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Social policy as nation-building: identity formation, policy feedback, and social citizenship in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Beyond economics-centric discourses about issues like “social investment,” in recent years scholars have argued that social programs, like education, healthcare, and income support arrangements, can be instrumental in the construction and reconstruction of national identities and solidarities at both the ideational and the institutional level. Drawing on this scholarship, this article makes a direct contribution to the comparative politics and policy literature by examining the trajectories of nation-building and social policy development in Ghana. It extends existing scholarship by providing an in-depth study of Ghana while using that case to further explore the understudied connection between social citizenship, identity formation, and policy feedbacks from existing social programs.

RÉSUMÉ

Au-delà des discours axés sur l'économie concernant des questions comme l'« investissement social », les chercheurs soutiennent depuis quelques années que les programmes sociaux, comme ceux portant sur l'éducation, la santé et les mesures d'aide au revenu, peuvent jouer un rôle déterminant dans la construction et la reconstruction des identités et des solidarités nationales, et ce tant au plan idéologique qu'institutionnel. Cet article s'inspire des analyses de ces chercheurs pour contribuer directement aux écrits comparatifs portant sur la vie politique et les politiques publiques, en examinant les trajectoires de l'édification de la nation et de l'élaboration des politiques sociales au Ghana. Il élargit les analyses existantes en proposant une étude approfondie du Ghana, tout en utilisant ce cas pour examiner de plus près le lien peu étudié entre la citoyenneté sociale, la formation des identités et les rétroactions politiques émanant des programmes sociaux existants.

KEYWORDS

Ghana; social policy; policy feedback; social citizenship; nation-building

MOTS CLÉS

Ghana; politiques sociales; rétroactions politiques; citoyenneté sociale; édification de la nation

1. Introduction

The social policy deprivation of the colonized during the colonial era became one of the key rallying cries for anti-colonial agitation in most African countries. Enhancing the social and economic well-being of citizens became the mantra of the immediate post-independence

governments in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Adésinà 2009). In a context of multi-layered political institutions with diverse ethnic loyalties, the first leaders of independent African countries increasingly sought to both create policies to build a sense of national unity among their citizens and to direct allegiance to the new post-colonial state through these social policies. This is consistent with the claim that social welfare policies may be implemented with the political objective of nation-building or national integration (Esping-Andersen 1996; Scarbrough 2000). Similarly, studies of select developed countries have shown that social policies correlate with solidarity and nation-building, and that retrenchment can result in nationalistic calls for separation (Béland and Lecours 2011; Kpessa, Béland, and Lecours 2011; McEwen 2006).

Meanwhile, as social policy in developing countries since the 1980s has been consigned to a residual category in dominant discourses on socio-economic transformation (Tendler 2004), social policy in advanced industrialized countries has been witnessing retrenchment and restructuring (Gilbert 2002; Pierson 1994). Although these developments derive their logic from the dominance of neoliberalism as a global policy paradigm, they were legitimized by the portrayal of social programs as a wasteful and unwarranted drain on national resources (see e.g. Rice and Prince 2000). In reaction to these discourses, a growing number of scholars and policy experts have embraced the idea that these programs are a form of “investment” in human capital formation. Others have also stressed the resilience of the welfare state (Scarbrough 2000). From this angle, both sides of the social policy debate increasingly focus on the value of social programs for economic development (Esping-Andersen et al. 2002; Morel, Palier, and Palme 2011).

Beyond these economics-centred discourses, students of social policy have argued in recent years that state programs like education, healthcare, and income support arrangements are instrumental in the construction and reconstruction of national identities and solidarities, at both the ideational and institutional levels (Béland and Lecours 2010; Kpessa, Béland, and Lecours 2011; McEwen 2006). While the impact of social policy on nation-building is of fundamental importance to countries in Africa, most of which are constituted by different ethnic groups, in-depth country studies are generally lacking. This article addresses this dearth of information on the role of social policy as an identity-forming mechanism and makes a direct contribution to the comparative public policy literature by examining the trajectories of nation-building and social policy development in Ghana. It extends existing scholarship, especially the work of Kpessa, Béland, and Lecours (2011), by providing an in-depth study of Ghana which complements that study’s broader focus on sub-Saharan Africa in general. Additionally, it complements Fuller’s (2014) work by providing another means to build a nation other than the use of symbolic nationalism, which Fuller explores in-depth. Theoretically, the article innovates by using the Ghanaian case to further explore the understudied connection between the construction of social citizenship, identity formation, and policy feedbacks from existing social programs.

