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## Understanding the dynamics of good neighbourliness under Rawlings and Kufuor

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### ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised that leadership influences relations between neighbouring states in international affairs. This article seeks to further illuminate the relationship between leadership idiosyncrasies and the nature of Ghana's neighbour relations under Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor. The argument is that, while political institutionalisation and the international environment may influence neighbour relations to some degree, leader idiosyncrasy is an important intervening variable. Indeed, based on the findings, the international environment may have had less influence on Ghana's neighbour relations in the period under study (1981–2008) than conventional wisdom suggests.

### KEYWORDS

Ghana; Foreign Policy; Rawlings; Kufuor; good neighbourliness; personal idiosyncrasies in policymaking

### Introduction

Given Africa's weak position in international relations and the global economy, many have argued that external factors or determinants tend to shape the foreign policy-making of African countries as compared with domestic determinants; hence the foreign policies of most African countries are externally influenced, if not dictated, by the world powers in the international system.<sup>1</sup> This thinking has driven many scholars to analyse Ghana's foreign policy at face value, with less credence given to other influential factors, for instance the idiosyncratic dispositions and undertones of leadership that motivate such policies. However, there exists a body of literature pointing to the need for a comprehensive analysis of foreign policy enunciating how individual leaders perceive, interpret and react to societal pressures, and the role this plays in a nation's foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> This perspective has not received much attention in Africa; instead there has often been a collective examination of Africa's international relations.<sup>3</sup> This has led not only to generalisations but, this article argues, also to substantial omissions in the extant scholarship on international relations in Africa.

With respect to Ghana, while some literature has given credence to the role of individual decision-makers, a large body of work has examined Ghana's foreign policy from the systemic perspective.<sup>4</sup> Without following this systemic analytical tangent, this study has chosen to analyse the foreign policy dichotomy and synthesis between two past heads of state of Ghana during their terms of office: Jerry John Rawlings (1981–2001) and

John Agyekum Kufuor (2001–2009). What was the impact on Ghana's foreign policy, especially with regard to relations with neighbouring states, of the different personalities and political perspectives of these two individuals – the former a military leader turned self-confessed democrat, and the latter an avowed liberal democrat?

This article is based on an in-depth analysis of the foreign policy direction and approach of both leaders, identifying and explaining variables that accounted for change and continuity in their terms of office. The focus is on the extent of good neighbourliness, one of the major pillars not only of Ghana's foreign policy but also in the international setting.

Good neighbourliness is a vital aspect of international relations and analysis. As a general principle of international law, it finds explicit expression in the solemn declaration of UN member states to 'practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'.<sup>5</sup> While this resolution might be considered bold, resolute, forward-looking and holding the potential to facilitate international peace, consequences of efforts at implementing this resolution have been quite unimpressive – intermittent stalemates culminating in numerous inter-state feuds coupled with both covert and overt actions and counteractions.<sup>6</sup> Thus, even though the UN strains to build and facilitate inter-state harmony, it is the proposition of this article that the decision-making elites in independent states have a vital role to play in the orientation, direction and approach to good neighbourliness among states.

On this basis, this article examines good neighbourliness under both the military and civilian eras of Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor.<sup>7</sup> In summary, this study has two main objectives: first, to identify the nature of continuity and change in neighbour relations during the terms of these two leaders; and second, to identify the factors that account for this change or continuity with personal idiosyncrasy as the starting point. It therefore must be clarified that this paper does not downplay the significance of the systemic or international factors in shaping Ghana's foreign policy. However, the view here is that these factors should not be allowed the unfettered and overriding place they currently occupy in much of the literature.<sup>8</sup> This study therefore complements extant literature on Ghana's foreign policy by expanding the scope of analysis while emphasising the relevance and dynamism of personality as a variable.

