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# Is the *Saemaül Undong* Initiative (the Korean Rural Development Strategy) a Compelling Exemplar for Ghana?

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## Abstract

This paper examines Korea's answer to the rural development challenge in the 1970s, the *Saemaül Undong* movement (SMU). As one of the revolutionary policies of Park Chung-Hee, it has been highlighted as contributing greatly to the South Korean economic miracle. There is consensus that it is a shining example of a successful rural development policy and has been widely documented. Given the signal achievements of the programme, this paper attempts to establish whether the SMU could be useful for Ghana as a lasting solution to rural underdevelopment. This paper presents a critical historical background of the SMU and how it was executed highlighting in particular the factors that were crucial to the success of the initiative. The Korean explications are then set against an overview of Ghana's attempts at rural development in an attempt to account for the reasons why Ghana has not been as successful at this task. Our conclusion is that the SMU can serve as a repository of best practices and outline lessons therefrom to guide the formulation and implementation of an integrated, home-grown rural development strategy to ensure the best possible chance of success of such a strategy.

## Keywords

Ghana – South Korea – rural development – decentralisation – leadership – new paradigm

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 *The Industrialization Dreams of Ghana and Korea*

By the 1960s several African and Asian countries which were hitherto semi-colonized and colonized had regained their freedom after violent and non-violent struggles against imperial powers. With their national destinies now firmly in their own hands African and Asian nationalist leaders were confronted with an equally daunting task: overcoming poverty and delivering high living standards for their people. In the literature the pursuit of such a goal has come to be described as “developmentalist.”<sup>1</sup> According Bernstein, developmentalist thinking and practise is fundamentally underlain by a focus on

Economic growth as a necessary if not sufficient condition of social progress, charted in the satisfaction of such basic needs as adequate nutrition, health and shelter (overcoming absolute poverty), to which can be added further conditions of a full human existence such as universal access to education, civil freedoms and political participation (overcoming relative poverty and deprivation. (2006, p. 155).

Rapid industrialization on the back of factories (heavy industries) using complex machinery and equipment (to produce or extract commodities such as ships, cars, steel, oil, chemicals etc) became the favoured route to attain high economic growth rates for emergent modern nations like Ghana and the Republic of South Korea (Korea hereafter) (Lin, 2007).

Kwame Nkrumah, the nationalist leader who led Ghana to independence was in a hurry for his country to industrialize. Nkrumah (Obeng, 2009, p. 278) saw the creation of a Ghanaian industrial sector as the vital prop (upon which all other sectors depended) of the Ghanaian economy:

I have made no secret of the fact, and I remain firmly convinced that Ghana must progress towards a balanced economy and this means the

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1 Developmentalism has been roundly criticized as being economicist, non-holistic and engendering environmental degradation among other charges. In this regard some scholars (Armah, 2006; Chinweizu, 2010; Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 1992) insist on a Post-Development viewpoint in response. In this work, we are sensitive to these critiques and align ourselves to the Post-Development framework which insists on a broader construal of development which transforms a society holistically (social, economic, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural) and sustainably (safeguards and protects the environment in the process).

creation, where nothing existed before, of an industrial economy which can balance the agricultural possibilities which we are already developing.

The speech (delivered before the Ghanaian National Assembly on February 21, 1961) in question was about the Volta River Project (hydropower scheme) on which turned Nkrumah's heavy industries vision for Ghana and its acceleration. Korea under Park will follow this same industrialization path (Lin, 2007) in what came to be known as "industrialize first, invest in agriculture later" (Seung-Mi, 2004, p. 73).

Having regained her independence from imperial Japan (Japan had ruled Korea since 1910) in 1945, Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world with a population plagued with massive illiteracy and an economy heavily dependent on foreign aid especially from the United States. The situation worsened when political forces in the northern part of the Korean peninsula invaded South Korea ultimately leading to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. By the time a truce had been signed to halt the war between the two factions in 1953, the ominous impact of war on South Korea – now separated from the North along the 38th Parallel by a UN-backed Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) – became apparent. The South Korean economy was one of the most indigent in the world with a mere \$91.48 GDP per capita in 1961. For comparison, Ghana at the same time enjoyed a GDP per capita of \$189.70. (World Bank, 2017).

In a neoliberalized world (Chinweizu, 2010; Harvey, 2005a; 2005b; Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2005) rural development as a critical component of the development process has fallen into disrepute. This triumphalist march of the market and with it the obsession with high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has produced in parts of the developing world a neglect of the rural sector which is experiencing "increasing incidences of landlessness and fragmentation of shareholding which has pushed dispossessed rural people into urban slums" (Hayami, 1998, p. ix). The logic of neoliberal socio-economic organization privileges the urban (i.e. urbanization) over the rural and hence places at its core, according to Harvey (2001, p. 345) the "process of city-making that is both product and condition of ongoing processes of transformation in the most recent phase of capitalist development." In this logic (Hayami, 1998, p. 26)

the rural sector becomes increasingly specialized in the primary production of food for the growing urban population and in cash crops for export earnings to support domestic industrialization, while the rural labor force is linked with the urban informal sector to form a reserve for the urban formal sector.

The reality depicted by Hayami (1998) above reflects the lowly development status the rural sector has been accorded in Ghana which has been grotesquely exacerbated by the turn to neoliberalism in the 1980s. Through a comparative policy history approach which brings into critical conversation the Ghana and Korea responses to rural development we argue for a new paradigm for Ghana's development with the rural sector at the core instead of the periphery. This work therefore seeks to explore (Hayami, *ibid*)

an alternate route to economic development in which there is movement of the modern production base into the rural sector, rather than migration of the rural labor force into the urban sector. In this alternative path, widespread rural industrial activities could be organized in a decentralized manner by exploiting not only the physical labor but also the entrepreneurial ability of rural people: two resources that were underutilized in the past. This rural-based development strategy, if found to be feasible, could alleviate the major difficulty in the tradeoff between growth and equity that confronts developing countries.

## 2      **Korea: Industrializing against All Odds and the Rural-Urban Gap**

Struggling to overcome the after effects of the Korean War Chang (2007, p. 3) described the Korea of the 1950s and 1960s as a “basket case of development failure.” Korea's main exports then were tungsten and fish among other primary commodities. In addition to the heavy human cost of war which had an impact on Korea's working population, Korea also had to deal with complications created by the separation from the resource-rich North Korea. Illiteracy was wide-spread and the country had to rely heavily on foreign aid – especially from the US, United Nations, and Japan – to feed its citizens.

Interestingly, by 1957, Ghana and a handful of other African countries enjoyed very similar if not better per capita incomes and economic conditions than South Korea (Nissanke, 2000; Chang, 2007). Ghana, it must be noted, was natural resources rich with a population of less than 6 million at independence. Korea will reverse her parlous state however as she entered the 1960s which marked the beginning of a spectacular economic boom.