The article is organized in four main sections. The first section offers a brief review of the recent literature on national identity and social policy to frame and properly situate our case study in the existing scholarship. The second section provides historical background about colonial legacies and nation-building in post-independence Ghana. The third section discusses the role of social programs in the construction of national identity during the country’s nationalist era. The final main section briefly discusses recent social policy developments in Ghana as they relate to the issue of national identity. The article concludes with a set of

remarks about the meaning of our findings for the analysis of social policy and national identity in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

2. Social policy as nation-building through policy feedback

Finding themselves at the helm of a system described as a “bifurcated state” consisting of citizens and subjects, both products of the indirect rule process, the leaders of independent Africa sought ways to effectively manage this system (Mamdani 1996). In this context of uncertainty, scholars argue that leaders appealed to nationalism to legitimate their rule (Chabal and Daloz 1999). In pursuance of the goals of legitimatizing their rule and nation-building, they turned to social welfare policies. In addition to industrialization and the crisis of capitalism, nation-building is considered one of the factors underpinning the establishment of welfare states in Western Europe (Scarborough 2000). For the leaders of newly independent African states, welfare policies held the key to nation-building and economic development. Social programs, therefore, are not only or even fundamentally about economic or social inclusion imperatives. At their core, such programs are tools of nation-building, which typically involves the deconstruction of primordial identities and the construction of broader national identities.

Although this idea is hardly new, a number of scholars who have studied advanced industrial countries since the mid-1990s have increasingly stressed the importance of the relationship between national identity and social programs (Béland and Lecours 2010; Goodman and Peng 1996; McEwen 2006; Williams 1995). According to the literature on developed multinational countries, depending on their institutional design, social programs can either reinforce or weaken national unity. Significantly, social programs in fields such as healthcare and education can become powerful symbols of national unity (Béland and Lecours 2010; McEwen 2006). These remarks are consistent with the institutionalist literature on policy feedback (i.e. how existing policies impact on politics and future policy decisions), which claims that social programs shape individual and collective identities over time (on policy feedback in general, see Béland 2010; Jacobs and Weaver 2015). This claim is clear in the title of Andrea Louise Campbell's (2003) seminal book on policy feedback and mass publics, *How Policies Make Citizens* (on the relationship between policy legacies and identity formation, see also Béland 2016; Skocpol 1992). From this perspective, social programs as policy legacies can create positive, self-reinforcing feedback effects on the development of citizenship associated with a shared national identity. In other words, through positive feedback effects, existing policies can feed nation-building over time. This point is closely related to the well-known reality that social citizenship can create shared national solidarity, a reality T.H. Marshall (1950) described decades ago. From this perspective, our identity formation approach to social policy is grounded in two classic streams of welfare state scholarship: the literature on policy feedback and the one on social citizenship. In addition to this article's specific contribution to the literature on the national identity and social policy nexus in sub-Saharan Africa, its more general analytical contribution is the article's articulation of the concepts of social citizenship and policy feedback in light of identity formation.

Studies on sub-Saharan Africa do point to the deliberate adoption of social programs as a means of identity formation in the post-independence era. Devereux and Lund (2010) note that pre-colonial communities had indigenous systems of shared support and risk pooling, which were overlaid with the systems colonialists introduced. However, as most nationalists

noted, social welfare systems put in place by the colonialists were skewed in favor of the colonial administration and neglected the needs of the colonized. Consequently, the colonies were characterized by abysmal levels of human capital development and a general lack of social progress (Kpessa and Béland 2013). Concerned with the twin challenges of socio-economic development and national unity, nationalist leaders used social policies as a mechanism to address these challenges (Adésinà 2009). In Tanzania, these efforts were aimed at redirecting the loyalties of citizens to the nation-state rather than to a particular ethnic group. Re-socializing citizens through these policies was aimed at generating support for building a stable nation-state. A study comparing the effects of nation-building projects in Tanzania and Kenya found that there is a stronger sense of national identity among Tanzanians than Kenyans (Miguel 2004). This is the result of the deliberate use of the educational curriculum to promote language and an ideological identity; the philosophy of Julius Nyerere, who framed the concept of a Tanzanian national identity; and the strengthening of local councils. From independence Nyerere pursued public policies intentionally to forge national unity, such that a 2014/2015 Afrobarometer survey of ethnic or national identity showed that about 57% of Tanzanians identify only as Tanzanians, and another 24% identify equally as belonging to an ethnic group and the nation (Afrobarometer 2014). These historical antecedents point to the fact that social programs are not only mechanisms of “social investment” and economic redistribution, but were also framed and designed to support the construction of national citizenship and identity.

In recent years, a few scholars have argued that this political and identity formation logic at the heart of modern social policy development is ever present within the “Global South,” especially sub-Saharan Africa, where ethnic diversity, stemming in part from colonial legacies, makes the social policy–national identity nexus crucial (Kpessa, Béland, and Lecours 2011; Mkandawire 2009). Because sub-Saharan countries that emerged during the decolonization era were fragmented from an ethnic and sometimes even a religious standpoint, nationalist leaders across the continent began using social programs, such as education and healthcare, as tools of both state- and nation-building.

In this article, we draw on some of this recent scholarship to further explore the social policy–national identity nexus in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Ghana. The decision to study this nexus in Ghana is legitimate. It was (in 1957) the first country in the region to officially gain independence. Considering this, Ghana is an interesting case from a long-term historical perspective due to its more than five decades of social policy experimentation in the context of ethnic and religious fragmentation inherited from the British colonial regime. As a first-mover country, it was a kind of laboratory and was quite instrumental in shaping the post-independence political and developmental discourse in the region. Thus, the present article is a discussion piece whose analytical insights may provide a framework for studying the interface between social policy and nation-building in other SSA countries.

