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## As We Celebrate 50 Years of Ghana's Independence ...

Our Perspective

Ghanaians have spent a large part of this year in a celebratory mood. Indeed for many the celebrations began when the Black Stars did well at the last FIFA World Cup tournament held in Germany. The better-than-expected performance was seen as a sign of good things to come as the country prepared for its 50th birthday.

The main celebrations, held in March this year, were the high point for the Government, the people and our guests. Some people grumbled about not having been made to feel a part of the public celebrations, but as Ghanaians, we have managed to put all of that behind us.

One of the things we are particularly happy about, as we celebrate 50 years of Ghana's independence, is the fact that the celebrations also provided an opportunity for serious stock-taking and self-assessment. The organisation of regular Golden Jubilee lectures by the Ghana@50 Secretariat and programme organisers at the Ghana International Conference Centre has provided an opportunity for a number of learned personalities to inform and educate the public about many issues relevant to national development. For example, even though most of us knew about the pervasive nature of corruption in our society, it took careful analysis by Lawyer Reginald Bannerman at one of those lectures to make us appreciate the scope of the problem and what drives it.

In another lecture recently, we were treated by Professor Marian Ewurama Addy to a good appreciation of the huge challenges that we face while trying to develop a



Freedom and Justice Arch

scientific culture to aid our broader development efforts. Professor Ivan Addae-Mensah's lecture probably left many Ghanaians embarrassed about the near-absence of ethical behaviour in our educational institutions. He practically said that cheating has become a way of life for many Ghanaians in a strong bid to get ahead of others. The lesson that one might draw from the various lectures is that all is not well with Ghana.

Despite the not-so-positive assessments of our achievements over five decades, we are a very hopeful people. Democracy is definitely taking root after several years of political instability. Even though we may not like the stories we have been treated to, the recent revelations at the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament have assured many Ghanaians that the institution is still a relevant part of our national development. That makes us very hopeful about the future of our institutions.

While the performance of our economy may not be spectacular, the last five years

## Founding Members of the Ghana Society for Development Dialogue

Emmanuel Ablo	Francis Dodoo
Ernest Aryeetey	Djabanor Narh
Alfred Teddy Konu	Korantema Adi-Dako
Gobind Nankani	Adwoa Steel
William Steel	Ivan Addae-Mensah
Kofi Anyidoho	Ishmael Yamson
Clifford Nii Boi Tagoe	Albert Osei
Ellen Bortei-Doku Aryeetey	Joseph Atsu Ayee
Kweku Appiah	Charles Egan
Isabella Quakyi	Anthony Matthews
Yaw Nsarkoh	Tony Oteng-Gyasi
Helen Nankani	Charles Jebuni
Abena D. Oduro	Raymond Atuguba
Ken Ofori-Atta	Doris Ablo
Angela Lamensdorf Ofori-Atta	Yaw Saffu
Nana Yaa Ofori-Atta	Franklin Manu

The **New Legon Observer** creates a platform for the discussion of broad development policy issues and matters of public interest. The articles are expected to be current and on relevant themes. It is owned by the **Ghana Society for Development Dialogue (GSDD)**.

The society is a registered company limited by guarantee and is independent of the management of the University of Ghana, Legon. The members of the society come from diverse professional backgrounds and are motivated solely by the need to develop a vehicle for the articulation of diverse but well-researched views on Ghana's development.

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### Design Team

Charles Tachie-Menson, Frederick Mante, Nicholas Kotei

*All correspondence may be addressed to:*

**The Acting Editor  
New Legon Observer  
P.O. Box LG 490  
Legon**

**Tel. 512503 Ext. 109 Fax. 512504**

Email: newlegonobserver@ug.edu.gh

have been different from the previous five years, and there are clear signs of improved stability. Our spirits have also been buoyed lately by the discovery of oil in commercial quantities on our shores. We recognise the possibility of over-selling this discovery and the danger of being led to experience a natural resource curse. But the significance of this discovery and the new opportunities it implies should encourage us to think of how best to manage the new find and avoid the difficulties and embarrassment that others have experienced in this venture.

Again, we observe the renewed confidence that development partners are showing in us, giving us more aid than they are giving our neighbours, and speaking very positively about Ghana generally. Ghanaians, to some extent, are more confident today about the future than they were some 20 - 30 years ago.

As we look to the future, our perspective on all of the pluses and minuses that Ghanaians have experienced is that we could more easily find solutions to our development challenges if only we listened to, and showed greater tolerance for one another. It is when we have built institutions that foster knowledge-sharing and actually use them, that we will find answers to development questions.

Development is about making the right choices as a nation in order to give societies and individuals more opportunity for self-fulfilment. The right choices stem out of dialogue, debate, discussion, etc. Societies that do not tolerate debate and discussion seldom make the right choices. Their choices often reflect the ambitions of a small minority with access to political power. With time, they lead to conflict as others fight for inclusion, and eventual stagnation. That is why we see the Golden Jubilee lectures as being indicative of our willingness as a people to engage in new discussions of "what went wrong?" But they also suggest that through the celebrations we are eager to discuss "what can we do right?" for the next 50 years.

This is where the Ghana Society for Development Dialogue (GSDD) comes in. As its name suggests, the society has been set up by a number of well-meaning people to provide a platform for discussing how best to bring development to Ghanaians. The society has decided to launch the New Legon Observer as the medium to be used by interested persons for discussing relevant development issues, and other matters of public interest.

The Ghana Society for Development Dialogue is made up of professional men and women from diverse backgrounds who share some common values. The members of the

→ 3



society are committed to inclusive and accelerated development in Ghana, relying on the inherent potential of all persons and on the contributions that they can make. They believe very strongly in democratic principles underpinning development.

Such principles must be reflected by freedom of speech and expression for all. They see roles for both the public and private sectors in the development enterprise. They do not seek to directly influence government policy in Ghana, but provide government an opportunity to know what different people think about different issues.

The society does not believe in excluding persons or groups from participation in the development policy dialogue on account of politics, gender, religion, ethnicity or any other criterion. Its membership is therefore structured to reflect these values. Membership of the society is not restricted to Ghanaians, but drawn also from persons who wish to contribute to Ghana's development. Its activities are also not limited to only persons living in Ghana.

The New Legon Observer has been inspired by the Legon Observer which was owned by the Legon Society on National Affairs and ceased publication in July 1983. The Ghana Society for

Development Dialogue owes a huge debt of gratitude to the members of the Legon Society on National Affairs who have provided very valuable information about their operations from many years ago and useful advice on how to run a paper like theirs. It is the intention of the architects behind the New Legon Observer to emulate the good example set by its predecessor.

The New Legon Observer is a fortnightly paper that should be of immense interest to all Ghanaians and others. It is designed to fill a niche in the market for papers, addressing the demand from people who would like to see analytical pieces on matters of development and public interest. It is not, and will not, become the mouthpiece of any one group of people.

It will not be driven by narrow political interests. It provides an opportunity for all persons who have very well thought-out ideas to express them, with a view to engaging a wider public in constructive debate and dialogue. It is expected that all articles published here will be properly researched, be very informative and educative. The paper has no ideological biases.

In this maiden edition, the Editorial Board has invited articles from a number of persons who have often

expressed their opinion publicly on matters of national development. As this issue is dedicated to the subject of celebrating Ghana@50, the articles reflect largely the views of the individual authors on the themes of politics, economy, society, science and technology, law and culture, and international development, as relevant to the broad subject.

It also contains a satirical piece to celebrate the launch of this paper. The article by the celebrated Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o is his contribution to the launch of the New Legon Observer and was originally written for a conference held in California in October 2007. Each subsequent issue of this journal will be structured to tackle the same themes for different subjects.

Clearly, there is a double celebration here. As we celebrate 50 years of Ghana's independence, we would like to invite all persons interested in participating in effective development dialogue for a more positive development outcome in future to join us in celebrating the launch of the New Legon Observer.

We look forward to your reading the paper regularly, and we also hope you will join the development debates by writing articles, reviews and letters.



Rising Sun

# GHANAIAN POLITICS: CONFRONTING THE CURSE OF SISYPHUS

Yaw Saffu<sup>1</sup>

## The Ghanaian Sisyphus

To discourse on the political economy of post-independence Ghana, I cannot help but reflect on a famous sixteenth century painting by Titian, of Sisyphus at work on his interminable, ultimately self-inflicted and self-induced pointless pain and frustration. No analogy is perfect. But in Greek mythology, as a punishment for his trickery, deceitfulness, avarice and also possibly his indiscretion, Sisyphus, an extremely well connected and high-achieving king of Corinth, was cursed to roll a massive boulder up a hill.

In the context of primitive technology, the boulder kept rolling back down the hill, despite his apparent dedication and best efforts. So, his punishment was, in effect, for eternity, unless he could have chosen to take advantage of modern knowledge of science, technology, organisational psychology, human resource management, and so on.

In the heady days of our pre-Independence nationalism, a CPP (Convention People's Party) ditty promised a march of 'Forward Ever, Backward Never'. But I believe it would now be universally agreed that, since

Independence, the reverse of the projected direction in that confident picnic song has been the more enduring reality in this country of ours, in the polity, as in the economy and society. We do not have to invoke the seriously unflattering, even shameful and sickening comparison with the paths trodden by South Korea or Taiwan or Malaysia over the same period, since 1957, to conclude that there has been something tragically self-defeating, Sisyphian, about our aspirations and attainments.

The high degree of instability generated by military interventions and attempted interventions and the unaccountable, incompetent and corrupt governance we have

experienced for the most part of the period have to be the primary causes of our poor performance. However, I believe our Sisyphian tragedy can be confronted and overcome if we, and especially our leaders, are serious.

### Questions To Be Addressed

The invitation to contribute an article to the inaugural issue of the New Legon Observer indicated that what was required of me was an expatiation on the question: 'What has changed in Ghanaian politics?' A clear-sighted analysis and explanation of what has preceded the present is, undoubtedly, a useful, even necessary, preamble to future corrective policy. Therefore, that question will be addressed.

On that question, in a nutshell, I intend to say that we now have an electoral democracy and an inchoate liberal democracy and that, until relatively recently, we had had very little of either in our independent statehood. Furthermore, democratisation has been accompanied by, and has even helped to induce, other positive changes in our politics.

But a more pertinent question, as far as I am concerned, and as far as the future is concerned, and the future is what really matters, is the following. 'What has to change in Ghanaian politics for us to have a realistic chance of consolidating and sustaining a genuine liberal democracy as well as replacing our weak state with a genuinely developmental state?'

These terms have to be defined. By genuine liberal democracy, I mean a political system where: (i) freedoms are real, because the high levels of grinding poverty, mass illiteracy and indiscipline (both elite and mass) that tend to render those freedoms nugatory have been significantly reduced or eliminated; (ii) executive accountability and competence are significantly guaranteed, because both the threat and reality of institutional, legal, cultural or conventional restraints and sanctions really do work, whether instantly or ultimately.

Specifically for Africa, by a developmental state, I mean one that has shed its neo-patrimonial, patronage-based style of politics in favour of transparent decision-making and implementation processes that



Regional map of Ghana

<sup>1</sup> Yaw Saffu is a Professor of Political Science and an International Consultant in Democratic Governance.

have as their primary objective the transformation of the economy in order to raise the standard of living of citizens. A developmental state is necessarily a strong state (but no necessary relationship with authoritarianism) because it has to be able to implement its own laws vigorously and control society without fear or favour for the sake of progress. These are projects a weak state (the direct opposite of a strong state) does not even aspire to target because, frankly, it is incapable of achieving them.

To rephrase the second question, what changes in the way we currently conduct our politics and conduct ourselves in politics must we, as Ghanaians, insist on and pursue, in order to create a dynamic developmental state instead of the weak state that continues to be embedded in an essentially neo-patrimonial system? The short answer to that question, I suggest, is to push for a further and faster deepening of liberal democracy, given the evident inability of our several past authoritarian rulers who, with the plenitude of untrammelled power they accumulated, far more concentrated power than they needed to restructure the economy and modernise society, nevertheless failed to initiate any sustained development, unlike their South-East Asian counterparts.

It may seem rather strange to advocate more democracy as a way of ensuring rapid structural transformation seeing that, historically, authoritarian and pre-democratic regimes have presided over, and have been responsible for far more fundamental economic and societal transformations than can be credited to democracies. Indeed, the logic and practice of democracy should often make it antithetical to steadfast, dogged, adherence to long-

term development plans, especially those requiring the deferral of the pleasures of consumption or disciplined belt-tightening.

Democratic governments have to negotiate with, rather than suppress or repress, interest groups which feel adversely affected by changes. Democratic governments often feel compelled to abandon prudent economic policies in election years, usually offering fiscally inappropriate, inflationary 'bribes' instead, in exchange for votes.