Under the authoritarian rule of Major General Park Chung-Hee, Korea set out on a brave course toward economic transformation through the pursuit of export-led industrialisation. The programme was hugely successful resulting

in the emergence of heavy and chemical industries (HCI), huge government-backed conglomerates (*chaebol*) and the rapid expansion and development of sprawling metropolises particularly its capital Seoul and the port city of Busan. Trade boomed while South Korea established its reputation as a formidable exporter of advanced technologies including electronic equipment, cars, and ships. Incomes rose rapidly for the country's urban populations and poverty was on the decline. South Korea had effectively achieved success as a developmental state. The developmental state is one in which the state through its deliberately crafted institutions defies the strictures of the market in pursuit of national transformation through rapid industrialization (Amoah, 2018; Ayee, 2013; Woo-Cummings). Indeed Korea will cement this new-fangled status by formally becoming a member of the Paris based Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996.

While Korea's economic boom was great for the urban areas (Ho, 1979; Yong and Jung-Jay, 1988; Brandt, 1979), it had an adverse effect on her rural dwellers. Writing in the 1970s Ho (1979, 645) argued that:

Regional imbalance has become a significant problem in South Korea, the consequence of rapid and geographically concentrated industrialization. Because rapid aggregate growth and regionally balanced development are not necessarily compatible objectives, this problem poses special difficulties for Korea's policy makers.

This phenomenon of increased expansion and availability of opportunity in the urban areas led to a massive rural-urban drift. The socioeconomic conditions in the rural areas worsened in comparison to the urban areas as the income gap between urban and rural areas widened. Data from Lee et al (2004) calculated in nominal terms (in the Korean national currency the won<sup>2</sup>) illustrate the extent of this alarming disparity in incomes between the rural and urban areas. In 1965 and 1970 the per capita income of the rural household was 18,000.00 won and 43,000.00 won respectively. In the same years the figures for urban households are 16,000.00 won and 55,000.00 won respectively. It is clear that by 1970 the rural-urban income gap had widened. The need to bridge this income gap and tackle especially the latent political threat of rural poverty and underdevelopment, prompted the Park government to launch an intensive, nationwide, community-based integrated rural development programme called the *Saemaül Undong* initiative (which can be loosely translated into

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<sup>2</sup> Represented with the symbol W.

English as the New Village Movement, NVM). Indeed at the political level rural Korea which had been considered President Park's natural allies and voting stronghold will begin to show their discontent such that in the 1969 elections his Democratic Republic Party will see its approval ratings dip to 69% in the rural areas.

The *Saemaül Undong* with its attendant positive and negative impacts will emerge as the means to stem this adverse rural political tide with its economic ramifications. The initiative will become a flagship Korean development policy export to many developing countries in the region and beyond. Drawing primarily from critical scholarly analysis of the initiative, we shall take another look at the *Saemaül Undong* and make comparisons with Ghana's rural development approaches to reveal what could serve as best practises and benchmarks for this West African nation's quest for rural development and thus economic progress.

### 3 The *Saemaül Undong*: Korea's Rural Development Success Story?

The emergence of *Saemaül Undong* movement, hereinafter SMU<sup>3</sup> must be seen less as the product of cold cerebral rural policy planning than that of a combination of serendipity and urban Korea's industrial good fortune. It is ironic that Korea's industrialized urban space which was linked to the discontent in the rural areas will offer the means by which SMU will emerge. Faced with a reported overproduction of cement in the winter of 1970, the government decided to distribute for free the excess to its rural population. The first 355 packs of cement distributed to 34, 665 rural communities came with a proviso: the product must be used for the welfare of the entire community. This distribution scheme was to prove a success as the projects embarked upon by the communities was valued at almost three times (W12.2 billion; approximately US\$48 million) the value of the cement given away. President Park will sense a political (response to the discontent of his rural base the total loss of which will threaten his tenuous grip on power<sup>4</sup>) and economic (reduce absolute

3 This will be used interchangeably with New Village Movement (NVM). The *Saemaül Undong* is also known in the literature as the New Community Movement.

4 Park Chung-Hee's political career was an intriguing one. He opportunistically and cleverly exploited Korean popular discontent that had long built up against the corrupt Syngman Rhee administration and which ultimately culminated in the April Student Revolution of 1960. He will lead a military coup on May 16, 1961 and became the Chairman of the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction. Park will discharge himself from the Korean Army which he had joined during Japanese colonial rule and win the 1963 election on the ticket of the newly created Democratic Republican Party. On the back of policies directed at strong economic

poverty in the rural Korea) opportunity to drive his Korean reconstruction agenda (Kim, 2004) that will target the rural populace far more intensely and directly and thus was born the SMU.

The SMU was announced on April 22, 1971 during a rousing speech by President Park Chung-Hee at a provincial government leaders' meeting held in Busan, a city in south-eastern Korea. Park emphasised the need to address the growing problem of underdevelopment in the rural areas. He admitted that, even though the economies of the urban centres were booming, the rural areas appeared to be left out of this success story. At the time, rural-urban migration had grown to unsustainable levels. The young labour force of the villages was moving in droves to the cities in search of employment in the industries that had sprung up there. This resulted in labour shortage to run<sup>5</sup> the agrarian economies in the villages. That was a threat not only to the development of those regions but also to the food security of the whole country, not to mention the risk of the government losing support in the rural areas. Park devised a plan that would revolutionise the villages from the bottom-up. He declared:

There is no hope in the village where villagers' yearning [for a better life] is not evident. If villagers initiate a development initiative [themselves], the village community can complete it in 2 or 3 years with only a small amount of government subsidy. It is the role of local government officials to encourage the villagers in this regard. Rural poverty should not be viewed a pre-destined outcome, but rather confronted with a spirit of self-help and self-support. In the near future, all villages could be

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growth and the alleviation of absolute poverty Park will go on to win the elections of 1967 and 1971. Defying the two term presidential term limit of the 1963 Constitution Park ran for a third term in 1971 after amending the constitution. He consequently beat Dae-Jung Kim but only narrowly at the 1971 polls which exposed especially rural discontent with his policies. Park's response was brazen. In October 1972, he declared a state of emergency, dissolved the National Assembly and suspended the Constitution. Under a new "Yushin" Constitution that was approved in December of 1972 Park became a lifetime president. Protests calling for the end of Park's dictatorship will bubble up among students and later became nationwide. The coincidence of the emergence of Park's political troubles in the early 70s and the launch of the SMU is telling showing clearly his efforts to regain rural support.

