Empire in Decline

Framing of the Gold Coast Decolonisation Process by the British Print Press between 1948 and 1956

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Introduction

The decolonisation processes of the twentieth century forced the previously mighty colonial empires to redefine their national identities in relation to the outside world (Leerssen 237). It is especially fascinating to study how the Britons, once taking pride of "the greatest empire the world has ever seen", came to terms with their diminished position in international affairs (Cannadine xxi). This thesis examines how the British perceived the loss of their colonial possessions in Africa, by using the rapid decolonisation process of the Gold Coast colony as a case study.

The urgent need of social reform and reconstruction at home, as well as increasing international and colonial pressures for decolonisation, were a generally acknowledged fact in Great Britain by the end of the Second World War. This translated to the acceptance of gradual granting of self-government to the remaining colonies (Von Albini xxi). However, answers to the questions of how to retreat, and what precisely was meant by self-government for colonies, divided contemporary opinions. Still today scholars debate on the motivations and aims of the British colonial policy-making during the post-war period. The most sceptical scholars argue that decolonisation was an unintended consequence of reforming policies that failed, whereas others claim that the British withdrawal was deliberate, and implemented due to increasing anti-colonial sentiments at home. Those who stress the importance of changing British public attitudes between 1940s and 1950s, debate whether they occurred due to pragmatic economic considerations, or moral self-reflections tied to social democratic values.

Especially research conducted after 1980s, when many new colonial archive sources from 1950s and 1960s opened up for research purposes, focuses on imperial policy from the metropolitan point of view (Stockwell 790). A praised example is research conducted by Frank Heinlein, who shifts the scholarly focus from examining the British post-war colonial policies to the 'official mind', "the basic ideas, perceptions and expectations of policy-makers" regarding the post-war

decisions on colonial affairs (6). Heinlein is successful in mapping the thought patterns of the British state and policy makers, but does not attempt to answer the wider question of how the British general public perceived the decolonisation processes (Murphy, review 154).

Inspired by Heinlein's perspective of the 'official' opinions, this thesis intends to form a similar account on the feelings and perceptions of the general British public. The concept of 'public opinion' is fuzzy and its research challenging, yet it is a crucial element for historians in understanding social change (Donsbach and Traugott 2). As Kann writes, the investigation and evaluation of the character of public opinion represents one of the most crucial tasks of the historian, meaning that albeit difficult, researching public opinion undoubtedly contributes to the formation of a more comprehensive account on the British public decolonisation discourse (374).

In order to research the opinions of the general British public, the thesis briefly examines the existing research regarding British public opinions on African decolonisation developments, and on the subsequent British policy reactions to these developments. These views are then combined with a historical newspaper content analysis. As Boyce notes, the connection between the press and the public opinion is a complex one, and media represent published rather than public opinion. However, the study of the means of political communication provides valuable information on how specific issues were identified, defined and treated within the public discourse at a specific time. To research the abstract notion of public opinion, the best thing to do is not even try to define it, but instead to consider the variety of ways in which it manifests itself (Boyce 218-221). Thus, as Vella states, a critical reading of historical newspapers may lead to significant insight into how societies came to understand themselves and the world around them (192).

For these reasons, the thesis focuses on one of the varieties of public opinion: the print press. By mapping the British 'published opinion' towards African decolonisation, as well as possible changes of these opinions, the thesis aims to produce new insights about the cultural history of the British decolonisation. In his study of the 'official mind', Heinlein reconstructs

concepts, instead of statistics or events, by analysing an impressive array of archived political texts such as speeches, minutes, and reports. This research studies newspapers in a similar manner, with the help of an analytical framework provided by Stephen Vella. Vella's framework covers a broad category of newspaper investigation, but due to the limited scope of this research, instead of studying the newspapers' social and textual context, this thesis focuses on the content analysis of the newspaper text itself (198). A detailed explanation on the method used is provided in chapter two.

The British post-war decisions regarding sub-Saharan Africa are a particularly compelling focus of research, as the black Africans were perceived as the most backward of all, and therefore in need of western help for modernisation, yet simultaneously it became necessary to consider them sufficiently alike as to make the modernising efforts worthwhile (Nugent 10). This research focuses specifically on the Gold Coast colony, as its independence movement turned out to be a surprisingly powerful one; before the disturbances of 1948 the British did not foresee any of the African freedom movements, and yet it took less than ten years for Ghana to become the first sub-Saharan nation to gain independence from Britain. Furthermore, the Gold Coast movement had a substantial impact on what was left of the British Empire, as it pushed into motion the pan-Africanist freedom movement in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (Albertini 222). Thus, the paper aims to provide an answer to the research question of *How did the framing of the Gold Coast decolonisation process by the British print press develop during the Gold Coast independence movement, between 1948 and 1956?*

The paper starts with an overview of the British post-war political views towards African decolonisation, and the corresponding policies implemented in the colonies. Additionally, the Gold Coast decolonisation process will be introduced in brief. Afterwards the paper turns to study the published opinion, by analysing British newspapers' framing of the process. Three crucial moments of the Gold Coast developments, and the ways in which the newspapers reacted to these moments,

will be examined. The goal is to track down the assumed developments on the ways in which the Britons perceived the Gold Coast independence movement, and the consequent British policy reactions to it. The moments will be analysed in the following order: firstly, the Accra riots of 1948 followed by Britain's declaration of state of emergency, breaking the seemingly calm status quo of colonisers and colonised; secondly, the decision to release the independence movement leader Kwame Nkrumah from Prison in 1951, a moment which finalised Britons' realisation that the change was inevitable; and thirdly, the Gold Coast legislative elections of 1956, leading to the formal independence of the republic of Ghana. The paper concludes by summarising the found developments in the newspaper framing, and analyses what they reveal about the ways in which the British dealt with the decline of their Empire.

Chapter 1: Historical background

1.1 British political opinion towards African decolonisation

During the Second World War the British government still believed in 'mission', and saw 'development' as its colonial policy objective. Especially the traditional conservative stream supported the economic 'viability' as a necessary condition for self-government (Goldsworthy 380). But not everyone took interest in colonial affairs, as still in 1945 the majority of British politicians regarded the colonies with indifference or ignorance. They saw it "as a durable but peripheral fact of political life" (Goldsworthy 2). Domestic issues such as unemployment and social welfare were much higher on the political agenda than the defence of empirical borders or repression of colonial nationalists (Crook 79).