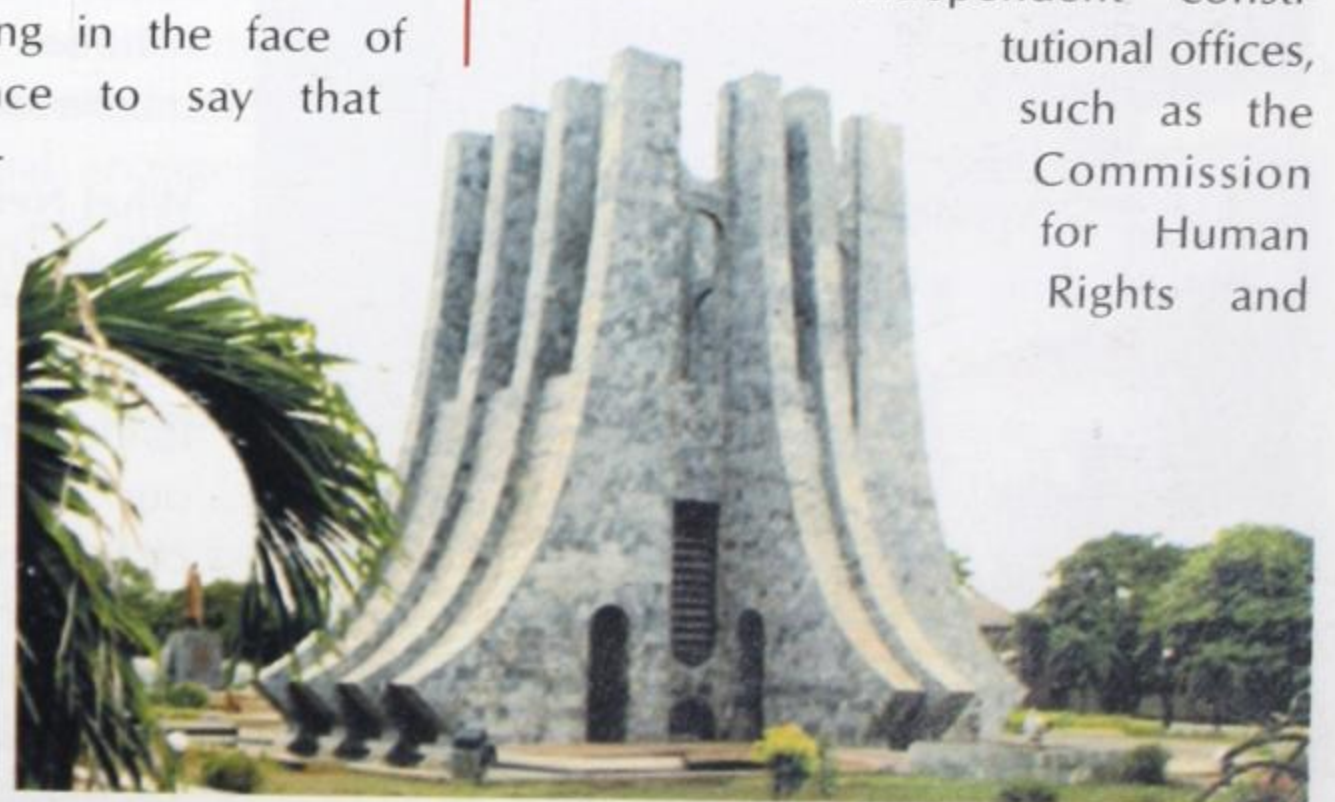
Therefore, everywhere else, liberal democracy has followed rather than led the take-off stage to sustained development. However, our own experience, and experience practically all over Sub-Saharan Africa, would suggest that the politics of liberal democracy, with competitive elections and the aggregation of criss-crossing interests that have to be satisfied openly, is in the long run the best and most reliable antidote to the politics of patron-client systems and the incompetence, corruption, poverty and injustices that they invariably breed.

### Ghanaian Politics Today: What Has Changed?

It would be flying in the face of everyday evidence to say that nothing has changed in Ghanaian politics since Independence, or even since 1993, the beginning of our current dispensation under the Fourth Republic. The current regime, par-

ticularly at the constitutional and institutional levels, does not have much in common with the one-party and despotic military regimes that have featured so prominently in our past, with their authoritarian, unaccountable governance and their egregious abuse of human rights. As far as the observance of constitutional regulations concerning the protection of the central tenets and elements of liberal democracy is concerned, it has to be emphasised that we have come a long way, in a relatively short time, effectively only since the 1996 elections.

Institutions, processes and activities that seem so natural now, so much a part of the present political landscape as to suggest they have been with us for generations, are nevertheless of only very recent origins. We can count among these an Electoral Commission with valid claims to independence and competence; a multi-party system with opposition parties that are not intimidated; an electorate that is evidently not afraid to show the red card to insufferable high and mighty politicians and peacefully change the party in power; a judiciary that has learned to assert its independence in the protection of liberties; the existence and functioning of other independent constitutional offices, such as the Commission for Human Rights and



Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, Accra

Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the National Media Commission (NMC) a genuinely vibrant, pluralistic and free media environment; and so on. As a result of all these, the exercise of governmental power is far less arbitrary and brutal now than it has ever been since the beginning of our independent statehood.

The proliferation of civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations of all types and descriptions, is another feature of our politics and political environment that has changed, on the whole, for the better. Whatever drives citizens to participate in elections, an 80 per cent turnout, as in the 2004 national elections, should be regarded as constituting a considerable affirmation of regime legitimacy.

These phenomena attest to the presence of citizen self-confidence that is equally manifest in the forcefulness with which opinions, even flawed opinions, are expressed on the FM stations. Such citizen confidence has not always been allowed to flourish. It is not too long ago that "the culture of silence" was regarded virtually as an aspect of the national culture. As most observers will agree, there is still a long way to go to make key institutions of

liberal democracy, such as the Parliament, perform as well as they should. But already, some significant liberal democratic dividends from the changes that have transpired can be pointed to. For instance, the Opposition's persistent questioning in Parliament was undoubtedly a primary factor in the Government's eventual abandonment of some proposed dubious loan arrangements with shady international corporations and characters.

Media scrutiny, such as it is, with only patchy investigative efforts that somehow manage to give really significant issues of lack of transparency in government dealings the widest of berths, must nevertheless be something that only the most reckless politicians will not seriously consider before they act. Similarly, while there is no accounting for what a mad military adventurer might fantasise to do, civilian control of the military is now almost certainly the most assured it has ever been since Independence. This is thanks to all the above changes in our political institutions and in our opinions which, as periodically reported by Afrobarometer surveys, are very strongly supportive of liberal democracy. But we must be thankful also for the vastly heightened opposition on the international scene to military usurpations of power.

### What Needs To Be Changed?

Superficially, most of the fundamental determinants of our politics that need to change would appear to lie outside the realm of political institutional reforms. It would seem economists, sociologists, educationists,

even genuinely God-fearing pastors, have more to contribute to the discussion on what needs to change, and especially how this can or should be done, than political scientists.

How do we change a culture that, instead of teaching people to stand on principles and speak their minds freely, seems to prescribe a too forgiving attitude towards political and economic 'criminals', teaching and encouraging them to cringe and flatter in the hopes of obtaining crumbs from the very people they should despise? How do we eliminate extreme, widespread poverty, make a significant dent in the staggering statistics on the extent of illiteracy, and train the thousands of middle class professionals required to make the economy and the society perform as they should? How do we discourage behaviour that undermines trust, a necessary, indispensable ingredient in any modern, large-scale organisation, but which appears to have vanished completely from our society? How do we tackle the glaringly outrageous and costly indiscipline that is evident in every nook and cranny of our society?

However, eventually, all the above are political and must be the concern of political leaders who are ultimately responsible for all authoritative decisions made in a state. Reforming the basis, the ends and processes of decision-making in the state is a political issue that impacts upon everything, including the success or otherwise of poverty alleviation programmes and the extent of illiteracy and indiscipline. Further, there are issues about public sector performance, basically of ethics and competence, but also of remuneration, that lie squarely in the political realm and that seem to have remained recalcitrant to all attempts at reform.



Cape Coast Castle

In a functional liberal democracy, where elections are genuinely free, the electorate must also bear some responsibility for the kind of politics that predominates in the system, for the type of leaders they help put into power. The basis of electoral choice does not appear to have changed very much in 50 years, except that the role of monetary and other material inducements and the role of ethnic considerations, via the political party, are probably going up rather than down. The minimal role that policy issues and assessments of personal competence and integrity of candidates appear to play in the calculation of electoral choice is a drawback that needs to be addressed.

But whereas the people, the led, can perhaps plead diminished responsibility, on account of their poverty and illiteracy, they can claim further, unlike the leaders, that they have not obtained control over sovereign decision-making and the allocation of the resources of the country on the basis of promises to confront national challenges, clean up the way we do things and raise standards of living. Political leaders do not only have a greater moral obligation than anybody else in the state, to perform to eliminate the sources of under-development, they have the legal power and the authority of office to make a decent attempt.

What has been clear so far is that full throttle efforts aimed solely at moving the nation forward have been generally absent. The attempts have been either dynamically misplaced, or extremely incompetent, or actuated by self-preservation, meanness, envy, revenge and personal enrichment, or strangely half-hearted, even bordering on the casual, or all of the above. Ghanaians should have no difficulty in identifying

the governments they have had from the above.

The sad truth is that until we get rid of the neo-patrimonial system that continues to be the bedrock of our politics, such are the sorts of government we shall continue to have. Patron-client relationships will continue to predominate. Policy and, especially, personnel will be chosen with an eye more on private and partisan advantage rather than on the dictates of the public good. Enforcement and implementation of laws and regulations will continue to be hostage to the same considerations.

### So, What Is To Be Done?

First, we must grow the economy consistently at faster rates to fund all the programmes that need urgent funding. I do not pretend to be an economist and so I will leave to my economist friends the question of how we go about achieving high average growth rates in the economy over a reasonably long period. But what I do know are: (i) poverty remains a great challenge to the deepening of a sustainable democracy. Poor people usually cannot and do not exercise their political and civil rights. They are too vulnerable and, thus, probably highly susceptible to the demagoguery of populists and anti-democrats. (ii) the economy cannot, and will not, grow at anything like the required rates without substantial changes, both institutional and attitudinal, in our politics, to end the current patron-client system of politics that has so conspicuously failed us.

The attitudinal changes required, particularly on the part of leaders, will have to be forced on them by a further

deepening of liberal democracy. This means, at least, constitutional and institutional changes. Therefore, the second answer to the famous Leninist question 'What is to be Done?' is to set about amending the Constitution: to free up democratic forces, particularly at the District Assembly level; reduce the extent of the presidential patronage in appointments; enable Parliament to play a more vigorous oversight role, checking and balancing the executive more effectively; tear up provisions of Official or State Secret Acts and open up the processes of governance with appropriate Bills; empower more and link constitutionally the funding of key constitutional bodies, such as CHRAJ, to growth in government revenue or expenditure; establish the office of an independent state prosecutor and enforce a genuine Leadership Code; and so on.

Technically, these are relatively simple constitutional amendments and bills. All they require is the political will that, unfortunately, has not been in abundant supply so far. But sustained public pressure can make leaders acquire, and perhaps even make them claim they have and love, political will. As Mr. Osekre of Achimota School Library, lambasting politicians and arguing the superiority of multi-party democracy even in the far more illiterate Ghana of the late 1950s and



Accra International Conference Centre

early 1960s, used to conclude in his distinctive, heavily Ga-accented articulation in English: "...You cannot fool all of the people all of the time". He was right. With the free flow of information and competition among nearly equally - matched political parties, people will learn, hopefully not too slowly, or only little by little, that the patronage-based system does not really benefit the majority and that fluid, constantly changing, issue-based majorities, that can force alternation of parties in government, will begin to call the shots.

Among the shots to be called, the third should concern how the largest three political parties, the governing party and the two largest opposition parties at any particular time (using the percentage of votes obtained at the latest national elections) should be funded to the same limited extent, with increased funding every fourth year, 12 months before the national elections, to ensure more equal competition. In exchange for public funding, the

political parties should jointly sponsor a Bill to strengthen and empower the Electoral Commission to monitor and enforce a law regulating private funding of parties and limits on political party and candidate spending on election campaigns.

In a truly functioning liberal democracy, no party retains power forever. The NDC (National Democratic Congress) failed to appreciate this simple historical fact when its leaders rejected the Electoral Commission's pleas for public funding of political parties.

The fourth and final item on the agenda for what is to be done should be an insistence on the rule of law in all situations. Not only is compliance with this insistence necessary to reassure potential investors, the justice it is calculated to deliver is a necessary safeguard for national cohesion and solidarity. Several reforms will be necessary to entrench the rule of law in the collective psyche.

Unfortunately, self-regulation does not appear to be an option in Ghana; it does not seem to work. Therefore, independent, constitutionally established Boards and Councils, to provide necessary oversight and enforce regulations and discipline, need to be strengthened across the board, including for the Police and the Judiciary. It will be a new dawn in this country when members of these two key institutions in the struggle to enthrone the rule of law can agree with the publishers of the Old Legon Observer that 'Justice Delayed is Justice Denied', instead of hauling them before their Lordships for contempt of court. To my non-legal albeit trained mind, that headline embodied a self-evident truth.

Long may the NEW LEGON OBSERVER survive to reiterate such home truths, for the sake of a renewed Ghana. GHANA REDIDIVA!