- 5 Even under normal circumstances agrarian conditions in Korea were environmentally harsh and unsparing. Brant writing in 1980 (pp. 182-183) reported that Korea's soils were "not particularly rich and require constant, intensive renewal and fertilization." He added further that Korea experienced unpredictable rainfall patterns and the brutal reality of only 23% of a rugged mountainous land area being cultivable. Within this natural framework it must be recognized that social conditions for peasants engaged primarily in wet rice agriculture in Korea as in other Asian countries was anchored in exploitation by a "bureaucratic-agrarian system." (Brandt, 1980, p. 182).

well-kept communities ... You could refer to this as a 'Village Remodelling Movement'. (Asian Development Bank, 2012, pp. 5-6)

In that speech, he outlined what the government's approach to rural development would be: a community-driven programme supported directly by government protection and investment based on a decentralised approach of self-help and diligence.

To kick-start this project, the Park government supplied half a ton of iron rods (in addition to the 335 cement bags already alluded to above) to each of the country's villages (*maul*) as seed investment for these rural units to come together and take charge of the improvement of infrastructure in their areas. Progress of the villages was monitored. Through *Saemaül Order of Merit*, the villages which recorded an increase in economic output due to good use of the supplies given were rewarded with more supplies to improve infrastructure even further. Soon, there was intense competition for agricultural success between the villages to gain the favour of the government.

The SMU did not stop there. Rural development being a major focus for the government in the country's Third Five-Year Economic Plan, the SMU was to play a key role in realizing government-defined objectives: modernising infrastructure, raising household incomes, reforestation mountains and improving the overall rural environment (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Thus, a series of projects were to be achieved through the SMU including:

- i. *Modernising rural production infrastructure (like road networks)*
- ii. *Updating agricultural infrastructure (this included introducing mechanised farming and new higher-yield varieties of rice)*
- iii. *Electrification and introduction of telecommunication systems en masse*
- iv. *Increasing rural incomes through increased productivity and constant investment*
- v. *Forestation Projects (for profit, controlling erosion and improving water tables)*
- vi. *Welfare and Environmental Projects (to improve housing and sanitation, and build community facilities)*

In a move to make sure that the policies outlined by the government were effectively communicated and coordinated from the grassroots level, the Park government established the Training Institute for *Saemaül* Leaders in Suwon, Seoul. The institute was established to train a cohort of younger leaders selected by the villages to steer the SMU development policies in their villages. The training focused not only on practical skills but also ideological and leadership competencies needed by the leaders to guide collaboration between the traditional village leaders (*rijang*) and the people of the village taking part in

the SMU development projects. The training centre was also a key provider of extension services for the farmers in the rural areas. The *Saemaŭl* leaders went on to guide many of the successful projects of the SMU like the replacement of thatched roof with slate, aluminium and tile that quickly gave the villages a new, more modern appearance while providing better protection from the weather (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

In addition to the decentralised approach to rural development, President Park and his government were very much involved in the running of the programme. His keen oversight over the implementation and promotion of the programme would come to define his regime. He provided the ideational impetus and the physical drive as well needed to popularise the movement and even romanticised it to the entire population:

It was President Park, with his strong will and commitment, who initiated, designed and provided continuous support for Saemaul Undong. He made Saemaul Undong a top priority of his Government, checking monthly progress, inviting villagers to cabinet meetings to give presentations, and making surprise visits to villages and training centres (Sooyoung, 2009, 127).

Just as the leaders of the *chaebols* were hailed as the heroes in the Korea's economic development story, the farmer was hailed as a heroic figure in the story of Korea's national development. Accolades were showered on successful rural communities in an attempt to attract the youth to resettle in the rural areas and get involved in the agricultural transformation and modernization happening there. The government made use of effective marketing and branding that popularised the *Saemaŭl Spirit*, an ideological movement that was to power the push for rural development through diligence, self-help, and cooperation. This ideological perspective also contributed to boosting the confidence of the people in the Park government's approach to rural development.

#### 4 The Golden Era of the SMU Ends and the Aftermath

By 1979, Korea's rural development had improved so much that rural dwellers, including those engaged in non-agricultural businesses, enjoyed average incomes very close to that of urban dwellers. In October that year, Park Chung-Hee, the pioneer and promulgator of the SMU, was assassinated (by Jae-Gyu Kim, the director of the National Intelligence Agency) and the ensuing change of government would bring the golden age of the SMU to an end. Regardless,

in about 8 years, the standard of living in the rural areas had increased significantly. Rural incomes had risen from the pre-programme average of 255,800 won in 1970 to 1,531,300 won (Reed, 2010) – a figure that approached parity with urban income levels.

The consensus is that the SMU had been particularly effective, in almost dramatic terms, in addressing absolute poverty in Korea and in a relatively short time frame (Park, 1998; Park, 2009; Reed, 2012). South Korea had at the very least, if not overcome, laid a useful foundation, for tackling the perennial challenge of rural development and poverty in a systematic and focused fashion. The relative success of SMU under Park Chung-Hee was acclaimed worldwide and attracted the attention of other African and Asian countries which were also searching for effective approaches for tackling rural underdevelopment. The demise of President Park will set in train a new political trajectory for Korea which ironically was inspired by the SMU. For Kim (2004, 147) this was a paradox since “... the state’s education and indoctrination programs in the *Saemaül* Movement taught ordinary people that political freedom was inseparable from their pursuit of economic freedom, empowerment and happiness.” The telling effect of this new trajectory was embodied in the turn from Park’s authoritarian developmentalism to development guided by a liberal democratic ethos. The SMU will be one of the key targets of this turn as it was privatized and thus cut free from government control (and therefore all vestiges of the authoritarianism of the Park years) by 1980. Subsequently the Korean government through the privatized *Saemaül Undong* Centre has been promoting Korea’s rural development experience as part of its development support for developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

In this work, we must be quick to add that we are sensitive to the limits of portability of the NVM at both the conceptual and practical spheres and do not seek in any way to canvass for its isomorphic root and branch adoption in Ghana. The literature on the SMU clearly cautions against that and for valid and legitimate reasons. For one the SMU was rolled out under very specific political-economy conditions which are different from Ghana’s contemporary political-economy realities. Under the Yushin Constitution (of 1972) Park effectively ruled under martial law without any organized official opposition against his leadership and the policies that flowed from it. Seung-Mi (2004, 74) underscores this view:

The October Yushin (Restoration) was designed to strengthen the power of the president, who was “elected” by the indirect voting of the *Tongiljuche Kukminhoeui* (National Council for the Autonomous Unification) members, appointed by the government.