However, the political debate on colonial affairs increased noticeable after the war, as during late 1940s and 1950s the British policy-makers were forced to reflect more on their Empire and its usefulness for them. The Conservatives had a practical point of view, and became ready to abandon the paternal practice of modernising theory by the end of 1950s, simply for the pragmatic

reason that reforming the colonies did not make economic sense anymore (Crook 80). Barnett argues that on the Left the attitudes had started to change already during the late 19th century, when a 'moral revolution' changed people's perceptions on the Empire, from opportunism to something of a moral burden. Thornton thinks that the leftist dislike for the empire developed more subtly, as a by-product of the shifting class structures at home. Early 20th century socialism empowered the working class and generated new ideals of social democracy and the welfare state – which were inherently incompatible with colonial-style oppression (Darwin 13-15).

The more sceptical scholars disagree with these views and claim that there were no considerable changes of attitudes (Gallagher 152-153). They argue that decolonisation was never the main objective of the policies, but rather an unintentional outcome of the modernising reforms that failed (Crook 80). Heinlein draws from this view, and argues that in most cases the principal reason for the decision to grant independence was Britain's habit of considering the goodwill of local nationalists as the best guarantee for its own interests. In other words, the British tactic was to stay one step ahead of nationalist demands, as it was considered to be the best chance for maximising British influence on the colonies, once independence would be granted (2). Therefore Heinlein claims that the British policy-makers' perception of colonies as underdeveloped and in need of aid did not change. What caused changes of attitudes was the increasing international anti-colonial pressure, which made the policy-makers realise that keeping the colonies was no longer beneficial for Britain's prestige (296).

In sum, during late 1940s and 1950s British political interests on the Empire increased, and colonial policy-making "moved from general bi-partisan accord to one of the more controversial topics" (Goldsworthy 2). Whether due to economic or moral considerations, or the fact that colonialism had become less acceptable in international arenas, most scholars agree that the British political attitudes towards colonisation had by late 1950s hardened considerably, and consequently

the idealism of exporting western-style development via modernisation had become to be seen as naively optimistic by most contemporaries (Crook 79).

1.2 British post-war policies towards African territories

The events taking place in India during the 1940s, leading to the independence of the brightest jewel of the British Empire, forced Britain to realise that the days of the old-style colonialism were over (Rothermund 67). Yet this realisation did not change the confidence of the Colonial Office about Britain's ability to regulate the pace of the change elsewhere, namely in the Middle East and Africa, to where the centre of imperial attention moved next (Thomas et al 62). Attlee's new Labour government, taking office in July 1945, was determined to maintain Britain's position as a global power. Somewhat ironically, Britain's severe financial problems and international pressure for decolonisation reminded the new government of the economic and strategic worth of the Empire (Thomas et al 47).

As the more sceptical scholars argue, the immediate post-war British policies in Africa were not necessarily aiming at true independence, but rather at finding new collaborative elites who would accept new form of association with Britain, in order to informally preserve the colonial-metropolitan ties beyond the formal independence. Even if the ultimate goal of such new form of association was a democratic self-government, to which power could safely be transferred, the British government assumed this would happen within the Commonwealth framework, and only after what was expected to be a lengthy process of political, economic and social reforming. There was a growing reluctance to maintain colonialism by force, yet there was no desire to grant independence to communities not 'ready' for it. The fear was that too early transformation of power would produce power vacuums, which less pro-British nationalist groups, with dangerous communist ideologies, would try to fill (Thomas et al 57-59).

It was understood that the previous ‘indirect rule’, forming alliances with the local African chiefs, did not anymore serve Britain’s interests. The chiefs, whose loyalty had been vital for maintaining the Empire so far, were no longer the ideal collaborators, and not only because of the democratic ethos of the war period, but because the aim of colonisation was not simply to preserve British authority anymore. Instead, including educated middle class in domestic governmental affairs was now needed, because wider African support was required to implement economic reforms (Thomas et al. 62). However, as Pearce points out, these elites were not the most ideal collaboration partners either because their loyalty for Britain was certainly not a given. Thus the plan that the educated elite would become legitimate successors to the British, rested on the somewhat over-optimistic assumption that after forming parties and having attracted mass-support in co-operation with the British authorities, the elite would be convinced that collaboration with Britain would be beneficial to them also in the future (93).

In other words, in addition to trying to offset the appeal of radical leftism by raising African living standards, the reforms were also meant to benefit Britain financially, and to guarantee the continuation of the ‘informal empire’. From retrospect it can be argued that the British immediate post-war colonial policies in Africa, sometimes referred to as the ‘second colonial occupation’, were controversial to say at least, as they were produced mainly Britain’s own strategic interests in mind (Thomas et al. 62-63). Furthermore, as Lynn reminds, it is important not to perceive British policies in linear terms, as the post-war Britain’s successive governments - firstly the Labour and then the Conservative government from 1951 onwards - certainly did not have a coherent policy approach on decolonisation, or consensus on how to adjust to the changes in Britain’s external relationships (1-2).

However, the underlying paternalistic assumption, that African population would be content with management of their own internal affairs and happy with the informal continuation of the Empire, was soon proven to be overly optimistic (Thomas et al. 62-63). This became clear fist in

the Gold Coast colony, where popular unrests of 1948, triggered by widespread discontent on economic problems and unfilled government pledges, lead to a series of events taking Britain by surprise and forcing it to end its Gold Coast colonial presence in haste.

1.3 Decolonisation process of the Gold Coast colony

Mainly due to its cocoa production, The Gold Coast was one of Britain's most wealth-generating African colonies. In accordance to the realisation that new imperial management was needed to enhance economic activity, the post-war colonial policy plan was that a new educated pro-British middle class would gradually take over the governance of national affairs from the chieftaincy (Thomas 250). This was why in 1946 Attlee's government approved a new Gold Coast constitution, which was meant to create a more centralised and integrated state. The idea was to convince the urban population of the coast that it was in their own interest to participate in new central institutions and to organise politically, in order to be able to defend their interests against the traditional elites of the inner parts of the country. So when a small coastal elite group, who had received a western education, established the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) party in 1947, the British were suspicious yet allowed them to do so, as the party seemed to want to advance along the political guidelines set by Britain, rather than to stop the colonial rule entirely (Thomas et al 64).

