

Ghana timeline – The Gold coast

British Crown Colony

1874: The Gold Coast is officially proclaimed a British crown colony. Originally the colony was only a 100 km wide strip along the coast, but the British still seeks control of the Asante kingdom and their wealth of gold. The British attacks again and burns down the Capital of Kumasi. The kings palace is found empty, but the British steals all values they can find.

1877: Accra becomes the capital of the colony.

1909: Kwame Nkrumah is born in the village Nkroful. He later graduates from Achimota College and continues studies in USA and England.

1918: After World War I the German areas in the East comes under British control. Nationalist movements begins to rise in the region.

"One of the greatest mistakes of the education in the past has been this, that it has taught the African to become European instead of remaining African. This is entirely wrong and the Government recognizes it. In future, our education will aim at making an African remain an African and taking interest in his own country."

Sir Gordon Guggisberg, governor of the Gold Coast in 1920. Quoted from "Africa – A biography of the continent" by John Reader.

1946: The colonial powers are weakened after World War 2. USA and USSR pressures for African independence. Ghana's Legislative Council gets a majority of black Africans, when the British little by little gives in to the pressure for African political representation. The rule of the colony is still entirely within the hands of the British though.

February 28, 1948: Riots breaks out in Accra when Police fires at an anti-colonial demonstration. 29 are killed and hundreds are wounded.

1949: Dissatisfied with the efforts of UGCC, Kwame Nkrumah leaves and founds the Convention People's Party (CPP). CCP quickly becomes the major player on the nationalist political scene.

1950: Nkrumah calls for a national strike and is jailed for his demands for independence.

1951: Nkrumah is released from jail after CPP wins the first election for the Legislative Assembly.

1952: Nkrumah becomes the first African prime minister and government leader, but still shares the power with the British governor Sir Charles Arden-Clarke. Nkrumah is re-elected in for the post in 1954 and 1956.

Independence

"Ghana our beloved country is free forever! ... The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent"

Kwame Nkrumah speaking on day of independence. Quoted from www.ashanti.com.au

March 6, 1957: Ghana is the first of the colonies in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence. Africa and the rest of the world follows the creation of the new state with high anticipations. The situation in Ghana inspire nationalist movements all over the continent. The economy seems to be good and promising as Ghana is rich with gemstones, forests and crops. Ghana is the leading cocoa exporter in the world and produces one tenth of the world's gold. 25% of the population is literate (which is high compared to other colonies at the time) and many has an education.

1958: A new law makes it possible to arrest anyone who is suspected of working against the state. The suspects can be imprisoned up to five years without sentence. Ghana has already started a slow development towards a one-party state.

1960: Nkrumah is appointed president of the republic.

1962: Foreign investors and industry are forced by law to re-invest at least 60 percent of their profit within Ghana.

August 27th 1963: William Edward Burghardt Du Bois dies in Accra. The African-American W.E.B Du Bois was born as in Massachusetts (1868) and became one of the most important contributors to the Pan-African movement, which again influenced Kwame Nkrumah and the history of Ghana. Du Bois was invited by Nkrumah to settle in Ghana after independence.

1964: Nkrumah suspends the democracy by suspending the constitution. Ghana officially becomes a one-party state and Nkrumah gains the power of a dictator. Criticised by the West, Nkrumah now turns to the Soviet Union and other communist countries.

The economy is out of control and the population is getting poorer. Nkrumah is no longer a popular leader as he hits hard on demonstrations and arrests anyone in opposition.

The first coup

February 24th, 1966: A military coup (without blood-shed) ends the rule of Nkrumah and his government. The coup is made by British-trained officers and takes place while Nkrumah is paying an official visit to chairman Mao in Beijing. Nkrumah flights to asylum at his personal friend President Sékou Touré in Guinea. In the following days and weeks all Nkrumah statues in Accra are taken down by the crowds.

May 1969: NLC aims to be a provisional government until a new election. Political parties are once again legalised.

The Second republic

September 1969: Multi-party elections are held in Ghana and a new civilian government is formed by Dr. Kofi Busia and the Progress Party.

1972: Kwame Nkrumah dies in Conakry, Guinea. In spite of his democratic failure he is still respected as the founder of Ghana. His body is later moved and buried in Accra.

Second Junta

January 13, 1972: Forces within the military once again finds that it is time for a change of government and carries out a coup. The National Redemption Council puts in Colonel Ignatius Acheampong as head of the state. But Acheampong lacks experience and economic-political visions. The result is a growth of corruption in all levels of government and society.

1974: The population shows it's dissatisfaction with the government through strikes – mostly arranged by students. The unions gets increasing support.

1975: Economy is close to collapse and it is no longer possible to come to agreement within the NRC-government. Acheampong decides to get rid of the government and forms the Supreme Military Council (SMC) with only seven hand-picked members. The opposition is far from happy with the situation, but the only answer from SMC is harassment and jailing of critics without sentence.

July 5, 1978: Acheampong is forced to resign as general William Akuffo takes control of the "Supreme Military Council II". He promises to reinstate a civilian government. Political parties are once again allowed in Ghana and a date for election is set. No other major changes happens in the following year and the discontent continues.

Rawlings

May 15, 1979: The young Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings heads an uprising within the army. The coup attempt is unsuccessful as Rawlings is arrested. Soon after he is freed again by soldiers supporting him.