It was within and from this period that the SMU begun to take root and deepen. Effectively there was no debate about the goals the SMU should seek to realize for rural dwellers and how beyond President Park's conception of it in the Blue House. This political framework meant that SMU could function as an "excuse for coercing citizens into unwanted or excessive work" (Seung-Mi, 2004, 79). Such an excuse cannot pass muster in Ghana's current liberal democratic dispensation. Having gone through long periods of strong man rule (both civilian and military) the 4th Republican Constitution (1992 Constitution) was effectively designed to limit and constrain the exercise of power. This ideal has been most eloquently manifested and entrenched in the Ghanaian polity in the successive handing over of power three times among the two leading political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the last 25 years. The Constitution seeks expressly to protect and promote rights such as that of free speech, association and thought. Institutions have been set up to adjudicate on rights matters of which one of the most notable is the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). It is evident then that even contemplating the adoption and deployment of a coercive Parkian approach to rural development as embodied in the NVM in Ghana today will be at best foolhardy.

It is important as well to take into full and proper cognizance another limiting reality: the traditional structure of power and influence in the rural setting. The contemporary Ghana case and that of Korea under Park differ. In the Korean case the SMU had to confront this for buy-in, mobilizational and administrative reasons. The traditional village in Korea had its village chief (*rijang*) who was selected through an informal process. Tradition dictated though that the *rijang* will be an elderly male and come from the dominant clans. The SMU will confront this by utilizing a clever dual approach incorporating appointed or elected *rijang* and younger people<sup>6</sup> to serve as *Saemaül* Leaders. The traditional elites played a role to be sure

but they were never given any power or resources to carry out government projects. Since the Park government was not interested in developing electoral politics, it was natural that these people were treated only as ideological upholders of the regime, with Confucian loyalty and filial piety. In contrast, young, motivated people in their forties, usually with

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6 In a Confucian society with its hierarchical ordering based on age and privilege, this was revolutionary but made possible because of the authoritarian political order in place. This order will justify itself in part by pointing to its necessity because of the communist threat and became reproducible partially through the NVM against which any challenge "was regarded as a defiance against the state." (Seung-Mi, 2004, p. 78).

an insignificant family background but with a strong will and a burning desire for a better life, were mobilized by the state to check on the traditional elites and to implement the NVM (Seung-Mi, 2004, p. 79).

The contemporary Ghanaian political-economy clearly lacks the simplicity of the Park era that the authoritarian political order both afforded and enforced. Any novel Ghanaian approach at rural transformation in the SMU mold will have to take into account multiple actors and in particular the chiefs<sup>7</sup>(bastion of traditional authority), the bureaucrats (the local government system), political parties and a phalanx of civil and non-governmental organizations whose roles are constitutionally derived, guaranteed and protected. Salient as well is the funding question for such rapid, sustained rural development that the SMU came to be associated with. Korea's industrialization success will provide the funds for the SMU and with it some national accounts balancing acts. These balancing acts will produce strains as evidenced by the budgetary challenges which cropped up by the 1980s (Yong Hyo and Jung-Jay, 1988, pp. 177-179).

The consensus in the literature on the SMU points to its broader national reach in Korea's rapid development agenda linked to but stretching beyond the initial rural focus. Kim's (2004: 142) metaphor is apt: "the infrastructure of *Saemaül* Movement enveloped the entire country like a vast, densely woven web from the tiniest family unit to the *Saemaül* Movement headquarters in the Blue House." What was this grand end then we might ask? The argument has been made that SMU ultimately forged the Korean citizen essentially into a compliant work horse for Korean style industrial capitalism. To be sure this forging was facilitated in no small measure by martial law (Yushin Reforms). Thus the *Saemaül* Factory which envisaged training for factory workers will be extended compulsorily to the highest echelons of the Korean state to encompass senior bureaucrats of cabinet standing and stature. This in the end will generate political and industrial strife which pitted bureaucrats and the *chaebols* on one hand against the *minjung* (Seung-Mi, 2004, p. 83):

The *minjung* ideology gradually entrenched itself among urban labourers, students, progressive intellectuals and some disillusioned farmers

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7 Odotei and Awedoba (2006, p. 11) note and rightly that "chieftaincy is one of the most enduring traditional institutions of Ghana and has displayed remarkable resilience from pre-colonial through colonial and post colonial times." They add that chiefs are expected to manage "local resources for development" for the welfare of their people "in an increasingly globalized world characterized by emphasis on democratic governance, human rights..."

from the mid-1970s on as a moral vision of political, economic and socio-cultural resistance against the state-chaebol alliance.

Without suggesting mimicking in exact detail the Korean example, the riddle to unravel then for Ghana, will be whether rural transformation in the case of this West African nation should be a goal in itself or a goal within and directed at a broader industrialization<sup>8</sup> agenda? We will attempt to respond to this in the subsequent sections.

## 5 Rural Development under Nkrumah: Attempts, Struggles and Failures

Like many African countries that gained independence, Ghana as a newly independent country positioned herself to deal with the challenges she had suffered and blamed on lack of political freedom. These challenges included rural development and poverty alleviation across the country. Some have highlighted the favourable politico-economic position Ghana found herself in at independence. Unlike many countries in sub-Saharan, the Ghanaian economic<sup>9</sup> situation was off to a good start at independence. As the world's biggest exporter of cocoa and the second largest producer of gold, Ghana had vast foreign exchange reserves waiting to be tapped. In addition to this, social infrastructure was rather developed for a sub-Saharan nation. Ghana had more well-educated professionals than any other African country south of the Sahara (Werlin, 1994). Unlike South Korea however, Ghana's rural development approach and record while varying wildly across the numerous regimes, has not led to such notable results. Ghana's first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, identified quite early on that rural development was key to dealing with poverty because most of the young nation's population was rural and poor. Deeply concerned about the rural question Nkrumah (Rathbone, 1992, p. 354)

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8 This is germane given that Ghana's long held dream to industrialize has come back with renewed vigour and interest at the policy level under the new Nana Akufo-Addo administration (hereafter NAAA). There is actually an uncanny similarity between the Saemaŭl Factory and the NAAA's One district One factory policy. The latter seeks to rapidly industrialize in the Ghanaian countryside just like the Saemaŭl Factory did with only partial success (Yong and Jung-Jay, 1988).

9 A rider is important here though. While Ghana's economic situation placed her at an relatively advantageous position in the developing world her need for more resources given her acute developmental challenges was still dire in many respects. In many speeches Nkrumah (Obeng, 2009) will underline this.

will write a letter (14th December, 1956) full of urgency to Alan Lennox-Boyd (Secretary of State of the Colonies) on that matter in 1956. Nkrumah looked forward to dollops of Western financial investments to not just develop Ghana but do so rapidly and radically. Indeed the rural question was on his mind in the letter in question when he made a request to the British Government to provide financial support for the construction of the Bimbilla-Bawku Road (estimated to cost £400,000.00). Nkrumah conceived the road as part of a broader plan<sup>10</sup> to develop the impoverished rural Northern Territories.