However, the plans for lengthy and peaceful transformation of governance were disturbed by wide popular dissent due to multiple social and economic problems facing the colony. A grave problem was an outbreak of swollen shoot disease, greatly affecting the cocoa production and especially the rural people whose livelihood depended on it. The cocoa crisis collided with other economic difficulties such as shortages of key imports, inflation and unemployment among the coastal city youth as well as demobilised soldiers (Thomas et al 64). On 28 February 1948, ex-servicemen union members organised a demonstration in Accra, to present a petition to the Colonial

Office demanding fulfilment of pledges to support the demobilised soldiers. Unexpectedly the peaceful veteran gathering turned into a riot, as the city's young unemployed joined the march in great numbers. Violence erupted, and unprepared policemen resorted to gunfire, killing three and wounding several protestors. News of the event spread quickly and triggered riots in all over Accra, as well as in several other towns affected by the cocoa crisis (Thomas 253).

Even if the disturbances of 1948 were relatively small-scale, compared to for example unrests of the French Indochina, they were significant due to the disproportionate state response they provoked. Colonial officials declared a state of emergency, and took leaders of the UGCC in custody, as they were firstly assuming a communist plot. However, after intensified police intelligence gathering, the officials came into the conclusion that the riots were driven by popular discontent with the economic and social situation of the country, rather than communist or anticolonial sentiments per se (Thomas et al 65).

The British were even more worried about the intentions of the radical Convention of People's Party (CPP), which attracted the same frustrated urban youths who had been protesting in Accra. The CPP was founded in June 1949 by Kwame Nkrumah, a young educated nationalist, who had left the more conservative UGCC. Before the general elections of 1951, Nkrumah was sentenced for prison for urging people to the so-called 'positive action', a campaign encouraging general civil disobedience demanding for true independence. However, his nationalist ideology was such a powerful one - appealing not just to the young unemployed, but also to the urbanised society at large, especially to the trade unions - that the CPP won the election with an overwhelming majority. The Colonial Office had no choice but to play according to its own democratic rules and to accept the election result, which also required releasing Nkrumah from prison, and appointing him as the 'Leader of Government Business'. The Colonial Office released him also because cooperation with the newly empowered CPP seemed in this new situation as the best chance to avoid using force, and to stay in at least nominal control of the speeding up decolonisation process

(Rothermund 132-133).

The self-conscious modern CPP also won the following elections of 1954 and 1956, but was simultaneously vigorously contested. Both the Muslim population of the Northern territories, as well as the traditional Ashanti region with chieftaincy rule, were strongly against CPP's plans to dismantle the traditional chieftaincy structures and to concentrate power to the central government. In 1954 the National Liberation Movement Party (NLM), representing the rural population of the hinterlands and demanding a federalist state, was founded to oppose the CPP (Rothermund 133-134). But since the CPP kept winning the elections, the British Colonial Office saw the modern CPP as a more legitimate cooperation partner compared to the rural NLM, which is why it allowed a governmental shift in two levels: firstly, a gradual relaxation of tensions of colonial control via short Indian-style joint-rule, before the actual introduction of self-government, preceding the formal independence of Ghana in 1957; and secondly, the dismantling of the traditional chieftaincy structures, which in practice meant drastic change for the ways in which people in the countryside lived their lives (Thomas et al 254-255).

Considering this disunited state of the country, it did not come as a surprise that once he became the Prime Minister of the newly independence Ghana, Nkrumah turned the country into a one-party state and became "an autocrat who lost touch with the people" (Rothermund 132). It is remarkable that the British, who had feared of loosing their Empire for so long, in the end allowed the transfer of power to the CPP without greater resistance, and within a relatively short period of time. Therefore it is fascinating to study how the British public attitudes towards decolonisation developed during the rapidly evolving Gold Coast independence movement.

Chapter 2: Conceptual approach

2.1 Print press as a reflection of public opinion

Considering the political opinions towards African decolonisation described previously, this thesis attempts to complete the picture by researching the opinions of the general British public. As mentioned, the concept of public opinion is an elusive one, and includes numerous varieties. Thus this thesis examines only one of these varieties, the 'published opinion', as Boyce calls it (218).

While studying decolonisation, researching the published opinion is a suitable approach, as the public opinion on colonialism was greatly influence by media. Media made the empires more coherent by improving the communication between the colonisers and the colonised, and provided forums for governments to convince their populations on the rightfulness of their colonial policies (Page and Sonnenburg 379). Many historians have highlighted the role of the press in constructing national identities, a prime example being Anderson's 'imagined communities', stressing the role of the press in encouraging individuals to 'imagine' themselves as a part of a national community (Potter 11). Mackenzie's famous study concludes that the British popular media played a crucial role in producing pro-imperial propaganda also during the post-colonial era. As economic exploitation ceased to be respectable after the war, the style of propaganda changed respectively; from aiming to justify the colonies' economic worth, to supporting their liberal constitutional advance. The British support for the constitutional developments was portrayed as strengthening the moral purpose of the Empire. This served to justify the need to maintain the British influence over the colonies beyond formal independence (Mackenzie 256-257).

It is important to state that not everyone perceived the published opinion in a similar manner, but there were different types of audiences: those with emotional, ignorant and prejudiced points of view, as well as those with highly intelligent, informed, and thoughtful opinions. Boyce links public opinion to political consciousness and divides these different audience groups in three classes: those who *make* opinions, such as highly educated class of journalists and politicians; those

who *form* them, who are not so highly educated yet take interest in politics and form well-informed opinions; and lastly, those who are ignorant or indifferent about politics, and simply *adopt* the prevailing public opinions (Aziz 3-4). K.K. Aziz, who analyses British newspapers in his study of British public opinion about Muslim Nationalism in colonial India, justifies his choice of using newspapers as a source by stating that they "in a way, cut across all the three classes", as "they tell us a great deal, not only what section of the makers of public opinion thought and felt but also what the nation as a whole was thinking and feeling" (4). Therefore it can be assumed that studying contemporary British newspaper texts on decolonisation will reveal what different social classes thought on the matter.