June 4, 1979: A few days before the planned election a new military coup is carried out by Jerry Rawlings. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) takes power, but still has the intention to make place for a democratic election later the same month. The aim of the coup is apparently to ensure free elections and put an end to the corruption and economic chaos. But it is also to prevent the SMC generals from retiring to a life in luxury after having run down the country. Politically and economically Rawlings is inspired by socialist ideas.

June 18, 1979: Dr. Hilla Limann and his People's National Party wins the election, but it is a close call: PNP gets 71 of the 140 seats in parliament.

Rawlings supports the AFRC in its determination to end corruption and restore order and justice before returning Ghana to democracy. The former leaders from the SMC government are tried and executed together with the three former chief of states: Acheampong, Akuffo and Afrifa. Several hundred government officials and businessmen are sent to prison.

The third republic

September 1979: AFRC turns over power to Hilla Limann. Rawlings and his soldiers returns to the army.

The new government tries, but not hard enough. It is not able to solve the economic stagnation of Ghana. Necessary, but unpopular economic reforms are given up in fear of unrest and a new coup.

Rawlings again

1980: Jerry Rawlings is not forgotten. He gains more and more popularity as he continues to demand an end to corruption. But Limann seems to have forgot the lessons learned from his predecessors. The corruption returns to society and internal conflicts finally breaks up the ruling party.

December 31, 1981: Jerry Rawlings once again takes power through a military coup. The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) is established with Rawlings as chairman. The parliament is dissolved and all political parties forbidden, but Rawlings insists that the (long-term) goal is restoring democracy in Ghana.

1982 and 1983: Several coup attempts are made by dissatisfied parts of the army (mainly from the northern regions). None of the coups are successful. Opposition groups operating from Togo almost succeeds in an overtake. Relations between neighbouring countries Togo and Ghana worsens.

1984: The Ghanaian economy is finally showing signs of improvement, and even though Rawlings has a tough grip on Ghana, he maintains his popularity (first of all among workers and rural population). Rawlings has strong connections to Libya, Cuba and Eastern Europe, but his efforts to improve economy are rewarded with new loans by the IMF. For the following years Ghana continues to have the highest growth rate in Africa. Rawlings speaks strongly against the economic globalisation allowing market prices on Cocoa to determine the future of a developing country like Ghana.

1985: The Preventive Custody Law allows the government to imprison opponents for the sake of "state security". The prisons are crowded with political prisoners.

Major Courage Qarshigah and other officers makes an attempt at Rawlings life. They are sentenced and one is found hanged in his prison cell. Amnesty International and the Western donor countries begins to criticise lack of human rights in Ghana.

1990: Rawlings forms the National Commission for Democracy to work out plans for the political future of Ghana.

1992: A new democratic constitution is passed. Political prisoners are freed and parties are allowed. Free press and human rights organisations emerges in Ghana.

The Fourth Republic

November 1992: Multi-party elections in Ghana. Surprisingly Rawlings wins the presidential election with nearly 60% of the votes. The opposition accuses Rawlings of fraud and boycotts the election for parliament. As a result of the boycott Rawlings' National Democratic Congress and its smaller coalition partners are getting all seats. Independent observers approve the elections as being free and fair. Rawlings now has a democratic base to continue the work he started during the long period with a military junta.

1994: A land conflict between the Ethnic groups of Konkombas and Nunumbas results in the "Guinea Fowl War" in north-eastern Ghana. Ancient conflicts are ignited after a discussion on a market place. Up to 2000 are killed and 150,000 are displaced. A peace treaty is signed, but violence breaks out again several times in the following years.

May 1995: The parliament approves a VAT at 17%, resulting in several demonstrations and some riots, specially in the capital of Accra. The government cancels the unpopular VAT - probably concerned about the forthcoming elections.

1996: Rawlings is re-elected with 57% of the votes. NDC remains the biggest party in parliament, but John Kufuor's New Patriotic Party also has strong representation. The opposition and all observers approve the elections. The West continues to be content and optimistic about the situation in Ghana, even though economic progress is now at a much smaller rate.

Late 1990's: Popularity for NDC is fading as the opposition puts forward accuses of corruption within the government. Rawlings remains popular, but is also personally accused of corruption.

1997: The Ghanaian Kofi Annan is appointed Secretary General of the United Nations, bringing great pride to the country.

March 1998: US President Clinton visits Ghana.

The level of water is falling in the Akosombo reservoirs resulting in power shortage for Ghana. With normal water levels the damn can supply all of Ghana and even sell electricity to Togo and Benin as well -except for the fact that 40% of the electricity is owned by a very hard contract to the American Valco company, which consumes huge amounts of power for it's Aluminium production. Construction of a nuclear power plant is considered by the Ghanaian government, but is found far too expensive. The energy crisis is partly solved by increasing the supply of electricity from Côte d'Ivoire.

January 1999: Members of NDC breaks out and creates the Reform Movement as a large opposition party.

August 1999: Police hits hard on student demonstrations. The demonstrations ends when the Universities are forced to close by the government.

New president elected

December 2000: Rawlings' presidency ends as the constitution only allows two terms in office. Vice president John Atta Mills is new presidential candidate, but it is John Kufour from NPP who wins elections and becomes the new president.

April 2001: Ghana accepts a IMF/World Bank plan for debt relief.

May 2001: Riots at a football stadium leads to overreaction from the police. 126 are killed as panic breaks out in the stadium.

June 2001: Accra is flooded and up to 100,000 are displaced.

May 2002: A reconciliation commission starts investigating human rights during the many years of military rule.

March 2007: Ghana celebrates 50 years of independence as the first sub-saharan African nation.