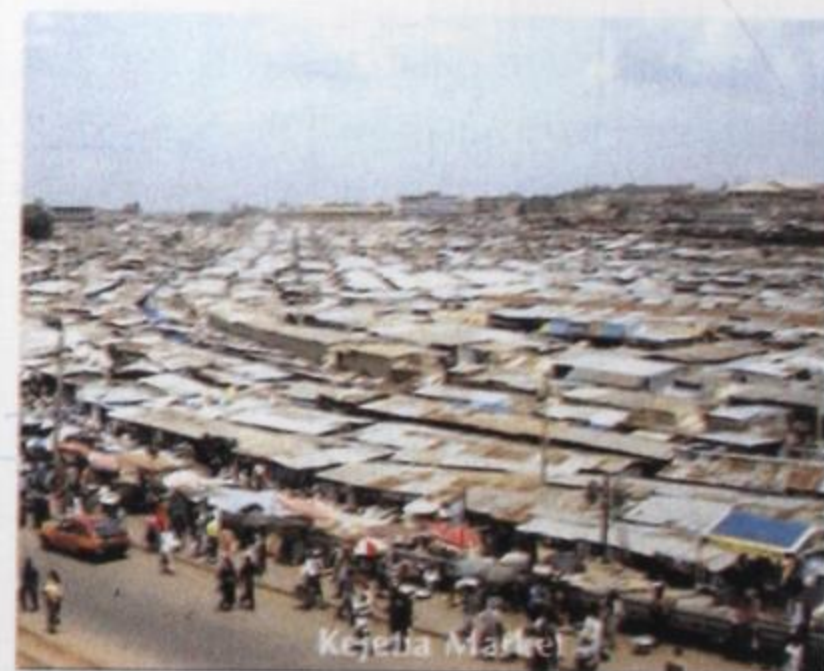
## How is the Economy of Ghana Doing after 50 years? The Problem with Comparing Ghana to other Countries

Ernest Aryeetey<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

One question that I often get asked many times at social functions is "So, how is the economy doing"? My response has often depended on my mood. If I got asked that question by a total stranger at a wedding reception on Christmas Eve, my instinct would be to respond like this: "Look, I came here to enjoy myself, not to assess

economies". But I have often restrained myself from doing that and would often say something like "things are ok, but it depends on where you stand and where you want to go". Is that a meaningless or silly response? No, it is not. It is quite loaded, depending on how you look at it. You probably might be thinking this is one



<sup>2</sup> Ernest Aryeetey is a Professor of Economics and Director of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER)

of those economists who always say, "it depends" to everything. There you would be wrong, because it really would depend on the question you asked me!

In the course of my professional development I have come to learn that there are many more ways of judging the performance of an economy than simply looking at the usual indicators, including various measures of economic output, consumption, inflation, employment, etc. Quite often in making those assessments we want to compare the situation in our country to the one elsewhere. Sometimes, the point may simply be that Ghana is not doing as well as it could. At another time the point becomes that Ghana is doing much better than similarly placed countries. Usually, however, many Ghanaians want to tell whether a particular government did better than another or whether the situation is changing over time.

These days, as I listen to development practitioners, development managers, development partners and development analysts speak about Ghana, the list of performance indicators keeps getting longer and longer, and one begins to wonder whether those

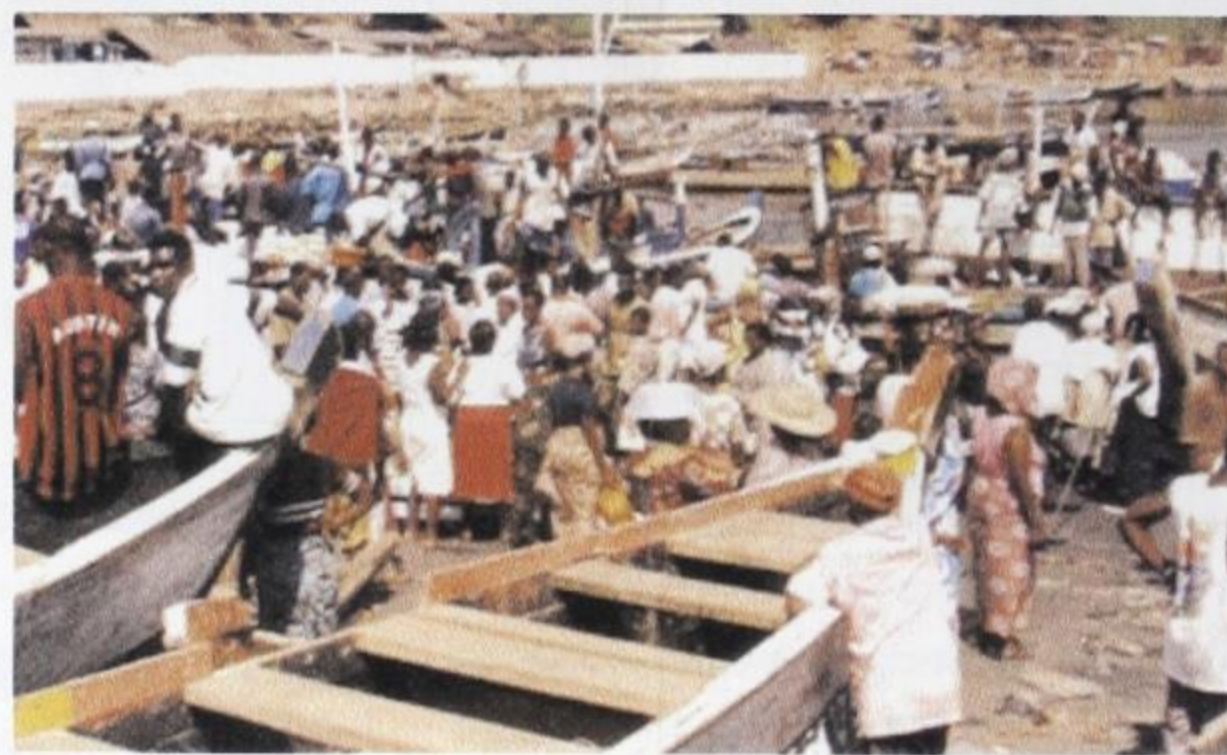
who keep extending the list really understand their significance. The challenge, I guess, is usually how to demystify economics and make some of those indicators relevant to everyday application.

That reminds me of the experience of a very senior government official trying to explain the performance of the Ghanaian economy to a large group of selected people in Kumasi some years ago. After he had gone on and on about how the government's policies were leading

to significant drops in inflation, somebody in the audience who described himself as a chief farmer asked innocently in Twi: "what at all is this inflation that you keep mentioning"? The government official then responded in Twi as follows: "just imagine that you have only ₵100 (one hundred cedis) to spend in a year and this amount can buy only one egg. And then in the following year you observe that your ₵100 can buy only one half of an egg. It means inflation has risen by about 50 per cent for the year". While I was beginning to think that the response defied everything I had

learned about the measurement of inflation as a student, the chief farmer showed that he knew even better when he retorted that "in my whole life I have never come across half an egg". I am sure you can imagine the wild laughter that followed from the audience.

But let us go back to the subject of measuring economic performance and comparing countries with these. The growing list of things to look out for when comparing countries is obviously



Takoradi Fishing Harbour

influenced by the number of things that the economies are expected to achieve, and those things are increasing very fast as the problems that people face change almost daily. These days many of the economic targets have been given international dimensions. I appreciate the fact that it is useful and nice to compare Ghana's GDP (gross domestic product) at any time to that of some other countries in order to make a point. While many would have liked to compare unemployment rates, these are difficult to determine in our part of the world, and nobody seems particularly anxious to overcome the challenges involved in changing the status quo. I have noticed increasingly that many public officials like to focus on the inflation figures as the true test of a government's performance, and I hope they have learned from the senior government official's experience. There are also many, including my good self, who pay more attention to how growing GDP rates translate into poverty reduction,



Adome Bridge - Atimpoku



Tema Oil Refinery

and this is becoming the norm in comparing countries. Thus I find more and more people talking about how much poverty has fallen in one country versus another, and which growth is pro-poor and which is not. I would like to see more government officials in Ghana, including those at Bank of Ghana, pay more attention to these developments.

As Ghana celebrates 50 years of independence, the comparison that one often comes across is that to Malaysia. There is no doubt that regardless of what performance indicators one chooses, Malaysia has moved into a completely different situation from where it was 50 years ago, while Ghana has not made that impressive a move (see Figure 1). Even though I only know Malaysia from a couple of hours spent at the airport in Kuala Lumpur while in transit, I have come to appreciate enormously its achievements from reading about it and from studying as much data as I have been able to assemble on its economic performance over the 50-year period. But this article is not about Malaysia and its achievements. It's

more about why Ghana is not Malaysia and how different people, not necessarily economists, make that assessment.

### The Promise of the Early Post-Independence Period

At independence, the stakes were very high, and so were

the people's expectations. They had been made to believe that "as soon as the white man left, things would be better". They were expecting jobs in modern factories because these were known to pay far more than farming did. They were expecting tarred roads to their towns and villages because they had learned that the reasons for not having them included the fact they had no exportable commodities to interest the colonial economy. There were many looking for better housing in poor urban areas since the residents had been deliberately deprived by the colonial government that chose to pay attention first to where its own kindred lived and then work on the areas for its "collaborators". All the things that we had been deprived of would be restored to us!

Many have acknowledged the fact that our first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, was a good dreamer. He was the one who wrote "and I can see and hear springing up cities of Ghana, becoming the metropolis of science, learning, scientific agriculture, industry and philosophy".

Did we share in his dreams? That is one question I have had great difficulty answering. I am quite sure most Ghanaians at the time wanted the same things as he did, particularly in terms of the outcomes. There is, however, evidence of vast differences in opinion about how to approach the dream, and the fact that agreement could not be found on this probably explains a lot of the political and economic problems that Ghana has had in the past 50 years.

### Turning Dreams into Reality: The Hard Options

Nkrumah's dreams were translated into large numbers of poorly run state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as we sought to industrialise. I have never had any ideological quarrel with the state owning enterprises, unlike many of my colleagues. There are many instances of countries pursuing 'dirigiste' forms of government. My point of departure has often been that the state does not have to manage the enterprises it owns.

As we pursued the early dreams, what comparisons emerged? There was of course the famous wager between Nkrumah and Houphouet-Boigny. It was common in the 1970s and 1980s to hear Ivorian claims of success. These days I find the claims more tamed, and Ivorians a far less confident people than they used to be. So maybe Ghana did not come out too badly after all. But, of course it depends on how you look at it! Maybe, we should use some of the usual performance indicators to judge. We find that the Ivorian per capita GDP is still more than three times larger than that of

Ghana. But the gap has narrowed considerably in the last decade. And now Ghana is growing somewhat faster than Côte d'Ivoire (see Figure 2) and the social indicators show far fewer differences than they did two decades ago. But you see, I am not particularly interested in who won the wager, as I believe they both lost. I don't think their countries are today what they both expected 50 years ago. When it comes to the Malaysia comparison there is the fact that Tunkur Abdul Rahman shared a similar vision as our own Kwame Nkrumah, but both he and his people realised much sooner that they were not moving fast enough. That brought about change in governance and strategy, giving foreign capital specific roles to play, often in partnership with domestic capital holders and also the state. We never gave ourselves the chance to re-assess the situation.

#### **Dealing with Early Failures: Frustrations of a People**

It took us an awful long time to come to the realisation that we were not going anywhere with our development. After Nkrumah, and for a long time, we simply lacked an approach. I have elsewhere described the years 1966 - 1983 as years for muddling through. We muddled through, doing what the young mechanics at Adabraka refer to as '*ma try ma kwe*' (I will try and see, in Ga). We tried to feed ourselves and our industries after it became obvious that if we did not repay our debts nobody was going to feed us on credit. We destroyed the entire financial system trying to make it finance the activities that benefited only the ruling elite,

largely military officers with no management skills, and those who could gain access to them. Indeed we unleashed unnecessary hardship on ourselves, similar to what our friends in Zimbabwe are doing to themselves today, for no apparent reason.

While we talked about promoting Ghanaian businesses we created even more SOEs than Kwame Nkrumah did. We started requiring licenses for every economic activity without agreed eligibility criteria. That allowed rent-seeking and corruption to grow much faster than ever before, turning our society into one in which merit did not count. In effect we undermined both the state and the market without any sense of when things would get better after making sacrifices.

Of course our frustrations as a people grew. They grew enough to make us, as students and professional bodies, defy the military establishment and protest openly. That allowed others to take the matter even further and initiate all manner of political changes, well beyond our wildest imaginations. I am fully aware of the fact that the link between economics and politics is a very strong one, and that is why I expected people who desired political power to have credible economic programmes. I saw people struggle for political power and then turn to look at each other and wonder what next. So our frustrations continued and we became far more desperate than our neighbours.

We indeed became the humiliated people of Africa, the subject of jokes among Africans, especially our Togolese and Ivorian neighbours, and

also our cousins in Nigeria. So much had been expected of us, and we had managed to destroy all that by not being able to develop a link between our dreams and our capabilities, and then refusing to dream after that. Many were those who could not vote with their voices and hands and so voted with their feet, as if that could solve the problem.

#### **Coming to Terms with the Real World**

By 1983, it was obvious that muddling through was becoming suicidal for the collective good. It must have been quite a humbling experience for the new political elite to put aside all that they stood for and go searching for aid from anywhere. When ideological friends did not provide needed support, the World Bank and the IMF were encouraged to step in. That brought with it a whole new Aid Industry to Ghana, and now to all of Africa. That experience also forced us to come to terms with the real world. In the real world, small open economies like Ghana are shaped largely by how they interact with the rest of the world. In that real world they have two choices: they can either decide to take their destiny into their own hands or hand it to their development partners to manage for them.