It is important to note that newspapers have influenced society as much as they have reflected it, since they filter, frame and report news in a manner supportive of established power structures. Therefore the biggest challenge for a historian examining newspapers in order to learn about public opinion is to assess their consumption end, i.e. the ways in which contemporary readers absorbed, interpreted and judged what they were reading (Vella 192-193). Therefore using newspapers as a source should be done with caution, and their content analysis must be combined with other historical insights regarding the period of examination (Boyce 222). However, due to the limited scope of this research, the social and textual context of the analysed newspapers is not thoroughly covered here, but instead the main focus is on the content analysis. Additionally it must be noted that while researching such fluid notions as public or published opinions, concluding with generic statements is somewhat unavoidable (Boyce 227).

Overall, it can be stated that relying on the popular press in order to learn about public opinion is risky, yet the role of the press in opinion formation is noticeable, especially in the case of colonial discourse, and therefore worth researching. Hence this thesis studies popular British newspapers, aiming to produce new insights on the British public decolonisation discourse in the 1940s and 50s.

2.2 Methodology

To answer the research question this thesis makes use of the comparative method, by studying parallel articles of different British newspapers in the 1940s and 50s, and by comparing developments in the writings over time. Three publications - *The Times, Manchester Guardian,* and *Sunday Times* - were selected as a sample. They were selected as they are all representatives of the so called 'quality press', meaning that their writers and readers were both likely to belong to the opinion *making* class. Moreover, the views of the readers of these newspapers shaped the views of the other classes, which is why studying them is likely to produce information not just on the higher class opinions, but on the opinions of the British society as a whole (Aziz 10-11).

Furthermore, the selection covers different political stances. *The Times* is a daily newspaper characterised by its Conservative readers, many of which come from higher income groups and are well educated. It certainly influenced opinion *makers* and is therefore well suited for the purpose of this research. The *Manchester Guardian,* another daily newspaper, is more plural in political terms as its readership extends to all parties, yet can be defined as liberal. The *Sunday Times*, which is a weekly paper and despite its name not connected to *The Times*, attracts mainly the financially well off and holds more of a Right-wing point of view (Aziz 11-12).

Based on Vella's framework, in addition to the basic factual elements (type of text; author; place and date of publishing; sources used), a selection of following elements will be analysed for each text, in order to interpret the meanings it carries: author's tone, vocabulary, choice of metaphors or mode of address; denotation and contemporary connotation of the key terms used; usage of 'us' and 'them' dichotomies; the underlying assumptions of the expressed point of view; the emotions to which the text seems to appeal; the knowledge which the author assumes that the reader has; the positioning of the author against another point of view; the implied reader; other relevant information which is left out; and the ideological limits which the text does not cross, i.e. its doctrinal framework (Vella 199-200).

The comparative method of analysing the three newspapers in parallel will be applied to three crucial points of time in the Gold Coast decolonisation process, as described in the following three chapters respectively. Finally, after separately analysing the texts regarding each point of reference, an overall conclusion will examine the developments of opinions based on all three examined points in time.

Chapter 3: The Gold Coast disturbances

The first sub question asks *How did the British print press frame the Gold Coast disturbances, starting in February 1948 and leading to the declaration of 'state of emergency?* The findings of this section confirm that the disturbances came as a total surprise to the British, who were sincerely bewildered by the possible causes of these events. The newspapers aim to justify the heavy emergency measures taken by the British government. International communist aspirations are at first seen as the most logical explanation for the disorders.

This first analysis section covers one-month period, starting on 27 February 1948 – the date when the ex-servicemen demonstration started the riots, which rapidly turned into wave of disorders spreading throughout the country. Between 27 February and 27 March 1948, total of 36 writings were published in the newspapers included in this research, containing the keyword 'Gold Coast'. The writings analysed per newspaper are divided as following: *The Times* 14, *Manchester Guardian* 19, and *Sunday Times* 3.

3.1. Preventive measures against a communist plot

Most of the texts focus on the riots and their aftermath, most often referred to as 'disturbances', 'disorders', or 'troubles', implying that the situation was alarming and unexceptional. The texts seem to be targeted mainly at western audience, both to the British as well as to other Europeans. They assume that the reader possesses some pre-knowledge about the Gold

Coast colony, thus implying that the readers are interested in, and aware of, African parts of the Empire.

The ways in which the events are reported in different newspapers are rather similar. The tone of the texts is in most cases defensive, supporting the police action of resorting to gunfire, as well as the decisions of the current Gold Coast Governor Gerald Creasy to declare a state of emergency, to arrest six UGCC members and to set the Gold Coast press under supervision. The actions of the colonial authorities are depicted as rightful, and in interest of the Gold Coast as a whole, to safeguard the lives of both 'Europeans' as well as local 'Africans'. Terms such as 'preventive measures', 'pre-caution', and 'security measures' occur frequently. The texts stress the difficulty of the situation for Governor Creasy, and for the Colonial administration as a whole, to justify the harsh measures. For instance *The Times* reports that "the police made every peaceful effort to prevent them but force had to be resorted to" in order to stop the ex-servicemen procession ("The Disorders." 3). Overall, The tone of most of the texts is strongly defensive, supporting the emergency measures taken by the British authorities. This suggests that there was a need to conceal the underlying fear of illegitimacy of these actions.

Instances of criticism towards the Government action arise only in one citizen's letter to the *Manchester Guardian* editor, as well as in *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian* reports on the British House of Commons questioning hour. During the hour members of the House pose critical questions to Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The *Manchester Guardian* reports these questions in more detail compared to *The Times*, including accusations of colonial administration's misuse of power. One member of the House criticises the arrest of UGCC members without allowing them to apply for a writ of habeas corpus as a "complete denial of the rule of law and the liberty of the subjects" ("Gold Coast Arrests." 8). Creech Jones responds to this with the same defensive phrases used throughout the texts, saying that it was an "emergency", that

the Governor was “compelled” to act, and that “otherwise, certain consequences of very great danger to the colony would have followed” ("Gold Coast Arrests." 8).