3. The push for nation-building in Ghana

There were widespread riots in Accra in 1948. These riots were the result of a confluence of factors including the high cost of imported goods and subsequent boycott of those goods, the dissatisfaction of cocoa farmers with the handling of the swollen shoot disease, and the shooting of war veterans who were marching to petition the governor. The government constituted a committee of inquiry to investigate the riots. Meanwhile, the leaders of the

United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) (the first modern political party in Ghana, formed in 1947) were arrested. In the blame game that ensued, the other leaders of the UGCC mostly blamed Nkrumah's radicalism for the riots, pushing him to resign from the UGCC to form the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in 1949. Subsequently, a report presented by a committee established by the colonial government to investigate the riots recommended the inclusion of Africans in government. Nkrumah and the CPP, however, rejected the report on the basis that it failed to recommend political independence, and rallied the nation to defiant positive action. In response, further riots broke out in Accra and other parts of the country, leading to constitutional changes and elections that saw Kwame Nkrumah become leader of government business and prime minister from 1951 to 1957 (Rooney 1988).

Nkrumah's commitment to socio-economic development and national unity began in this period and continued until he was overthrown in a military coup in 1966. Although the military government that then took power – called the National Liberation Council – undertook the reform of most of Ghana's social programs, such as the free healthcare program the Nkrumah government had put in place, these moves were met with widespread public outcry. As a result, the user fee policy was abrogated (Arhinful 2003). While there were several other attempts to introduce fees for social services, except for very low fees for some health services introduced under the Busia government in 1971 and the introduction of student loans, these attempts were not totally successful (Hutchful 2002).

Even though there was political turbulence in subsequent years, Ghana's social programs remained relatively unchanged until the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings took power in a military coup in 1981. The PNDC government began implementing World Bank/International Monetary Fund-supported structural adjustment policies in 1983. These policies encouraged disengagement from the state and, in some cases, the creation of a parallel system for "needs that remain unfulfilled by official channels" (Azarya and Chazan 1987, 121). Subsequent governments in the 4th Republic, which began in 1993, have implemented various social programs to reduce poverty and to promote social cohesion.

In the years leading to and immediately after independence, Ghanaian nationalist leaders were faced with two fundamental challenges that revolved around (a) national unity and (b) improving the socio-economic livelihood of their citizens. The national unity question is so important largely because, like elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the demarcation of the territory that constitutes modern-day Ghana ignored pre-existing ethnic differences among the indigenous population. In the process of creating boundaries, several diverse ethnic and indigenous political entities were lumped into a single, sociologically artificial unit for the convenience of the colonial administration. For instance, the Akans as a linguistic group consisted of several diverse indigenous states, including the Adanse, the Assin, the Akwamu, the Akyem, the Aowin, the Asante, the Twifo, the Boron, the Branda, the Denkyira, the Nzima, and the Sefwi (Kiyaga-Mulindwa 1980). Similarly, the Ewe group was made up of about 120 small indigenous states, including the Anlo, Dzodze, Some, Ave, Adaklu, Abutia, Ho, Peki, Kpando, Waya, Taviefe, and about 13 Tongu states. The internal diversity among major linguistic groups was also evident among the Ga-Adangme group, which comprises states such as Labadi, Osu, Teshi, Nungua, Tema, Osudoku, Shai, Ada, and the Krobo. The Gur linguistic group was scattered in various parts of northern Ghana and also had several ethnic states, including Nanumba, Dagomba, Mamprusi, Wala, Buila, Mossi, Kusasi, Talensi, Mo, Dagarti, Kesena, Vagala, and Nankani (Antwi 1992). Each of these ethnic states had their own

political institutions, ranging from hierarchical, centralized units to decentralized forms of governance often vested in traditional rulers or chiefs.

The British model of indirect rule both subordinated these pre-existing political institutions and used them for the Crown's convenience. It "worked to intensify ethnic awareness and competition" in a manner that "stimulated insecurity and conflict" by favoring some groups over others in what amounted to a typical "divide and conquer" ruling strategy (Wunsch and Oluwu 1990, 35). Because colonial rule was arbitrary and oppressive, it was able to contain the tensions and animosities arising from the subjugation of diverse ethnic states under a single foreign political authority. Wunsch and Oluwu (1990, 35) note that "colonial policy also frequently drew sub-administrative boundaries which placed one group in a dominating position over another"; "as chiefs were designated from one ethnic unit and granted unprecedented powers over a second, previously quiescent group, ethnic relations became increasingly rivalrous, and at times hostile."

Another factor that contributed to these tensions was that before independence, the British, Germans, French, and the League of Nations had all at one point served as the colonial authority over various parts of what is now modern Ghana. For instance, several indigenous Ewe states were under German colonial rule before they were later transferred to the French. The northern section of Ghana, part of which was initially under German rule, was later administered as a British Protectorate under a League of Nations mandate. At the same time, and to complicate matters, while some Ewe states were under German then French rule, other Ewe states, including Peki (which had a prior overlord status over the other states), was placed under the British colonial administration.