Consistent with the qualitative case study strategy,<sup>9</sup> data was obtained from multiple sources. The primary sources involved in-depth face-to-face interviews with three elite respondents: President Rawlings himself; Ambassador DK Osei<sup>10</sup> for the Kufuor administration; and Mr Edwin Adjei<sup>11</sup> from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions developed for individual respondents, based on the time span relevant to each. Three different types of semi-structured interviews were conducted, adopting points from Operational Code Analysis.<sup>12</sup> In addition, secondary sources were relied on, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not able to provide many primary policy documents concerning the case under study owing to the fire which destroyed many official documents in Accra in 2009.<sup>13</sup> For analysis, we adopt a framework based on the respective approaches of J Gustavsson<sup>14</sup> and K Goldman,<sup>15</sup> who focus on foreign policy continuity and change. What these two have in common is the extent of agency they ascribe to individuals or to the decision-making elites. Goldman focuses on structural constraints, however, while Gustavsson's model explores fundamental sources of change that can be categorised as international or domestic. This study analyses Ghana's foreign relations between 1981 and 2008 within this framework.<sup>16</sup>

The article proceeds as follows. After the introduction and a historical overview of Ghana's leadership since independence, the next section explores, briefly, the extant literature on Ghana's foreign policy, as well as the theoretical framework for the analysis. The third section deals with a comparative look at Ghana's neighbour relations under Rawlings and Kufuor, respectively. The last section makes conclusions based on the empirical analysis and analyses the implications for the future of Ghana's foreign policy.

### **Ghana's foreign policy in historical perspective**

The impact of leadership on Ghana's foreign policy since independence has been the focus of various studies. Odoom and Tieku<sup>17</sup> posit that the domineering nature of Ghanaian leaders has intermittently led to foreign policy change and continuity. In the definitive years of Ghana's foreign policy, Kwame Nkrumah's ideology shaped Ghana's foreign policy orientation. Some scholars have assumed that, even though Nkrumah publicly declared support for the Non-aligned Movement, his penchant for socialism led him and the nation, to a large extent, to forge closer ties with socialist economies.<sup>18</sup> Even though W S Thompson's seminal work on Ghana's foreign policy<sup>19</sup> acknowledges the existence of other factors (systemic and structural) that shaped Ghana's early post-colonial foreign policy, he argued that the ideology, personality, ideals, traits and perceptions of Nkrumah did likewise, if not more so.

Thompson argues that Nkrumah's policy stance, including his African-focused foreign policy goals, his response to the Congo crisis, his unflinching support for liberation struggles on the continent and quest for African unity, were mostly shaped by his personality traits and his ideology. His ideology was adopted from his ideological father, Marcus Garvey. Thompson argues, however, that foreign policy should not be based on one man's ideals or traits. In agreement with Thompson, Chazan<sup>20</sup> also views Ghana's foreign policy as a direct reflection of the ideals and personality of Nkrumah. Akokpari<sup>21</sup> on the other hand has argued that Ghana's foreign policy in the post-colonial era was shaped by interplay of both domestic and international or systemic factors. He, for example, cited the Cold War and the polarised nature of the international system in the 1960s which engrossed Ghanaian and African leaders at large to focus on building alliances with blocs perceived to be supportive of their governments. Critically, he downplayed the relevance of leadership traits on foreign policy. The 1960s being the definitive years for Ghana as a new state, it has been noted that the Nkrumah years crafted the core niches of Ghana's foreign policy to which subsequent governments in Accra have largely remained faithful. These traditional foreign policy objectives can be subsumed under the broad support for liberation struggles and subsequently for the formation of the Organisation of African Unity which later became the African Union, as well as opposition to minority rule and racism in Africa, the principle of Non-alignment and, finally, support for inter-governmental organisations or supra national institutions such as the United Nations. In terms of neighbour relations, Nkrumah's personality traits made him a foe to his immediate neighbours, except for Guinea and Mali, which formed the nucleus of the United States of Africa for which he had agitated.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequently, the National Liberation Council (NLC) government and its successor, the Progress Party (PP), presented Ghana with leaders with different – if not directly contrasting – ideals, traits and ideology from Nkrumah. The *Legon Observer* for instance observed

that the NLC was 'a faithful ally to the West'.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, a day after Nkrumah's overthrow, the *London Times* reported that 'Ghana has swung back to reliance on the West'.<sup>24</sup> The period under the NLC and PP (1966–1972) is seen as uninterrupted in any analysis of Ghana's foreign policy because foreign policy under the two regimes remained the same. In affirmation of this assertion, PP Foreign Affairs Minister Victor Owusu indicated that 'the foreign policy of any country contains constants which must be appreciated by all those who seek to govern'.<sup>25</sup>

