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Emmanuel Kwaku Siaw

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Ideological dynamics in Ghana's foreign policy: exploring the interplay between macro-ideologies and contextual ideas

Emmanuel Kwaku Siaw

Department of Politics, Philosophy and International Relations. Swansea University, Swansea, UK

ABSTRACT
This article contributes to the evolving approaches that demonstrate the adaptability and everydayness of ideologies by exploring how contextual approaches can respond to the nuances of the ideology – foreign policy nexus in the African context and allow for a systematic comparative analysis. Drawing on Jonathan Maynard's ideology-conflict thesis, Michael Freeden's ideological morphology, and Marius Ostrowski's comparative ideological morphology, it challenges the non-ideology thesis in African politics, arguing that the issue lies in the limitation of approaches, not the absence of ideology in foreign policymaking. The article demonstrates this by analyzing Ghana's economic diplomacy, an area widely seen as non-ideological, across three administrations – Nkrumah, Rawlings and Kufuor. Applying the Ideological Contextualization Framework to the Ghanaian case, I argue that the varieties of Ghanaian nationalism characterized by its historically evolving components partly explain Ghana's economic diplomacy. While the analysis in this article aims to further enhance the bid to see ideologies as phenomena that are 'necessary, normal, and [which] facilitate (and reflect) political action',[1] it is a call for further empirical application of contextual frameworks. It also demonstrates the potential of ideology to open analytical spaces for a better understanding of the dynamics of agency and dependency in Africa's international relations.

Introduction

On 27 June 2020, Ghana's former President, John Agyekum Kufuor, made a reflective clarification of his party, New Patriotic Party's (NPP), ideology during the confirmation of Nana Akuffo Addo and Mahamudu Bawumia as presidential candidate and running mate for the december 2020 election in Ghana. He declared that:

> People ask whether this party is leftist or socialist; we are not. But I tell you we respect capitalism with conscience, capitalism that is human, and this is why we fit the safety nets. The safety nets below which we do not allow any human to fall under . . . [2]

While Kufuor's statement aligns with the idea of compassionate conservatism advocated during the David Cameron and George W. Bush administrations,[3] it demonstrates how

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African leaders have grappled with ideological challenges while navigating decolonization and socio-economic development.[4] This has led to varied ideological expressions, reflecting a heterogeneous nature that sometimes defies simple categorization within existing macro-ideologies.[5]

The dynamism of ideologies in an ever-changing world has attracted developments from either theoretical[6] or methodological[7] perspectives. These developments allow for a systematic and diagrammatic breakdown of the morphological contents of macro-ideologies and have influenced how the relationship between ideology and foreign policy is studied.[8] They have gained considerable attention in the literature, primarily focusing on the Western context.

However, the relationship between ideologies and foreign policy in Africa has not received enough attention either because the rhetoric and actions of policymakers do not conform to macro-ideologies or external influences appear to override the ideological objectives of African governments.[9] I argue that this is not a case of the irrelevance of ideologies, as it has been established that ideologies indeed impact policies on the continent.[10] The challenge, however, lies in the limitation of existing approaches and methods to adequately capture the nuances of ideas in a context from which the ideologies may not have originated. The interaction between macro-ideologies and contextual ideas has not been adequately theorized to allow for comparative analysis and demonstrate how ideologies influence foreign policy.

This article makes two contributions. First, it proposes a contextual framework for analyzing the link between macro-ideologies, contextual ideas and policy that is a derivative aggregation of variables based on Jonathan Maynard's ideology-conflict thesis, Michael Freeden's ideological morphology and Marius Ostrowski's comparative ideological morphology. Second, it contributes to the existing literature on ideologies and foreign policymaking in Africa with implications for African agency in international relations.[11] Overall, it responds to Alan Cassels' call for pursuing analytical endeavors that pay more attention to how much weight thin or contextual ideas have brought to bear on policymaking over time.[12] This is demonstrated by analyzing Ghana's economic diplomacy under the Nkrumah, Rawlings, and Kufuor administrations, which represent different political epochs. I argue that it is the varieties of Ghanaian nationalism characterized by its historically evolving components that partly explain Ghana's economic diplomacy – challenging the widely held non-ideological thesis of Ghana's foreign policy due to limited agency.

The rest of the article is divided into five sections. It begins with a concise methodological note, followed by a section exploring the complex relationship between ideology and foreign policy from the global to the African context. The Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF) is introduced next, followed by its application to Ghana's case before a conclusion.

Methodological note

Ghana's long record of foreign policymaking and diverse political experiences make it a valuable case study in African international relations. In Ghana, I focus on three administrations: Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), 1957–1966, transitioning from a multi-party to one-party state; Jerry John

Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) 1981–1993 and National Democratic Congress (NDC), 1993–2001, shifting from military to democratic rule; and John Agyekum Kufuor's New Patriotic Party (NPP), 2001–2009, an avowed democratic government. These three administrations mark crucial epochs in Ghana and African politics: Nkrumah's era embodies early post-colonial challenges, including confronting imperialism, Cold War politics and building a new state. Rawlings' administration navigates the end of the Cold War and economic struggles, and Kufuor's tenure emphasizes the post-Cold War focus on African renaissance.[13]

The empirical basis of this article is built around fieldwork conducted in Ghana from June to October 2019. This involved interviews with former ministers and diplomats who served under the three administrations. I also interviewed former President Kufuor of the NPP and current party officers for all three parties. In these interviews, I asked questions that allowed respondents to reflect on governments' policy choices, ideological intents, and critical events in Ghana's foreign policy. In addition to interviews, I collected archival sources, including speeches, foreign policy statements, from Ghana's Public Records and Archives Administration Department, and parliamentary Hansards. The data will be analyzed through the Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF), which will be explained later in this article.

