

# Prophets of development: An investigation into Kaiser Industries' economic relationship with Ghana, 1957-1965

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## Abstract

Kaiser Industries had been able to amass political influence in the United States during the heights of the Great Depression and translated those relationships into benefits. Kaiser industries became emissaries for American democracy, while at the same time looking towards the company's bottom line. Their story is not unique, as the United States would encourage several high profile American companies to enter into business in foreign states that the American government was looking to curry political favour. Simultaneously, the creation of the Breton-Woods system, such as the World Bank Group and its subsidiaries, ready to support and "lend" to projects that had the backing of the US, the story I seek to tell reaches multiple dimensions of Cold War geopolitics. This is a story of development and the dangers of competing interests. The US sought alliances to curb the Soviet Union and the spread of communism; Ghana sought assistance in industrializing and introducing modern businesses into the nascent nation; Kaiser sought new markets to exploits and over time, Kaiser Executives were able to forge close and personal links with Ghana's president, Kwame Nkrumah. They used these connections to also assist them pushing their agenda, which at times conflicted with Ghana's own stated agenda. Ultimately, this is a look at business practices in the shadow of the Cold War and its connections to neocolonialism.

**Keywords:** Kaiser Industries; Volta River Project; Economic development; Kwame Nkrumah; Cold War; Ghana

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<sup>1</sup> This research was conducted through generous funding provided by the Stanford university center for African studies. The author would also like to thank Profs. Gordon Chang and Richard Roberts for their commentary and feedback. Additionally, he would like to thank Karen Fung of Stanford University Library as well as the staffs of the National Archives at Kew, and Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana.

## **1. Introduction**

In 1957, Ghana's finance minister, Komla Gbedemah, was refused service at a Delaware Howard Johnson restaurant due to his race (Donovan, 1957: 3). This event caused such an international scandal that United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower invited Gbedemah to the White House to personally apologize for the incident. Gbedemah took advantage of this fortuitous meeting to inform the president about Ghana's desire to build a hydroelectric dam via international, ideally American, assistance (Wise, 1957: 1). While he seemed outwardly sympathetic to the project, Eisenhower remained non-committal and proposed further discussion of the dam at a later date (Legum, 1958: 6). Nevertheless, this meeting between Gbedemah and Eisenhower increased the burgeoning relationship between Ghana and the US during the heights of the Cold War. Only the key players in the ensuing affair were missing from this initial meeting: the company who would benefit the most financially from the Volta River Project (VRP).

This was the era of the gospel of modernization theory, which held that low income states could only advance as a society if they adopted the faith of democratic capitalism, married to economic development. By the end of the 1960s, the unintended economic consequence of this flawed theology was the replacement of one form of economic domination, colonialism, with another. The results would ultimately prove disastrous for the poorer states of the world, as the expected economic benefits never fully materialized for their countries. The American government and a private American company's involvement reveal the VRP to be about Cold War brinksmanship as much as a dedication to development and profit. The tensions these divergent interests caused were exacerbated once Ghanaian interests and demands were introduced into the discussion. In this scenario, the successful party/parties had to control and manage the expectations of all involved by massaging and influencing the overall perception of the project. Because "development" is a broad and malleable term, the expectations for the various parties are at once in conflict. For example, Ghana sought to spark a national, and its leaders hoped, a continental movement of industrialization, signified by the generation of hydroelectricity. Yet Kaiser Industries, a multinational corporation (MNC) with diverse interests, merely sought access to the power the dam would generate rather than this far-flung dream of hydroelectricity sparking industrialization in Ghana. Thus the term "development" throughout this essay will appear broad and undefined, precisely because the actors themselves never truly decided what they all believed it to mean.

Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation was part of Henry J. Kaiser Sr.'s industrial empire, which by the end of the 1950s included a shipbuilding firm and a burgeoning healthcare insurance company (see *The Kaiser Story*, 1968). Kaiser, a politically connected businessman, had long been involved in US domestic affairs. At the height of his influence during World War II (WW II), he served as one of the key shipbuilding magnates and was well rewarded for his fast production of naval vessels (ibid). The militarization of American industry in this era was associated with individuals, such as Kaiser, Howard Hughes, and Henry Ford, rather than corporation. Kaiser belonged to the lineage of men such as J. P. Morgan (who famously abated the Panic of 1907) and J. D. Rockefeller, who never held elected office but served as state agents in important matters of national security. Morgan, Rockefeller, and Kaiser made development – i.e., the creation of the infrastructure necessary for quotidian living such as roads – their vocation and business. They made their fortunes from building nations. These men were the artificers of the new age, resplendent in steel.

The early historiography concerning American companies and their involvement in development projects was concerned with the public perception of the social class structure in America and the role of the upper business class in US society. In the 1930s, historians looked back to the age of “robber barons” and reassessed their value to society. The Gilded Age came under attack as revisionist historians sought to decontextualize the actions of those plutocrats. In their book, *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927), Charles and Mary Beard cast the robber barons as a pernicious group, willing to use vicious means to attain their own goals. Yet even with their harsh critiques, the Beards noted the importance of this wealthy social class, as they served a utilitarian good, and also had historical antecedents mollifying their actions. Richard Hofstadter served as the leading voice in the next generation after the Beards to reassess the value of the “robber barons.”<sup>2</sup> Hofstadter argued in *The Age of Reform* that American businesses had traversed through three crucial periods of Progressivism, Populism, and the New Deal. These three eras marked cleavages in how the American people embraced or rejected the business class.

These two tomes highlight the struggle of the business class to maintain an image of probity. These two texts were accepted as classics for many years before future scholars thoroughly debunked most of the positions espoused within them. By the time the Beards and Hofstadter had published their respective

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Beard, who had also taught at Columbia University before Hofstadter attended, heavily influenced him.

books, business was seen as sordid and self-involved, thus there was a need for men of a higher character to enter into its ranks. Business was a noble calling, a vocation whose practitioners could be of benefit to their fellow men, rather than the rapacious set of bygone eras. By the 1950s, the American zeitgeist had a sense of religiosity about the benefits that could be accrued from business (see, e.g. *Foreign Affairs*, January 1948; *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 1948; *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, July 16, 1955; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1961; *New York Herald Tribune*, November 05, 1961). There was an emerging American theology of business, similar to the great panacea for emerging nations, by which development could be married to democracy. Whether or not this was a logical or feasible position is a moot point, as will be subsequently shown. This illusion was incredibly powerful and served to reshape the public perception of the business class in the US. Was there a difference between the business class and its role in society during the time of the Beards and that of subsequent generations? Or was it the evolving public perceptions of this social class? Because of the mutability of narratives, it is difficult to parse and assess this question, yet the idea of public perception reoccurs throughout this essay. Development projects are an area ripe for assessment of how public perception shifts due to geographic relocation and personal interest. One of the many types of development projects popular throughout the post-WWII era was the erection of dams.