The leaders of the PP unequivocally expressed their distaste for socialism and Nkrumahist ideology from the era of the United Gold Coast Convention–Convention People's Party (CPP) political banter in 1949. Therefore, it was largely expected that an offspring of the United Gold Coast Convention would not hesitate to virtually truncate relations with communist countries which hitherto were friends of Nkrumah. Accounting for this divergence, Chazan<sup>26</sup> argues that Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia's<sup>27</sup> long stay in opposition and Nkrumah's aggressiveness towards him predisposed him to negating and deviating from Nkrumah's foreign policy approaches and ideology. It is believed that policy initiatives such as pulling out of the Non-aligned Movement and pursuing Pan Africanism, as well as opting for a dialogue with South Africa, were influenced by Busia's ideology and the prevailing economic conditions. Neither the NLC nor the PP administration experienced the antagonism with neighbours faced by the previous government. Busia's genteel nature and his predisposition to dialogue made him a friend of many, except for antipathy he faced owing to his policy calling for 'dialogue with apartheid South Africa' and the Aliens Compliance Order.<sup>28</sup>

Following the early 1972 military coup by General IK Acheampong, his National Redemption Council/First Supreme Military Council (SMC I) made a significant diversion from the foreign policies of the NLC and PP administrations. Chazan<sup>29</sup> summarises Acheampong's foreign policy and development strategies as based on two interlocking principles: self-reliance and regional reallocation. These principles are believed to have influenced his initial foreign policy stance of debt repudiation (Yentua policy), 'operation feed yourself', nationalising foreign mining and timber concerns and minimising Ghana's reliance on foreign expertise. Of greatest significance was the development of cooperative ties along the West African littoral, which facilitated the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).<sup>30</sup> Although Chazan was not so emphatic in identifying the determinants of the foreign policies of the National Redemption Council and the shift back to a quasi-Nkrumah Africa policy, it is believed that the ideology of Acheampong (as an Nkrumahist sympathiser and militant nationalist) as well as domestic economic conditions played a significant role. Consequently, Acheampong's foreign policy was influenced greatly by his ideals, traits and ideology. He created numerous friends across the African Continent through assistance in kind and financially. Aluko observes that, under the Acheampong administration, Accra became a hospitable abode for African freedom fighters, as it was under Nkrumah.<sup>31</sup>

Subsequently, the respective holds on power of the second Supreme Military Council (SMC II) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) administrations during 1978/1979 did not do much in terms of foreign policy. This has been attributed to the fact that both administrations were overly concerned with internal/domestic matters. In addition, the two regimes (SMC II and AFRC) stayed in power for very short terms, serving nine and three months respectively. While the SMC II was making preparations

for elections, the AFRC focused on what it termed as a 'house cleaning exercise'. Subsequently, from 1979 to 1981, the People's National Party (PNP) headed by Hilla Limann held the presidency. Like previous governments, the PNP's tenure was affected by a precarious economic situation. Even though it was expected that the Limann administration would strengthen economic relations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Limann resisted every attempt from supporters of this approach on the basis that such a relationship would have a negative bearing on the social and economic needs of the people. Limann was perceived as a friend to neighbouring countries owing to his approach and his persona. As a result, there was minimal tension between Ghana and her neighbours under the PNP administration.<sup>32</sup>

Following the 1981 coup that ousted Limann and the PNP government, Rawlings formed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and led Ghana into a new order of foreign policy decision-making, especially in the area of economic diplomacy.<sup>33</sup> The initial pro-Eastern Bloc stance of the administration (termed defiant isolationism by Chazan),<sup>34</sup> was abandoned in 1983 in favour of the economic policies advised by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. This 'policy U-turn' is deemed to have been driven by the persona of Rawlings, who sought to improve the lot of the poor and the wellbeing of the masses, even if that meant an abandonment of ideological stance. However, his ability to arouse support behind two coups, and the traits evident in Ghana's policy U-turn, among other factors to be noted below, made Ghana's immediate neighbours suspicious of him, resulting in mounting tensions in regional relations. There were numerous incidences of accusations and counter-accusations, attacks and counter-attacks between Ghana and her immediate neighbours under the PNDC administration, blamed on the personal differences between Rawlings and leaders of neighbouring countries.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, leader compatibility helps to explain the friendship between the Sankara government of Burkina Faso and Rawlings' Ghana.<sup>36</sup>