Ideology, foreign policymaking and Africa's international relations

It is essential to briefly set a conceptual foundation for ideology because how one defines ideology shapes the nature of analysis. Ideology is a system of interrelated ideas, whether intended or unintended, over a period of time, that shapes how individuals or groups understand, construct and interact with their political and socio-economic contexts. It is also an interpretive tool. While pejorative and narrow definitions conceal much of ideology's analytical value and utility,[14] non-pejorative and broad definitions focus more on its dynamic utility as a compelling conceptual tool for comparative social and political research.[15] This article assumes a non-pejorative and broad approach. It is the fundamental basis for ideological morphology.[16] The emphasis on relativity and context, allowing for the full expression of variants of an ideology within and across contexts, is what Marius Ostrowski calls comparative ideological morphology.[17] This comes with questions regarding which ideas and ideologies (existing or new) are prevalent in a particular context, whether in their original, disguised, or localized forms.

In African philosophy and ideology, there has been a longstanding debate on these questions,[18] demonstrating the search for ideologies to consider and frameworks to analyze the relationship between ideas and contexts. One such debate is between Paulin Hountondji and Kwame Gyekye. Hountondji argues that it is perfectly philosophically African to expand the frontiers of Western ideologies.[19] However, Gyekye argues that 'the philosophy of a people is invariably a tradition. But a tradition requires that its elements (or most of them) be intimately related to the mentalities and cultural ethos of the people who possess the tradition'.[20]

This debate has continued and, in recent years, transformed into various debates covering the supply and demand of ideologies.[21] Therefore, while Africa has been on the fringes of ideological frameworks and approaches, the jury is still out on ideology and its

role in African politics and foreign policies. The Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF) proposed in this article attempts to contribute to this discussion by suggesting a more systematic approach to the ideology conversation.

Generally, answers to the extent of ideological influence on foreign policies have been diverse. Yet, the grand takeaway from the studies is that a relationship exists between these two variables, with some tracing ideologies' influence as far back as the late 18th century when Antoine Destutt de Tracy coined the word.[22] However, as Alan Cassels laments, the important role of ideology in world politics has generally been taken for granted rather than systematically analyzed. Notably, he emphasizes the theoretical deficiencies in referencing a few 'total or pure ideologies'.[23] He argues that 'partial, unsophisticated ideology – ideology in the sense of a collective subconscious mentality or belief system' – or what is dominantly referred to as thin or contextual ideas 'has brought just as much weight to bear, and over a longer time span'.[24] This article is an attempt to support his assertion.

Historically, African leaders and governments have actively developed and embraced various ideologies to understand their unique circumstances and pursue goals like decolonization and socio-economic development. These ideologies include African Abolitionism, anti-colonialism, African Socialism, Marxism, the Non-Aligned Movement, Negritude, Ujamaa, Ubuntu, African feminism, postcolonialism and consciencism.[25] The numerous ideological manifestations show a continuous search for ideas to address challenges in a heterogeneous context where, although established macro-ideologies may partly align with governments' ideas, they fail to fully capture their unique conditions and goals. Sometimes, the ideas may be contradictory when analyzed within a single macro-ideology. However, these somewhat conflicting ideas can be better understood within an analytical framework that recognizes the dynamic nature of their heterogeneity – similar to Michael Freeden's concept of thin-centered ideologies[26] while focusing more on their contextually manifesting nature.

Africanist scholars are not oblivious to this situation. Although some studies have identified the effects of ideologies on foreign policies,[27] others have further revealed the ideological diversity that characterizes the African context, making it nigh impossible for adequate analyses within a single macro-ideology, especially those with roots outside Africa.[28] In his bid to critically examine whether the expressions and opinions of African political leaders match their ideologies, Christopher Clapham concludes that their statements could not meet the standard of political philosophies, theories or ideologies.[29] This is because, for him, just like other narrow approaches, consistency and strict coherence are the mark of political ideologies, and since ideas espoused by African leaders do not conform to these principles, they cannot be regarded as ideas with analytical utility. He suggests that these statements and opinions should be seen as responses to the situations faced by these leaders. While I agree with Lawrence Bamikole that 'Clapham's observation is essentially correct but based on the wrong premise',[30] I add that it is rigid and lacks a framework that acknowledges contextualization and heterogeneity. This raises critical questions regarding the interaction between macro-ideologies and their environments and how the ideological outcome of such interactions can influence foreign policy.

Existing studies rarely explicitly address these questions. Scholars typically analyze leaders or governments, like Nkrumah's administration, who strongly adhere to specific ideologies, leading to foreign policies considered irrational and undermine national

interest, especially when they do not yield positive outcomes.[31] Or governments like the Rawlings administration abandoning their ideologies for pragmatic policies.[32] This division between 'ideologues' and 'pragmatics' poses challenges, as the former struggles to explain changes in ideologies, while the latter finds it difficult to understand the nuances of ideologies. Both overlook the importance of contextualization.

In a study of ideology and conflict behavior, Jonathan Leader Maynard argues that distinctions like this do not do 'justice to modern social scientific understandings of the diverse causal processes through which ideas may influence action'.[33] Also, these approaches typically do not help us put a theoretical structure on how this happens, especially in contexts where the heterodox nature of ideology is evident. Kufuor's 'capitalism with conscience' statement exemplifies the limitations of such narrow approaches in Africa. His statement prompts the theoretical quagmire regarding the relationship between ideologies, contexts, and their impact on policy, which the next section attempts to address through a derivative adaptation of Maynard's ideology and conflict behavior thesis.

Outlining the Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF)

The Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF) assumes that to analyze ideologies and their impact on policies, one needs to explore the relevant context and the potential for such contexts to produce ideas that actors must grapple with. The framework proposed here is a derivative aggregation of approaches advanced in other fields, particularly in Maynard's conflict thesis,[34] which I believe presents a significant analytical potential for comparatively analyzing the link between ideology and foreign policy, mainly in contexts where not only did existing macro-ideologies not emerge from but also their putatively weaker position in the international system lends itself to limited consideration of ideology. This is because considering ideology is an important foundation of agency. As shown in Figure 1, the framework consists of two parts: internalized and contextual.