Historians' focus on dam building in the post-WW II era is remarkable. Specialist scholars of Africa have engaged with this topic with particular enthusiasm. Historians such as David Hart, Heather Hoag, Stephen Miescher, Thomas Noer, Julia Tischler, Barbara and Allen Isaacman all investigate the complexities of development projects, specifically dams, and the outcome of those projects (Noer, 1984; Adams, 1992; Hart, 1982; Hoag, 2008; Isaacman and Isaacman, 2013; Tischler, 2013; Miescher, 2014). Scholars such as the Issacmans, have demonstrated that there were many unintended consequences for engaging in these projects. Their book, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development*, details the problems encountered by Portuguese colonial officials as they sought to bring development into colonial Mozambique. Other scholars have also detailed the political ramifications of these ventures, such as in Stephan Miescher's "*Nkrumah's Baby*." However, they have often stopped short of looking at the motivations of the companies that chose to participate in these projects, because the answer appears ostensibly obvious: profit. This is a simplistic reading of a complicated history, which demands greater academic intervention.

There are three principal actors (Chad Calhoun, Edgar Kaiser, and Kwame Nkrumah) within this particular narrative. There are certainly other significant and prominent people who merit some attention. This, however, is a story based on the perceptions of various interested groups rather than the detailed actions of individuals. These highlighted individuals are meant to serve as a means to understand the shifting interests at play. These interests were pivotal in controlling the narrative presentation of the VRP from 1958 to 1965. Second, this is a story about the VRP itself and focusing on central characters detracts from the importance of the project. It is paramount to not become attached to principal actors because the VRP obviously meant different things to different actors. Nkrumah, for example, was looking for a dynamic project that would lead to rapid industrialization for his nascent country: this was of limited import to Calhoun or Kaiser. Finally, this is a story that matters precisely because the question of why Africa has failed to “develop” has often been observed from the macro political arena. The involvement of non-European MNCs such as Kaiser require reassessment. The connection between the colonial legacy of European MNCs and Africa’s stagnation has received some minor attention, such as David Fieldhouse’s history of the United Africa Company, yet there has not been enough attention paid to American companies (Fieldhouse, 1994). Especially companies, such as Kaiser Industries, long idealized as ethical practitioners of capitalism.

The purpose of this essay can be summed up thusly: how was Kaiser Industries’ involvement in the Ghanaian VRP perceived by the various constituents who shared an interest in the project? This paper seeks to uncover and understand how the VRP was understood by those involved (i.e. Kaiser Industries, Nkrumah) and those affected by its construction (the Ghanaian people), as it was being constructed and once it was completed. There is very little scholarship on Kaiser Industries, thus most of the supporting materials that directly deal with Kaiser either come from newspapers of that era or other documents that directly involved Kaiser himself, such as correspondence with Nkrumah. This brings into question the matter of perception once again. Because Kaiser has been involved in the production of many of the materials presented here, it leads us to question how much of an unbiased story can be told. Yet, there is even evidence to tell this pivotal story without fearing an attempt to either overcorrect for bias or be swept up in reciting panegyrics to Kaiser. As an example, W. Arthur Lewis, Principal Economic Advisor to the Ghanaian Prime Minister, tended his resignation in 1958 because Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, would not agree to Lewis’ proposal that: “The Ghana government should not invest in the

Volta dam more than £25 million of its own money” (PRAAD: RG 17/1/73). Conversely, there are additional contemporary counterpoints. There is Henry Kaiser, Sr., writing to Nkrumah to comment on a speech he heard Nkrumah deliver on the topic of the dam. Kaiser writes: “I took especial stimulation when you spoke of the Ghana of Tomorrow which you envision ... ‘From the elevated ground on which we stand, I see the symbol of the Ghana of Tomorrow ... a vast new industrial complex” (PRAAD: RG 17/1/116). These are but two examples of a conflicting perception on the VRP. This gap in perception indicates that there was no universal appraisal of the VRP.

## **2. Cold war realities and dam constructions**

When Komla Gbedemah entered the White House the morning of October 10th, 1957, to have breakfast with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, one may surmise he was not concerned about the morning’s menu (Donovan, 1957). His own country’s prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, had been in dire straits for several years, looking for a willing partner to build a hydroelectric dam. The nation was sitting on massive deposits of bauxites, the necessary raw material for aluminum production (The Volta River Project II, 1957). The White House meeting lasted for a little over an hour. Eisenhower offered his sincerest apology on behalf of the country for the unpleasantness that had befallen Gbedemah (Eisenhower Presidential Library, 1957). The Gbedemah incident came at a most inopportune time, as US domestic racial tensions rapidly increased, as evinced by the integration of Little Rock Central High School the month prior (Dudziak, 2000: 127-128). Gbedemah only managed an opening salvo to pitch the VRP as Eisenhower remained sympathetic (Legum, 1958: 6). This was not the first time the Ghanaians had reached out to seek American assistance in building their dam. With the support of Ghanaian desire, the construction of the dam would be a long process, encompassing several American presidential administrations.

In the early 1950s, when Nkrumah and his governing party, the Convention People's Party (CPP), had proposed the idea to build a dam, the opposition in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly had raised an objection. They pointed out that a project of such magnitude was not a sign of that body’s fiduciary responsibilities, insofar as being the caretakers of the state’s limited coffers. Nkrumah by 1952 had already attempted to reach out to the American government but was rebuffed by the outgoing Truman Administration. Nkrumah was trying to bypass the slow-moving British by gaining American assistance in what he saw as a pivotal



project, necessary for the sustainment of the future of his envisioned state. The American Consul, William Cole Jr., had replied that in order for the American government to consider the proposal, it would first need “the appropriate agency of the British Government to request such financial assistance on behalf of the Gold Coast” (TNA: FCO 141/5063). This terse response came about because the country was still a colonial possession and American policy was not to upset the status quo. Nkrumah had embarked on this gambit at the same time as he was unveiling the government’s initial proposal to build the dam, via the government’s White Paper (CMD. 8702, The Volta River Aluminium Scheme).