Nkrumah, it must be added, was well aware of the politico-economic and even moral rationale for rapid rural transformation. At independence the new Convention People's Party (CPP) had to prove itself capable of providing a better standard of living for the teeming masses than had pertained under British colonial rule. This was imperative for political stability in the period following closely on the heels of independence.<sup>11</sup>

The economic and moral imperatives turned on the role rural dwellers had played in the Ghanaian independence struggle (Adu-Boahen, 1985; Danquah, 1984). On the Akuapem Ridge (specifically in Mampong initially) in Ghana's Eastern Region, the ingenuity and entrepreneurial drive of Gold Coast farmers such as Tetteh Quarshie and Nana John Kwame Ayew among others will transform cocoa into a formidable global industrial crop.<sup>12</sup> Cocoa export proceeds will become the mainstay of the Gold Coast economy the control of which will culminate in clashes between the cocoa farmers one side and the Colonial authorities and European business interests on the other. The frustrations of cocoa hold-ups (all led by Nana John Kwame Ayew) of the 1920s and 1930s will ultimately be canalized into a broader goal: overthrow of the colonial order as a permanent solution.

The outbreak of the Swollen Shoot disease will provide the needed fillip for this canalization. In order to halt the ravages and spread of this disease the Colonial authorities issued *Swollen Shoot Disease of Cocoa Order Number 148 of December 1946* which provided the legal basis for cutting out diseased trees. This policy measure did not go down well with the already suspicious cocoa farmers who saw it as an attempt to deprive them of their primary means of

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10 Nkrumah had suggested the setting up of a fund in which the retreating British will contribute £1.5 million per annum over a decade. The idea of a fund arose from the suspension of the Colonial Development and Welfare grants as independence approached. Nkrumah sought to hedge against this in order to guarantee funds for among others rural development.

11 In any case the colonial struggle itself had been contentious and acrimonious pitting Nkrumah's party against the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and its offshoots.

12 Earlier attempts to pull this off had failed in the Caribbean and other parts of the world.

survival and heirloom. The cocoa farmers through their organizations (which had a long history of resistance) such as the *Sika Mpoano Akuatse Fekuwa* (Gold Coast Farmers Association) and the Ashanti Farmers Union were driven into the arms of the urban nationalist leaders who saw a political opportunity and seized it. Two anti-colonial forces which hitherto had not been organizationally and ideologically united will join forces against the colonial establishment on the Gold Coast.

The CPP will go on to make the swollen shoot affair part of their manifesto concerns for the 1951<sup>13</sup> elections and in 1957 form the first independence government. It is clear that Nkrumah had a moral duty to improve the lot of Ghana's rural citizens. The strategy of the Ghanaian government under Nkrumah was to rapidly develop the rural areas through industrialisation and improvement of infrastructure. In addition, in line with Nkrumah's socialistic leanings, considerable effort was put into social development. This effort led to the establishment of fee-free schools, public hospitals, state farms, and the construction of other supporting infrastructure like feeder roads and irrigation systems to boost development in the rural areas. However, this vigorous push did not last long enough to foster significant and lasting results; Nkrumah was deposed in a coup in 1966.

We must hasten here though to sound a cautionary note. It will seem that the agrarian sector (and by extension rural dwellers), mostly ensconced in rural Ghana, mattered to Nkrumah so long as it was a secondary appendage to his industrialization dreams. At the 2018 Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisburg Lecture noted Ghanaian historian Emmanuel Akyeampong will underscore the point that Nkrumah held dim views of the place and value of small holder peasant farmers in his grand development scheme. He will fall out with his chief economic advisor the Trinidadian economist Arthur Lewis on development strategy on precisely the same points (Kanbur, 2017). Arthur Lewis preferred an initial focus on agriculture in tandem with setting up of light industries. Nkrumah on the other hand preferred heavy industrialization. In a sense then Park was as Nkrumahist as Nkrumah was Parkian: "industrialize first, invest in agriculture later." This clearly points up the complexities associated with Nkrumah's rural development policies especially on whether or not they were merely a footnote of his larger rapid industrialization drive.

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13 Tellingly in December, 1949, Ayew the chief cocoa farmer had formed the Ghana Farmer's Congress and made it a wing of the CPP. (Danquah, 1994, p. 16).

## 6 Post Nkrumah Rural Development Policies up to the Fourth Republic

Attempts at rural development after Nkrumah have been many and varied. The Busia government under the Second Republic also drew up the One-Year Plan for Rural Development. This plan was the first integrated rural development plan in Ghana. Its goal was to rapidly industrialise the rural economy but it threw out Nkrumah's socialistic approach and replaced it with a market driven orientation that sought to encourage foreign investment into the sector while improving domestic entrepreneurship. Of course, due to a series of unpopular policies and other factors including a heavy debt burden on the economy (Libby, 1976), devaluation of the currency and a sharp drop in cocoa prices, the Busia government did not last long and by 1972 had been overthrown in a coup d'état led by Col. Acheampong. Busia's rural development vision was still born.

Between the Second and Third Republics (1972-1979), two different military juntas took power. Ironically, it was under the rule of the National Redemption Council (NRC) – headed by the aforementioned Acheampong – that Ghana pursued a rural development strategy that approached Korea's SMU in similarity of concept. Under the motto "Operation Feed Yourself" (OFY) and "Operation Feed Your Industries" (OFYI), the NRC government set out to focus on the country's agricultural sector and development across the country. Clearly, the meaning of the motto was unambiguous. Self-help was the way the government intended to solve Ghana's looming food crisis and agricultural development.

Part of a Five-Year Plan for the nation's development, the goal was to increase farmer incomes and create employment opportunities in the rural, agrarian economy. Unprecedentedly, a quarter of the resources dedicated to the Plan was earmarked for rural areas and agricultural development. The OFY and OFYI as Ghana's main rural development approach during the 1970s was a mixed bag of successes and shortcomings. While the motives and general strategies of OFY and OFYI were decent, Nsiah-Gyabah (1998) notes that mismanagement and corruption (*Kalabule*) undermined the effectiveness of the important aspect of social infrastructure provision that if successful may have helped the programme to succeed and possibly put Ghana's rural development effort on a path similar to Korea's – where the SMU was concurrently starting to show its first signs of success. Regardless, OFY and OFYI did succeed at doing one thing: rallying people around private farming and agriculture for self-sustenance. OFY and OFYI sparked a wave of farming everywhere in the country; farming became trendy as compound plantations and backyard gardening became widespread (Nsiah-Gyabah, 1998).