Internalized ideas

Internalization happens when there is a sincere belief in the values and preferences of specific schemas that influence the perception and understanding of individuals' or groups' context and decision-making.[35] For the proposed framework, internalization captures macro-ideologies such as socialism, liberalism and communism. According to Maynard, internalization involves two main cognitive mechanisms or pathways: commitment and adoption, but I add indigenization and briefly explain them in turn. The essence of these mechanisms is to explain the cognitive relationship between ideas and actions, further demonstrating how governments exhibit these ideas.

Commitment is exhibited when decision-making is significantly influenced by ideas that governments or individuals are intrinsically committed to.[36] Maynard argues that commitment relies on 'intrinsic resonance' with ideas that shape perceptions and decisions.[37] Adoption, on the other hand, is when, although a government may lack an intrinsic commitment to a specific macro-ideology, it adopts one closely related to its aspirations.[38] Adoption is often rooted in identification.[39] Maynard suggests that

Ideological Contextualisation Framework (ICF)

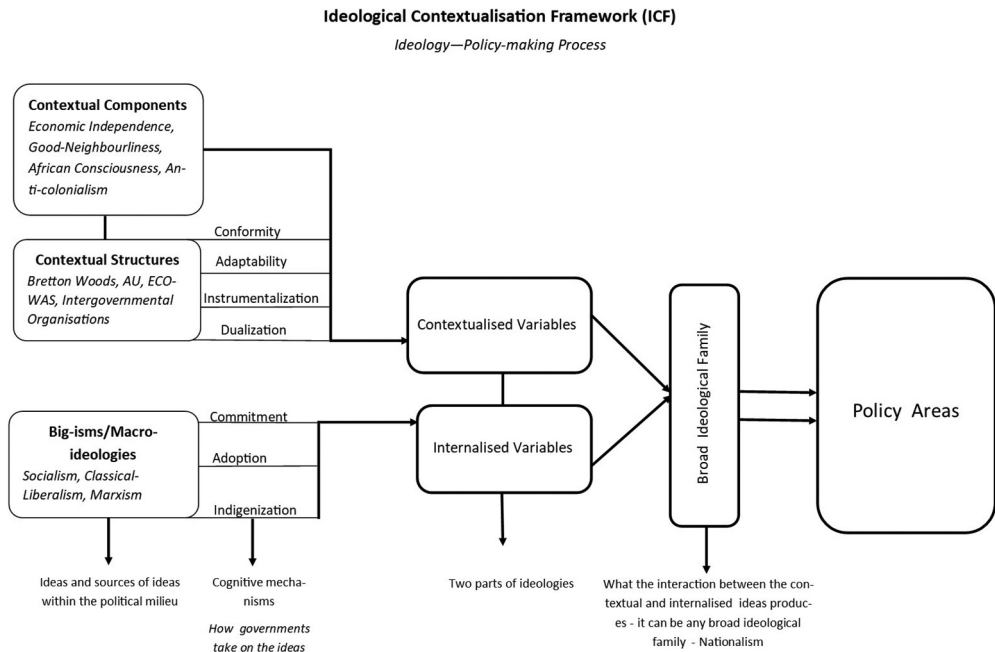*Ideology—Policy-making Process*

Figure 1. Ideological Contextualization Framework (ICF). Designed by author.

individuals who adopt ideologies are more tolerant of compromises and deviations due to their lack of intrinsic commitment. I add that groups that adopt ideologies are susceptible to internal disagreements and contestations as they come from different ideological backgrounds. Once the primary objective that brought them together is achieved, they may diverge on the future direction of their government or party.

Indigenization involves framing and localizing ideas from the ground up rather than committing to or adopting existing ideologies, reflecting some of Gyekye's sentiments above. It occurs when there is an authentic effort to create new ideologies that reflect the socio-cultural, political, historical, and economic conditions of a specific context.[40] During Africa's decolonization era, many nationalist groups and new governments attempted indigenization, although these attempts have not been notably successful.[41]

Contextual ideas

Ideologies are embedded in an environment, and governments are influenced not only by their internalized ideas but also by the interaction between them and their socio-economic environment (domestic and international). I use contextual ideas instead of Maynard's structural mechanisms to demonstrate agency, dependency and the dynamics of emerging and evolving variables that attract different interpretations within the context. This offers the potential to compare similar or different manifestations of ideas across space and time.

There are three critical variables under contextual ideas: components, structures and cognitive mechanisms or pathways. Contextual components are historically evolving societal conditions that have attained ideological value and presence in governments'

ideologies. It is important to note that although contextual components may be common to all administrations, their meanings and interpretations change according to the internalized ideologies of governments and usually reflect on the reception toward contextual structures.

Contextual structures are those avenues of path dependence, based on the ideas of powerful international and domestic institutions, that governments are usually bound to follow or react to regardless of their internalized ideologies. Constructivists have long emphasized the notion of norm diffusion; however, this has not been systematically studied in a way that theorizes its interaction with other ideological components within different contexts, especially from the bottom-up.[42] Regarding the cognitive mechanisms within the context, Maynard proposes two – conformity and instrumentalization –, but I add two more – adaptability and dualization – to further show the dynamic nature of the domestic and international context in foreign policymaking.