One of the most vocal critics of the project, as then envisioned by the colonial state was Dr. John Coleman de Graft-Johnson. De Graft-Johnson, from a prominent Fante family, had been educated in Britain, where he studied economics. In a blistering article published in several newspapers in the Gold Coast, he attacked the VRP’s proponents for proposing a project that would force the Gold Coast to bear the brunt of the costs, while the metropole received the greater share of the rewards. He asked:

Why has the United Kingdom Government become suddenly interested in Aluminium production in the Gold Coast? We need not search far for the answer for the very first paragraph of the White Paper is headed “United Kingdom Requirements of Aluminium.” It is estimated that the United Kingdom will require in 25 years, three times its present supply of aluminium. We are told that the fabricating industry in the United Kingdom already has a capacity of 500,000 tons a year. The second paragraph of the White Paper is headed “Need for a New Sterling Area Aluminum Smelter.”, [sic] thus there is no attempt to disguise the fact that Britain is now prepared to exploit the aluminium industry of the Gold Coast (TNA: FCO 141/5063).

He additionally questioned the sociological effects of the project, as the early drafts of the White Paper did not seem to be taken into proper consideration the mass displacement of people (Tsikata 2006). At other times, de Graft-Johnson expressed a more sympathetic opinion of the project. On the contrary, he wrote in a subsequent page that, “there is no reason why we should not seriously consider undertaking the Volta River Aluminium project in stages covering a number of years” (TNA: FCO 141/5063). The problem with this approach was that it did not meet Nkrumah’s desire for an accelerated program, which would see the dam built as soon as the nation had achieved independence. Already the world was noticing Nkrumah’s impatience. Black America, in particular had taken notice (*Atlanta Daily World*, 2.7.1957).

The United States' image abroad as the land of benevolent democracy was suffering. Historian Mary Dudziak has argued that the United States was constantly on the lookout for positive messages highlighting its own fidelity to harmonious equality they could disseminate globally, counteracting Soviet propaganda about American hypocrisy (Dudziak, 2000: 106-109). As Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis notes, decolonization occurred immediately after the end of WWII (Gaddis, 2005: 81-82). Gaddis' main focus is on the slow pace it took to achieve total independence, while the US remained concerned about communism becoming the dominant form of political ideology in these newly independent domains. Norwegian Cold War historian O. A. Westad maintains there was a conflicting sense of purpose in the American presence during the post WWII era. The US saw itself as the protector of these new nations, ensuring their ability to sustain freedom and liberty, but only as interpreted by American standards (West, 2005: 110-111). He conversely notes most of these states saw American meddling as merely an attempt to replace one imperious foreign overlord for another.

Countries such as the United Kingdom viewed their old empires as potential sources of revenue. The USSR seized upon this and started to proselytize a gospel of anti-colonialism, pointing out the hypocrisy of how native peoples of Africa and Asia had assisted in thwarting the oppressive thrall of fascism only to be returned to the yoke of their foreign colonial masters. This message, married to African demands for self-governance, especially in the Gold Coast, found very receptive ears among the general populace. It created a sense of distrust of the colonial apparatus as the British had claimed their presence was only required so they could help Africans achieve a level of development commensurate with the rest of the world (PRAAD: RG 6/1/32). Prior to WWII, Africans' demands had been largely restricted to calls for greater liberties; after the war, these became full blown demands for total and immediate independence from the British Empire. It remained to be seen what role the US would play in this unraveling drama. W. R. Louis and Ronald Robinson have argued that the British were forced to agree to begin dismantling portions of their colonial apparatus in exchange for American beneficences (Louis and Robinson, 2003: 51-53). This was a difficult process, as the British had crafted a byzantine state apparatus in colonial governance. There is clear evidence of the British fostering a poor fiduciary environment for their colonies (Rodney, 1981). U. K. treasury official H. A. Shannon wrote in 1952 of how colonial states were structured in such a fashion that currency standards were strictly dependent on terms set in the British metropole.



Shannon, in a paper for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), another Breton-Woods institution, wrote the following: “the colonial authorities can have no independent monetary policy. And as the legal tender basis is fixed in this way, it also follows that, strictly local banks can have no independent credit policy, if needed, outside narrow limits determined by their own ‘sound’ banking practices” (Shannon, 1952: 322). Many British colonial states would attain independence in the 1960s, yet their financial freedom was immediately linked to their former colonial overlords. Post-independence proved to be a frustrating set of circumstances as the pound sterling (£) was not as strong of a currency as the dollar (Zupnick, 1954). Furthermore, all trade conducted prior to independence would have been conducted in pounds sterling, regardless of who the other trading partners were. Globally, post-WWII, there had been a strong demand for the American dollar (\$), as the British would keep the dollars their colonial states accrued remitting back to them the equivalent in pounds. This created the need for American capital, as distasteful as it may have been to some of the newly emerging sovereign states of the Third World who strove to craft a future of total independence from colonial ways.

What the Ghanaians were asking of the Americans was served as a criticism to British failure in their development agenda for their colonial possessions. The dream of the dam had arisen under colonial rule yet it was never completed under its auspices because Ghanaian political leaders would not allow metropolitan businessmen to undertake yet another project that would benefit the interests of the metropole over the interests of the colony (see Rodney, 1981). Julia Tischler (2013) remarkably demonstrates in her book, *Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation*, how British action, in regards to development, could vastly increase once there was a clear benefit to Britain’s needs. The building of the Kariba Dam in British central and southern Africa was made possible precisely because the colonial state finagled its way into creating a long-term project, with lasting implications for the metropole. Both the British and the Americans realized that there were ways to render third world peoples economically dependent despite political independence. Therefore the ensuing passages require several distinct lenses.