The short-lived Third Republic yielded to the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) – another military junta – led by Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings. Saddled with deep economic challenges [the response to which was Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)], most of the moves for rural development and poverty alleviation were more a response to the hardships engendered by SAPs than a deliberate, integrated strategy. Thus, in the grand scheme of things, a specific focus on rural development was buried in the background till the end of the regime and the start of Ghana's Fourth and current Republic. In spite of this, Ghana under Rawlings did pull off some laudable reform. There was a push toward a new form of decentralisation: District Assemblies. The Rawlings government believed in local government authorities as the fulcrum for community involvement and ownership of rural development goals.<sup>14</sup> The Rawlings government may thus have created the foundation that could be harnessed in the future to bring about successful community-driven rural development projects. Meanwhile, Ghana has since not achieved a significant boost in rural development on the scale of SMU-era Korea.

## 7 What Lessons can the SMU Offer Contemporary Ghana?

In spite of the justified critiques against it the SMU produced real results for Korea. Brandt (cited in Kim, 2004, p. 133) concedes this:

The paradox of top-down, centrally directed mobilization campaign such as the SaemaŬl Movement is that it cannot escape its essentially bureaucratic characteristics, even when the policy goal is to create self-sufficient, independent, self reliant villages ... it [nevertheless] is probably unique in the developing world in terms of results as measured by rapid improvement in the quality of rural life.

Granted that SMU was so successful for South Korea, could it produce similar results if Ghana adopted it as the be-all-end-all for rural development? An affirmative answer to this question seems enticing to be sure. However, as already indicated in this work we urge caution to avoid the temptation of transplanting the SMU concept hook, line and sinker as a model for responding

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14 Kwamena, Awhoi, 2017, *Decentralization in Ghana: A Collection of Essays*. Accra: Winmat. He provides a comprehensive and authoritative historical, legal, constitutional, theoretical and practical analysis of Ghana's local government system set in train under PNDC era and the Fourth Republic.

to Ghana's rural development woes. The better approach would be to use the SMU as a repository of best practices; lessons to guide the formulation and implementation of an integrated, home-grown rural development strategy that will have the best possible chance of success. We shall examine some of the lessons that Ghana can learn from the Korean experience of rural development under Park Chung-Hee that could be useful for increasing the chances of success of a future rural development strategy.

### 7.1 *Mass Education*

In many ways, the success of the SMU in Korea can be attributed partly to a set of socio-economic, political and institutional conditions existing before the launch of the initiative. Korea has been argued to be in an advantageous strategic position that fostered her economic miracle. Some have argued that Korea, strategically exploited her geopolitical value as a critical leverage to secure substantial support in the form of foreign aid, grants, and trade friendliness from the West (especially the United States of America) in the Cold War context (Douglass, 2013). The end of the Cold War and the radical re-configuration of the world order meant that the context of Korea during the miracle cannot be repeated and is exclusive to the period. However, we hold and advance the view that, to maximise the chances of success for a future rural development strategy we can learn from the approaches taken by Korea to not only create a fertile environment but drive as well a rural development boom like the SMU. Drawing from the literature on SMU in particular and Korea's development pathways generally we shall point out some lessons Ghana can learn from Korea's rural development experience and suggest a number of areas that need to be prioritised to improve the outcomes of Ghana's attempts at tangible and far reaching rural development.

In the first place, in the lead up to the SMU period of the 1970s, Korea invested heavily in education. At independence in 1945, Korea had an estimated literacy rate of 20 percent. Despite the devastation of the Korean War that followed, by 1960 the literacy rate had improved drastically to over 90 percent. This development which was realized through investment in primary education and mass-literacy programmes created a population that was intellectually ready to participate in development projects and to accept new technologies, even in the rural areas. Brandt (1979, 148) points to the value of high literacy for Korea's rural development:

A tremendous national effort after liberation resulted in the achievement of compulsory, universal primary school education by about 1960, accompanied by a very rapid expansion in the number of secondary schools and colleges.

Brandt (1980, p. 184) adds further and perceptively:

For purposes of long-range development, attitudes toward education are perhaps as important as actual educational attainments, and Korean farmers share the widespread Korean obsession with learning. In fact, they are often criticized for spending too large a proportion of their scarce resources on education of their children.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2014), literacy rate in Ghana as at 2014 stands at an estimated 56.3 percent. Most of the literate population is disproportionately concentrated in the urban areas of Ghana. Rural illiteracy remains rather high (at almost 70 percent) than in the urban areas (about 30 percent). Clearly, Ghana still has a long way to go in terms of eradicating illiteracy in her population. Korea managed to create in a generation a population that was ready to take part actively in an integrated community-driven development approach like the SMU. There will be challenges ahead to be sure which are surmountable through bold reform in Ghana's education system to increase access and improve quality of student and teacher education through a focus not just on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) – as has often been suggested by Ghana's recent education policies – but also the inclusion of Arts (STEAM) as the Koreans did. This will ensure that many more cohorts of students get educated across the educational spectrum both in the rural and urban areas. This particular point on the links between education and development is ironic giving that at independence Ghana had one of the most highly educated citizens in the developing world and Ghanaians to this day are also obsessed with education like Koreans.

It must added for perspective that this vexing literacy problem in rural Ghana was recognized by the PNDC government which set up the Non-Formal Education Division (NFED) in 1987 within the Ministry of Education. Neoliberalization, government's ambivalence and/or reluctance to continue to fund the NFED, logistical neglect among other factors will ensure that the golden age non-formal education in Ghana in the 1990s will be over by the turn of this century. Revisiting the education of especially rural dwellers should be seen as critical (as the Korean case demonstrates) if Ghana seeks to bring about rapid rural transformation.

### 7.2 *Local Leadership and Ownership*

Ghana's limited attainments regarding rural development has been blamed on poor policy implementation and monitoring arising from poor administrative capacity and over-centralization of the bureaucracy and decision-making. This has caused a certain over-reliance on the government to launch development

projects. This is not to say that government has no business launching development projects in the rural areas. On the contrary, the government has a role, and inevitably so, to play supporting and guiding policy implementation. The point here is that the way most rural development strategies have been handled in the past have not been people-centred. They have followed a top-down than bottom-up approach. The corollary is that rural development is disrupted as soon as government lapses at the top become apparent. Public administration theory grapples with this problem under the Political Elasticity theory. Political Elasticity theory (Werlin, 1994, p. 34) is concerned about the ways in which political power may be conceived beyond a zero-sum notion for purposive national development goals. In this rendering “political power takes on “rubber band” and “balloon characteristics” which allow leaders to “(a) decentralize or delegate power by various means without losing control and (b) expand their influence in ways that predictably affect the behaviour of wider citizens, participants, and subordinates.” Ghana’s rural development shortcoming reflect all the signs of political inelasticity. We will illustrate this with what we describe in the Ghana context as the *Northern Pentagonal Road Play* (NPRP). Amoah (2016) has argued that the budgeting process under the Fourth Republic and the budget documents arising out of it must be considered products of a well crafted bureaucratic ritual than a serious attempt at responding to Ghana’s policy problems. We turn to Ghana’s budget documents over an 18 year period (2000-2018) to further reinforce this view as we unpack the NPRP.