Conformity is the tendency for individuals or groups to comply with societal pressures or ideological structures and expectations, especially when there is limited agency over decision-making.[43] Maynard argues that once a government conforms to a contextual structure, it reduces the power of sincere internalized ideas.[44] Instrumentalization of ideology is crucial to understanding the connection between rhetoric and actions, especially when sincere commitment is lacking.[45] In such situations, governments can exploit the contextual ideological atmosphere to achieve specific goals based on their genuine ideological commitment. Maynard argues that instrumentalization is effective within an ideological context where the audience sincerely embraces the instrumentalized ideas.[46]

Adaptability occurs when internalized ideologies evolve and adjust to incorporate ideas from contextual ideological structures. This adaptation arises when the internalized ideology falls short of fully capturing governments' realities, goals, and aspirations, but a contextual structure offers an alternative.[47] Unlike conformity, adaptability involves consciously integrating ideas from external contexts into the internalized ideology. Adaptability aligns with the constructivist view of states and governments as autonomous entities that learn from the global environment.[48]

In the case of dualization, internalized ideologies hold more power as governments oscillate between their internalized ideas and ideas from contextual structures only when ideas from the structure coincide with their internalized ideas. Dualization has been valuable for understanding phenomena involving internal political paradoxes.[49] It occurs when contextual structures lack sufficient strength to pressure governments into conforming or adapting their internalized ideologies. In the following sections, I explain how the framework applies to Ghana.

ICF and Ghana's international relations

The inherently heterogeneous nature of the proposed framework allows for comparative analyses of ideas within and across different ideological lexicons and contexts. In the Ghanaian case, I choose nationalism because it conceptually fits the continuum in the fundamental aspirations of nationalist leaders who attempted to carve a pathway for Ghana's development, regardless of their internal differences.[50] Lloyd Fallers describes

nationalism as an 'ideological commitment to the pursuit of the unity, independence, and interests of a people who conceive themselves as forming a community'.[51]

The choice of nationalism is also influenced by it being a recurring theme during my interviews to refer to the broader aspirations of Ghana in international relations. Nationalism has also been used in more recent studies to analyze aspects of Ghanaian politics.[52] As such, I use nationalism to demonstrate the path dependence and nationally characteristic ideological components and structures that have been significant contextual ideological variables since independence. I drew these from the interviews, foreign policy speeches and literature on Ghana's foreign policy.[53] As outlined in Figure 1, the ideational components that emerge are economic independence, good neighborliness,[54] Pan-Africanism or African consciousness[55] and anti-colonialism.

While these are relevant to the international relations of many African states,[56] they have been key ideational features of Ghana's international relations. For instance, Kofi Attor, a former NDC MP and chairman of the parliamentary select committee on foreign affairs, observes that 'we [Ghana] have always talked about economic independence'.[57] With pronouncements such as 'seeking first the political kingdom' by Nkrumah to political independence and first/second independence, many African governments either prioritize or acknowledge this need to wean Africa from external dependence.[58] Anti-colonialism is the urge to cut Ghana from perceived colonial stranglehold. As will be shown later, there is very little agreement between the different administrations on colonialism, how its effects are perceived, and what kind of relations should be nurtured between Ghana and former colonial metropoles. This article focuses on economic independence and anti-colonialism because they are the directly significant contextual components of Ghana's economic diplomacy.

Contextual structures in Ghana include institutions such as the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. For economic diplomacy, I focus on the Bretton Woods Institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as an ideational structure due to its enduring influence.

The discussion above explores Ghanaian nationalism characterized by common ideational components and structures. I propose varieties of Ghanaian nationalism to demonstrate that while confronted with the same contextual ideas, there is a tendency for the administrations to interpret and react differently. These variations stem from internalized ideologies and how they interact with the contexts. In the sections below, I discuss Ghana's economic diplomacy under the three administrations through the lens of the ICF. Economic diplomacy is often perceived as 'pragmatic' due to Ghana's limited agency,[59] but the discussion below introduces some ideological insights.

The Nkrumah administration: 1957 – 1966

The internalized or macro-ideology of the Nkrumah's Conventions People's Party (CPP) administration was fluid in name, from socialism to African socialism, scientific socialism and Nkrumaism. The government was considered a socialist, anti-capitalist administration. Members of the administration and Nkrumah himself conceptualized this in public statements and parliamentary debates.

Victoria Tagoe, a CPP MP, conceptualized socialism as a combination of work and happiness[60] - a term that embodied the government's seven-year development plan.[61]

The establishment of factories would bring work, but happiness, she argued, 'springs from a state of wellbeing' characterized by things such as fee-free education, free text-books and uniforms, and free medical care.[62] The Minister for Local Government and Justice between 1961 and 1965, Kofi Ofori-Atta, contended that socialism could be better understood through a distinction between state and private enterprises.[63] He added that 'the paramount objective [of the state enterprise] is to supply the needs of the people ... the entrepreneur also attempts to provide the needs of the people but with a difference, in order to make profit ... the one gives, the other takes'.[64] For Nathaniel Welbeck, a Minister for Works and Housing between 1954 and 1958, socialism in the Ghanaian context meant a classless society where 'one should not eat and leave the others'.[65] Socialism, according to Kwaku Amoa-Awuah, was meant to create a welfare state aimed at improving the standard of living[66] or building what Benjamin Konu, a CPP MP who became a protestor but later rejoined the party, referred to as a 'safe haven of utopia'.[67]

These conceptualizations of how socialism translates into daily lives capture some basic tenets – human values, communalism, and modernity – that Nkrumah later emphasizes. Nkrumah defined his party's socialism as 'a non-aligned version of second-world socialism; a social synthesis for the reconciliation of modern technology and human values; the defense of communalism in a modern setting'.[68] This means that despite drawing on an existing macro-ideology, there were efforts toward local owner-ship of socialism. A CPP MP, Charles Donkoh, argued that

> Our socialism is based upon communalism that is unique; it is different from any type of socialism obtained anywhere else. In our international relations, we have pointed out that we are not going to copy anything from any other country.[69]