From one vantage point, the American government needed to show multiple constituents, such as the Third World and their own African-American population, that the US was a fair practitioner of the democratic values it constantly preached. In the next perspective, there was a need to focus on American economic-political clientele-building by rendering the US indispensable to these new emerging

states. In another perspective, there was the obvious purported security threat of communism, which had to be staved off by thwarting all Soviet attempts to influence the state of affairs in Africa (Rose & Petersen 1984). Finally, and crucially, there was how Kaiser's motivation and rationale for wanting to be involved in this project was received both at home and abroad, by multiple constituencies. The initial proposal was intriguing by itself but the agenda of bringing instantaneous development to one of the newest nations of the world was certainly enough to arouse the general interest of the major construction firms as well as aluminum prospectors, showing as to why Kaiser would be involved (Miescher, 2014). A cursory perusal through the company's financial reports from 1951 to 1959 shows steady growth and measured management (see Kaiser Industries Corporation Annual Reports, 1951-1959). Even the steel strike of 1959 did not inhibit the company's overall growth. The strike was a case study of the senior Kaiser executives' astute business acumen, as they diversified the company's interests into as many arenas as fiscally possible.

### **3. The African American perspective**

Nkrumah's outreach to the world for assistance in regards to the VRP had certainly drawn the attention of more than just the American political establishment. Key African Americans, some of whom had come to positively associate themselves with the new state, were also paying attention, as one can ascertain from the commentaries in the early news coverage the VRP received. As early as July 1957, before Gbedemah had even visited the White House, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* reported: "US Businessmen Show Interest in Ghana Project" (*Los Angeles Sentinel*, 4.7.1957). While this in itself is not indicative of widespread African-American interest in the VRP, it shows that the Black American media was acutely aware of the project from its inception, and some sought to inject themselves to assist. Claude A. Barnett, the founder of the Associated Negro Press, had informally appointed himself an advisor to Nkrumah. He wrote to the Ghanaian Prime Minister about how to proceed in his approach towards the American government and what his best course of action to take (PRAAD: RG 17/1/5G). As Barnett attempted to steer Nkrumah towards the US government for their assistance constructing the VRP, he also sounded a word of caution towards Kaiser. Barnett expressed initial "doubts that Kaiser's [*sic*] could get finance for the project" (PRAAD: RG 17/1/5G). Barnett offered an insight into the American political workings of the era to which Nkrumah may not have been attuned. He raised his reservations precisely because the men who ran Kaiser, i.e., Henry Sr., and Edgar, were deeply connected to the Democratic Party of the

United States. Thus Barnett did not see the means for the project to be maintained, as he anticipated a Republican to succeed the popular Eisenhower (ibid).

Nkrumah's connection to the African-American people had its roots from his school days in Pennsylvania, where he had attended Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania. As Nkrumah began his political career in Ghana, the African-American press closely monitored his progress, reporting on his meteoric rise. Baltimore's *Afro-American* celebrated on the occasion of Nkrumah's first electoral victory in the 1951 Gold Coast elections; they hoped the country would "set the pattern for the rest of West Africa" in its quest to end colonial rule (*Afro-American* 24.2.1951). The *Philadelphia Tribune* in an early profile on Nkrumah proclaimed: "Eyes of the World on Lincoln Grad." (*Philadelphia Tribune* 28.12.1954). The *Afro-American* quoted Nkrumah as saying on the day of Ghana's independence: "Looking back today and trying to trace my career ... I can see no institution which has contributed more to my success as my alma mater, Lincoln University" (*Afro-American*, 6.3.1957). The article also studiously noted Nkrumah's plea for more assistance from African-American colleges under the auspices of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to train more students who could assist Ghana's advancement toward industrialization (ibid). The adulatory acceptance of Nkrumah extended past the media as evinced by the throngs of crowds that witnessed his 1958 visit to the US. The *Atlanta Daily World* reported five thousand people came to "cheer" Nkrumah as he arrived in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, while the *Philadelphia Tribune* reported ten thousand people "lionized" him in North Philadelphia (*Atlanta Daily World* 30.7.1958; *Philadelphia Tribune* 29.7.1958).

By 1960, Nkrumah's pleas appear to have had little effect, as the UNCF was still "exploring" the means it could use to assist students from emerging African states (*Tri-State Defender* 20.8.1960). This bears highlighting not to suggest Nkrumah was counting on this level of support to achieve the rapid industrialization he envisioned. This point, rather, underscores the complex and complicated relationship between African-Americans and Africans at this time. There was certainly a need for African-American expertise, at least to compensate for the dearth of technical and engineering expertise in Ghana. Unfortunately, Nkrumah was never able to recruit from this pool of talent, highlighting yet another reason why the Kaiser deal was so desperately sought. There are several potential reasons for why African-Americans never fully committed themselves to Nkrumah's agenda. On the one hand, many black Americans were proud of the achievements and accomplishments of the new African states, as clearly

demonstrated by the coverage of the African-American newspapers. On the other hand, Homer Smith, the *African-American* columnist, wrote that “the American Negro is the ‘most Americanized’ of all Americans” (*Chicago Daily Defender* 11.3.1963). As Smith understood, many African-Americans could not relate to Ghana specifically because they viewed themselves as Americans first, regardless of the ethnic tensions prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s. So then where did Kaiser fit into this story?

The VRP itself received very little press coverage in the African-American media after 1959, when Kaiser became heavily involved.<sup>3</sup> The idea of the dam was intriguing to several prominent African-Americans, but most did not appear to be generally interested (*Los Angeles Sentinel* 2.4.1964). Surprisingly, Kaiser also chose not to highlight nor sell this achievement to the African-American community, as a visible sign of its continuous progressive outlook. Kaiser had a long history of hiring African Americans, dating to the early 1940s, when it had faced down union threats for hiring Blacks (*Chicago Daily Tribune* 21.10.1942). One potential answer as to why both the African-American press and the African-American public was poorly kept abreast of the project’s development was that Nkrumah had made a drastic shift towards autocratic rule. Influential Blacks, living in the diaspora, such as Nkrumah’s economic advisor Arthur Lewis, who had excitedly moved to Ghana to help the nascent nation, quickly departed as Nkrumah amassed more power at the expense of the citizenry. Lewis, who was against the project under the proposed terms with Kaiser, returned to the Caribbean and then to a professorship at Princeton (PRAAD: RG 17/1/73). People like Lewis could have helped proselytize on behalf of the project to the African-American community, yet Lewis’s initial public silence on the matter was deafening.