In the transition of Ghana to democratic rule between 1993 and 2000, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) became a virtual continuation of the PNDC in a democratic format. Almost all the cabinet of the PNDC continued as cabinet members under the NDC; the government maintained relations with the international financial institutions; Rawlings was still the leader of the NDC; the country's foreign policy direction continued to be formulated with the objective of seeking economic breakthrough; and lastly the international system had changed, with the collapse of the USSR signalling the end of the Cold War. The minister of foreign affairs for both regimes, Obed Asamoah, affirms that the foreign policy of the NDC was not different from that of the PNDC.<sup>37</sup> In essence, the guiding principles of foreign policy under the PNDC formed the core of Chapter Six (Directive Principles of State Policy), Article 40 of Ghana's 1992 constitution.

In the preceding discussion, it has been demonstrated that different Ghanaian leaders have been instrumental in shaping Ghana's foreign policy historically, thereby supporting the argument of this article that the study of Ghana's foreign policy should include the recognition that leadership influences continuity and change in foreign policy.

### **Patterns of change and continuity**

The analysis shows that neighbour relations was one of the major issues that experienced a more explicit dichotomy between Rawlings and Kufuor in terms of individual

idiosyncrasy and approach. As the discussion below will detail, the Rawlings administration suffered alienation and rifts with Ghana's neighbours, while the Kufuor administration enjoyed cordial relations with all neighbours which hitherto were hostile to Ghana. There was a dynamic shift in policy methods and programmes – what Herman terms programme and problem or goal changes.<sup>38</sup> The inherent motivations for foreign policy decisions and actions were fundamentally different.

Based on the research, this article argues that, under Rawlings, Ghana's neighbour relations were characterised mostly by fear; his policy goals were security and power oriented. This affected the extent of success and cordiality in his neighbour relations. Kufuor, on the other hand, was occupied with the need to seek economic benefit. In line with his liberal stance, he initiated a paradigm shift from the traditional exchanges based on goodwill between neighbours to a more assertive economic diplomacy.

### **Explaining neighbour relations with theory**

This study combines two frameworks – those of Gustavsson and Goldmann – to aid in the explanation of change and continuity in Ghana's neighbour relations between the two leaders.

Gustavsson postulated that the sources or driving forces of foreign policy are mediated by individual decision-makers to cause change. Therefore, inputs flow from the source, altered or maintained by the individual decision-maker, and subsequently lead to a policy change. Thus, the individual decision-maker remains at the centre of the decision-making process. The sources of foreign policy change, according to this model, are concerned with fundamental structural conditions that can be broken down into two main categories: international and domestic factors, which are further subdivided into economic and political factors.<sup>39</sup>

The main explanatory logic of Goldmann's framework or model was to identify intervening stabilisers in the system and process of foreign policymaking. This model is classified under structural constraints models that focus more on identifying factors that may stabilise existing policies, thereby preventing the penetration of pressures for change from affecting the decision-making system. This is directly in line with the aspect of continuity being explored in this study. The main contribution of the theory lies in the originality in identifying stabilisers located in the causal chain of the foreign policy decision that prevents change from occurring. The four main types of stabilisers identified by this model can be categorised as international, cognitive, political and administrative.<sup>40</sup>

The foregoing theoretical discourse provides a framework for assessing the dynamics of change and continuity in Ghana's foreign policy under Rawlings and Kufuor. Both theories have emphasised the intervening role of leaders or decision-making elites in foreign policy. Besides leadership, the political institutionalisation variable by Goldmann dynamically explains the nature of foreign policy change and continuity between Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor. Here, the international environment factor is regarded as an extraneous variable which, although not shaped by any of the leaders, influences decision-making. However, we argue that, notwithstanding the dynamism of these variables, the leadership factor becomes the ultimate element for the direction of Ghana's neighbour relations under the two leaders. The next sections explore these factors.