This, with the different lexicons, demonstrates the government's ambivalence toward the exogenous roots of socialism and the need to create something that reflected the African condition. Consequently, Nkrumah framed philosophical consciencism as an ideology that responded to colonialism, imperialism, disunity, and underdevelopment. Consciencism was Nkrumah's new socialism that integrated traditional African, Islamic, and Western Euro-Christian influences in Africa to align with the humanist principles embedded in the African personality.[70] This effort toward indigenization was unsuccessful in gaining enough traction, although more recent efforts are reconsidering consciencism as a viably distinctive ideological approach for African development.[71]

Socialism was, therefore, borne out of adoption, particularly due to this seeming ambivalence and the government's diverse membership. The administration included what Kwame Ninsin describes as 'an even more bizarre collection. It included romantic socialists (comprising primarily a section of the intelligentsia and trade unionists), petty-bourgeois elements (of the commercial elite), traditionalists and political 'yo-yos'.[72] Consistent with adoption, the party's initial aspiration to rapidly eliminate colonialism resonated with many regardless of ideological differences. However, when the questions of development and relations with former colonial metropoles arose after independence, the internal ideological divisions between groups grew wider, resulting in some key resignations, including Arthur Lewis, who was the government's chief economic advisor, and Komla Gbedemah, a founding member of the CPP and cabinet minister for finance for seven years.

Regarding economic diplomacy, the interpretations of two contextual components – economic independence and anti-colonialism – were directly impactful. For economic independence, the government's key position was to take control of the sources of production and national resources to revert the colonial norm, where the stakes for these sources were external, and resources predominantly served foreign interests. This created a dependent economy in Ghana, just like many other colonies.[73] Nkrumah distinguished political independence from economic independence, emphasizing that the former was achieved in 1957, but the fight for the latter had just begun.[74] The government's idea was to elevate Ghana to an economic stature reminiscent of the precolonial era, secure prosperity for Ghanaians, and set an example for the rest of the continent. This meant the objective of 'recreating the history of our nation as we translate into practical reality the dreams and visions of our forefathers'[75] and 'to redeem its past glory and reinforce its strength for the realization of its destiny'.[76] Nkrumah questioned why 'Ghana, which was in the 11th century, at least equal in power in might to England, disappeared as it did?'[77]

To pursue economic independence, the government embarked on an agenda to diversify Ghana's agricultural production, moving from overreliance on cocoa to a mixed one involving fishery, coffee, bananas, tobacco and palm oil.[78] The government also embarked on an Import Substitution Industrialization, including the Volta River power project, to push the industrialization agenda.[79] This industrial prosperity agenda also had implications for the rest of the continent as it is tied to the government's pan-African agenda of proposing African solutions to African problems and demonstrating that the black man is capable of managing their own resources.[80] While the government's approach and rhetoric sound like an attempt to jettison all relations with the West, in particular, Nkrumah argued that 'in the modern world, independence also means interdependence'[81] and 'even Ghana with its real measure of stability and prosperity – needs this outside support and stimulus'[82] which 'contribute a web of common interests which we (both Ghana and Western partners) can freely acknowledge'.[83] As such, the government's interest was to 'to help our people to learn the new industrial skills' to take over.[84]

The idea and approaches toward economic independence are strongly linked to anti-colonialism as both contextual ideas inherently contest the extent to which Ghana's resources have been exploited and economy unequally integrated into the global economy, particularly with former colonial metropoles. After independence, the question of how the newly independent Ghana should relate with former colonial powers was among the dilemmas. As we shall see with the other administrations, one determinant for this relation lies within the externalization and internalization of Africa's challenges. Governments emphasizing neo-colonialism and the uneven global system externalize Africa's woes, while those focusing on domestic deficiencies internalize the woes. The Nkrumah administration leaned toward externalization, which shaped their anti-Western/capitalist rhetoric and perspective on economic independence. The key point here is that how the government interpreted both variables was influenced by the government's internalized (macro)-ideology, which shaped the relations with and interpretations of ideas from the contextual structures.

As the first government after independence, the Nkrumah administration played a significant role in introducing the IMF as a contextual structure into the Ghanaian

context when it signed on to the fund in 1957. However, the government never officially enrolled on any of the fund's programs, mainly due to the inherently anti-capitalist/Western inclinations of the government's socialism and interpretation of economic independence and anti-colonialism. For instance, the administration's industrialization projects were financially draining. By 1965, when cocoa prices had fallen, it became unsustainable to continue using cocoa proceeds to fund the projects, leading to budget deficits and an imminent economic crisis. Although the government initially contacted the fund, it took about a year for Ghana to agree to set up an arrangement to renegotiate credits.[85] As an administration that had maintained a strong socialist and anti-capitalist/Western rhetoric coupled with the ideas of economic independence and anti-colonialism, the government not only kept the negotiations a secret, but also, when it started implementing some of the recommendations, they were branded as part of the government's actions toward fiscal discipline.[86]

Reflecting on the cognitive mechanisms, this could be seen as close to instrumentalizing contextual ideas. It shows how ideology shaped the government's economic diplomacy and response to contextual structures through its internalized (macro)-ideology and interpretation of contextual components. It also demonstrates the extent of agency that an analysis of ideologies can unravel even in a foreign policy area considered to have limited room for maneuver.

The Rawlings administration: 1981 – 2001

Like the Nkrumah administration, the Rawlings administration's internalized (macro-) ideology was fluid in name; socialism, Marxism, revolutionary socialism and social democracy.[87] In my interviews with members of the NDC, they referred to themselves as social democrats, and justifiably, the party is a member of the Socialist International, demonstrating their international alliance. However, the Rawlings administration, which is a forerunner to the current NDC party, began by referring to itself broadly as a socialist-Marxist government whose international ideals hinged on proletarian internationalism involving the recognition of Ghana as part of a global struggle to replace Western capitalism with a relatively 'egalitarian' system. Since his first entry into Ghanaian politics in 1979,[88] Rawlings had strongly advocated a fight against 'forces which continue in their efforts to disorient and hence control us … to control our destiny[89] … and establish clear action plans towards bringing about a new international economic order.[90]' This idea was inherently anti-Western and demonstrated wariness of interference by the West.