The act of subordinating and ruling several indigenous states under separate colonial authorities, as well as the administration of the entire country under different authorities, was instrumental in the emergence of ethnic and regionally based political parties, such as the Anlo Youth Organization (AYO), the Togoland Congress (TC), the Muslim Association Party (MAP), the Ghana Congress Party (GCP), and the National Liberation Movement (NLM). These formed mostly after self-rule had already been achieved, to promote and protect the regional, ethnic, or religious identities and perceived interests of their members (Buah 1998). For Nkrumah and members of the ruling CPP, the emergence of such ethnic and religious political parties at the peak of anti-colonial, state nationalism across the country was an indication that the Ghana the African political elite inherited from the British colonial regime was not a nation; instead, "identities with and loyalties to ethnic, religious, regional and racial groups are stronger than those to the state" (Osaghae 2006, 4).

For instance, the NLM, which later became an amalgam of various ethnic and religious political parties, was openly opposed to a unitary system of government and advanced two core proposals: (a) the protection of chieftaincy and the indigenous states for the purposes of local governance; and (b) the creation of a federal system by diffusing political power from the national capital to the regions in an attempt to exploit existing territorial and ethnic divisions to the NLM's own advantage. In opposing a unitary system of government, the NLM argued that traditional political institutions were the embodiment of the people and the depository of the cultural norms necessary for an independent Ghana to evolve into a new political system that prioritized the indigenous states, as well as the political authorities associated with them. Ninsin (1991, 221) noted that "agitation on the need to protect chieftaincy for example was originally legitimized and predicated on the need to evolve a democratic system of government rooted in the traditions of the people."

Beyond the case for the preservation of indigenous states and traditional rule, the NLM also argued for an overall federal state structure that recognized and preserved the territorial autonomy of the colony, the Ashanti province, the Northern Territories, and the Trans Volta Togoland. These areas were logical choices because the colonial regime had administered them as distinct entities. Support for the federalist position, on the other hand, was more varied. Given the northern region's comparative disadvantage in economic development, northern members supported the federalist position for fear of southern dominance in a unitary state. Meanwhile, the Akans, located mostly in the cocoa-producing areas, thought federation could give them leverage over control of cocoa wealth (Ninsin 1991) and the Ewes were of the view that federation would open new windows of opportunity to re-unite with their kinsmen in Togo (Buah 1998). However, the NLM's demands for a federal system of government were not met.

Against this background, in the period leading to and soon after the demise of the colonial regime, Ghanaian nationalists saw the revival of ethno-nationalism (resulting largely from the practices of the colonial system) and the tensions associated with it. These were a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of the modern state nationalists intended to build. For example, Nkrumah (1962, 3), the most prominent nationalist of the time, argued that unless the issue of ethnic differences is handled with care, "it can undo all our valid efforts" to build a real, credible, and independent nation. The question of national unity that confronted this early form of nationalism was exacerbated by tensions stemming from the internal political developments that led to independence, as well as the arbitrariness of colonial partition and administration.

In addition to the challenges presented by the country's fragile institutional base, the new post-independence Ghanaian state also had to confront the general neglect of the welfare needs of the people. There were glaring spatial disparities between urban and rural areas and between northern and southern regions since social and economic infrastructure had been built expressly to exploit the country's resources. Nor were the social policies introduced by the colonial regime designed with Ghana's development in mind. Education policy, for example, was mostly designed to train indigenous people as clerical staff or to play other subordinate roles in colonial civil society. As a result, the curriculum prioritized the teaching of religion and morals, basic arithmetic, singing, Latin, Greek, drawing, history, geography, gardening, literature, and the English language. Thus, the entire educational system was "hopelessly devoid of the physical, natural, and social sciences" (F.N. Nkrumah 1943, 36). Busia (1964, 20) pointed out that under colonial education policy, Ghanaians "learned more about countries and people in faraway Europe than about the needs and problems of their kindred. The school does not seem to prepare the child" for his or her own society. Although missionaries also established schools, the growth in unemployment among school leavers in the colonial era was seen as an indictment of a school system that focused almost exclusively on literacy education and "production of personnel for the church, the civil service and service with the merchant companies" (Antwi 1992, 33). In other social policy areas, such as healthcare, housing, employment, and old age income support, the colonial administration completely ignored and discriminated against the people in the provision of services. The provision of such services was limited mostly to Europeans in the colonies.