Those who opt for the first often study the way the world operates and then determine how best to engage that world. That is what many of the South-East Asian economies did in the 1970s and 80s. In this real world, economic management is about using resources quite wisely, trying to get as much out of limited resources as possible. The

countries that move ahead of others are those that are willing to take initiative and are innovative. They are those that look for markets and strategise how best to enter them. They are not afraid of trade; they master it. When they borrow, they use the resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. Indeed they do not borrow first and ask 'what shall we do with it?' They also do not share cakes that they have not yet baked.

On the other hand those who make the second choice may be seen to be playing it safe, which is not necessarily a bad thing. Their budgets are likely to be financed even if the threshold remains too low to deal with the major problems facing the economy. They constantly turn to their 'friends' for advice and endorsement. Ministers' speeches are written by consultants hired by development partners. National development programmes have to be 'approved' by the same partners and particular expressions have to be present in order to show that officials of Finance ministries are well informed. Whether the economies are doing well or not is often determined by the development partners and not by the countries themselves. Effectively the countries' economic managers learn to become extremely risk averse and latch on to any new ideas that may be associated with the next big aid programme. And there are many such examples in Africa today.

It is my view that Ghana is somewhere between the two. Economic managers

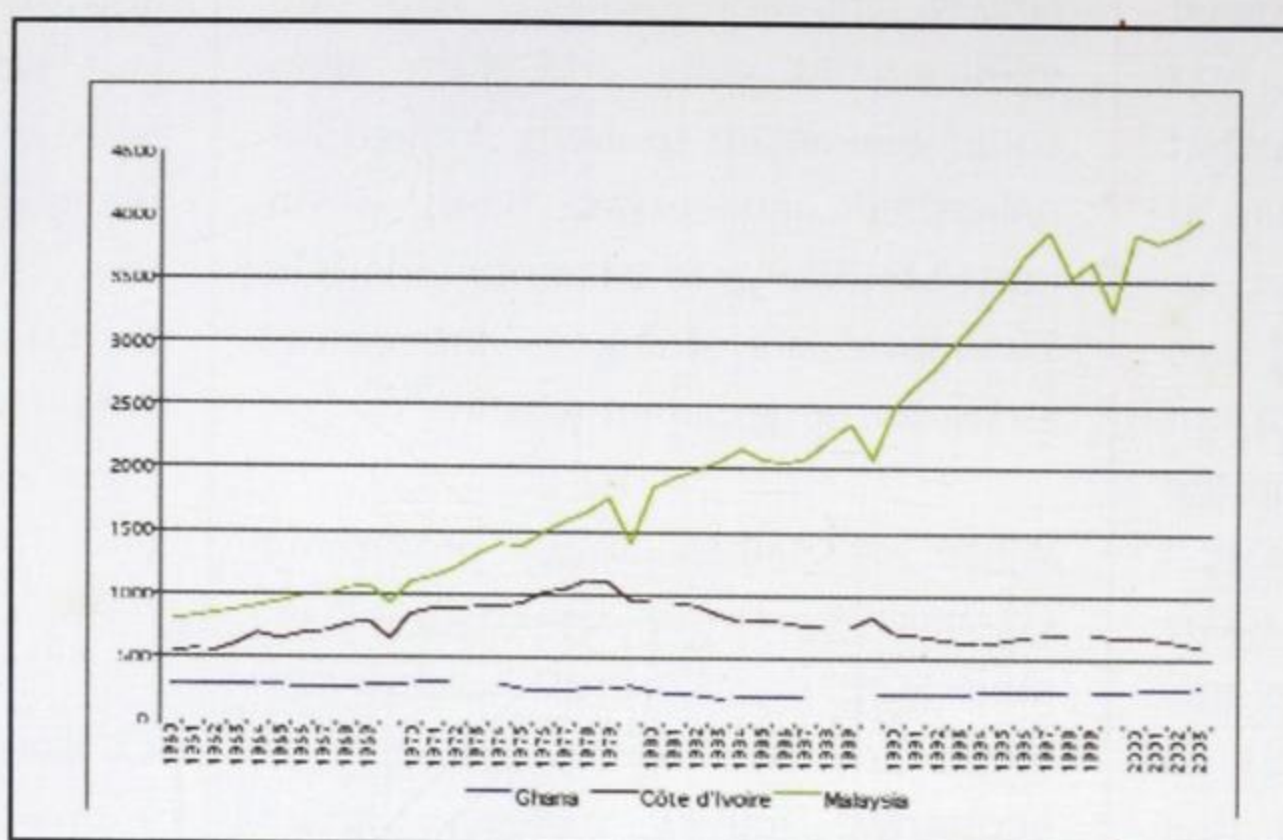


Figure 1: Per Capita GDP in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Malaysia since 1960

would like to take the first option after two decades of liberal reforms, but there is considerable risk aversion in their ranks and too much self-interest among those offering advice, benefiting immensely from the relationship with the development partners. We have not yet developed mechanisms that reward innovativeness and initiative.

**So, Is Ghana Doing Well or Not? It Depends ...**

Clearly, the indicators are currently looking better for Ghana after many years of difficulty, particularly compared to other African countries. The incidence of poverty at 28.5 per cent is coming down much faster than in most countries, and the most recent annual GDP growth of 6.2 per cent is as good as it can get under prevailing structures.

Of course, with more aid and other transfers it can get even better. The Bank of Ghana is obviously very happy with the inflation situation even though there are worries about the link to the exchange rate; but the only people worried are the exporters. I am not very sure about the employment situation but the number of people I see at the large road intersections is growing.

Figure 1 however suggests caution in celebrating achievement. It shows clearly that the people of Malaysia have done far better than their compatriots in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, which we have known for a long time. Ghana's performance in terms of per capita GDP has been quite flat, while that of our Ivorian neighbours first went up and then fell. The narrowing of the gap in more recent times is more due to their decline than our rise.

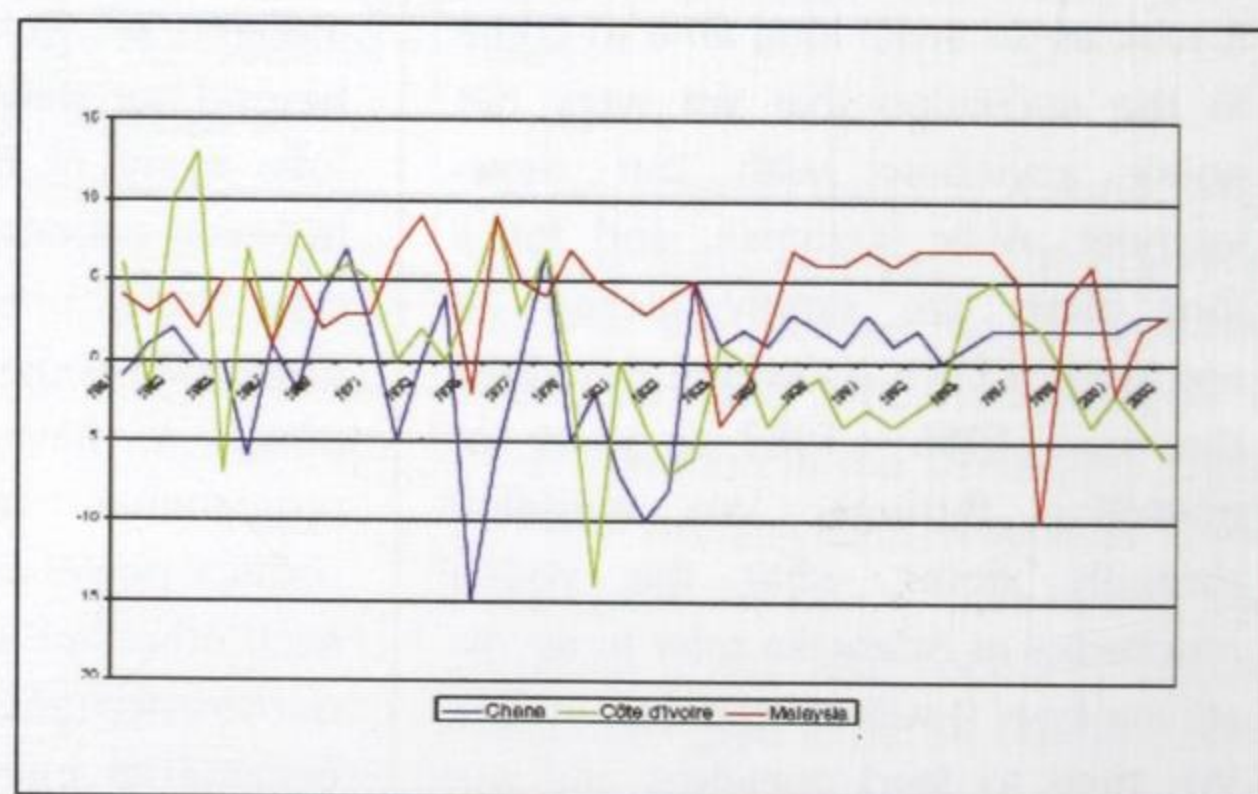


Figure 2: GDP Growth Rates in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Malaysia since 1960

As Figure 2 shows, the growth achievement is indeed not spectacular



Preparing pineapple exports

but it looks much better today when one compares it to the very unstable situation before 1984. And indeed it shows that we are growing in a more stable fashion than Côte d'Ivoire.

Putting aside all that I said earlier about performance indicators, I have learned that the most objective opinions about whether Ghana is doing well or not are those made by foreigners, and here I do not mean World Bank or IMF officials. In the November 5, 2007 issue of Business Day newspaper in Nigeria, there was an interesting article written by Blessing Anaro. The title of the article was "Ghana's re-denomination: A competitive edge over Nigeria"? Among other things, Anaro writes that "a recent visit to Ghana reveals the gains the country's economy has made from its last re-denomination exercise... Besides the fact that the currency seems to have added 'more weight', it has given the country's economy more confidence". He writes further: "for now, the standard of living, including prices of goods in Ghana, has gone up noticeably. No doubt, this is one of the

outcomes of the re-denomination exercise. Somehow the citizens do not seem to be complaining, as they are using both the old and new currency simultaneously". I must confess I was not sure of what the reference to prices really meant within the context.

Anaro's article was concerned about what he saw as Ghana positioning itself for a leadership role in the West African Sub-Region. Clearly, Ghana is doing something that some Nigerians admire. Indeed there are many Africans who ask me constantly what is going on in Ghana, full of admiration. They have heard positive things about Ghana and are trying to understand it. The different languages and accents I hear at the new shopping malls of Accra suggest to me that many more Africans are as impressed as Mr Anaro.

In sum, there is no doubt about the fact that the economy of Ghana is more stable today than it was a decade ago. And this is very commendable. Ghana also has a much more stable economy than its neighbours. But will it be equally stable two years from

today? I honestly cannot tell you. This is because it does not simply depend on who is in power in Ghana and who the economic managers are. Being a small open economy without very strong institutions and structures yet, a lot still depends on how Ghana's development partners respond to it and what happens in the rest of the world.

I would like to see the next decade devoted to developing Ghanaian initiatives and greater innovativeness in the management of the economy. I would like to see greater determination to influence the structure of the economy and make it more robust. For example, I would like to see a Ghana that decides that it must have a China policy as part of its industrial development strategy with a view to taking advantage of the new fastest growing market in the world. That means, in 10 years Ghana should not be exporting raw cocoa beans and timber mainly but a much more diversified set of processed and manufactured items. That is what a mature economy should do.



Kente weaver

## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

Akosua K. Darkwah<sup>3</sup>

For those of us whose parents had not even met when Ghana gained independence in 1957, the numerous activities undertaken this year to mark the Golden Jubilee of Black Africa's first independent nation have provided us with many opportunities to learn about Ghana's history. One such activity that I have enjoyed immensely is the compilation put together by employees at the Daily Graphic that chronicles some of the major happenings in Ghana over the last five decades. These news clippings provide a window into life in Ghana over the last 50 years and show us the extent to which Ghanaian society has changed in the past half century.

In reading these news clippings, I have been struck by both the sense of familiarity and dissonance that these news items evoke. Some of the items tell stories so dramatically different from our reality in Ghana today that I simply cannot relate to the incidents described. Imagine my surprise for example when I read that the Ghana Railways and Harbours Administration made a profit of one million pounds sterling in the year 1961!

My only image of a train in Ghana is a loud, old, rusty train teeming with hordes of people both inside and outside the train. Yes, people hanging on for dear life. These hangers on no doubt ride for free, which partly explains why we do not have shiny, gleaming, trains transporting us all over traffic-choked Accra. Indeed, for some of us, the only means of transportation we can easily identify with is road transportation. Reading then about an

efficient, profit-making rail service in Ghana was hard to believe.

On the other hand, some clippings in the book tell very familiar stories. In fact, these stories are so similar to our reality now that I find myself double checking dates to make sure that the incidents described there indeed occurred many years ago. Take our efforts at decongesting the Central Business District of Accra for example. Apparently, goods for sale competing with pedestrians for space on the sidewalks of Makola market is not a new phenomenon at all. Hawkers were being asked to quit the pavements as far back as 1968. Oh yes, Stanley Adjiri-Blankson has his job well cut out for him if he intends to permanently clear Makola market of the congestion on the pavements. This is apparently a 40-year old problem!