The lexicons also showed the trajectory of the administration's development: Marxism described their belief in class struggle domestically and internationally; revolutionary characterized their path to power and the need to fundamentally change Ghanaian society. On 1 January 1981, Rawlings argued that socialism involves broadening the scope of decision-makers and the decision-making processes to include those he called the guardians (police and soldiers), the workers, farmers, the rich and the poor.[91] However, the government's ban on multi-party politics until 1992 contradicted its claim of establishing a representative government. Yet, leading members, including Kojo Tsikata,[92] exemplified socialism by living modestly, wearing sandals made from

car tyres (popularly called Afro Moses) instead of driving expensive cars and wearing pricey shoes.[93] This was to exhibit the government's association and solidarity with the troubled masses and oppressed – a hearkening back to the history of social revolution, as exemplified by Che Guevara.[94]

By 1993, when the administration became more emphatic about social democracy, the members conceptualized this idea to demonstrate how different it is from the 'property-owing-democracy' idea of the Kufuor administration (explained later). In my interview with Kofi Attor, he argued that while social democracy 'looks at the interest of the people and brings them up for the collective good', property-owning democracy 'allows everything to thrive, the market forces play, prices find their level, individuals develop, and when they do, they will pay taxes, and that will be used to develop the nation'.[95] It is worth noting that although the Rawlings administration cut across a military government (1981–1993) and multi-party democracy (1993–2001), key members of the administration remained in different positions throughout. As such, the core values of freedom, justice, and solidarity were offshoots from the values of probity, accountability, and social justice that characterized its predecessor PNDC administration.[96]

Based on the framework outlined in this article, the cognitive mechanism for this internalized ideology is closer to adoption mainly because of the diverse nature of the membership and the attempt to align to an idea that broadly reflects their aspiration to overthrow the Hilla Limann's PNP administration, in 1981, for its inability to reverse Ghana's neocolonial dependency.[97] The Rawlings administration included a diverse range of individuals. Some, like those from the June Fourth Movement (JFM) and the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG), were socialist-Marxists drawn from students, workers, and soldiers. The New Democratic Movement (NDM) identified as socialist-Marxist, but differed in composition, primarily consisting of leftist intellectuals and civil servants. Notably, the NDM acknowledged the potential need for temporary collaborations, even with entities not fully aligned with their ideology, to establish the necessary socio-economic infrastructure for a socialist state.[98] Like the Nkrumah administration, the questions about how to approach development and relate with the West arose once they overthrew the Liman administration. Characteristic of an adopted ideology, their divisions became more apparent in how they interpreted the contextual components and related to the IMF.

When the Rawlings administration took power in 1981, the IMF had grown into a remarkably stronger contextual structure and attracted mixed reactions and repercussions. Boafo Arthur rightly observes that 'Rawlings' predecessors either went to the IMF and lost political power, or for fear of losing power refused to accept IMF conditionalities but ended losing power all the same'.[99] The deteriorating Ghanaian economy,[100] compounded by the failed industrialization drive[101] and the increasing role of the IMF in Ghanaian politics,[102] sustained the ideas and narrative around economic independence and anti-colonialism. The Rawlings administration built its economic independence narrative as fundamentally anti-Western and anti-colonial, consistent with their interpretation of socialism. While acknowledging domestic management woes, particularly by the 'moderates', a more conscious attempt to externalize Ghana's developmental challenges shaped their interpretation of anti-colonialism. In the 1981/82 revised budget, the Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning, Kwesi Botchwey emphasized that 'inevitable working of the pattern of international economic relations, controlled by

a concentration of integrated multinational corporations in industry working hand in hand with transnational banks' is the cause of Ghana's developmental crisis.[103]

According to Emmanuel Hansen, who was the Secretary to the PNDC, the administration's radical transformation included 'the termination of the control of the local economy by foreign multinational companies and the creation of political forms which would make the interests of the broad masses of the people predominant and realizable'.[104] As such, the twin ideas of economic independence and anti-colonialism also meant freedom from IMF programs and conditionalities.

The relationship between the Rawlings administration and the IMF under the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) can be described as uneasy. As a government that emerged on the back of the anti-Western narrative, the initial public economic diplomatic actions were to embark on missions to Libya, Cuba, the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. Negotiations with the IMF began in 1982, but just like the Nkrumah administration, they were kept secret due to internal contestations and contradictions with the government's narrative. The JFM and KNRG were against such negotiations, while the NDM supported them because they acknowledged the need for some undesirable associations to build a socialist society. Therefore, enrolling on the SAP in 1983 attracted discontent from the hardliners who either left the government or went into exile while some were accused of attempted coups.

Contrary to the pragmatic interpretations and popular ideological U-turn thesis in the literature about this situation, we can draw some ideological analysis. A faction of the government supported the implementation. It attempted to instrumentalize the program by taking advantage of the dominant neoliberal climate to stabilize the economy while improving its electoral fortunes or perhaps implementing a neoliberal program in a socialist way. It led to tensions characterized by instances of resistance in the form of excessive and unbudgeted spending and fiscal indiscipline, including substantial wage increases and relaxing tax collection.[105]

To some extent, these resistances demonstrate ideological intents. The administration largely maintained its core ideological intent to identify ways to alleviate the burden on the poor population, which formed its main support base.[106] They also demonstrate that while the IMF could still push through some reforms, there was a fundamental clash of objectives and approaches between the fund and the administration. My interviews with former PNDC members showed that the government maintained more 'meaningful' relationships with what they called progressive countries and regimes of the East. This included security-related assistance, cultural and strategic trade agreements, and education scholarships. Economic relations with the West were purely transactional, while those with the East were nurtured for their strategic ideological influence. This was motivated by the idea and need to pursue economic independence and sovereign integrity.