Overall, these developments demonstrate that, at independence, the Ghanaian state was a constellation of indigenous states on top of which were layered modern political institutions of governance. Its artificial origins and inability to satisfy the material and social needs

of the people, as well as major divisions among nationalists over the proper distribution of power, meant that disintegration was inevitable if steps were not taken to develop a Ghanaian sense of national inclusion, solidarity, and belonging. Believing that national unity was a necessary condition for socio-economic development, Nkrumah and several other leading nationalist leaders sought to raise the imagination of the citizenry beyond the existing ethnic and social tensions and divisions by igniting a common sense of purpose and solidarity closely aligned to the idea of shared Ghanaian nationhood. Thus, nationalist discourse began to focus on the common challenges citizens faced by directly referencing the neglect inflicted on Ghanaians by the colonial regime, especially in terms of education, healthcare, housing, and social services (Kpessa, Béland, and Lecours 2011; Olukoshi 2000). In appealing to the challenges all citizens faced, irrespective of their ethnic and religious background, Ghanaian nationalists argued that “colonial rule has left a high degree of illiteracy among our people, and we all know that in conditions of ignorance and superstition, it is easy enough to fan internecine feuds” (K. Nkrumah 1962, 4). By making persistent references to the legacies of social exclusion inflicted by the former colonial rulers, nationalists stirred up a shared sense of past neglect and immediate social need as a strategy to weaken ethnic identities in favor of national, state-wide solidarity, urging the people to strive towards building a unified nation that received “the most complete loyalty and devoted service from all its members” (K. Nkrumah 1962, 4).

4. Using social policy for nation-building

In light of the challenges underdevelopment and the national question posed, Ghanaian policy makers saw social policies, especially education and healthcare, as instruments not only for improving the social conditions of the citizenry, but also for knitting the people together to build a strong, unified national identity. This was particularly true after 1951 when Nkrumah became prime minister. Simultaneously, nationalists sought to capacitate citizens for both economic development and social transformation. Specifically, the nationalists that formed the first government believed that the state provision of social policies could weaken ethnic identities and the tensions they typically generate by re-directing the loyalty of the citizenry to the state. These policies would also empower the citizenry to participate in governance processes and enhance their capabilities for socio-economic development.

At the most general level, the prevailing idea among nationalists was that national unity is fundamental to development, especially in the fight against the hunger, misery, ignorance, and disease left behind by the colonial administration (K. Nkrumah 1960, 1963). According to Nkrumah, “our first duty was to ensure the unity of the nation and its tranquillity, in order to go forward with our tasks of development” (K. Nkrumah 1963, 61). However, nationalists also thought that nation-building could not succeed without substantive socio-economic progress and meaningful improvement in citizens’ individual lives, regardless of their background. In fact, although social programs, such as education and healthcare, were seen as key to addressing citizens’ needs, it was thought that state provision of these social benefits and services to all the citizens, irrespective of their religious and/or ethnic identity, could create a sense of unity among the petty states and develop a broader national consciousness among those aligned with the new Ghanaian state (K. Nkrumah 1963).

Consequently, one of the earliest strategies nationalists adopted in their nation-building effort was a calculated scheme to take over all educational institutions that had been established and managed by missions and religious organizations in the colonial era, and foreclose any future possibilities for missionary activity in formal education. For instance, while the policy made it clear that “no primary school opened by denominational religious body or by a person or group of persons will be eligible for assistance from public funds,” it also required all educational institutions in the country to be directly managed and supervised by local state authorities (Government of Ghana 1957). As Haizel (1991, 61) noted, “the missions were not only virtually barred against future expansion of primary school. They were also expected to give up their existing school.” For nationalists, primary education was so crucial to the development of an active and enlightened citizenry that its provision must be the state’s responsibility. Nationalists felt they could not trust missionaries’ educational programs, most of which were implicated in colonial exploitation, to provide a solid foundation for shared citizenship with enduring literacy (Government of Ghana 1957). By taking control of the provision and management of education, nationalists sought to use public education to develop and socialize the citizenry towards the common secular values that engendered national solidarity. Similar actions were taken in other social policy areas. For instance, in health policy, nationalists replaced the existing colonial policy of out-of-pocket payment for health services with a citizenship-based health program under which the state was responsible for all costs associated with healthcare.

In pursuing their policy objectives, nationalists recognized the need for public, state-based social policy to be redistributive, equitable, and accessible to all citizens if its strategic relevance in the overall nation-building effort was to be realized. When accessing policies that directly affected them, citizens were expected to acquire a feeling of equal and fair treatment. This would foster a shared sense of commonality, regardless of their ethnic and religious background. The CPP indicated in its manifesto that the government was committed to creating a unified system of free compulsory elementary, secondary, and technical education up to 16 years of age; upgrading the University College to the status of a university; pursuing a campaign to abolish illiteracy; initiating a free national health service; implementing a high-standard housing program; expanding the supply of piped water to all parts of the country; and implementing a national insurance scheme.

Free and compulsory primary education for all Ghanaian children was introduced under an accelerated development plan in 1951 (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). Aware of the level of poverty and destitution among the citizenry, and the role of education in potentially reversing these trends, policy makers ensured that the state provided free education (K. Nkrumah 1963). According to Mr. K. Botsio, the education minister at the time, the main aim of this plan was the provision of at least some education for every child who had reached school age (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). Although the plan sought to expand education at all levels, primary education saw a more rapid expansion than other levels (Stratton 1959). New classroom blocks were put up and tuition in primary schools was free, though, except in the poorer region of northern Ghana, textbooks were not.