Despite much of Nkrumah’s rhetoric, there was no ecumenical approach to Pan-Africanism. The disjointed voices that had long preached unity among people of African descent, lacked consensus on many subjects. For example, there was no universally accepted timeline as to when European colonialism should come to an end. The gap between African and African-American unity was a wholly separate matter, complicated beyond history and geography (see Gaines, 2006). It is now important to question why the collective leadership within the project did not do a better job of reaching out to the African-American community with something as critical as the VRP. As discussed earlier, potential

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<sup>3</sup> For example, a routine search on Proquest yields few results when “VRP” is searched along with “Kaiser” in specifically African-American newspapers.

emissaries and apostles were fleeing Ghana in the early 1960s. There is the possible inference here that Nkrumah and/or Kaiser gave low priority to the idea of promoting this project to the African-American community. There was certainly a minimal, if almost nonchalant, approach to cultivating the African-American community's interest in the matter. Because as Dudziak showcased, the US government certainly needed to buffer their bona fides, as far as their commitment to anti-colonialism and this was an opportunity Kaiser and Nkrumah could have presented to both parties as being emblematic of that moment. But if Kaiser was uninterested in heavily courting African-American attention, then why did its leaders approach and appeal to the American political class? Kaiser certainly needed funding, but what could Kaiser's leaders offer in return if they were not going to guarantee the interest of the Black World? The answers to these seemingly straightforward questions offer another insight into the Cold War calculations and religious considerations that colored this particular contest.

#### **4. American political perspective**

Nkrumah returned to the US for a three day state visit in July 1958, thirteen years after his previous sojourn; returning this time as Prime Minister of Ghana (*New York Times* 27.7.1958). During his tour, he pressed President Eisenhower on the inquiries Gbedemah had made less than ten months prior. Eisenhower, still dealing with poor race relations, e.g. school integration, at home, was swayed enough to offer some tangible assistance. This gave Eisenhower the opportunity to showcase his efforts to help usher sub-Saharan Africa into the modern age and thus dispel the notion that he was unconcerned about Blacks whether in America or globally (Dudziak, 2000). Eisenhower and Nkrumah expressed mutual interest in seeing the VRP come to fruition. At the conclusion of Nkrumah's trip, they released a joint statement: "With regard to the Volta River project, the United States expressed its appreciation of the contribution this project could make to the economic development of Ghana" (*Philadelphia Tribune* 29.7.1958). As tepid as this announcement appeared, it demonstrated interest on the part of the American government. At this point, the only remaining need was an interested company.

At the end of 1958, Eisenhower reached out to Kaiser due to its expertise in both dam construction as well as its possible interest in bauxite extraction. Kaiser was less concerned with the copious amounts of untapped bauxite available in the region. Unlike the VRP as envisioned by Nkrumah, getting access to the

dam represented an opportunity for an ongoing project by giving them access to a cheap source of hydroelectricity (BANC MSS 85/61c. carton 200, folder 16). The dam was projected to provide 768,000 kilowatts of power, with half of that power going toward the aluminum smelter. Despite the smelter's heavy usage of power, it was a substantial improvement over the extant 40,000 kilowatts per year, prior to the dam's completion (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). Kaiser was hesitant about getting involved in this project principally for financial reasons. As such Nkrumah offered his own inducements, as he invited the company to generate a proposal for building the dam (*Daily Defender* 27.9.1958; *New York Times* 17.9.1959). The only task left was to find a willing financial backer for the project.

Nkrumah gave Kaiser the VRP on a silver platter with an incentive laden contract (PRAAD: RG 6/5/31). John F. Kennedy's arrival to the White House also signaled a change in how the American government intended to pursue the project (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, 1961). The Eisenhower administration had been tepid in obtaining Congressional funding. The Kennedy administration was cognizant of the struggle to win the hearts and minds of Africans, as the Cold War steadily raged on. Kennedy pointed out to Nkrumah, during the latter's visit to the US in 1961, America's commitment to upholding the revolutionary zeal from the days when the country overthrew the yoke of British imperialism in 1783 (*ibid*). Such bombastic language was clearly meant to influence as well as flatter the African leader. How else could Kennedy make such assertions in earnest, when his own Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) just weeks prior had helped assassinate Congolese premier Patrice Lumumba? (*New York Times* 16.1.2011). The US needed to maintain its tenuous grasp on Africa, even if it meant building a lucrative hydroelectric dam for a potentially communist-sympathizing leader.

American political leaders had been justified in their apprehensions, insofar as trusting Nkrumah. From Ghana's earliest days as an independent country, Nkrumah had displayed dictatorial tendencies (Davidson, 1973; James, 1977; Rooney, 1988). There had been no guarantee Kaiser would receive approval to proceed with its plan despite the cozy relations the Kaiser family enjoyed with Washington insiders (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). Edgar Kaiser was appointed to serve on the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity in 1961, which allowed him to maintain his closeness to the center of American power (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 23, folder 2). He had to walk a careful line between that of an invested Washington insider and



that of a concerned American businessman, looking out for the nation's interests rather than his own company's profit margin. The company's response to the government's approval of the VRP aid package therefore was not a panegyric but a more restrained praise. Norm Nicholson, the company executive who authored the statement said:

The decision by the administration to approve United States participation in Ghana's economic development demonstrated great courage and foresight. It provides an unparalleled opportunity for a partnership of American public and private enterprise, working with the government of Ghana to strengthen the economy of that developing nation (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16).

Kaiser's message remained consistent: it was undertaking this project for more high-minded motives than profit. One of the motives they proffered was the enlightenment of a country that was lagging in its economic development but showed great potential, which a company like Kaiser could easily help move into the next stratosphere of growth (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16).