How then do we judge just how much social change has occurred in Ghana over the course of its existence as an independent state? To illustrate this, I will look at the educational sector which has been the primary process by which we have attempted to effect social change in this country. Education allows an individual to develop his or her fullest potential. It provides individuals an opportunity to expand their horizons, understand the world around them and acquire skills that they can use to improve the community in which they live. As

Nelson Mandela is often quoted as saying "education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world". Ghanaian politicians' belief in the validity of this statement is evident



Basic School Students

in the fact that since independence, as noted by Ivan Addae-Mensah in his J.B. Danquah Memorial Lectures of 2000, each successive government has spent no less than 30 per cent of the national budget on education. In addition, each Constitution of this nation has enshrined the right of every Ghanaian child to basic education.

Since independence, a number of major reforms have taken place in this country, all in the ultimate effort to ensure that Ghanaians have access to education which would ostensibly transform us first as individuals and eventually the society as a whole. These efforts began with Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. With the establishment of the Ghana Education Trust, he set about increasing access to education by building more schools in different parts of the country. In addition, the 1961

<sup>3</sup> Akosua K. Darkwah is a Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, the University of Ghana, Legon

Education Act enshrined the idea that public basic schools would provide almost free education. The only bill parents with wards in public schools received was for fees for textbooks.

In the 1970s, other major education policy documents and reforms included the Dzobo Report, which served as a precursor to the 1987 curricula reforms and the Ghana Education Service Decree of 1974. The major reform which took place in the 1980s was the overhaul of school curricula in 1987. Our more home-grown Junior Secondary School/Senior Secondary School model technically sought to take better account of our reality and needs as a developing country. We needed less highly trained professionals and more people with basic training. Vocational skills, were also given far more prominence than had been the case with the British styled Ordinary and Advanced Level system of schooling. Some major changes that took place in the educational sector in the 1990s included the creation of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GET Fund) with a portion of the proceeds from value added taxes as well as the Capitation Grant Programme, both of which are intended to improve the infrastructure available in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Also, in fulfillment of Ghanaian children's constitutional right to an education, there has been the adoption of the Free, Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy. Since the millennium, two other major changes have taken

place; the Ghana School Feeding Programme which fed more than 200,000 school children in selected districts across the country last year and most recently, the transition to the Junior/Senior High School model, which among other changes, has added an extra year to the number of years students will spend in secondary school.

Of all the changes that have taken place in our educational sector since independence, the reforms of 1987 are perhaps the reforms most closely tied to the goal of transformation. Access to education can be granted to all citizens but without an education that takes cognizance of the context in which we live and is relevant to the needs of our society, our educational sector will be ineffective in changing our society for the better. In terms of access, at the primary level, the numbers are encouraging. With gross primary school enrollment rates standing at 91 per cent in 2006, Ghana might well surpass the Millennium Development Goal of achieving Universal Basic Education before the deadline of 2015. At secondary level

also, student enrollment almost tripled between 1986 and 2004 with the numbers going from 27,000 to 90,000 over that period. A similar story can be told at the tertiary level. In 2005, thanks to the increase in public universities and the establishment of a dozen private universities, the number of tertiary students hit the 100,000 mark. Dr. Nkrumah, I am sure is happy about this. However, these numbers do not tell the whole story. The rate of increase in access has not matched our population growth rate over the last 50 years. In real terms then, while the numbers have gone up, in terms of a ratio to the population of school-going individuals at each level of education, we have made very little progress. Only 14 per cent of secondary school going age children are actually in school and only 5 per cent of secondary school leavers actually get into tertiary institutions in Ghana.

Secondly, as ably demonstrated by Ivan Addae-Mensah in his J.B. Danquah Memorial Lectures of 2000 aptly titled "Education in Ghana: A Tool for Social Mobility or Social Stratification?" access, particularly at the tertiary level is limited to a select few, who happen to attend the right kinds of secondary schools. In the late 1990s, data collected at the University of Ghana, Legon showed that although there were 504 Senior Secondary Schools at the time, between 60 per cent and 92 per cent of students admitted into the university to read various courses came from the 50 schools classified as well-endowed by the Ministry of Edu-



Female head porter - 'Kayayoo'

cation. 43 percent came from 18 of these schools which have consistently excelled in the National Science and Mathematics Competition. A similar story was evident at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).

I doubt that a decade later, the evidence would be any different. Even without mentioning any of the names of these schools here, I am sure that every reader would be able to name correctly at least five of the schools that are included in this list of 18 top schools. Entry into these top schools is undoubtedly also shaped in large part by the kind of primary school one attends. Unlike what pertained half a century ago, attending a public primary school in a rural area makes it almost impossible to attend any of the top 18 schools. A man who graduated from one of these schools exactly 50 years ago once shared with me the fact that he went to that school from a rural school in the Eastern Region with four other colleagues. However, these days, students from that same school cannot even make it into the nearest Senior High Secondary School, less than an hour's journey away.

Clearly then, while on the surface of it, access to education in Ghana has been improved with the provision of more school buildings, in reality access particularly at the higher levels of education is limited to the select few whose parents/guardians ensure that they attend the right kinds of primary schools which will get them into the appropriate secondary schools.

Even more importantly, going to school is not worthwhile if it does not transform the individual, let alone

society as a whole. The numbers of Ghanaians going to school is meaningless if the quality of education that they receive is questionable. And on this score, we have made very little progress. The emphasis on quantity has not been matched with an equal emphasis on quality. As a teacher who finds it difficult teaching 500 plus students in a manner that I can guarantee would ensure that each student learns, I find it hard to imagine how my colleagues at the secondary and particularly primary school level can cope with teaching our children the fundamentals of Mathematics, English, Science and Social Science when they have 50 plus wide-eyed children in front of them. Ghanaians' lack of faith in the quality of our public education system is evident in the numerous opportunities that have been created and taken up by parents who can afford to do so to ensure that their wards avoid having to go through the public school system in the country.

Numerous private schools have been set up that offer both a different pedagogical approach (the Montessori style) and/or different content (the International Baccalaureate). This lack of faith is not unfounded. On average, students from public schools consistently perform worse than those from private schools on the criterion-referenced tests used to ascertain mastery in English and Mathematics. In 1997, for example, while 69 per cent of students in private primary schools reached mastery in English, the same could be said for only

6 per cent of students in public primary schools. The situation was no different in Mathematics. While 40 per cent of the students in private primary schools reached mastery in Mathematics, only 3 per cent of students in public primary schools had attained mastery in Mathematics.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, the best way to judge just how much difference all the tinkering with our educational system has made in the last 50 years is to reflect on the potential of our public schools (basic, secondary and tertiary) to transform our children who spend years in that system. I am not simply interested in how many of them would pass the requisite national certificate examinations but also those who can read and write grammatically correct sentences, think logically, argue cogently, understand basic concepts in Mathematics and Science and have some understanding of the world around them. Above all, how many of them can draw on the knowledge and skills acquired over the years to contribute to the transformation of our society? That, after all is the ultimate purpose of education. While we have made a lot of changes in our educational system, ultimately I dare say then that very little has changed.



Ghanaian street scene

<sup>4</sup> These statistics also show that private schools in this country also have some way to go to ensure that all the children enrolled in those institutions reach mastery level in both English and Mathematics.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN GHANA - 50 YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Ivan Addae - Mensah<sup>5</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major roles of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences is to act as a think-tank to Government in accordance with the Act that established the Academy 48 years ago. In fulfillment of this aspect of the Academy's mandate, it recently went into dialogue with the Council of State on the question of Science and Technology Governance. This article is based on the deliberations with the Council of State and the memorandum that emerged from these interactions, which has been submitted to Government through the Council of State.

My objective in this article is to articulate some of the concerns of the Ghanaian scientific community, including the Academy, and bring the issue of Science and Technology Governance to public notice so as to generate the necessary debate to enable the country fully understand these issues and try to find appropriate solutions. No science and technology policy can make any meaningful impact on society if the governance structure at the highest level is weak.

The modern world economy has been shaped by scientific and technological advancement, resulting in the emergence of the Knowledge Economy. No country has been able to modernise its economy without reliance on scientific and technological inputs on a massive scale. The importance of science and technology as the main tool for economic and

social development has been emphasised in several major world forums and documents. In a 2004 United Nations report entitled *Inventing a Better Future: A Strategy for Building World-Wide Capacities in Science and Technology*, prepared by the Inter-Academy Panel (IAP), made up of 90 of the world's Academies of Science including the Ghana Academy of Arts and Science, it was clearly stated that

*"all nations, whether industrialised or developing, face a broad array of challenges that will require the application of up-to-date scientific knowledge and technology. No nation can now afford to be without access to a credible, INDEPENDENT Science and Technology (S&T) research capacity that would help it to develop informed policies and take effective action in these and other areas".*

Another report from the Inter-academy Council (IAC) and the Inter-academy Panel (IAP) has underlined the fact that no African country can develop its agriculture, ensure food security and produce a surplus for export without a massive and sustained infusion of human and material resources from science and technology into agricultural production. Just before the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005, which was attended by H.E. the President John Agyekum Kufuor, the Academies of Science of the G8 countries issued a joint statement with the Network of Academies of Science of Africa, on the role of Science and Technology in the development of



Balme Library, University of Ghana

Africa. The declaration concluded that

*"without embedding science, technology and innovation in development, we fear that ambitions for Africa will fail".*

All governments of Ghana since independence have acknowledged in principle, the pivotal role of Science and Technology in the country's economic and social development. The Seven-Year Development Plan (1963 - 1970), the new educational reforms, the Medium Term Development Plan (1997 - 2000) and even the new Ten-Year Development Plan currently in preparation by the National Development Planning Commission, all recognise this fact. The problem has been with implementation. That is why 50 years after independence, we are still crying about the same issues that were clearly identified in the country's first major development plan 47 years ago.

In Part III of the First Medium Term Development Plan (1997 - 2000) of the Ghana Vision 2020 Development Strategic Plan, it is stated that

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Addae-Mensah is Professor of Chemistry and a retired Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Legon.

*“technology and technical expertise are critical factors influencing the success of small enterprises. Many entrepreneurs are either unfamiliar with new technologies or cannot afford to access appropriate levels of technology. This problem is often magnified by poor linkages between science and technology institutions and industry, lack of coordination amongst research institutions, inadequate funds for designing and developing marketable prototypes, and WEAKNESSES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AT POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION LEVELS.*

The document therefore recognises the weak Science and Technology governance structure of the country as a major obstacle to successful entrepreneurship. Ghana needs to rapidly train and create the critical mass of scientists and technologists to enable her provide and manage emerging industries and take full advantage of the global technological explosion with the required human capital. The country needs to modernise and re-equip existing scientific, technological and industrial establishments to meet current challenges and cope with current and future global trends.

The recent discovery of oil in commercial quantities requires that the country should immediately, as a matter of urgency, set the necessary processes in motion to train the appropriate personnel to manage and exploit this new national natural resource, otherwise we shall find ourselves being held to ransom by foreign expertise, which will siphon off a vast portion of whatever benefits will accrue from this resource. Quick and effective planning towards this goal is absolutely crucial.

Science and Technology education in Ghana is not responding adequately to development needs due to inadequate funding, poor management, obsolete pedagogical strategies, and the very weak governance structures that have bedevilled our scientific endeavours since independence. Current resource allocation to science and technology education is less than 0.5 per cent of GDP, far below the minimum of 1 per cent proposed in the Lagos Plan of Action. Advanced countries and some of the emerging countries such as Korea, Malaysia and Singapore devote as much as from 3 to 10 per cent of GDP to support science and technology.

Constraints to the rapid development of adequate scientific and technological manpower to support our industrial and economic development include poor laboratory and workshop facilities, low enrolment of science and technology students, weak and ineffective linkage between training and research institutes and the productive sector, and a very poor science culture in the society, resulting



Scientific Research

in a general lack of appreciation of Science and Technology and its relevance to development. We tend to look at issues of development, not as challenges that need sober scientific appraisal for solutions, but as issues that can only be solved by divine intervention.

Ghana cannot expect to develop as a nation without devoting substantial human and material resources to research, development and application of science and technology, and the governance structure for achieving these objectives is absolutely crucial.

#### **Past and Present Science and Technology Governance Systems**

During the first republic, science and technology matters were directly under the President, and all matters relating to planning were also directly under him. The first time the country had a full Ministry devoted to Science and Technology was in the 1979 - 1981 Government of Dr. Hilla Limann, when the Ministry of Industry Science and Technology was created, with full Cabinet status.

Even with a full Ministry, with or without Cabinet status, Science and Technology have always been made appendages of some other ministerial portfolio. From “Industry, Science and Technology”, the country moved to Science and Technology, then to “Environment, Science and Technology” then to “Environment and Science”, with Technology appended to “Communications” as the “Ministry of Communications and Technology”, a move which attracted considerable criticism from the scientific community. The answer to these criticisms was the complete disappearance of Technology from any Ministry, with the

creation of the Ministry of Communications and the retention of the Ministry of Environment and Science. This was then followed about eighteen months ago by the President's major cabinet reshuffle which cut down the number of Ministers and Deputy Ministers by about 10 per cent. One of the casualties, unfortunately, was the Environment and Science Ministry. Now we have the Ministry of Environment and Science totally dismembered, and half of it absorbed into the Ministry of Local Government and the other half absorbed into Education.

These frequent permutations and combinations of Science and Technology have not allowed the country to focus adequately on science and technology as the major tool for our economic development. Educational institutions in the country, particularly at the tertiary level, including the polytechnics, are confronted with limited capacity to enable them take advantage of the vast potential created by globalisation in the knowledge market.