Between 1951 and 1966, enrolment increased at all levels and large numbers of primary, secondary, technical, and vocational schools were established across the country (Antwi 1992; Foster 1965; Government of Ghana 1964; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975; Stratton 1959). The implementation of the 1952 Accelerated Development Plan for Education was followed with the Artisan Training Scheme and the opening of Kumasi College of Technology

(later the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) to promote technical training (Haizel 1991; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). The Artisan Training Scheme was a scholarship to enhance skills acquisition by Ghanaian artisans and tradesmen in the UK, until technical education in Ghana was fully developed. Accordingly, Haizel (1991) noted that about 107 people in areas such as upholstery, bakery, masonry, pottery, and blacksmithing, among others, were sent to the UK. The new College provided courses in technological and vocational training, absorbing students from existing technical institutes. Shortly before independence, the Ghanaian government created a technical education unit to further develop technical education.

The government also established the Ghana Education Trust soon after independence, with an initial endowment fund from the Cocoa Marketing Board. The purpose of the fund was to accelerate the development of educational infrastructure throughout the country and award scholarships to Ghanaians of all backgrounds who demonstrated academic excellence (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975; Mohan 1967). By the time the Trust stopped operating in 1961, 24 of Ghana's 68 secondary schools had been built. Moreover, the government passed the Education Act (Act 87) in 1961 to provide for the development of education and to regulate the terms and conditions of service of teachers; and for purposes connected therewith (Government of Ghana 1961). Significantly, section two of Act 87 made primary education compulsory; parents who failed to send their children to school would be sanctioned.

Although Nkrumah's educational strategy was aimed at producing the human capital needed for the country's development, education was also linked to the development of a national political consciousness (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). In the nationalists' view, the best way to build a nation was through education. As noted, at end of colonialism, the country had a

low level of education among the bulk of our [its] people, and no system of universal education. Such a public is easy prey for unscrupulous politicians. It is amenable to demagogic appeals and readily exploitable by eloquence that arouses the emotions rather than reason. (K. Nkrumah 1963, 72)

Thus, "every avenue of education and information must be used to stir and nourish the political consciousness of the people and make and keep them aware of the welfare objectives of the government's planning" (K. Nkrumah 1963, 129-130). As a result, the nature and design of the education policies and curriculum aimed at enhancing national consciousness. For instance, beyond the fact that the boarding school system and posting of teachers to areas outside their territories of origin helped foster a sense of national identity, the institute of adult education catered to the needs of adults to acquire a General Certificate Examination (GCE) and university diplomas irrespective of their ethnic and religious background; they needed only to be a Ghanaian to benefit (Antwi 1992; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975). There was an emphasis on reforming the educational system to cater to the needs of the country since the colonial educational system facilitated the attainment of colonial objectives.

These developments were not limited to the education sector. At independence, Ghana's healthcare system, considered largely curative, was mostly limited to urban areas and was delivered on a "cash and carry" basis. This meant that most of the population was excluded from the healthcare system either because of where they lived or because of their inability to pay. Recognizing the centrality of good health to high economic and social productivity,

post-colonial policy makers took active steps to reverse major healthcare policies introduced during the colonial period. For instance, in contrast to the colonial government's out-of-pocket, fee-for-service policy, post-colonial policy makers took active steps to provide health services based on the idea of social citizenship, where the state paid the cost of health services for all Ghanaians. In this vein, new hospitals were built and existing ones were renovated. In addition, a scholarship scheme for medicine and health sciences scholars was established and about 400 Ghanaians were sent abroad on various statutory scholarship programs to study medicine and other subjects related to healthcare (Government of the Gold Coast 1955). The expansion of the scope of social programs in that period to cover all Ghanaians arguably created new policy legacies and positive feedback effects through the construction of shared social citizenship and national identity beyond primordial ethnic affinities. One can therefore infer that the feedback effect from the design and pursuit of social policies may have helped to weaken pre-existing ethnocentrism and presumably redirected loyalties and sentiments towards the new nation-state that had funded free access to the social programs.

In terms of positive policy feedback, this also resulted in exponential increases in the number of health professionals, including doctors, nurses, dentists, midwives, and pharmacists in the nationalist years (Government of Ghana 1964). Addressing the republican parliament in 1960, Nkrumah indicated that "the government has embarked on a complete reorganization of the health and medical services of the country and greater impetus will be given to research and health problems, the attack on endemic diseases, health education, nutrition and development of hospitals and health centres" (K. Nkrumah 1960, Para 24). In 1963, the government introduced a Seven-Year Development Plan that gave enormous priority to healthcare, allocating £31 million to the health sector alone. The policy states that, "quite apart from humanitarian reasons, capital devoted to the improvement of health services is an economic investment, for a healthy population is much more productive than unhealthy one" (Government of Ghana 1964, 176).

Although both education and health policies were pursued mainly for their role in producing the human resources needed for socio-economic development, post-colonial policy makers also designed these programs in a manner intended to (a) knit the citizenry together as part of the nation-building project, and (b) raise the visibility and profile of the state within Ghanaian society. For instance, as part of preventive health policy, decision makers dispatched medical personnel to all parts of the country to educate people about diseases such as trypanosomiasis, yaws, and onchocerciasis and to ensure that all citizens were vaccinated when necessary. The strategy of using health policy to enhance the prospects of nation-building was further augmented by the mobile health cinemas that travelled across the country to show documentaries and films on hygiene, as well as the establishment of village health centres, child welfare centres, radio doctors' talk shows, and a proactive health visitor program that sent nurses, doctors, and midwives to rural and suburban communities to conduct medical examinations and offer initial treatments (Addae 1997). Arguably, this strategy of deliberately posting teachers, doctors, nurses, midwives, and other public servants to ethnic communities other than their own, and acting as public faces and social ambassadors of the state, especially through the services they offered, were among others instrumental in framing and reshaping national identity and solidarity.