If Kaiser was dedicated to getting governmental assistance, how much of its own capital was it willing to invest in this program? Kaiser entered into the venture with another American partner, Reynolds Metal. Altogether, Kaiser planned to invest \$28.8 million, which would grant them 90% equity, while Reynolds would invest \$3.2 million to get 10% equity (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). At the same time, the Ghanaian government had to raise the remainder of what Kaiser believed to be \$300 million. Kaiser's \$28.8 million was certainly not a substantial amount when compared with the sum the Ghanaian government was investing. Additionally, Kaiser's own engineering imprint would assist in building the hydroelectric dam, fully funded by the Ghanaian government (*New York Times* 19.11.1961). This is the stark reality of the VRP. Kaiser contributed a pittance to receive unfettered access to cheap hydroelectric power. The company's financial statements from 1961 through 1965, the year when the project was completed, reveal a company that was rapidly growing (see Kaiser Industries Corporation Annual Reports, 1961-1965). The creation of the Volta Aluminum Company (VALCO) was certainly not the only reason, but it is indicative of a company not in need of the type of assistance which the Ghanaian government provided.<sup>4</sup> Nor does it indicate this was a company looking to dole out benefices to needy states. So how did they resolve this conundrum and sell the project to their audience? Nkrumah was

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<sup>4</sup> The Volta Aluminum Company was created as joint company between Kaiser and Reynolds, with Kaiser retaining the majority of the shares and voting power.

already sold on the vision presented by Kaiser as he viewed it to be the best chance to get an American company involved and he was also personally fond of Chad Calhoun (PRAAD: RG 17/1/46). However there were other influential actors, such as members of the US government. Certainly, a collaborative effort was required on the part of Kaiser and Nkrumah.

### **5. Kaiser and Nkrumah's collaborative efforts**

By 1960, Ghana was a full-fledged republic, having shrugged off the last vestiges of outward colonial rule. The deal struck between Kaiser and Ghana was therefore between an MNC and a supposedly wholly independent and sovereign state: yet the assistance of the US, another quasi-imperial state, had been necessary to accomplish this feat. Among the many concessions Kaiser managed to wrangle for itself, its shareholders were exempt from paying any taxes on dividends accrued from the VALCO project as well as an exemption on export and import duties for the company. These were frozen in place, in accordance with the deal, for thirty or fifty years after the start of production (Obeng, 1983). VALCO was granted a fixed wattage rate for power at 2.625 US mills (ibid: 5). According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), the average mills for industrial use by the time the deal was negotiated in 1961 was 5.8, compared with the 12.8 for commercial usage (US Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Review, 2016). Observing the average rates for at least thirty years, as per the EIA report, the closest VALCO would ever come to paying nominal US rates was in 1970, when US averages slipped to 4.1 US mills (ibid). This helps to explain in part why Kaiser chose to enter into this venture, but it does not speak to what it did behind the scenes to ensure the success of maintaining the deal.

Nkrumah returned to the US in 1962 for another state visit. Once Kaiser decided it would become fully invested in the VRP, it had been working furiously behind the scenes. This appears logical and common sense but a closer look reveals it still contravenes the received wisdom of those days: Communist-backed areas were generally hostile to capitalism. As Nkrumah became increasingly unpredictable, journalist Drew Pearson, who had been an original booster of the plan, began to write more critically about the project. Pearson went from calling Nkrumah, "West Africa's most influential leader," to suggesting "an easy way to spank" him (*Los Angeles Times* 10.2.1964; *The Washington Post*, 22.1.1966). How did Kaiser end up in this predicament? The company had been carefully trying to manage the public image of the endeavor as early as 1960, when it succeeded

in getting its own men installed as Nkrumah's public relations contact for the project (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). Throughout the first phase of the project, Kaiser actively monitored press coverage, both positive and negative (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16).

Kaiser concentrated as much energy on the press as it did on the political sphere. The company was aware of the mounting political pressure even before the project was underway. Several political figures, such as US Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee were known to oppose American involvement with a country that had leftist tendencies, as they feared was true of Ghana (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). The deal, which had the potential to bind America closer to the West African state, was coming apart because of political reticence. At times Kaiser gave the impression it knew more about Ghana than US political leaders, even if that were not the case.<sup>5</sup> Kaiser worried that a lucrative business opportunity would be squandered by naïve political labels, such as "communists," "leftists," "rabble-rouser," etc. The company, in this case, was driven by its desire to increase profit margins. This impasse between US political desire and Kaiser's goals contravenes the image, carefully cultivated and maintained by Kaiser throughout its history, of the all-American company always serving faithfully. Yet this is not conclusive enough to prove how committed Kaiser was to its bottom-line rather than blind adherence to patriotism.

Kaiser's monitoring of the press did not stamp out the negative press but it is indicative of the company's concern about the situation. One internal office memo showcases the depths of its worries, as it fretted over the translation of one news article. The author of the memo, Roger M. Denney, wrote: "What would be desirable would be to obtain the original NEUE ZURICHER ZEITUNG [*sic*] text," for further corroboration (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 14). This was in regards to positive press no less! This control of messaging went all the way to the top of the corporation: Edgar maintained final approval on the company's public messaging (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). While Nkrumah was publicly and loudly trumpeting the oncoming project, Kaiser had to remain measured in its approach so as not to box itself into an untenable position (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). Evidence such as this can be viewed in multiple ways. First, the company wanted to present the best possible image of itself to the public. Second, the company wanted as

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<sup>5</sup> Nothing underscores this more than the nickname the American consulate staff bestowed upon Chad Calhoun of "second Ambassador." James B. Engle, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, VA, [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org).

much control over the ongoing situation as possible. Third, it also displayed the company's concern about the overall project.

The interesting components of the proposed Kaiser press release were how the entire project was framed. If the statement had been released, it would have attributed the following to Edgar Kaiser:

We in the Kaiser Organization have been fully aware of the importance of the project to Ghana, the United States and the other nations of the Free World. From this undertaking we have gained an appreciation of what is common and what it is dissimilar in Ghana's present position in the world compared to that of the United States. Recognition of these similarities and differences, and painstaking appraisals of them, have influenced our decision to go forward there (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16).

The references to the "Free World" were direct insertions from CEO Edgar Kaiser, who had made the speech-writers substitute that phrase instead of references to Russia (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). Edgar was cognizant of the press coverage the project received from esteemed newspapers both in the US and the UK such as the *London Observer* and the *New York Times* and therefore the need for control over the narrative (Ibid., 1-2). There was also another fascinating addition to the press release: the purported partnership between Kaiser and the Ghanaian nation.