Current trends seem to suggest that our educational institutions, including those set up to promote science and technology education, are drifting away from their assigned norms. The polytechnics which are supposed to produce the middle level manpower for our technological advancement now have more students in marketing and business studies than in electrical and mechanical engineering. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census special reports, the ratio of science to humanities students in our universities has dropped from 43:57 in 1996 to 36:64 in 2001 while that in the polytechnics has dropped from 55:45 in 1996 to 44:56 in 2001. In effect there are now more non-science students in the polytechnics

than there were in 1996, yet these are the institutions expected to train the middle level technological manpower for industrial development.

These trends are not likely to change to enable the country achieve its economic development objectives if the governance structure for science and technology continues to be weak, fragmented and uncoordinated. In the Academy's view:

■ The Education wing of the Ministry as currently constituted is already very big, with serious budgetary constraints. Adding the Science portfolio to it is likely to constrain resources going into that sector, and make Science and Technology an even more deprived unit of the sector.

■ The Science Education Unit of the Ministry is limited to only the Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary school levels, and does not go beyond curriculum development and promotion of science education at those levels. There is little provision for handling the science content of higher education and matters of high scientific and technological research and development.

■ Science and Technology permeates several ministries, including Trade and Industry, Roads, Railways, Harbours, Aviation and Space Technology, Environment, Energy, Agriculture, Health, etc. It will better serve its purpose by being given a higher profile, if possible, by existing as a separate Ministry with Cabinet status, to be able to coordinate all aspects of Science and Technology for Development

■ Dispersing the responsibility for Science and Technology into other ministries does not give the impression of a coherent and focused policy direction that will act as the necessary



Mampong Plant Research Institute

tool for the country's rapid economic development.

■ Since technology is the interface between science and development, putting Science under Education, means that institutions such as the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and all its 13 constituent research institutes and other affiliate centres, etc, with mandates that go far beyond just education and manpower training, will all now come under the huge and inadequately funded and already very complex Ministry of Education. This is definitely going to affect their capacity to contribute to industrial development as outlined or mandated in various Government documents. Similarly, serious national and international environmental issues are likely to be bogged down by mundane local authority issues.

■ When one looks at what is going on in some African countries such as Rwanda, South Africa and Nigeria, one cannot help but feel extremely worried about what is going on in Ghana, and the rudderless direction that Science and Technology continues to receive. Nigeria, for example, has set clear targets to have its own communication satellite in space by 2015, and have an astronaut in space by 2025. Nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuels is being vigorously pursued. Whether

these are achievable targets or not, they constitute a national dream being directly and vigorously pursued by the Government – under the direct supervision of the Presidency. One may therefore ask, what is Ghana's dream for the next 10 years? What is our vision for Science and Technology as a nation?

■ Nigeria is reported to have set up a National Raw Materials Research Foundation under the Office of the President. A certain percentage of tax is levied on all industrial raw materials imported into the country. The tax revenue accruing goes directly to the Foundation for funding Science and Technology research, especially the development of local raw materials, in the country. Research therefore does not suffer from inadequate funding. Is Ghana thinking of setting up a similar research endowment fund? If so what is the envisaged seed capital and how is it going to be sustained?

■ It is the considered view of many scientists in the country, including the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, that the frequent changes in the governance structure for Science and Technology is the main cause of the non-implementation of the National Science and Technology Policy Document, prepared as far back as August 1998. No single ministry has regarded this document as the basis of our economic development and



Satellite Dish

sought to implement its provisions over a sustainable period of time.

■ In the past, ministries responsible for Science and Technology have not really articulated what role Science and Technology must play in economic development, as the main driving force for industrialisation. This needs to change.

■ Evidence-based scientific studies on specific tasks to assist in policy decision-making have been missing in Science and Technology governance.

■ Science and Technology ministries have operated as if they only play supervisory roles for various agencies as a link to Government instead of being the source of ideas and the driving force for using Science and Technology to transform the economy.

■ The country started the construction of a Science Museum as far back as 1963. It is yet to be completed and commissioned. But we have managed to construct four football stadiums in two years. Are we really serious about applying Science and Technology to our development efforts?

#### Recommendations

■ Science and Technology should be given a higher profile and more effective governance structure than is presently the case. Ideally, there should be a separate Ministry for Science and Technology with full Cabinet status. The Ministry will be responsible for liaising between the Research and Development institutions and Government.

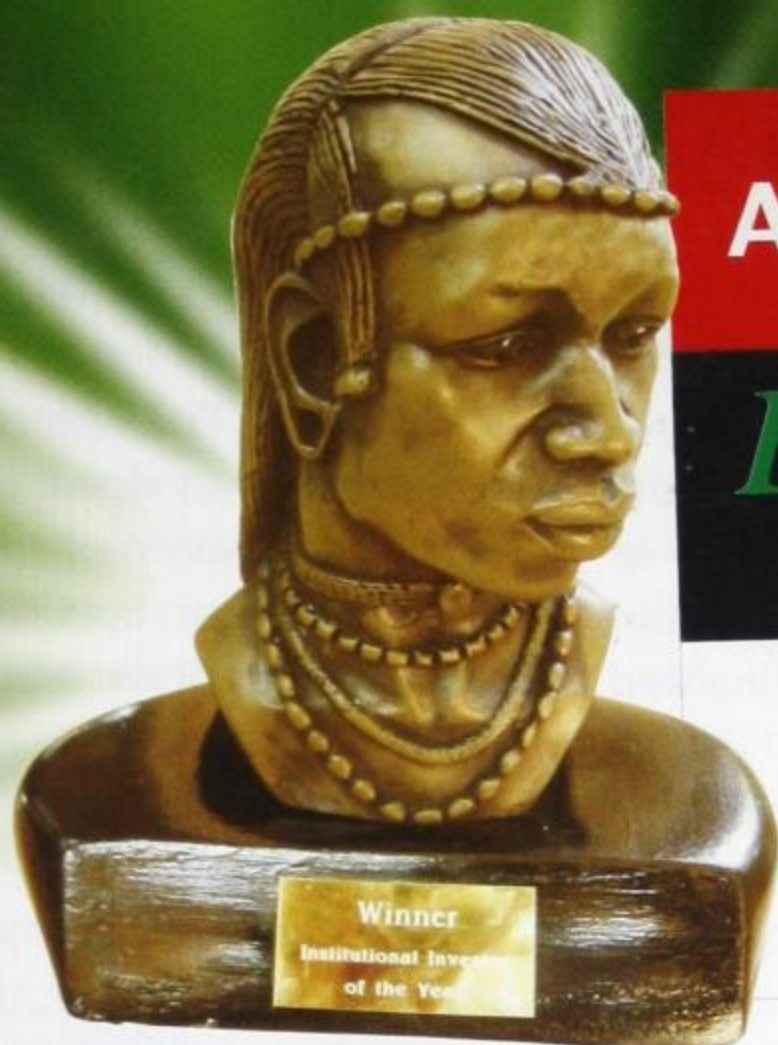
■ However, whether Science and Technology is given a separate Ministry with Cabinet status or continues to be appended to another Ministry, there

should be a Special Adviser to the President on Science and Technology, independent of the Ministry and directly responsible to the President. This is the case in the more advanced countries such as Britain, the USA, India and China. The office of the Science Adviser will be expected to set up special task forces that will articulate the President's vision and implement each year, at least one or two big ideas or objectives, that reflect the President's vision development and advancement.

■ No matter which Ministry is charged with Science and Technology governance, Government should establish a Science and Technology Commission or Foundation, independent of any Ministry, with an independent budget controlled by the Ministry of Finance. As an overarching institution, its budget of 1 to 2 per cent of Ghana's GDP should be approved by Parliament. The Commission should be able to source for independent funds from other sources, internal or external, to support Science and Technology initiatives. The tax on imported raw materials to support Science and Technology research that Nigeria for instance has instituted could serve as an example. The Commission will be charged with the development and application of Science and Technology for national development, and the inculcation of a scientific culture into the general population. Such a structure obtains in South Africa, the United Kingdom, India, the USA and Malaysia.

■ The tendency to shift science and technology matters around with every cabinet reshuffle does not give the right impression that the country is serious about its science, and should be avoided at all cost.

SPECIAL PRESS RELEASE



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## TOWARDS A MEETING POINT OF VICTORY<sup>6</sup>

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

Let me start by acknowledging the tremendous thought and energy that Dr. Colette Atkinson, Lynh Tran and Lynh's predecessor, Chris Aschaan, have put into planning this conference. But the conference, of course, would not be possible without your expressed desire to participate and now your presence. The conference and its themes are timely, for, given the speed of globalisation and the tensions it is generating, the need for genuine dialogue between cultures and languages on the basis of equality and mutual respect has never been greater.

The idea of the conference itself arose out of the activities of the International Center for Writing and Translation (ICWT). Since its inception five years ago, ICWT has supported translations mostly into English, and language revitalisation projects in diverse countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the islands, including Angola, Eritrea, Kenya, South Africa, India, Tibet, Martinique, Iceland, Hawaii, Iran, Indonesia, Italy (Sicily). The Center has also brought to this Campus, Native American, African-American, Maori, Samoan, Hawaiian, Caribbean, Korean, Indian, Irish, Finnish/Danish, and English writers under its two series: *Other Ways of Knowing: The Challenge of Cultures in Contact*; and *From Here to There: Languages in Conversation*.

Under 'Other Ways of Knowing', the distinguished intellectuals engaged in issues and varied notions of cultural

translation. Thus Peter Nazareth, of Ugandan-Asian origins but now teaching in Iowa, talked movingly of 'Elvis in the Third World', looking at this icon in terms of the marginalised cultures of Africa and Asia. Maori intellectuals talked of Shakespeare's sonnets in Maori and showed the riveting film, *Merchant of Venice*, set in New Zealand, in the Maori language with Maori actors. The 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate, Wangari Maathai



Zulu girl - [www.travelandleisure.com/articles/zulu-nation](http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/zulu-nation)

discussed the environment as the language of human life and talked of multilingualism as reflective of bio- and eco-diversity.

Underlying the notion of other ways of knowing was a question of the tendency to assume and often act as if there is only one way of looking at reality, mostly the way that comes in a straight temporal line from the Greeks

to the West. The Western gaze on the world becomes dominant, sometimes making the non-Western look at itself through Western Eyes. But what about the Asian, African, Native American, Native Pacific gaze at the world? Cultures can illuminate and creatively impact one another to the benefit of the human, challenging us all to be open to other ways of knowing.

From 'Here to There: Languages in Conversation', brought together writers working in and from marginalised languages and cultures to discuss the relationship between the languages of the cultures from which they wrote or drew; and the dominant language with which they engage, in alliance or opposition. The 'Here to There' of the title assumed the normal cognitive process of knowledge beginning where one is, the here, then adding to it, all the way to the there, each step being enriched by what has gone before while clearing the path for the next, the constant mutual illumination of here and there.

The 'Here and There' are everywhere, contained in each other, interlocked for all time and space. Applied to language, it means that for the individual and the community of every culture, the mother tongue is the starting point of the quest for knowledge. The 'Languages in Conversation' part of the title is in reference to the need for languages and cultures to engage each other, through translation

→ 23

<sup>6</sup> Plenary Keynote Address at the Conference on "Global Conversations: A Festival of Marginalised Languages" organised on Wednesday October 24, 2007 by the International Center for Writing and Translation (ICWT), the University of California, Irvine. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is Professor of Comparative Literature and English and Director of ICWT.

as the common language of all languages. We took translation as conversation, more as an ideal which has yet to be realised, because conversation assumes equality of the interlocutors. Without that assumption, conversation would be anything but conversation. It would be a prayer, a lecture, a sermon, a command. In structures of the dominating and the dominated, languages negate the ideals of conversation and assume a relationship of command in a hierarchy of power.



Peasant farmers at work

Nothing illustrates this distortion of the ideals of mutual give and take better than the colonial process during which the relationships between languages became one of dictation from the dominant to the dominated culture. Just as in the realm of economics and politics, so in culture, the world became divided into a handful of the dominant and hundreds of the dominated, a situation still reflected in the relations between languages today. In more ways than one, the global world is an inheritor of global colonialism. A handful of languages literally dominate all the other languages of the globe. Some languages, with all the knowledge they contain, are even dying under the pressure for linguistic and cultural

homogenisation. The world of languages and cultures has thus become divided into a dominant few and a marginalised many. Marginalisation is a question of power, for the languages themselves, no matter the quantity of their speakers, are not marginal. Whereas between the dominant, translation has been a two-way traffic largely, among the marginalised, it has become dictation of the dominant to the marginalised, with the dominant dictating the interflow and terms of the exchange

between them. The result is that many intellectuals of the post-colonial world have abandoned their languages altogether to write, theorise and scholarise in the dominant. They may argue that they are using the borrowed dominant languages differently, and this is largely true,

but the fact remains that at the end of the day, it is the languages and cultures of the birth of these intellectuals which have been deprived. The intellectuals may be excellent spokespeople of their own cultures through their mastery of the dominant; English for instance may even give them a world stage to display the dynamism of their cultures, but this is a case of the dominant enabling and disabling. It enables such intellectuals and the cultures they represent to voice their originality on the world stage defined by the imperial language, but it disables the voice of those cultures and languages by depriving them of some of their best minds and genius. Visibility in the dominant becomes invisibility in the marginalised. And among the margi-

nalised, for instance, between Gujarati and Yoruba, Igbo and Zulu, African and Native American languages, there is almost total silence!

