite course covering environmental studies, geography, civic education, cultural studies, economic development, and history, and it is allotted six 35-minute periods per class per week.[76] This means that contact hours for pure history education are minimal. The media, such as radio stations and television, and peer-to-peer discussion are important sources of influence as well. Patriotic poems and songs such as the National Anthem, the National Pledge and "yen ara yasaase ni" in Akan (in English: "This is our land"), which are recited daily in many schools, also play a role.

The National Anthem, for instance, requests God's blessings upon the "Homeland Ghana," to "make our Nation great and strong" and to make Ghanaians "bold to defend forever, the cause of freedom and of rights." It requests God's favors to be able "to resist oppressors' rule with all our will and might forever more." These are profound, patriotic words that are enough to make any child express unflinching allegiance to the nation. The National Pledge also adds to the patriotic outlook. Its opening lines read: "I promise on my honor, to be faithful and loyal to Ghana my motherland." It further adds, "I promise to hold in high esteem, our heritage won for us, through the blood and toil of our fathers." These are intense statements that could potentially influence students' patriotic outlook beyond what is taught in the classroom.

Discussion: Impact of the Competing Narratives on National Development

The competing historical narratives discussed in this chapter have impacted Ghana in three main ways. First, they have whipped up a national conversation *not* based on ethnic, religious, or sectarian sentiments, although these factors cannot be ruled out completely. Second, confidence in education has been affected to a large extent. Finally, and paradoxically, the competition has helped shape the social studies textbook narratives on independence in ways that have had purifying effects. This section explores these three dimensions.

National Cohesion and Stability

According to Araujo and dos Santos, memory is "associated with those who wield power, since they decide which narratives should be remembered, preserved and disseminated."[77] Irrespective of how frequently official narratives shift, dominant narratives endure unofficially until their proponents take up positions of influence. Official narratives are bound to change when there are no institutional frameworks for restraint. In democratic regimes such as Ghana,

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[75] Alhassan (JHS social studies teacher), interview with the author, Tamale, July 11, 2014.
[76] MoESS, "Social Studies Teaching Syllabus," iii.
[77] Araújo and dos Santos, "History, Memory and Forgetting," paragraph 12.

changing narratives may not reflect specific government policies but rather power struggles and dialogues between various competing social groups.

For 13 years, from 1966 to 1979, a culture of silence was imposed in various forms on the memory of Nkrumah and his legacies. The pro-Nkrumah government of Hilla Limmam (1979–81), which was ousted from power by Rawlings' second coup d'état, marked the end of this culture of silence. Rawlings revived and sustained the memory of Nkrumah until the political space was opened for a multi-party democracy in 1992. Under Rawlings, informal and formal narratives of independence history began to converge. The multi-party regime has provided political and social space for graduated competing narratives generated by pro- and anti-Nkrumah participants in the discourse. In this competitive sociopolitical space, multiple platforms such as radio stations, think tanks, political parties, and indeed social studies textbooks have been adopted to sustain the conversation.

The culture of silence in Ghana was imposed by both military and civilian governments; after 13 years of this silence on Nkrumah and the violence associated with his regime, his memory was glorified uncritically. The fourteen years that followed (1979–92) prepared the country for another phase (1992–present), during which the public discourse was extended beyond Nkrumah. The gradual public remembrance of the contributions of personalities associated with the past – Nkrumah, Danquah, Busia – has successfully warded off potentially destabilizing ethnic divisions in national politics. Some degree of political ethnicization is doubtless extant, with the Asante ethnic group adhering by and large to the NPP and the Ewe to the NDC,[78] but it is not a pattern seen nationally. Overtly ethnically and regionally based political parties are currently banned (Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution). Political discourses mainly center on personalities and their past achievements. This has reduced the risk of realizing the "Kaufman thesis," which states that ethnic hatred incorporated into national politics triggers emotional hostility, which in turn leads to antagonism, domination, and in extreme cases, conflict.[79] This said, a risk remains that cults of personality can undermine institutional memory and stifle innovation. National discourses should progress from extreme emphasis on personalities to discussing what makes institutions work, while acknowledging individual contributions within the institutions and structures of state. Therefore, the latest edition of the social studies textbooks (2008) are well structured to strike a balance between emphasizing state institutions and acknowledging individual contributions.