The project was patently an international affair, but time and again the writer of the press release stressed the primary partnership was the one between Kaiser and Ghana (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). References to the American political element did not go further than mentioning President Kennedy's authorization of Ghana's requested aid. The authors conscientiously pressed the enhancing aspects of this project, exhorting its intended audience to view the company as missionaries of democracy, delivering the gospel of economic development. In the corners of the release, there was a passing mention of Kaiser Stockholders, but they were certainly not the intended audience for this homily. This was a sermon targeting the rest of the world, as the company's annual report used different language to express its views on these matters. The unsung hosannas and hallelujahs Kaiser expected cannot be ignored viewing all the various drafts and inputs from the company executives. The company was not doing this out of the goodness of its heart and this was not a work of pity: it was a calculated measure to extract the most possible revenue for the barely mentioned stockholders.

## **6. Ghanaian political perspectives**

If there was an arena in which the dam should have received near universal applause, one would presume it would have been within the Ghanaian political community. Yet like most other segments to whom the idea had to be sold, there was a fractured conceptualization of the dam. By 1958, Nkrumah had a steady grip on the Ghanaian legislature, as his ruling CPP, had an overwhelming majority in parliament (Austin, 1964). Nkrumah was well aware as early as 1956 how Kaiser ran its operation thanks to Norman Manley, the Jamaican Chief Minister, whose country had an existing relationship with Kaiser (PRAAD: RG 17/1/46). Thus he operated on a level of knowledge that kept him apprised of all facets and possibilities from the ensuing venture. This was not information he shared liberally, as can be gathered from the later complaints of members of the Nkrumah government. Bauxite, what Nkrumah believed would be the secret draw for Kaiser, was relatively cheap to export in this period. The colonial governments had generally given favorable concessions to companies, such as Kaiser, contracts that were supposed to last well into the 1970s. Nkrumah therefore knew he was bound to be in a difficult bargaining position and would be unable to promote the sale of bauxite as the primary purpose of the venture. As Manley warned, the fact that “so many colonial countries have virtually given away their bauxite makes it difficult for a country like ours [Jamaica] to demand a fair share of the exploitation of an asset which will ultimately disappear” (ibid).

Manley’s note to Nkrumah exposes the position Nkrumah had boxed himself into by the time he began his negotiations with Kaiser in earnest. In order for Ghana to gain the most from this deal, the bauxite had to be manufactured and processed locally, to guarantee a high rate of return than which most colonial nations anticipated or received (PRAAD: RG 17/1/46). Furthermore, Nkrumah had to at least give the semblance of diversifying the risks by gaining more international partners for the project, which he did with the World Bank (PRAAD: RG 17/1/5G). He also had to show that there was a thorough and competitive process for bidding on the VRP and that Ghana was not going to be taken advantage of by these foreign concerns (PRAAD: RG 17/1/5G). Nkrumah relied primarily on three actors during this time: Commander Robert G.A. Jackson, the Australian colonial official who remained to serve in the independent Ghana, Komla Gbedemah the finance minister, and Arthur Lewis, the economic advisor (PRAAD: RG 17/1/5G). Outside of this tiny cabal, detailed information was rarely allowed to other ministers or party functionaries. Nkrumah could not allow additional voices to weigh in, as he was singularly focused on obtaining a willing partner for the VRP.

## **7. International agencies**

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the financing arm of the World Bank throughout the 1950s, engaged in several high profile construction projects in the developing world. Many American firms coincidentally were the beneficiaries of the majority these projects. For example, the Bank was financing a reconstruction project in India for \$75 million. The contractor for that particular project was the Henry J. Kaiser Company, the preceding name would have presented little concern for the Kaiser Industries (*New York Times* 22.6.1956). These massive amounts of money were underwritten by highly industrialized nations, especially the US. As such, it was not strange to see the Bank either refuse to service a loan application or for a loan request to be left in an undetermined status for as long as possible. The Bank would be sure to cite its valid concerns as to why a loan may have been denied or delayed. In the case of Ghana, it bears reminding of the country's political orientation at the time of the initial request would have presented for the Western-supported Bank.

Ghana had been in negotiations with the Bank as early as 1958 yet there was little overt progress. In a speech given to the United Nations' (UN) Economic and Social Council, Bank President Eugene R. Black stated the following:

The problems of African economic development, like those of other areas, must be attacked from both directions simultaneously: from below, at the level of the individual, whose lot may be immediately improved in some small measure, and from above, through basic development projects of some magnitude, whose benefits will ultimately be widely felt throughout the whole economy. One purpose for which the Bank was established was to encourage private investment in development financing, and the Bank consistently keeps this objective in view in all its operations.<sup>6</sup>

On the surface those two sentiments encapsulated the Bank's position on the entire project. Yet a close inspection of President Black's own personal sentiments on economic development in the "underdeveloped world" reveals he thought it an "idea ... too hazardous to merit serious consideration." However, it was already in existence by the time he arrived at the Bank.<sup>6</sup> Black was sympathetic to the plight of the developing world because of how he assessed

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene R. Black, Address by Eugene R. Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development before the 29th Sessions of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, meeting at U.N. Headquarters, New York City, April 7, 1960: 4,7, [Records of President Eugene R Black - 1960 Speeches - Speeches 02 Folder ID: 1769196, WBGA].



forced encounters, i.e., colonialism, had disrupted many societies' historical trajectories.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of 1960, Ghana eventually obtained the loan from the Bank (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 13). The financing was in place for the \$196 million project, with the Bank facilitating Ghana obtaining 45% of the loan (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16). In 1959, Kaiser had already created a company (VALCO) to extract and exploit the aluminum. The creation of VALCO had many critics. *Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly* called the entire venture a "Monument to folly," as it did not think the project was viable for the Ghanaian people, nor did it make business sense for Kaiser (*Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly*, May 08, 1961: 1). The *Washington Post's* Carroll Kirkpatrick questioned American involvement in a project with "a country whose commitment to Western or democratic ideals is highly doubtful" (*Washington Post* 1.1.1961). Nkrumah's own economic advisor, Arthur Lewis, was dubious of the financial benefits of the project, as he felt the VALCO agreement was far too charitable to Kaiser (Tignor, 2006: 176-178). Was Ghana an unworthy partner? Was Kaiser's VALCO deal too favorable to the conglomerate? Inevitably the answers to both these questions are dependent on the inquisitor's perspective. So then how was the Bank swayed? It all came down to the presentation and how the Bank envisioned the idea.