The ICWT programmes were meant to encourage conversation among languages, among the marginalised themselves and between the marginalised as a whole and the hitherto dominant. Our model was to encourage a model of relationship that made visible the genius even in the most marginalised of languages.

The intellectuals who came here, most of you among them, illuminated many aspects of the two series, *Other Ways*, and *From Here to There*, and the model they tried to encourage. They also raised other questions. In time we realised that although the ICWT touched many languages and cultures, the intellectuals came here in threes only at any one time. Why not bring together all the intellectuals who have touched and been touched by the Center, within the Campus, the State, the nation and the world, for what would amount to a global conversation? In the end, financial and logistical restraints would not allow us to bring everybody to Irvine. But we did not give up on the idea of a global conversation, which is why we are all gathered here from Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Ireland, Spain, India, Denmark, Turkey, Germany, and the Americas. But even two people can still initiate a global conversation. We hope that our discussions in the next three days will contribute to a vast global conversation among cultures and languages of the Earth.

We are hoping that the participants will address many of these issues and more, particularly around the several Rs: Recovery, Revival, Revitalisation,

and Restoration leading to greater visibility of marginalised languages. Recovery, Revival and Revitalisation take on a more urgent tone when we realise, as in John Noble Witford's report in the *The New York Times* of 19 September, that one language falls out of use every two weeks; and that of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken, nearly half are likely to disappear, following those that have already been driven to their graves. Restoration is part of recovery, revival and revitalisation, but here at the ICWT we have been using the concept to refer to the process of putting works written in a dominant language by intellectuals from a marginalised culture, back into the original language and culture of the intellectual, in effect restoring the work to its original language and culture without interfering in its existence in the dominant memory, almost like helping it return home from exile. Conceived as a global project, it would affect quite a number of cultures in Asia, Africa, Europe and the islands, and it would help in reversing the brain drain by ensuring that the products of that brain drain go back to build the local base. We are not talking about a new thing: this process has already started. Some of Wole Soyinka's plays have been translated into Yoruba. Many works by African writers have been translated into Kiswahili. In India, too, some works, Rushdie's for

instance, have been translated into Indian languages. In many international fora, there is often the talk of the transfer of appropriate technology from where it is most concentrated to where it is less endowed. What about the transfer of appropriate knowledge in general from its concentration in dominant languages to the marginalised? All this should be a conscious global movement, a global restoration project, calling for a grand alliance of the committed.

It is the visibility of the buried voices of the globe, whether in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, the Americas, that will measure the success of such an enterprise. Here among us, are many participants who have already taken advantage of new technologies to make the languages they work in, a little bit more visible. The use of technologies to enhance the vision is one of the themes of this gathering. There are other issues, for instance, the relationship between the marginalised and the dominant and how they can work together creatively.

The focus of the conference is therefore on activism and learning from one another. Most of those present have been active players in the drama of languages in their own countries. We are hoping that the participants will readily draw on the

insights they have gained from years of linguistic and cultural activism and share them with the rest of us. That way, we shall return to our places, strengthened, no longer feeling alone, but part of what many others, all over the globe, are trying to do. The idea is to make this a continuing conversation all over the globe, a conversation that implicitly challenges the hierarchical model of the relationship between languages and cultures and envisioning a replacement with a model based on networking. In a network, all languages, big and small, can give and receive.

That is why at the International Center for Writing and Translations, we have borrowed, for our inspirational motto, a line from Aimé Césaire's book 'Discourse on Colonialism', that culture contact is the oxygen of civilisation.

Aimé Césaire concludes his celebrated Poem, 'Return to the Native Land', with a declaration that no race has a monopoly of beauty and intelligence, that there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory. The same could be said of languages; that no language has a monopoly of beauty and intellect, emotion, reason, that there is a place for all at the meeting point of victory. This global conversation should be a small step towards that victory.

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## AFRICA AT A CROSSROAD: Will Ghana Show the Way?

Gobind Nankani<sup>7</sup>

Africa has been experiencing an economic boom over the last five years. Such high growth rates have not been seen across Africa for four decades. Economic growth has averaged over 5 per cent, and has been much higher in oil exporting countries. Even the conflict-ridden countries on the continent have begun to do better. Some argue that Africa is at a crossroad: there is a new economic renaissance afoot. Others maintain that these good times are fragile; that the high commodity prices, driven by high growth in the United States and China, may, as they always have in the past, be reversed. African countries will therefore again see a growth acceleration followed by deceleration.

Ghana is, rightly or wrongly, seen as one of the leading indicators for the rest of Africa. Ghana turned 50 this year. The celebrations in March recalled emotional scenes from 1957. Throughout Ghana, many of Ghana's own daughters and sons welcomed our achievements. Others, casting an eye on comparable countries such as Malaysia, South Korea, Botswana and Mauritius, lamented what might have been. In much of Africa, Ghana's 50th anniversary was acknowledged as of continental significance, a period of reflection: what would the future bring for Africa? Would this be foretold by Ghana's experience? Will the future bring a continuation of the high growth of the last five years? Given Ghana's current chairmanship and the historic role played by Nkrumah in the African Union (AU), would Ghana play a regional and continental role in group-

ings like The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and in the AU to help lead African growth and an improvement in the lives of Africans?



Map of Africa

In this article, we address three questions on how to sustain African growth, using Ghana as a focal point: (I) how has growth in Africa fared over the last 50 years, and what lessons can be drawn for countries like Ghana? (II) what lessons does international experience imply for Africa in general and Ghana in particular? Finally (III) what role must countries like Ghana play in the ECOWAS and AU context?

### (I) Growth in Africa: Lessons from the last 50 years

Recent research (Ndulu, Arbache-Page) on growth in African countries in the last 50 years is illuminating in three ways. First, African growth has been low. As is well known, the African growth story compares unfavourably

with that of other developing countries. Between 1975 and 1995, all regions in the world except Africa improved incomes. Even South Asia, with its large number of poor people, made impressive strides. And, of course, in East Asia, the word "miracle" has been used to capture their unprecedented growth performance. During this same period, African incomes declined. Since 1995, African growth has improved, with income per capita growing at 1.8 per cent. Despite this favorable recent trend, by 2005, income per person in Africa had not yet recovered to the levels observed in the mid-1970s. There was also much variation across countries: a few had high growth, such as Botswana and Mauritius; many registered modest growth, such as Ghana; and others—such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Côte d'Ivoire, and Zimbabwe—registered declining incomes. In contrast, growth in all other regions was positive throughout the post-1995 period.

A closer look at Africa's low growth unmasks a strong "stop-go" pattern. The period has been made up of episodes of growth accelerations and decelerations, or by periods of good times followed by bad times. There was a slightly higher tendency for good than for bad times. This explains the region-wide average growth of 0.7 per cent between 1975 and 2005. Underlying this was an average growth rate of 3.6 per cent during the good times, and negative 2.7 per cent during the bad times. What is noteworthy is that had Africa avoided the bad times, average

<sup>7</sup>Gobind Nankani is former Vice President for Africa at the World Bank and President of the Global Development Network

incomes would have grown by at least 30 per cent more: growth would have been 1.7 per cent rather than 0.7 per cent. Further, accelerations have been more common between 1995 and 2005, and decelerations between 1975 and 1995. This lends credence to the suggestion that something different has been happening in Africa over the last decade.

Third, this “stop-go” pattern has had negative economic and social costs. Growth accelerations tend to be associated with higher savings and investments, and hence are more likely to meet an essential condition for further growth. Foreign direct investments are six times as high during accelerations. The “stop-go” pattern harms social indicators. Life expectancy, infant and under five mortality, and the primary enrolment rate are all substantially unfavorable during decelerations. Significantly, during growth accelerations the positive impact on social indicators is much smaller than the negative impact during decelerations. Over time, then, social indicators have tended to stagnate or in some cases decline.

The upshot of this retrospective on African growth is two-fold: Africa must take advantage of the recent resurgence of growth since 1995 to increase its long term growth



Ghanaian garment worker

performance. Further, it must do everything possible to prevent growth collapses. Such collapses are often due to external shocks i.e. sudden changes in commodity prices or international recessions with their multiple effects. The challenge for African countries is that they need to manage such shocks better than in the past. Countries can learn to manage shocks better as is clear from comparing the traumatic 1997 East Asian crisis with the minor effect of the current US credit crisis on East Asia. The implications for Ghana are identical: find ways to keep the favourable growth of the last few years robust, and prepare in advance to manage any external shocks that may hit. External shocks are part of a global economy, it is never a question of whether they will hit or not, it is just a matter of when. We therefore need to build defenses against them, well in advance. In this regard, it is commendable that the 2008 budget states an intention to enact a Fiscal Responsibility Law and to set up a Stabilisation Fund. Both are important instruments in the management of shocks.

## (II) Successful Growth: Lessons from International Experience for Africa and for Ghana

Since maintaining high growth is an essential part of Africa's long term strategy, it is useful to ask: what advice emanates from the experience of successful developing countries, and from global thinking on Africa? At the risk of over-simplifying, there are three messages: (a) each country needs to follow a few broad principles; (b) also to discover its country-specific growth journey; and (c) African countries face special challenges that require a complementary global effort.

Recent reviews of the successful growth experiences of countries such as China, India, Botswana, Mauritius, Chile, etc (Rodrik-Hausman, World Bank) have helped establish both the common principles and the country-specific fundamentals underlying their superior performance. The key lesson here is: there is no “one-size-fits-all” but it is also not true that “anything goes”; certain common principles must still be adhered to. Or, as Rodrik's recent book's title puts it: ‘One Economics, Many Recipes’.

(a) The common principles that each country must stress are: (i) macro – stable macro economic management, as measured especially by inflation (ii) global – taking aggressive advantage of the opportunities provided by global trade, investments and technology; and (iii) state discretion – interweaving a strong use of markets with a judicious use of public instruments which are effective in the country's institutional context.

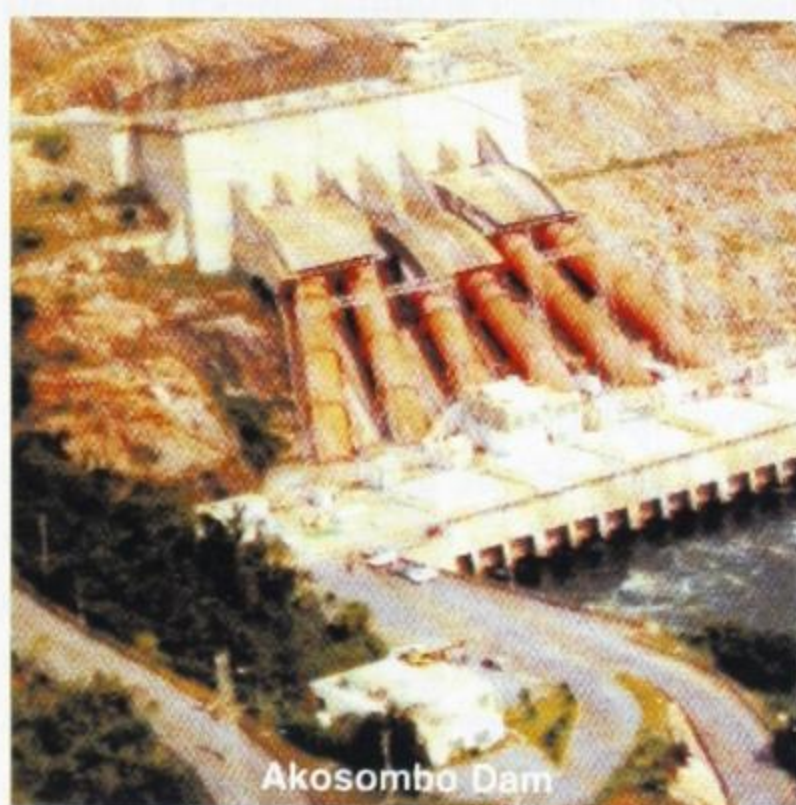
(b) The country-specific dimensions arise because countries need to identify and work on their most binding constraints sequentially over time. Growth involves deep changes and innovations. But it is impossible for a country to change everything in one step. Hence, it is necessary, as successful countries have demonstrated, to work on the most binding constraints first, deal with those, and then move to the next set of binding constraints, etc. The success of countries like China, India, Malaysia, etc is replete with examples of this kind of successive attack on selected problems. For example, China, Chile, India and Malaysia continue to retain controls on capital inflows, because of their relatively fragile financial systems, but it is expected that some day these

controls will be lifted. Country-specific approaches also come about in the ways in which countries choose to trade and invest. Thus, China today is the manufacturing centre for the global economy, while India has focused on services (especially software and outsourcing) and more recently is becoming a major exporter of foreign direct investment in sectors in which it has deep experience such as steel. In general, the agenda for tackling binding constraints is often focused on sectors such as energy, transport, finance, training, logistics, etc., and addressing their problems takes careful diagnosis and very effective implementation.