In 1956 (in a letter to the then Secretary of the Colonies, Lennox-Boyd) as already mentioned, Nkrumah was of the view that constructing the roads (see Figure 1) in the northern part of Ghana was a developmental necessity that will connect the impoverished North to the relatively well off South. For him this was necessary to spur transformation in arguably Ghana’s most ruralized parts, including the North. Policymakers under the 4th Republic in Ghana seem to share this view (the Bimbilla-Bawku Road is now part of the famous Eastern Corridor project<sup>15</sup>) as the budget and other policy documents show but cannot seem to build these vital roads (desperately needed in these rural areas for

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15 Hereafter EC. This is an ongoing road project of approximately 695 km defined as “National Road N2 connecting Tema Port and the Kulungugu Border Post (BP) with Burkina Faso.” (Ministry of Roads and Highways, 2013). It is worth noting that as at 2013, 400 km (58%) of N2 was unpaved.



obfuscating bureaucratic jargon). Our argument is that a greater role for local ownership (bottom-up participation and leadership) of these roads will have aided their rehabilitation and construction. With central government authorities (based mostly far away in the capital) essentially driving the process these roads meandering through rural communities are conceived as being distant and unconnected to their everyday lives. They therefore pay less or no attention to their construction and subsequent maintenance. Without active

TABLE 1 Northern Pentagonal Road Play (NPRP)\*

Budget Year	Road Stretch	Comments in Budget	Our Comments
2000	Jasikan-Yendi	Phase I Completed.	At the time of our research the information we gathered was that the Hohoe-Jasikan stretch (just 30km) was virtually unmotorable leading to demonstrations by citizens in that area. One needs to use this stretch to access the purported completed Phase 1.
2001	Tamale-Yendi	Mentioned as one of trunk roads under construction.	Interesting switch from the EC. The "play" has begun. First stretch of the pentagon.
2002	Tamale-Yendi	Mentioned as on-going construction to be continued.	This 43.0km road still remained unfinished after a year. Jasikan-Yendi Road not mentioned at all in this budget.
2003	Tamale-Yendi	Mentioned as on-going construction to be continued.	This 43.0km road still remained unfinished after 2 years. Jasikan-Yendi Road not mentioned at all in this budget.
2004	Tamale-Yendi	27% Complete.	It has taken three years for a road that will take 100 mins to traverse to be not even half way done.

TABLE 1 Northern Pentagonal Road Play (NPRP) (cont.)

Budget Year	Road Stretch	Comments in Budget	Our Comments
2005	Tamale-Yendi	94% Complete.	Four years gone and road still unfinished.
2006	Tamale-Yendi	No mention in budget.	Half a decade and no mention whether road completed or not. Curious why no update offered.
2007	Yendi-Bimbilla	New Project.	This is the <b>second</b> stretch of the pentagon and lies on the EC (this marks a reversion to the EC after six years).
2008	n/a	No mention of Tamale-Yendi or Yendi-Bimbilla Road.	Curious that no update given of Yendi-Bimbilla Road.

\* Government of Ghana Budgets Statements from 2000-2008.

TABLE 2 Northern Pentagonal Road Play (NPRP)\*

Budget Year	Road Stretch	Comments in Budget	Our Comments
2009	Yendi-Gushiegu	"Upgraded and partially reconstructed work substantially completed." (GoG, 2009, p. 118).	This is the third stretch of the pentagon and lies on the EC. It seems that when the lots were cast for which road to feature in the budget it fell on this stretch. Our research shows that by 2012 this stretch was unpaved.
2010	Tamale-Buipe lies on Central Corridor. In addition to the EC there are two other corridors namely the Central and Western Corridors.	To be rehabilitated as part of the Central Corridor Road.	This is the fourth stretch of the pentagon and is off the EC. There seems to be no consistent focus to finish the EC.

TABLE 2 Northern Pentagonal Road Play (NPRP)\* (*cont.*)

Budget Year	Road Stretch	Comments in Budget	Our Comments
2011	Tamale-Buipe	Rehabilitation continues.	No comment.
2012	Tamale-Buipe	Works continue	No comment
2013	Tamale-Buipe	"Other major project that will achieve significant progress this year." (GoG, 2013: p. 134).	For three years the works on this have continued. Per the budget it took two years to expect significant progress.
2014	No mention of Tamale-Buipe Road	No comment on this road.	No update and therefore promise of significant progress cannot be confirmed.
2015	Tamale-Buipe	Reports that this stretch 98% complete in 2014.	Curious that this update not given in 2014.
2016	Tamale-Buipe	100% complete.	It has taken 5 years to complete rehabilitation works on a 103.4 km road.
2017	Tamale-Yendi	Part of promise that: "195km of trunk roads and 25km of urban roads will be constructed" (GoG, 2017, p. 93).	This road was declared 94% complete in 2005.
2018-1	Tamale-Yendi	Programmed for continuation of construction.	This 43km road has been the focus of attention for 17 years and it is still under construction
2018-2	Tamale-Salaga-Bimbilla	Part of roads to be constructed in next three years.	This is the fifth stretch of the pentagon of the play.

\* Government of Ghana (GoG) Budgets Statements from 2000-2018.

participation and oversight by locals government's grandiose intentions regarding these roads is scarcely matched by tangible implementation outputs.

The SMU has a lot to teach Ghana in this regard. The SMU created new forms of leadership that cooperated with local village authorities. The *Saemaŭl* leaders selected by the various Korean village units, were trained by the government's *Saemaŭl* Leadership Training Centre. These leaders served as a change agents (Don, 2018)<sup>16</sup> and cooperated with traditional authority to mobilise the rural population to carry the objectives of the development policy. This approach created a sense of ownership in rural folk. The *Saemaŭl* leaders were also natives of the village and were some of the best qualified available there.

Ghana has made some strides in creating the District Assemblies (DAs). However, DAs have not been able to achieve the decentralisation they were intended to create and Ghana thus remains a heavily centralised state. The current situation with local government means that DAs are virtually redundant; a phenomenon we would like to term as non-participatory decentralisation. More efforts are needed toward harnessing the local government structure and involving traditional rulers and local leadership in the development process to create what we will term participatory decentralisation. This, in our view will be crucial if any rural development policies are to be successful.