Quality of Education

By 1965, Ghana's education system was rated highly in terms of progression toward education for all citizens (universal coverage) and teacher and student motivation.[80] This position has, however, been downgraded since then,[81] and interventions such as the 1987 reforms, the introduction of free compulsory universal basic education, and the school meals programs have been aimed at restoring past achievements. It could be opined, surveying the overall situation,

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[78] Gyimah-Boadi and Asante, "Ethnic Structure," 248.
[79] Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*.
[80] Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana.*
[81] Peil, "Ghanaian Education"; Dzobo, "Address at the National Workshop."

that too many resources have been expended on "reforming education" rather than focusing on improving educational facilities, training teachers, and motivating both teachers and students to be more productive.[82] A political economy of education reforms has been created, whereby the awarding of contracts to reprint textbooks and other educational materials has, in some instances, depended on relationships with politicians. Each political party that comes to power struggles to preserve a certain historical identity, either for or against the legacies of Nkrumah. This has resulted in frequent, sometimes needless, educational reforms that have failed to build confidence in the educational system.

Developmental Progression of the Narratives

A close study of the textbooks analyzed suggests that the changes in historical narratives around independence and subsequent events do not simply reflect changes in political allegiances; they rather relate to a transformative progression in Ghana's education system. This progression can be compared to growth from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.[83] The period prior to the 1980s was the "prenatal" stage, during which a culture of silence reigned. The 1987 reforms marked the "childhood" stage of the JSS/JHS education system. Here, the presentation of historical memory was unidirectional, and certain omissions served to emphasize heroic myths around Nkrumah and independence, as well as stereotypes about the Big Six.

Transition to the "adolescent" stage was initiated with the establishment of the Educational Reforms Review Committee in 1994. The 1999 National Education Forum represented the climax of this transition, and the 2001 curriculum review completed it. At this stage, myths about Nkrumah were replaced with stereotypes that diminished his national stature, and the Big Six were glorified instead. The state was portrayed as the victim of Nkrumah and the political instability he supposedly brought about. There remained signs of selective remembrance and blaming "the other" for unpleasant events.

The narrative reached adulthood during the 2007 reforms and the 2008 textbook review. Myths and negative stereotypes have been eliminated completely; and there is a sense that the causes of violence and political instability in the early years of nationhood are presented objectively.[84] This mature version admits that the history of Ghana is a continuum and that the current state has emerged as the sum of the actions of all those involved in the history of the Gold Coast and subsequently of Ghana. Growth is still in progress, and so far there is no strategic agenda to present as many robust facts about Ghana's past as possible, be they glorious or shameful. Much emphasis is on how the nation fought against foreign oppression, leaving out facts about the fierce domestic political struggles that were badly handled by both the ruling government and the opposition elements in the First Republic. The presentation of national independence in textbooks remains based on interpretations of the events and presentation of moral lessons, with

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[82] The introduction of the Single Spine Salary Structure (SSSS) in 2010 has recently improved remuneration for teachers.

[83] This progression is similar to Elie Podeh's assessment of the Israeli education system.

[84] See Amoah et al., *Social Studies for Junior High Schools 3*.

little room for the presentation of hard history in order to enable students to make their own assessment and draw conclusions from there.

Conclusion

Nkrumah's legacy in Ghanaian history generates debate on how to interpret the violence that overshadowed Ghana's independence in the 1950s and 1960s. The violence has been justified and condemned from a range of perspectives, and formal narratives have been manipulated over the years to suit different political traditions. This has had an impact on confidence in curricula, as the urge to influence narratives in schools appears to lead politicians to tamper with the syllabi of some courses of study. This process of political manipulation has evolved to a point where the narrative has reached some level of balance. A cursory look at the present narrative in the textbooks shows some impartiality and could mark the end of the cyclical politicization of education reform. Until this end is definite, education in Ghana risks remaining a pawn in the hands of politicians.

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