(c) Finally there is a general consensus on the need for additional global efforts to support Africa's own efforts to break out of its historical poverty quagmire (Sachs, Africa Commission Report, UN, African Development Bank, World Bank, UN IPCC). The scale and scope of such additional global efforts are debated, but not their need. Thus, Sachs has argued that the depth of poverty and some of the geographic constraints on many African countries require a special aid effort to help meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 or as close to that as possible. Easterly does not dispute that aid can be helpful, but is dismissive of the results achieved by current aid efforts, emphasising instead, examples of successful self-help efforts that are easy to spot on the continent. Collier has recently argued that the world's Bottom Billion, many residing in African countries, need a special deal not just on aid but also on trade. He argues for trade preferences for all African countries, in order to allow them to compete with East Asia, and to forge a new path of rising

incomes. More recently, the UN Panel on Climate Change has emphasised that many of the biggest risks from climate change will hit the poorest countries the hardest, and especially African countries. There is yet no discussion of what support will be needed to help poorer countries adapt to climate change. Within Africa, there have also been continental efforts to address Africa-wide challenges, such as the NEPAD initiative on regional infrastructural investments and on the African Peer Review Mechanism.

What are the implications of these three messages for Africa and for



Ghana? From the first message, African countries must have a continuing strategy to maintain macroeconomic stability, to export more aggressively and increase competitive investments (domestic and foreign), and make judicious use of market and public instruments. From the second message, they must also take on their binding constraints sequentially, even if this goes against the advice of some of our external partners who are particularly ineffective in harmonising their support. In both areas, many African countries have made some progress. But there is much more to be done. Using Ghana

as an example, the macro performance in 2006 and 2007 has been disappointing. Happily, the 2008 Budget calls for a Fiscal Responsibility Act, whose implementation will be essential. Export performance, in the non-traditional sector, remains tepid. And the "Golden Age of Business" is still very much at an initial stage. Again, progress is being made on improving the investment climate and in reducing the cost of doing business. At the same time, Ghana lags behind many other African countries in attracting the private sector into the crisis-prone energy sector. Ghana needs also to work much harder on its most binding constraints while achieving excellence in execution, especially in infrastructure, exports, agricultural productivity growth and in our China policy.

From the third message, African countries have begun to recognise that these global efforts can, at best, only be the less critical part of the solution. Much more action and effort are needed by African countries themselves. This is in part because the rhetoric of our external partners has not been matched by actions. Thus, the 2005 promise of a doubling of aid to Africa by 2010 is already acknowledged as off-track. Excluding debt relief, aid to Africa actually declined in 2006. It is also in part because development experience demonstrates that without strong self efforts, sustained success cannot be achieved. Indeed the experience of oil exporting countries such as Nigeria is instructive: oil, like aid, is an external inflow, and neither assures a country of success. Thus, African countries need to complement the reliance on aid with a stronger reliance on other instruments. We must argue for the trade preferences that Collier

advocates. We must have a China policy that ensures that there are spillovers from their investments in mining and oil; spillovers such as employment, subcontracting to local suppliers, technology transfer, and natural resource processing. We must improve our investment climates aggressively to facilitate domestic and foreign investments, learning from China's own experience on how to get the best out of foreign investments. We must make better use of remittances and find the right incentives to have them channeled through the financial system. And we must increase domestic revenues, which will have the added benefit of making governments more accountable to domestic constituencies than to external partners. The recent AU decision to set up an African Infrastructure Fund to help finance NEPAD's projects by borrowing from Pension Funds around the continent is a fine initiative, now awaiting effective execution.

**(III) Regionalism:** It will be appropriate to highlight one more African challenge and its implications for countries like Ghana. It is now accepted that African growth will need another ingredient: regional and continental collaboration on selected projects, especially in infrastructure, and programmes such as trade and investment protocols. The key points are: First, Africa's total GDP is small. All of Africa's GDP is comparable to that of Belgium. A typical African country has the GDP of a single large city such as Chicago or Shanghai. The average African country has a population of four million. Given Africa's market size, countries must not develop growth strategies in isolation from their neighbors in the sub-region, and for some matters, the continent. Second,

Africa has the most serious infrastructure deficit of any other continent. This is compounded by the relatively low population density and the lack of navigable rivers that lead to oceans. Infrastructural investments too, whether in roads, railways, energy, or indeed in health and education, have to be looked at in regional not country frameworks. Third, in negotiating with other global bodies such as the WTO, the EU, and countries like China, single African countries just cannot match the human capital and experience the other partners bring to the table. It makes sense for groupings such as ECOWAS and the AU to take on active roles in assisting countries or in building the capacity to do so, to ensure win-win outcomes for African countries.

Given these regional challenges, it is important for countries such as Ghana to play strong leadership or stewardship roles in ECOWAS and the AU, beyond the minimum that every African country would contribute. The decision at the recent AU Summit in Accra to examine and streamline Africa's Regional Economic Communities was a good one, now also awaiting successful execution. Ghana and other successful African countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Senegal, Botswana, etc. have a special responsibility to play a regional and continental role. This is of course in Africa's interest. But what the three regional challenges tell us is that it is also in the interests of the potentially more successful countries like Ghana that they play their supra-national role to the maximum extent possible.

### Conclusions

Yes, Africa is at a crossroad. But the outcome is not a foregone conclusion. The recent upturn in growth in African countries has benefited from the

favorable international environment and from the high commodity prices for Africa's exports, as well as from the increased demand for these products from China. Significantly, Africa has also benefited from the many reforms that African countries have undertaken in the last two decades, which are now bearing fruit. Examples include the macroeconomic stability that is now the norm across the continent; improvements in the investment climate; the productivity gains from the introduction of competitive mobile telephony, etc. On balance though, analysis suggests that at least 1 per cent, and perhaps as much as 2 per cent, of recent growth may be due to the commodity price and volume boom. Should this boom turn into a milder boom or a bust, African growth will be impacted.

Africa's own experience and that of other successful developing countries suggest that the best path forward is one with the following features: proactive, country-led, principled, and with an appropriate mix of global/regional/continental elements. Since the mid-1990s, Ghana, and other countries like Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, etc. have been on a transitional path moving closer to the preferred path. The regional bodies such as ECOWAS have become more active, and the AU is waking out of its earlier slumber at the continental level. But we are not there yet. It is now time to step up to the next challenge and to demonstrate that Africa too can produce some examples of successful growth to inspire other countries on the continent. Botswana, Mauritius and to some extent South Africa have begun this process. For it to take root, countries like Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Madagascar, Uganda and others must become Africa's "tigers". ■

## TWO SCHOOLS OF TAUGHT (sic) (Power in the Nation's Discourse)

Ebow Daniel<sup>8</sup>

Rising from the ashes of the First Republic, the "Legon Society on National Affairs" (LSNA), which published the celebrated "Legon Observer"(LO), soon came to include academics as enamoured of Socialism as others were disenchanted. Presumably, what each taught in class depended on the school of thought to which they belonged. Indeed, "two schools" was playfully bandied about when the membership of the LSNA was in discourse.

It is a deserving tribute to the defunct LO that, 25 years after being chased away from the stands, another magazine seeks to emulate what it tried to do, to provide a forum for debate so we do not slip back into monologue. In each volume of the LO could be found the writing to engage the mind and others to rest the mind, the serious and the not so serious or the "unserious", all juxtaposed in one document. In tribute all round, in this maiden issue of the new magazine, we dare say where power is concerned, there are two schools of thought, and of taught too!

"Power corrupts", said Lord Acton, British historian. He spoke as a scholar who had observed power-play in historical settings and could see the corrosive dynamics. Winston Churchill, romantic imperialist politician, knew differently. Not unlike money, power is its own attraction. It was the reason he was not about to dismantle the British Empire. It was not a project to which a Victorian British Prime Minister could commit.

No less an empire-lover, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was also less starry-eyed. In office, he thought he could see "the Wind of Change" coming. It was, indeed, a tsunami. He still made the right judgement, to run to a safe haven than to be hurt from being in the way. And so taking advantage of the changing mood in Downing Street and Whitehall, we set out from the Gold Coast to arrive in Ghana in 1957. It was to be furtherer away from the Queen in Buckingham Palace, that we proceeded directly to the First Republic in 1960.



In spite of our republican aspirations as a nation, we have in each village an Odikro, the absolute monarch, to whom allegiance is personal, before whom we acknowledge our subject status. From the village, it is a short walk to go looking for the familiar, namely, the national overlord who is no less absolute. The yearning for the absolute state of affairs shows in the readiness to welcome any who comes dismantling the carefully crafted document to preclude the "one-man-show", to install himself as the "in charge" under whatever title. Besides

1966, it happened also in 1972, and again in 1982; and are we done yet?

Flirtation with absolute power becomes inconvenient only when we are ordered to leave our homes on a Saturday to report at a designated place to de-silt gutters, because the President is similarly engaged. This is a Ghanaian experience with not just one government. It is especially inconvenient when a retiree's car can be commandeered for one "operation" or another, and never returned. And then we discover to our consternation that restraining the President who has grown too big is difficult while trying to dislodge any such is the treasonable act for which we can be incarcerated or even shot, before trial.

Fist raised, "power to the people" is the slogan that immediately puts non-people at risk. Blamed for everybody's poverty, non-people are the legitimate punching bag of the people. So, when the enemy of the people hits the canvas and power has come where it rightly belongs, who so politically incorrect wants to extend discourse to handing over of power, to whom? The raised fist is not without significance or advantage. It is fisticuff ready for containment of the awkward question in the middle of a people's take-over bid of power.

Lord Acton's dictum on the corruptibility of power was the examination question with which many a student of history could be confronted until European history has been expunged from the list of things

<sup>8</sup> Ebow Daniel is a retired Registrar of the University of Ghana, Legon

worth studying in school. Power corrupts, whom? The Good Book tells how in the Garden of Eden the First Lady was corrupted from eating an apple. If apple corrupts another, it is itself not immune to corruption. As a matter of observed fact, under the tree where it falls, apple undergoes putrefaction, ceasing to be wholesome. Reflexively or intransitively, apple corrupts, it rots.

Like apple, so like power, capacity to lay waste others and all. Genocidaire, both the Hutus of Rwanda and the Nazis of Germany forfeited worldwide goodwill before long. Isolated, the Hutu regime lost out to its Tutsi victims including eight hundred thousand dead over a mere three-month period. Similarly, the Third Reich which promised itself one thousand years in office proved short-lived after dispatching six million Jews in a pogrom. So discredited, dismembered and atrophied, neither regime is about to resume.

Power is also honey to the tongue, as others have observed. It explains why engaged in all manner of self-marketing, so many in the land now want to be President. The "Door-to-Door" engagement with the electorate is the "I Care For You" touch. It is refreshingly novel. Not so refreshing is the promise to die for a power-broker, recalling our subject status.

"I will die for you" recalls also another piece of melodrama in 1966 when, in the face of threats from Guinea, one of us came on television to recite a speech laced with Churchillian quotes, "we shall fight on the beaches" and all. Barely a year on, to be precise, on April 17, 1967, when the Mortar Regiment

descended on the capital from Ho, the people who were going to lead the beach fights could not be found. One of them was fetched from the sea afterwards. He preferred going for a swim when Ho came to town!

Accessing power invites histrionics, regrettably. We happen also to have some very strange ideas about what must not happen when we are in office. When we have doled out money to delegates to be elected flagbearer at a party congress and performed in many soap operas for the amusement of the electorate at large, to arrive where we want to be, we must at once become vegetarians or teetotalers? Family members must disengage from business? Because government contracts might otherwise come to family to fuel perceptions of conflict of interest?

It is our good fortune that we have experienced life under different regimes in the years since 1957. This is how we come to know that socialists, social democrats, property-owning others or any kind, civilian or military, nobody falls in love with poverty, if they can help it. "Charlie Wotee" (rubber flip flops) or "Afro\Moses" (sandal made out of used car tyres) is not anybody's preferred footwear. Nor does anybody suffer from itches for wearing imported designer-wear.

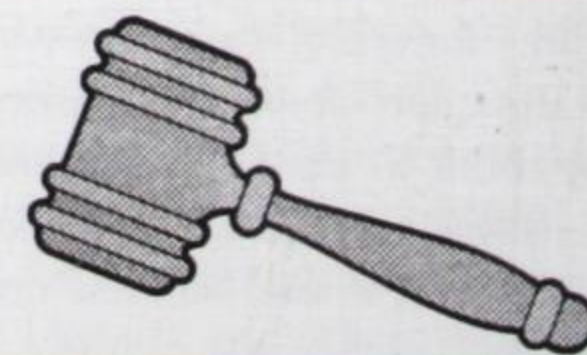
It is not known of any of our political elite who has turned down overseas scholarships for their children because there are not enough to go round for social equity. None is known to have refused allocation of a hire-purchase estate house from the State Housing Corporation till others in the constituency have had their turn. They

are not there with us at the tro-tro (local lorry) station, because they have more assured, also more comfortable, means of transport. Some have gone about looking after their own in ways that the Citizens Vetting Committee (during revolutionary times) would not approve, for which they have suffered; or may be not yet. But, even in reduced circumstances, everybody who has held political office is better off than before taking to politics.

The point is that power is not any burden under which the political elite labours, to their personal detriment. If it were so, MPs would not ask to be returned to Parliament again and again. If there was no two-term limit to the Presidency, who might not be running again? We heard it before, power is delicious, absolute power is absolutely delicious!

To conclude, Lord Acton's letter of 1887 to Bishop Mandell Creighton said more than the truncated version credited him. He wrote, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad".

It is food for thought, in particular, whether the converse of Lord Acton's thesis also holds, whether bad men can ever be great. For the present, discourse is all the more engaging when power as corrupt (or) is contrasted with power as a delicacy, "two schools ..."!



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