The legitimacy of Government action is grounded with claims of ‘communist incitement’, which most of the texts explicitly assert as the ideology behind the disturbances and the UGCC. Even in cases when the authors state that ‘political implications’ of the events can only be known once the Commission of Inquiry has investigated the matter, a reader can sense the authors’ underlying pre-assumptions of communist connections. As the situation in the Gold Coast develops, also the economic reasons for the discontent are mentioned, yet the ‘communist plot’ explanation gathers most of the attention. There is only one instance of a writing clearly questioning this assumption, namely a West African citizen’s letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian,* worried about “European obsession with Communism”, and about reducing colonial issues to “mere pawns in the game of world politics” ("Demand for.” 5; Njoku 4).

The usage of ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomies is present throughout most of the texts, though somewhat more explicitly stated in the more conservative *The Times* and *Sunday Times*. The people taking part in the riots are referred to as ‘a mob of natives’, ‘looters’, or having ‘a very ugly temper’ and depicted as irrational. Overall, the people of the Gold Coast are referred to as ‘Africans’ or ‘Natives’, as a binary distinction for ‘Europeans’. However, there is also simultaneously the effort to build an imagined community, to which all of the peoples of the Empire belong. This comes across clearly at *The Times’* reporting of the ‘King’s message to the Gold Coast’, which is a reply to the local authorities’ messages, and includes expressions such as “His persons”, and “His people”, who are “very much in His thoughts” (“The King’s.” 3). Especially *The Times* emphasises the differences between the rioters and the native Chief authorities, which are praised for staying loyal to the British. This demonstrates the challenge with which the colonial powers at the time had to deal with: the ways in which to depict their colonial subjects. The newspapers helped the British to

frame their subjects increasingly as equals, yet still inferior enough to justify the need of continuing British control.

The underlying assumption in all of the texts is that British colonial rule is a benign power, and that the Gold Coast needs the British in order to regain order, since the colonial authorities are repeatedly reported to have the situation 'under-control' and 'well in hand'. Questioning of the Empire is unthinkable here; expressions such as 'self-government', let alone 'independence' are nowhere to be seen. For instance, Governor Creasy's decision to supervise the press in Accra is presented as if it such an action was a standard part of his jurisdiction ("Alleged Leader." 8). Only in *Manchester Guardian* appears an article which brings forth the demands for transfer of power, and for inquiry into the "Gold Coast massacres", though not presented as Gold Coast people's demands, but as those of students, "both white and coloured", demonstrating in London ("Gold Coast Riots: Students." 6).

The emotions to which the texts seem to appeal are paternalistic feelings of responsibility towards the lesser Africans. This holds true especially in the case of the four articles, which are the only ones containing the keywords 'Gold Coast', but not concerned with the riots or their subsequent events. Instead, they portray the morality and goodwill of the British, by discussing educational and health issues of the colonies. *The Times* presents findings of a report prepared by the Colonial Office and the National Institute for the Blind, which states that blind welfare organisations should be established throughout Africa, to enable "young blind natives to be educated and trained to lead active and happier lives" ("Blindness In." 3). In addition, one article deals with colonial cotton production, emphasising pragmatic economic considerations for the plans to increase colonial primary production "for the benefit of both of the colonies themselves and of this country" ("Cotton From." 3).

The similarities of reporting across different newspapers might not result from the newspapers' own political stances per se, but may as well occur due to the fact that the sources used

are in most cases the same British government officials. This proves that the press was used to provide governments with a forum to justify their colonial policies (Page and Sonnenburg 379). It is striking how many of the writings cite the same governmental speeches and publications, especially those of Governor Creasy, Secretary of State Jones and Under-Secretary of State Rees-Williams. What is largely missing is the African perspective on the narrative. *Manchester Guardian's* more liberal views are noticeable in this case, as they refer to a total of five African sources in their writings (as opposed to one of *The Times*, and none of the *Sunday Times*).

To conclude, the British newspapers of 1948 frame the Gold Coast disturbances as a grave emergency situation. Few instances of criticism towards British authorities do appear in the analysed texts, yet the dominant tone is defensive, expressing support for the counter-measures taken by the colonial administration. Despite stressing the need to wait for the official inquiry into the matter, most of the writings more or less explicitly hint to the 'communist plot' as an underlying cause for the disorders. The need to combat the spread of dangerous communist ideology justifies the harsh emergency measures. At this first stage of the analysis the necessity of the British rule is not questioned, and there are hardly any signs of the upcoming decolonisation. The press helps the British authorities to frame themselves as lawful colonial masters, whose presence in the colony must continue - for the benefit of both the British, as well as their inferior colonial subjects.

Chapter 4: Nkrumah's release and appointment as the 'Leader of Government Business'

The second sub question asks *How did the British print press frame the victory of the Convention of People's Party in the Legislative Assembly elections on 8 February 1951, which lead to Kwame Nkrumah's release from prison and appointment as the 'Leader of Government Business'?* The ways in which the newspapers frame the election results, and the British reactions to them, appear to be considerably different to the way in which they framed the disturbances of 1948. After winning the elections, partly the same men accused for communist agitation three years

ago, are now presented as viable cooperation partners for Britain. However, the riskiness of the 'experiment' to even partly transfer the power to African hands is simultaneously emphasised.

Again the analysis covers a one-month period, starting from the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly elections of 8 February 1951, and including the following events of Nkrumah's release from prison on 12 February, the request of the current Gold Coast Governor Arden-Clarke for Nkrumah to form the next government on 13 February, as well as Nkrumah's first Legislative Assembly meeting as the 'Leader of Government Business' on 20 February (Owusu-Ansah I – Ii). Between 8 February and 8 March 1951, total of 27 writings were published in the newspapers included in this research, containing the keyword 'Nkrumah'. The writings analysed per newspaper are divided as following: *The Times* 10, *Manchester Guardian* 16, and *Sunday Times* 1.