The 1960s saw the beginning of global economic dialogue, coupled with the end of overt colonial rule. Groups such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD), originally known as the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC). The dialogues these entities engaged in required substantive results (PRAAD: RG 6/3/2). These groups' motives were never clear, as evinced by their membership structure. For example, as the OECD expanded, it never approached nor sought to incorporate any developing nation as a full participatory member (PRAAD: RG 6/3/2). Its aims, whilst global, ultimately was more beneficial to its member states than the occasional participating states, such as Ghana. Therefore it is not shocking to review the OECD's Development Assistance Group's argument that "the terms and

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This is not to accuse President Black of being wholly unresponsive to the idea of economic development. Black in this speech, given at The Cyril Foster Lecture at Oxford University (a series meant to promote world peace,) expounded further by discussing the difficulties of robust economic development whereby so many varied interests were at play it would be almost impossible to satisfy all desires. Age of Economic Development, Oxford University, Oxford, March 3, 1960: 4, [Records of President Eugene R Black - 1960 Speeches - Speeches 02 Folder ID: 1769196, WBGA].

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 5-8.

conditions which development finance is provided are very important indeed, the OBJECT [sic] to which the financing is channeled is even more important” (PRAAD: RG 6/3/2). Ostensibly this appears rational and objectively helpful to nations in need of development but that had not attained comparable levels of industrialization as the industrialized states. However, the highly industrialized countries guaranteed many of these loans, and their industries were the ones that benefitted (PRAAD: RG 6/3/2). The DAG, the IBRD, and the OECD therefore did not need much in the way of persuading from Kaiser as to the viability of the VRP; such programs fit their intrinsic agenda.

## **8. Conclusion**

Kaiser’s moment as an emissary of Western democracy reveals a fundamentally skewed reality. This reality was that of conflicted interests (Ghanaian political leaders looking to industrialize, Kaiser looking for cheap resources, and the US government looking to prevent the spread of communism), masked as shared interests. There was of course the overt shared interest of “development,” but what exactly did that word mean? The importance of this moment is not that a company manipulated perception rather it is that very little thought seems to have actually gone into defining what development meant and the totality of the consequences resulting from this project. This can be blamed on the ineptitude of the political leaders: so then where do the voices of average Ghanaians appear in this story? Ghanaian citizens were a pivotal constituency. Ghanaian politicians had to cajole and sell the overall project to the ordinary Ghanaian citizenry. Thus Kaiser, as well Nkrumah, had to carefully craft and repurpose a message to this audience. How did they react? What was their understanding of the VRP? Was the VRP important to them? Were the opposition parties ever able to formulate a coherent agenda or did Kaiser and Nkrumah catch them completely flat-footed? Did Kaiser and Nkrumah take them into their consideration when creating their messaging or were they an insignificant factor? Why would Nkrumah accept a deal that even his own economic advisor assessed to be bad? These questions at once result in unsatisfying answers. The simplest answer, however is that, the Ghanaian political landscape by the 1960s was under the complete sway of Nkrumah that there would have been little opposition, if any to his agenda.

Kaiser’s involvement in the VRP was motivated by self-interest, made possible by the desperation of the Ghanaian government, as well as the Cold War’s influence on global politics. The problem that constantly bedeviled this venture was the matter of perception and cultivating the appropriate responses

from various audiences. American interest in quashing the advancement of the Soviets meant the American political class was willing to allow commercial interests, such as those of Kaiser, take advantage of the economic imbalance of the post-WWII era. Kaiser, when necessary, could drape itself in the vestments of priests of democracy, all the while wearing their mercenary armor underneath. Kaiser executive R. L. Davis sent the following telegram to his fellow executives, with tensions rising between the US and the Ghanaian governments, as the latter sought US aid:

Neither Washington nor London want to give the appearance of backing Nkrumah by promising help on the Volta Project. If he is toppled from power, relations with a new government might then be cool, if on the other hand, Nkrumah comes out on top, little would be lost by a further delay (BANC MSS 85/61c. cartoon 200, folder 16).

The previous quote appears to be taken out of context as it was not written by Edgar Kaiser or Calhoun, but it reveals the deeper thinking and interests of those who shaped the direction of the company. The company was not enthusiastic about bringing hydroelectricity to Ghana and even ensured that the amount of the dam's power output was lowered, so as not to affect aluminum smelting operations. This was the reality of their interests, despite the pious and pleasing words they proffered. It is likely that another company would have taken Nkrumah up on his offer, probably reaping a similar reward as Kaiser.

Dam construction finished in 1965, two years before its expected completion. It served as Nkrumah's last great achievement before he was toppled from power. Kaiser, all the while, was aware that their business partner, Nkrumah, had numerous dealings with the Soviet Union and had steadily become antagonistic towards the West. Their rhetoric of spreading democracy dissipated as they quietly and quickly went about the business of exploiting the powerful hydroelectric dam. The priests of democracy became merchants once again, as their profit margins steadily increased throughout the rest of the decade. Few journalists bothered to question Kaiser in the months before Nkrumah's demise. Fortuitously for Kaiser's supporters in the US government, the Nkrumah government was toppled in a coup, to be replaced by a more pro-Western military dictatorship. Content with their deal, Kaiser Executives stayed out of Ghanaian politics. They would only exercise their influence if, and when, external forces threatened their interests. Out of all parties involved, only Kaiser was happy with the results of the relationship as they reaped the rewards of having controlled and directed the narrative.

## **Biographical Notes**

**Osei Boakye**, a fourth year doctoral history candidate at Stanford University, is interested in aid, debt, development, and political economics, as well as international financial institutions and the role they play in each of these areas. He has presented at numerous conferences, including the African Studies Association on topics dealing with political economic history. His dissertation is focused on the economic history of Ghana, 1946-1976, looking at the relationship between decolonization and the role it played in influencing/shaping the economic status of the state.

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