One can also identify conformity, especially when the government implemented some neoliberal policies and conditions. In such instances of conformity, Kwamena Ahwoi argued that

> We [the Rawlings administration] were not denying leftism; we were not saying that leftist theory was bad. But we were also saying that faced with certain practicalities, life is full of certain compromises that you have to compromise . . . I will not say leftist turned rightist.[107]

Yet more significantly, the pressure from the fund's conditions and domestic pressures played an important role in transforming the administration from a military government to accepting multi-party democracy, further demonstrating the learning feature of states and governments from a constructivist perspective and the adaptive cognitive mechanism in the ICF.

The Nkrumah and Rawlings administrations present two governments whose internalized (macro-)ideologies and interpretations of economic independence and anti-colonialism inherently contradicted Western structures of economic diplomacy. The Kufuor administration presents a different case but demonstrates another side of the spectrum of Ghanaian nationalism.

The Kufuor administration: 2001 – 2009

Although the Kufuor administration and the NPP assumed office in 2001, the government already had a long ideological history in its international relations that it remained faithful to. The NPP traces its roots to the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) founded in 1947, the same party that invited Nkrumah to Ghana, but he left to form the CPP due to disagreement with other members of the party for ideological reasons. Particularly, Nkrumah was dissatisfied with fraternizing with the West and the gradual approach to independence by the UGCC. While the UGCC preferred self-government within the shortest possible time, Nkrumah preferred 'self-government now'.[108] After the split, the former collaborators became political foes and contested elections against one another, first in 1951, which the CPP won convincingly. The UGCC metamorphosed into the Ghana Congress Party (GCP) and included former CPP members who had fallen out with the party to contest the 1954 elections against the CPP. This group later became the National Liberation Movement (NLM) and contested the 1956 election. By the 1960 constitutional referendum and presidential elections, all the opposition parties had joined to form the United Party (UP). In all these elections, Nkrumah and the CPP won convincingly.[109]

After the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966, the UP reconvened as the Progress Party (PP) under the leadership of Kofi Abrefa Busia and won the 1969 election.[110] It is noteworthy that key figures in the PP, including Prime Minister Busia, occupied positions in the National Liberation Council (NLC) junta (1966–1969) that ousted Nkrumah. The NLC strengthened Western ties, froze Eastern relations, and embraced neoliberal economics. The PP government, however, was the first time a forerunner of the NPP formed a government in Ghana and further demonstrated their liberal, pro-Western /capitalist inclinations through several ways, including enrolling on an IMF program and inviting Harvard's Development Advisory Service (DAS) to assist in implementing the policies and conditionalities, and maintained antagonism toward the East.[111] It is worth noting that Kufuor served as a deputy foreign affairs minister under this administration. The government and the program were aborted through a military coup in 1972. During the 1979 elections, two parties – the Popular Front Party (PFP) and United National Convention (UNC) – emerged from the PP to contest against Hilla Limann's People's National Party (PNP), which was considered an Nkrumaist party.[112] They lost the election to the PNP, but the Rawlings administration overthrew the Limann administration in 1981 and organized the next election in 1992. The 1992 election saw the regrouping of the former PP members who had split into the PFP and UNC coming

together to form the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which, although it did not win both the first (1992) and second (1996) elections, won the third (2000) under the leadership of Kufuor and formed a government in January 2001.

The ideological string that ties the forerunners together up to Kufuor's NPP is classical liberalism or what the party members refer to as 'property-owning-democracy' characterized by strong capitalist inclinations and inherently pro-west. Unlike the Nkrumah and Rawlings administrations, the Kufuor administration showed no ambivalence toward the West. In our interview, Kufuor clearly stated that Britain was viewed as a strategic partner, affirming his government's decision to 'link with Britain in a very special way'. This, he emphasized, is 'very much in line with my predecessors, my forbearers Danquah-Busia. That's the tradition of our party. I have been always truthful to it'. In my interview with Edward Asomani, who was the Executive Director of the Danquah Institute, he described the Danquah-Busia-Dombo tradition as believing in 'the primacy of the individual, free market, democracy, multi-party rule, the rule of law', and as being 'center-right' espousing 'conservatism, small government, and a vibrant private sector as the engine of growth'.

How the NPP defines property-owning-democracy is traced back to a statement made by one of the key members of the UGCC, J. B. Danquah, in 1962:

> I mention next the seven [leading] members of the United Party of Ghana with whom I share a common policy liberates the energies of the people for the growth of a property-owing democracy in this land, with right to life, freedom and justice as principles to which the government and laws should be dedicated in order, specifically, to enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen.[113]

This is usually quoted on the party's public documents like manifestos as

> [The party's] policy is to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property-owning democracy in this land, with right to life, freedom and justice, as the principles to which the government and laws of the land should be dedicated in order specifically to enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen.[114]

Nana Akomea, an NPP MP and minister for information under the Kufuor administration, argued that 'the ownership of property, as a reward for genuine effort, is the bedrock of a genuine democracy'.[115] In describing the practical manifestations of NPP ideology, Kufuor argued that

> We (NPP) are not revolutionary; we are not radicals. We appreciate the centrality of the human being. We are democrats. Even when we feel strongly about things, we want to convince stakeholders why the world should go the way we think we should go and if we manage to convince them, then in agreement with them we move together.[116]

This departure from the socialism of the Nkrumah and Rawlings administrations also meant varied interpretations of the ideological components that, in turn, shaped relations with contextual structures such as the World Bank and IMF. Economic independence remained a significant contextual component largely because Ghana's economy was in decline due to the failure of the SAP.[117] By 2000, the IMF had approached Ghana to consider enrolling on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. The Rawlings administration declined these calls due to their experience and fearing the characteristically stringent SAP conditions would hurt their chances in the