4. 1. Cooperation for the general good

The texts report the election results, and the unusual occasion of Nkrumah's release, and discuss the political implications of these events. The implied audience seems still to be mainly the British, who are assumed to be well informed about the recent nationalistic developments in the Gold Coast, which shows that colonial issues had by 1951 moved to the centre of British political agenda.

Like the writings of 1948, also these texts largely defend the British governmental approach to the Gold Coast affairs. A major difference compared to the framing of 1948 is that the newspapers move from defending government's decision to arrest UGCC members, to support government's new aim to cooperate with Nkrumah's victorious, even more radical CPP party. This change of policy is justified by claiming that a completely "new spirit shown by the exemplary behaviour of the people throughout the elections" has emerged in the Gold Coast, and that "the release of Nkrumah may set a seal on a new period of cooperation for the general good" ("Party Aims." 5). *Manchester Guardian* writes that "it may in turn ought to be a good thing that a popular

party, even a near-revolutionary one, should have won", because "just as nationalism has forced the pace towards the new constitution so victory for popular nationalism may force the pace towards national responsibility" ("Self-Government Party's." 7). Furthermore, a member of the House of Commons is reported to describe the situation as a happy event of "birth of new democracy" ("Commons Greet." 6).

Consequently, there is a need to depict Nkrumah and his party in a more favourable light, to justify his release and appointment as the leader of the new Assembly. This is visible in the use of binary dichotomies, which are now present considerably less compared to the texts of 1948. The *Manchester Guardian* now describes the CPP as "the best organised party in the country", and writes that "the elections were conducted in an orderly manner due to CPP action and its desire to maintain order" ("Self-Government Party's." 7; "Imprisoned Gold Coast." 6). The British government is reported to send goodwill messages and congratulation telegrams to the new 'partners' and 'coloured friends'. The way in which Nkrumah is depicted has changed radically; he is no longer member of a party agitating looters with an ugly temper, but a 'beloved leader' who is a 'friend of Britain'. Also the fact that most of the newly appointed African ministers have received a western education is highlighted repeatedly. It is even noted that "most of the CPP members had discarded their African robes" on the first Assembly session, to show that the British government has made a rational choice in allowing this partial transfer of power ("Gold Coast Cabinet." 7).

Despite the significant change in the ways in which the CPP and Nkrumah are framed, the texts simultaneously convey the British policy-makers' cautious attitudes towards the rapidly changing situation. The suggested communist connections are barely mentioned anymore, because that would not support the new plans for the gradual transfer of power. Instead the main worry now is that "authority is being transferred so rapidly into unproved hands" ("The Gold Coast Experiment." 7). The situation is titled as an 'experiment' and 'risky', because the underlying assumption is that the African members of the Assembly still need to prove their ability to govern,

and they are not by default fit for the job. The analysis of *Sunday Times* is the most sceptical one, warning that the CPP has to first "succeed in extricating themselves from the tangle of their election promises" after which "they will still have to learn how to govern, if they can" (Divine 5). *Manchester Guardian* also stresses the "the difficulty of giving political expression to the legitimate desire of dependent peoples to run their own affairs", and writes that the CPP and its supporters "want overnight what has been achieved elsewhere by generations of experiments" ("Kwame Nkrumah." 4).

The fact that many of the writings still refer to British officials' statements may again explain the overall tone supporting government action. However, compared to the previous time frame, now a broader selection of sources is used, and a more critical tone towards government action is allowed. An example is an extremely critical point of view presented by Dr Malan, Prime Minister of South-Africa, whose statements are reported in detail by both *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian*. He is criticising Britain for welcoming its former colonies to the Commonwealth community without consulting the other white Dominions, which according to him puts "white civilisation and leadership" in great danger ("Commonwealth in Peril." 5). He predicts that the "West African experiment would undoubtedly fail", because it is "a case where the good principle of democracy wrongly applied made itself ridiculous" ("Dr. Malan's Attack."6).

Compared to *The Times*, which stands clearly behind the Government action, *Manchester Guardian* more openly admits the awkwardness of the situation for the British officials, and the power CPP holds due to its considerable popular support. It fairly states that the Government will be "faced with several embarrassing situations, such as appointing an ex-convict as a Minister or the non-cooperation of the CPP with Government officials" ("Self-Government Party's." 7). Another article foresees that the colonial administration will be in a position of "some difficulty and great delicacy", as despite the fact that the emergency powers will stay under British control, "Mr Nkrumah and his friends hold in their hands more than the fate of representative government in

Gold Coast - what they do will determine the rate of progress towards self-government throughout the colonial empire" ("African Experiment." 4).

Despite these critical voices, the actions of British officials are still largely supported, and the underlying assumption is that they are still firmly in control of the events, and will remain so to the foreseeable future. The newspapers clearly aim to defend this view, by presenting Nkrumah's release as the Governor Arden-Clarke's 'act of grace' and stressing the 'goodwill' of Britain in allowing the new Assembly formation. While presenting the new ministers and the division of their portfolios, no newspapers writes about the backgrounds of the European Ministers, to whom the most important portfolios' are assigned, whereas the backgrounds of the African Cabinet members are thoroughly scrutinised. Instead, it is emphasised that despite his title as the 'Leader of Government Business', Nkrumah is a 'Minister without a portfolio' and that Governor Arden-Clarke will maintain his veto power over the Cabinet decisions ("Gold Coast Cabinet." 7).

As in the previous analysis, the texts seem to appeal to paternalistic emotions and feelings of superiority. Even if Nkrumah and his fellow party leaders are now depicted as rational, in order to justify their ministerial positions, the people of the Gold Coast are still seen as inferior and in need of help. The British are reported to be "'watching with the closest and most sympathetic interest" the events of the Gold Coast, and "helping them towards self-government" ("The Gold Coast Elections." 7; "Gold Coast Cabinet." 7). CPP's nationalist doctrine is judged as "a wholly social political phenomenon, without any economic doctrine or programme" and the people supporting it are referred to as a "'unthinking, unreasoning" mass ("The Gold Coast Elections." 4). They are "prisoners of an idea", labelled as "the emotional force of nationalism" (Divine 5; "The Gold Coast Elections." 4). Depicting the people as being easily persuaded by the CPP doctrine supports the idea that the newly introduced path to self-government must be lead by the British.