Through education, health, and other social policies, the state may have created a deeper sense of belonging in a manner consistent with both the post-colonial nation-building and

the socio-economic transformation agendas. Studies that examined the people's level of awareness and national identity in the period immediately following the nationalist years showed that Ghanaians were not only enthusiastic about national politics, they also had a stronger sense of national identity and togetherness. For instance, in a study that analysed national political consciousness in Ghana, Hayward (1976, 446) noted that, notwithstanding the fact that the "current geographic and ethnic demarcations were completed only in the 1950s" and that "the entity was delimited with little knowledge or concern for existing societies and political units," Ghanaians in both urban and rural areas displayed intimate affinity with the state and a high degree of national political consciousness. But as noted below, this "golden age" of nation-building engineered by social policy was curtailed with the retrenchment of social policy from the early 1980s. One of the policy feedback effects of this retrenchment was the disengagement of citizens from the state and the resurgence of social service provision by ethno-political traditional leaders.

5. From the retrenchment of social programs to the 4th republic

The social policy progress made under Nkrumah's leadership was subjected to various retrenchment efforts as a result of a series of economic and political crises in the 1970s and 1980s. These processes, undertaken by both military and civilian governments, failed to make any drastic changes to programs due to widespread public outcry. Consequently, except for a very low fee introduced for some health services and the replacement of free university education with a system of student loans, the policies remained unchanged until Rawlings took over the government in 1981 (Arhinful 2003; Hutchful 2002). By this time, the economic problems that had begun in the mid-1960s had worsened. The second global oil crisis in the 1970s and the subsequent recession in advanced industrialized countries exacerbated the crises. The impact of these challenges on the country stemmed from the fact that the economic recession in the developed world led to a drastic decline in demand for Ghana's cocoa, gold, and other primary products. Exports stagnated, terms of trade became unfavorable, and nominal interest rates on foreign debt increased to the high double digits by the mid-1980s (Chazan et al. 1992). The crisis also affected the level and extent of the provision of social services when compared to the nationalist era. Supported by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), policy makers blamed the size of the state for the economic crisis and began to reduce state involvement in social provisioning through the gradual introduction of out-of-pocket fees for social services including healthcare, education, and others that the state had previously provided on the basis of social citizenship.

Consequences of the state's reduced role in social services provision included difficulty in accessing such services due to cost (Asenso-Okyere et al. 1998); a reduction in the relevance of the state in the eyes of the citizenry; and the resultant emergence of chiefs and religious leaders as alternative structures of authority and as avenues for accessing social services. In the period immediately following the nationalist era, the state's role in social provisioning was condemned and pro-market policies – economic recovery and structural adjustment programs – were adopted. Efforts to reduce the role of the state included trade liberalization, a reduction in social spending, increased exchange rates, the removal of price controls and subsidies, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, a 30% devaluation of

the Ghanaian cedis (Boafo-Arthur 1999), and the forced retirement of many workers (Anyemedu 2000; Gyimah-Boadi and Essuman-Johnson 1993; Kraus 2007).

The introduction of these perceived cost-saving measures meant that the role of the state in promoting and protecting the wellbeing of its citizenry was significantly reconfigured in a direction at odds with the paradigm of social citizenship that existed in the nationalist period. In the case of healthcare, for instance, the introduction of user fees increased existing levels of inequity because access was limited to those who could afford to pay (Agyepong and Adjei 2008). Due to the inability of the citizenry to pay directly for social and health services, they resorted to using traditional healing services, faith healing, and self-medication (Hutchful 2002) for their health-related needs. In the field of education, structural adjustment policies resulted in lower levels of school enrolment since some parents became unable to pay school fees when workers were forced to retire (Kraus 2007).

During this reform period, social policy was perceived not as an investment but as consumptive, and the main focus of public policy was on promoting economic growth. Government officials reasoned that equitable social distribution would follow economic progress. This, however, was not the case. The negative effects of structural adjustment and economic reforms necessitated the implementation of the Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) in 1987 (Aryeetey and Goldstein 2000; Hutchful 1994). This program was aimed at enhancing the acceptability of adjustment programs particularly among those most affected, that is, “small farmers and hired labour ... poor households with inadequate or no access to basic social services such as health, education, water; the unemployed and those with meagre earnings, especially urban youth; and finally, households in the northern regions” (Hutchful 1994, 572).