December 2000 elections. Ghana's economy was, therefore, characteristically heavily dependent on external funding.[118] For the Kufuor administration, economic independence also meant weaning Ghana off this dependence to 'a Ghana that is self-sufficient . . . doesn't need the support of development partners to pay 60% of its budget year in year out'.[119] In his first State of the Nation Address, Kufuor emphasized his government's objective of 'restoring the dignity of the African people'[120] and strengthening Ghana's position in the world within the much-touted golden age of business.[121]

When linked to the administration's interpretation of anti-colonialism, this approach to economic independence was not anti-capitalist or anti-Western, unlike the other administrations. Instead, it internalized Ghana's developmental woes, pointing at the maladministration and corruption of previous administrations[122] and acknowledging the need to collaborate with the West. In my interview with Kufuor, he argued that

> If you take Britain we saw that it was, in international relations, the longest relations our nation had outside because Britain was our colonial metropolis or if you like master. . . my government decided that was a country that will be looked on as strategic. We should link with Britain in a very special way so as to use the relationship to maximize our economic efforts and benefits.

These interpretations shaped relations with the IMF and World Bank, which, at the time, remained a strong contextual structure in the Ghanaian context due to the continuing economic challenges and limited alternative options for financial support. I argue that while the Rawlings administration rejected HIPC partly for ideological reasons, the Kufuor administration accepted it for similar reasons. It was one of the government's initial most important economic diplomatic actions. Although there was some internal discomfort by some members, particularly from J. H. Mensah (leader of parliament), who described it as 'a sick person going to the clinic'[123] and a member of the opposition NDC describing it as 'recolonizing ourselves'[124] the government placed more emphasis on need and ownership. In March 2001, Kufuor asked Ghanaians to 'tighten their belts', appealing to their conscience about the deteriorating economic legacy and the need for austerity measures for recovery and stabilization.[125] After a year, he further emphasized how he harbors no regrets for joining HIPC and how reaching a decision point at a record time is an integral part of the government's aspirations to become the gateway for business within the region.[126]

In 2004, during a press conference by Finance Minister Yaw Osafo-Maafo to address the nation on reaching the completion point for the Enhanced-HIPC, he reemphasized the HIPC initiative 'as part of the NPP Government's economic strategy of prudent economic management'.[127] He further argued in a way that showed that the government was not instrumentalizing HIPC to secure funding but believed in the fundamental neoliberal policies underpinning it. He stated that

> The lessons that have been learned in this process call for consistent implementation of the macro-economic policy framework and structural reforms to sustain the process, to lay solid foundations for robust growth and wealth creation for the benefit of all. We are committed to pursuing the prudent policies that have brought us thus far[128]

These statements and efforts demonstrate how the policy recommendations of the program found a place within the administration's broad liberal ideology. The adaptive pathway is the closest cognitive mechanism to demonstrating how the Kufuor

administration took on the IMF and HIPC. The ideas propagated by the program coincided with the party's internalized liberal ideas. It, therefore, did not have to conform, instrumentalize, or dualize because, as indicated above, the government intrinsically believed in the principles and their potential to deliver a stable economy – a feat the government achieved for a period of time.

Analyzing Ghana's foreign policy through ideology offers alternative perspectives. Doing this within the ICF allows us to explore internal variations and continuities of any broad ideological frame or lexicon while holding existing macro-ideologies as one of the ideational sources that interact with contextual ideas to shape foreign policy. Examining Ghana's economic diplomacy illustrates this. Internalized (macro-)ideologies shifted from socialism under Nkrumah to neo-liberalism under Kufuor. The interpretation of economic independence also changed from anti-Western/capitalist to more pro-Western /capitalist. Similarly, anti-colonialism shifted from externalized perceptions under Nkrumah to internalized under Kufuor, focusing on domestic issues. These ideological shifts shaped reactions to contextual structures. Nkrumah and Rawlings were apprehensive about the IMF, while Kufuor welcomed its program. This analysis reveals the broad spectrum of nationalism in Ghana and challenges 'pragmatist' explanations that rely on Ghana's limited agency in international relations.

Since Kufuor's administration, Ghana's economic diplomacy continues to be shaped by an eclectic mix of internalized and contextual ideas. The post-Rawlings NDC (2009–2017) and post-Kufuor NPP (2017–2025) have adhered to their party's internalized ideologies, with anti-colonialism and economic independence remaining relevant contextual components. The Akufo-Addo-led NPP notably declared the 'Ghana Beyond Aid' agenda in 2017. Despite being on an IMF program for the seventeenth time in 2023,[129] reactions to the IMF vary from resistance to acceptance shaped by these ideological mixes. Focusing on how ideologies influence economic diplomacy and policy receptions can help tailor strategies to align with national goals while managing external dependencies.

Conclusion

Many international relations studies acknowledge the importance of ideology in understanding states' actions. While traditional approaches often oversimplify, recent advancements in the ideology literature offer tools for a more nuanced analysis. This is essential for Africa, where ideology is often understudied due to its perceived limited influence and potential disconnect between rhetoric and action. This article argues that these limitations lie in existing methodologies, not the perceived inconsequence of ideology in Africa's foreign policy. By adapting Jonathan Leader Maynard's ideology-conflict framework, this article offers a way to understand how ideologies shape foreign policies in African contexts. This framework considers the dynamic relationship between macro-ideologies, contextual components, and structures. While acknowledging Africa's relatively weaker position in the global system, it argues that ideologies still play a role, albeit more subtly than traditional approaches may capture. This framework and its demonstration through the Ghanaian case aim to provide a pathway for comparative analyses of ideologies and policies within and across different African contexts. It calls for further theoretical development and application, offering the potential for a deeper understanding of African agency in international relations, moving beyond 'pragmatic' explanations.

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