In sum, the ways the newspapers of 1951 frame the CPP's victory, and the following unexceptional circumstances requiring the appointment of a political ex-convict as the Assembly

leader, reflects the difficulty of the situation for the British decision makers. As *Manchester Guardian* writes after Nkrumah's release, "the abruptness of Mr Nkrumah's personal transition yesterday symbolises the difficulty of giving political expression to the legitimate desire of dependent peoples to run their own affairs" ("Kwame Nkrumah." 4). The newspapers help Britain in transferring the power without losing its prestige, by framing the leaders of the CPP, earlier associated with nothing but trouble, as rational pro-British co-operation partners. However, at the same time the newspapers voice concerns on the CPP's ability to govern, and imply that Britain is still in control of the Gold Coast developments. This is meant to exemplify the British goodwill, as there are still strong feelings of superiority, and the idea that the people of the Gold Coast cannot reach self-government without British help.

Chapter 5: Independence

The final question reads '*How did the British print press frame the Gold Coast legislative elections of 17 July 1956, and the following Gold Coast Legislative Assembly vote for independence as the new state of Ghana?* The texts of this section reflect the dilemmas faced by the British officials in 1956, which are similar to those of 1951. On one hand, there is the need to depict the CPP as a rightful winner of the elections, in order to allow the complete transfer of power. On the other hand, the strong reactions of the opposition parties after the elections, and their accusations of CPP's misconducts, cannot be overlooked. Thus, the newspapers aim to convey messages of hopeful optimism, wishing that the CPP would unite the coast and the hinterlands, yet they simultaneously indicate worries about the inflammable political state of the country, and about the risks connected to the upcoming independence.

On 11 May 1956 the current Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd had called for a general election, after which the question of the form of government would be left for the new Assembly (Owusu-Ansah Iii). This section starts from the election date of 17 July 1956 and covers the

following one month period, including the reporting of the CPP gaining yet another clear election victory, and the following vote of the new Legislative Assembly on 3 August 1956, choosing independence within the Commonwealth under the name of Ghana (Owusu-Ansah Iii). Between 27 February and 27 March 1948, total of 19 texts were published in the newspapers included in this research, containing the keywords 'Gold Coast' and 'independence'. The texts analysed per newspaper are divided as follows: *The Times* 11, *Manchester Guardian* 6, and *Sunday Times* 2.

5.1. Help for constitutional advancement

Majority of the texts discuss the election results, and the forming of the new government, since these events are "of crucial importance to the future constitutional development of the Gold Coast" ("Dr. Nkrumah's Victory." 11). This time the texts seem to be aimed at wider international audience, because the situation has now developed to the point that independence is understood to be inevitable, and consequently the "immense and incalculable" implications of the coming change for other western powers holding African colonies have been recognised (Lang, "Gold Coast." 7).

Especially the first articles, written before the election results are in, have an optimistic tone. The voting is described as 'quiet', 'orderly' and 'peaceful'. Despite the mentioned tense feelings in the Ashanti region, there is thought to be an overall good spirit. This is demonstrated with the words of a CPP Minister Gbedemah, who assures that "if the C.P.P. is defeated, we shall be glad to see our opponents, the N.L.M., take over", and *Manchester Guardian* predicts that "If that spirit can be recaptured and kept, after the excitements of the election are over, the Gold Coast will be safely round another corner" ("Election Day." 6). Later on the tone becomes more cautious, as the votes are counted, and it becomes apparent that the way in which they are distributed shows a deep divide between the CPP supporting coast, and the rural areas, which are backing the NLM and other opposition parties.

Despite the uneven distribution of the votes, the newspapers continue to position themselves to support the British interest, by claiming that the CPP reached a ‘handsome’ and ‘decisive’ victory. This is because in order to depict the British withdrawal as graceful and logical, and in the interest of the Gold Coast as a whole, there is a need to emphasis the legitimacy and popularity of the CPP. *The Times* states that “ Nkrumah will have a strong case for claiming that the Gold Coast electorate have endorsed his policy of immediate self-government and that they are content with centralised form of administration such as now exists” (“Dr. Nkrumah’s Victory.”11). On the same note *Manchester Guardian* writes that despite the CPP’s main strength being in the south, it has clearly reached a "a reasonable majority" and “ has done well enough in Ashanti and in the Northern Territories to sustain its claim to speak for the country at large” (“C.P.P.” 6). One article even claims that the tight tie is great for the country, since “it is important for the Gold Coast that its Opposition as well as its Government should be strong and effective” and writes that a strong opposition is needed to keep the CPPs admitted “seeds of totalitarianism” in check, once the British rule has ended (“New Gold Coast.” 7).

To highlight the legitimacy of the CPPs leadership, some of the texts present the demands of the opposition parties as unreasonable and their thoughts as dangerously violent, in contrast to the rational CPP. As *The Times* warns, “although a clear mandate has been given under parliamentary Democracy for the C.P.P.s proposals to frame a constitution when independence is attained” the opposition “may not accept without protest “, which could “ take a violent form” (“Gold Coast Poll.” 6). An editorial of *Manchester Guardian* stands completely on CPPs side, claiming that it is “absurd” to represent the CPP “merely as a Colony party imposing itself on other regions”, because “those who opposed Dr. Nnkrumah’s plan had votes, used them, and found themselves to be minority” (“Forlorn Hope.” 4). The editorial even blames the opposition parties for not forming a coalition sooner, and therefore allowing the totalitarianism to grow within the leading party, by writing that “many of the CPPs faults have grown up for lack of it (opposition)” (“Forlorn Hope.”

4). To emphasise the binary distinction, the newspapers cite Nkrumah's speeches, which portray him as a uniting leader, encouraging the people to seize the opportunity in unity, "so that history can record that at our country's greatest hour no dissent voice was raised to mar the majesty of the occasion" ("Gold Coast's Independence." 5).