In the end, although neo-liberal adjustment policies were introduced mainly to halt a festering economic crisis that threatened the stability of the state, the way the policies were designed and implemented adversely affected the nation-building agenda that had underpinned governance in the nationalist years. This led to an increase in the role of non-state actors in social policy provision, a trend seen elsewhere in sub-Saharan African and, more generally, across the Global South (Cammett and MacLean 2014). One possible interpretation of this phenomenon is that, because state provision of social programs had been the key mechanism for building a sense of belonging among citizens, the withdrawal of the state from the provision of such programs had the feedback effect of enhancing opportunities for ethno-traditional leaders to nurture competing centres of authority and to lay claim to the loyalty of the citizenry. This situation is characteristic of the post-colonial, bifurcated state (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Mamdani 1996). Referring to this state of affairs as a system of “divided legitimacy,” Ray and Eizlini (2006) argue that traditional authorities have in recent years reinvented themselves as agents of or partners in development. As MacLean (2003, 666) noted, retrenchment in the provision of social welfare programs compelled many citizens to return to and rely on informal networks where “solidarity of the extended family and community are understood to be the most enduring and resilient.”

It is noteworthy that the 4th Republic (1993–present) has seen renewed commitment to social policy development. Beginning with the administration of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in 1993, there was a commitment to universal basic education and healthcare. Yet with user fees in place, large segments of the population could not afford some social services. There were instances of women leaving their babies in the hospital because they could not pay hospital fees. This situation pushed some religious bodies and other

non-governmental organizations to step in to provide hospital fees so that patients who could not afford those fees could be discharged. The government also introduced a subsidy program that targeted low-income groups; however, the program actually benefits the well-off as well as the poor. In the mid-2000s, the government committed itself to harmonizing all social programs in the country, including the capitation grant, the school feeding program, free maternal healthcare, and cash transfer program, through the drafting of the national social protection strategy (MMYE 2007). Efforts at social protection and the promotion of social inclusion resulted in the mid-2016 launch of the national social protection policy document aimed at enhancing access to social protection and expanding access to social security and social insurance. This more recent return to social policy in the overall development processes in Ghana can be seen as a belated testimony to the transformative role social programs apparently played in the early post-independence era by reinforcing national unity and shared citizenship.

6. Discussion

During the nationalist era, the new Ghanaian state created major social programs that were oriented toward more than just stimulating socio-economic development. After independence, health and education programs, as well as other social benefits and services, became seen as powerful tools of nation-building in a highly fragmented polity characterized by old ethnic divisions that had been exacerbated during the colonial era. For the young Ghanaian state, investment in social programs was not only perceived as an investment in productive human capital formation; it was understood as a tool for the construction of Ghanaian citizenship and national unity beyond and above existing ethnic identities. Starting in the late 1960s, however, the idea of nation-building through social policy began to decline, a trend that peaked during the 1980s, when adjustment policies favored a marketization of social benefits and services that considerably weakened the potential nation-building power of social welfare institutions. This situation created windows of opportunities for traditional and ethnic leaders to assume the role of social service provider, which helped them reinforce their perceived social and political legitimacy. Our analysis points to the possible relationship between national identity and social policy as they relate to both social citizenship and policy feedback from existing social programs, a set of interconnected issues discussed in the first section of this article. Depending on the way they are designed, these programs in SSA countries have the potential to serve as instruments for nation-building and can strengthen national unity through positive feedback effects that may foster a greater sense of shared citizenship. Although the promotion of the national identity attached to the central state has the potential to become a source of oppression for minorities, positive feedback effects stemming from state-operated social programs can also reduce ethnic and territorial divisions while fostering social cohesion and citizenship.

Finally, as this article argues, this discussion about the potential relationship between national identity and social policy points to the fact that social programs are not just tools of socio-economic development and “investment.” Even if it is tempting to reduce these programs to their potential economic and developmental role, one should always keep in mind their powerful *political* role in both state-building and the related drawing and redrawing of national and ethnic boundaries and identities, and the loyalties associated with such spheres. As recent research conducted in Nigeria suggests, providing citizens with improved

social services is key to state-building in part because those who access such services are more likely to “express belief in an unconditioned citizen obligation to pay tax” (Bodea and LeBas 2014, 215). This contributes to state-building in part because of the central importance of taxation in this process (Tilly 1985). Another positive feedback effect of more comprehensive social programs is to stimulate the democratic political participation of those benefiting from these programs (Campbell 2003). This is not only true in advanced industrial countries but in sub-Saharan Africa as well. Based on her recent study of the relationship between democratic participation and social policy in Zambia, Erin Accampo Hern (2016, 1) concludes that “those who have even marginal access to state services have higher levels of political engagement and political participation than those without access, indicating that imperfect extension of services may help boost democratic citizenship in developing countries.” The positive impact of social provision on democratic participation in SSA is also confirmed by Bleck’s (2013) recent analysis of education policy in Mali.

As these examples suggest, reducing social policy to a purely economic logic of “investment” is both inaccurate and politically unfortunate because it exposes a lack of understanding by policy makers of the broader roles social programs can play in politics and society, including in democratization and state-building. It is hoped that this article stimulates more research on this topic, in both sub-Saharan Africa and in other regions of the “Global South”; the nationalism–social policy nexus is a global phenomenon and the potential for future comparative scholarship on the topic is almost endless.

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