### 7.3 *Co-operant Factors*

Learning from the SMU's success, linking up rural development and agricultural development policy, Ghana must seek to establish an all-integrated programme that will provide support for the rural farmers throughout all the stages of the farming process. Doing this may be a better approach to raising rural incomes as the burden of agricultural activities would be reduced for poorer, agrarian households. This will also ultimately lessen significantly the dependence of rural communities on funding from the centre for welfare, economic and social projects. Reed (2014) highlights how the all-encompassing nature of the SMU in Korea helped it to be effective. The SMU era saw the establishment of infrastructure to aid rural households in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. In this regard the Park government (2004, p. 75) is remembered for "riverbank building, the drilling of underground water, the readjustment of arable land – realized through such measures as rectangular planting patterns for rice fields – and hunger relief." Government support did

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16 A useful example, sanlim-kyes (voluntary mutual aid associations for the reforestation), part of the SMU, helped Korea to regain its lost forests.

not just end at providing better seed varieties and fertiliser but went further to include infrastructure to improve rural access to land and credit, government-sponsored processing, storage, transport, and communication facilities.

In 2017, the Ghanaian government launched a new policy for rural development called Planting for Food and Jobs. Its main goal is to create employment opportunities in agriculture and increase agricultural output as a way to increase rural incomes and boost rural development. While, the initiative has some promise as an attempt to foster integrated rural development, it risks being ineffective if it does not also include the other supporting facilities cited hitherto.

#### 7.4 *Mobilization and Moral Example*

Ghana can learn from the Park government's effective branding, publicity, and marketing approach<sup>17</sup> aimed at promoting the rural development drive. The digital age provides a distinctive and rare opportunity for such a massive mobilizational undertaking. The explosion of broadband internet access through mobile telephony in Africa comes to mind (Amoah, 2014). Park Chung-Hee played a pivotal role in making sure that the SMU was well-known across Korea – in both urban and rural areas. The motives of the government were made clear through effective use of the media and SMU was branded as a popular movement that was sure to succeed in creating truly transformative rural development. The Park administration managed to place a convincing shine on agriculture. Farmers were given the highest honours in the nation's development discourse; right up there with the CEOs who were powering Korea's urban industrialisation boom. Ghana OFY and OFYI initiatives are arguably the closest Ghana has come to achieving this kind of fanfare around agriculture and community-driven rural development. For the fortunes of Ghana's rural development to change, any strategy must seek to establish a change of mindset about rural development. Such a change in mindset would be necessary to promote the bottom-up participation that the SMU was so successful at creating. The world of today offers vast opportunities for Ghana to harness effective publicity and branding to pitch the cause of rural development to the masses. With the advent of social media and the strong penetration of traditional media especially TV and radio, Ghana can now, more than ever, effectively mobilise her population for an effective community-driven development push. The SMU

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<sup>17</sup> Our position takes into full account Moore's (1984-1985) caution about the mobilization components of the SMU.

element of change of mindset could be more successful should a visible media campaign be pursued.

It must be noted here that exemplary and focused leadership by Gen. Park helped to publicize and brand the SMU. He made it clear that the SMU was his top policy priority. This prioritization of the SMU was backed by a competent policy team (not political apparatchiks; the creation of the position of presidential special assistant exemplified this) at the Blue House which was led by able bureaucrats such Kim Chŏngnyŏm and O'Wŏnch'ol.

The lesson here is the need to strenuously avoid egregious politicisation at all costs if a rural development initiative such as SMU is to make progress. Park Chung-Hee as the figurehead for the SMU could have used the initiative as political ammunition to seek support. Critics of his regime have argued that the SMU was merely a ploy to increase popularity among the rural masses. Arguable as that may be, proponents of the SMU have opined that the initiative would not have been successful had it been unfurled in a patently partisan political fashion. Park managed to steer the SMU as a depoliticised vehicle for stirring Korean national consciousness on development based on shared and simple values (Douglass, 2013). He actively used his power to create an ideological force necessary to power rural development even long after his assassination. Ghana must learn from the Korean experience to allow attempts at community-driven rural developments projects to flourish without being necessarily tied to the political party which initiated it.

## 8 Conclusion

This paper has offered a critical appraisal of the Korean rural development strategy, *Saemaŭl Undong* (SMU) [New Village Movement]; its historical context and execution with a focus on what factors made the strategy successful. Today, the SMU is one of South Korea's exports in her foreign assistance repertoire. In light of Ghana's lacklustre rural development attempts, this work ponders the viability of SMU as an exemplar for Ghana in her quest for rural development.

We posit that though adopting SMU in the same way it was handled in Korea appears to be an attractive proposition, a more useful stance would be to consider some key lessons that the SMU offers Ghana, and indeed other developing nations. We have outlined some areas of special importance: a) improvement of education especially in the rural areas to bridge the illiteracy gap; b) better and emboldened action in favour of participatory decentralisation; c) the establishment of a comprehensive rural development plan that is

home-grown and home-oriented; d) the use of effective branding and marketing to inspire a change in mindset about rural development to instil values such as self-help and industry; and e) avoidance of politicisation of such rural development programmes to prevent sabotage and undermine peoples' ownership of any progress chalked .

To be sure, even if Ghana were to take these lessons seriously for the coming years, the journey ahead will be no less arduous. Ghana's contemporary context presents some daunting challenges. Since Ghana abandoned the developmental state approach after Nkrumah and subscribed to the liberal/neoliberal schools of development, she has been heavily limited in her agency.

Multilateral commitments and aid politics will impact how Ghana will be able to manoeuvre towards her development goals including confronting the rural question. Though a look at these commitments and limitations is beyond the scope of this paper, we are perhaps prompted to see the opportunities they present as well. The private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are two areas that Ghana could exploit to achieve her goals of economic development including rural development. Through service delivery, they have proven useful in grassroots mobilisation. Whether Ghana will succeed or fail in the years ahead the vexing question of rural development will depend on how well Ghana rallies this panoply of actors and integrates them in a deliberate development plan to realize the lofty dream of an economic boom like the Koreans have. Again the centrality of questions on nationalism, patriotism and just what kind of ideology will be required for realizing Ghana's rural development have been broached (especially in the Korean Case) but not comprehensively addressed in the comparative analysis. In our view it is best left for further work on this matter for which we have provided some invitation for further research. Ghana must continue to seek answers while learning from the most compelling examples in our world and deepen alliances that foster cooperation and exchange of policy experience. For this endeavour, Ghana's continuing 40-year-old diplomatic alliance with Korea could be a great asset in her arsenal.

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