Even if the newspapers frame the CPP as a unifying force and its support widespread, at the same time they cannot ignore the looming crisis. Some of the articles cite also the opposition members, who accuse the CPP leaders for corruption and totalitarianism, and therefore boycott the new Assembly, trying to persuade the British to support their demands for a federal state. *The Times* correspondent, reporting from the meetings of the traditional council of the Ashanti chiefs, writes that "it is becoming increasingly clear that the opposition, although a minority, is well organised, at least in Ashanti, and likely to seek any remedies for its grievances unless a form of compromise is found" and warns that "if Britain did not heed the plea of Ashanti and if Dr. Nkrumah would not give in, bloodshed would result" ("Ashanti Challenge." 7; "Ashanti Plea." 5). As an editor of *Sunday Times* comments, Nkrumah "has made many enemies" and therefore "a correct evaluation of the election results calls for much more complicated consideration than a mere counting of heads" (Lang, "Gold Coast." 7).

Despite acknowledging the trickiness of the situation, the texts worry about the "lamentable position" in which the British find themselves, rather than the danger in which the people of the Gold Coast are in ("Gold Coast Goes." 7). Before the results are in, *The Times* correspondent predicts that if the CPP's majority is small, or confined to the coastal areas, then "Britain will be in an extremely difficult position in deciding whether to grand independence" ("Election Issues." 8). Besides signalling feelings of superiority, this suggests that the newspapers still frame Britain as being in control of the Gold Coast developments. Even if in reality the upcoming independence was inevitable by 1956, such framing aims to portray Britain as a gracefully withdrawing benign power. The morality and goodwill of the British is communicated by expressing worries about the

constitutional advancement of the Gold Coast. *The Times* writes that "the British Government, while rightly anxious to honour their promise of political advancement, must see that the transition of power takes place under conditions that satisfy all African who have the welfare of their country at heart", and adds that "no one wishes to slow up the march of African independence, but the great mass of Africans themselves will want to be shown that those who are taking over from British rule have the same high standards" ("Storm in." 11).

The framing of the events in 1956 is similar to that of 1951, as in both cases the newspapers highlight the CPP's rationality and friendliness towards Britain, as opposed to the Gold Coast citizens and the opposition. It is noted that there are totalitarian elements present in the CPP, but the matter seems to be toned down. Thus the newspapers continue to serve the interests of the British government, by aiming to show that Britain is supporting the constitutional advancement of the Gold Coast out of its morality and goodwill. However, the international pressure for decolonisation is also visible in the framing, and some of the texts openly express concerns about the probable threats connected to granting independence to such a divided country.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Based on the conducted newspaper analysis, it can be concluded that the way in which the British print press framed the Gold Coast decolonisation process developed in accordance to the interests of the British government. When it was realised that the Gold Coast independence was inevitable, and could actually work in favour of Britain, the analysed newspapers move from opposing to supporting the transfer of power to the CPP. The newspapers portray Britain as a benign power, which remains in control throughout the decolonisation process for the benefit of the African people. The findings thus confirm those of Heinlein, who concludes in his research of the 'official mind' that the policy-makers' main goal during the decolonisation processes was to

prevent Britain from loosing its face, by showing to the international community that the Britons "had just bowed gracefully to the inevitable" (309).

The tone of the texts remains defensive throughout the three analysed points in time, aiming to portray the actions of the British government as rightful. When the rioting breaks out in 1948, the underlying assumption is that British rule is needed to regain order, and therefore the newspapers stress the dichotomy between the rioting 'natives' and the ruling 'Europeans'. However, as Heinlein argues, the policy-makers soon come to realise that in oppose to fighting the African nationalistic sentiments, a rapid transfer of power to friendly local forces is the best means of ensuring future cooperation (297). In the newspaper framing this realisation can be located between the texts of 1948 and those of 1951, as between those points in time the texts move from firmly supporting colonialism to defending the plans for transfer of power. Consequently, the papers move from depicting the UGCC as dangerous and communist, to framing their successor, even more radical CPP, as a friendly pro-British force. Especially the fact that the emphasised communist threat of 1948 is phased out in the later texts, exemplifies the need to present Britain's plans for the transfer of power as voluntary and rational.

The way in which the newspapers throughout the analysis portray Britain as being in control of the events, supports Heinlein's conclusion that one of the British government's main objectives was to hand over power in a spirit of amity and goodwill. Heinlein writes that policy-makers paid special attention to the way power was transferred, and how the public perceived this transfer, because if Britain would have appeared to have been forced to withdraw, it would have been considered as a humiliating defeat. Respectively, it was understood that "if the transfer of power could be presented as an act resulting from British generosity and liberality, much had been won" (301). This is precisely the message what the studied newspapers aim to convey, while presenting the transfer of power to the CPP as Britain's charitable 'act of grace'.

Similarly, the fact that the newspapers seem to continuously appeal to the paternalistic feelings of morality and superiority, confirm Heinlein's claim that the British perception of the colonies as underdeveloped and in need of assistance and supervision did not change. Instead, new concerns about colonialism's harmfulness to Britain's position in international affairs took over the feelings of responsibility and morality towards the lesser Africans (297). This is why the newspapers moved away from supporting old colonial practices, to depicting Britons as helping the Gold Coast in its constitutional advancement. Such framing served to both exemplify the British goodwill, and to justify the newly introduced plans of the rapid transfer of power.

However, the newspapers of 1951, and especially those of 1956, when the anti-CPP opposition empowered, also write about the risks connected to the transfer of power. This suggests that even if the newspapers aim to defend government action, the incoherent ad-hoc nature of the British colonial policy-making during the examined time period is too obvious to be entirely concealed by the press. This further supports Heinlein's observation that the decision makers were first and foremost concerned with "coming out with honour", rather than properly preparing the colonies for independence (301-302). Accordingly, the newspapers move from stressing the importance of colonial presence for the safety of the natives, to suddenly presenting independence as beneficial for them.

The conducted analysis implies that between 1948 and 1956 the British print press aimed to portray the decline of the Empire as a result of rational decision-making and goodwill. The findings suggest that the framing served to mend the feelings of national embarrassment connected to the loss of imperial possessions. However, as Vella suggests, in order to draw more detailed conclusions on the ways in which the British public perceived the decline of their Empire, both the social and as well as the textual context of the newspaper texts should be covered in further research (198). The vast possibilities offered by newspaper scholarship could be combined with other historical insights from the examined period, for the benefit of colonial history writing.

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