## Personal idiosyncrasy as a factor

The personal idiosyncratic factor is subsumed under what Gustavsson calls the cognitive factor. It accentuates the psychoanalytical theory that leaders make foreign policy decisions based on their belief systems. As a result, foreign policy decisions are made based less on the objective analysis or view of the international system but on the decision-maker's own views, values, history, psychology, perceptions and understandings. Therefore, a change in policy or approach is triggered when there is a change in perception either by the same individual or when there is a change in government. While this approach is seemingly authoritarian in nature and bound to thrive in such regimes, the nature of foreign policy decision-making, as appears in many constitutions, even in developed democracies, provides some leeway to leaders in decision-making. It is therefore posited that, in the case of Ghana under Rawlings and Kufuor, the idiosyncratic values of the two leaders influenced their relations with neighbouring states; accordingly, the change in government stimulated changes in Ghana's neighbour relations when President Kufuor took over from President Rawlings.

Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor subscribe to different ideological stands. Rawlings can be described as holding a Marxist-Socialist set of beliefs, holding the notion that society has been stratified into rich and poor, bourgeoisie and proletariat, and subscribing to the merits of popular power. He has expressed belief in the assumptions and explanations of the dependency and world systems theories, wherein the existence of an international stratification between the West or capitalist economies and the developing world, especially Africa, Asia and Latin America, must end.<sup>41</sup> He argued against the exploitation of these regions in his international speeches and interviews.<sup>42</sup> In addition, his execution of a coup d'état and subsequent 'house cleaning exercise' demonstrate that he has been receptive to revolution and to the possible use of force to attain peace, equity and justice.<sup>43</sup> In his own words, he espoused in relation to the Ghanaian setting that, 'there is no justice in this society and so long as there is no justice, I would dare say that let there be no peace'.<sup>44</sup> President Kufuor, on the other hand, can be described as neo-liberal in his views; he believes in global interdependence, economic cooperation and liberalisation. He also believes in the efficacy of institutions as well as the dividends of peace and peaceful coexistence with other states in the international system. He has expressed belief in the concept and principle of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other states.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, the two leaders, based on these idiosyncrasies, pursued different foreign policies with regard to Ghana's neighbour relations. President Rawlings's belief in 'People Power' and distaste for the deceptive nature of capitalist economies predisposed him to distrust neighbours that were practising similar political and economic systems or had established asymmetrical links with the West.<sup>46</sup> He saw these neighbours as threats to his regime and was subsequently accused of supporting dissidents within Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, with the aim of causing a revolution like that in Ghana.<sup>47</sup> This generated a lot of tension between his administration and neighbouring countries, leading to covert and counter-covert operations against each other.

Another cognitive dichotomy between the two leaders that influenced neighbour relations was the penchant to detach one's beliefs or sentiment from national policies. While President Rawlings apparently approached policymaking with a certain degree of

sentimentalism and ideological conviction, President Kufuor has been observed to be quite detached.<sup>48</sup> President Kufuor's neighbour relations were marked, even as an avowed liberal democrat, with an openness to both democratic and non-democratic leaders. As a point of emphasis, his first official visit as a president was to non-democratic Togo. Although he was criticised for this, he justified it on the grounds that good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence are a pre-requisite for effective national development. Consequently, President Kufuor received equally positive feedback from Ghana's neighbours. This was the difference in case between the two leaders of Ghana.

### **Political institutionalisation as a factor**

Political institutionalisation reflects aspects of expectation and consistency. An institutionalised policy is the one that gets repeated year after year and, in such cases, there exists a high level of consistency and predictability. To Goldmann, when a nation repetitively pursues a particular line of policy action or approach, the action of the government becomes predictable. It inadvertently ensures continuity in foreign policy decisions or approaches.<sup>49</sup>

While institutionalism expresses the dialectical assumption of this paper, the chronological dynamics in the Ghanaian case differ from the norm, it is here argued. Political institutionalisation has in the case of Ghana less to do with the state and more to do with the genealogy of the party or elites in government. Therefore, the assumption of path dependence is based on historical antecedents, especially with regard to the relationship of the government in power and members of the elite in neighbouring states. This therefore means that the phases of cordiality and enmity between Ghana and her neighbours under Rawlings and Kufuor can also be explained through an understanding of the historic relations that existed between the political and ideological precursors of the two administrations. For instance, coming from the Danquah–Busia–Dombo tradition (anti CPP coalition), the Kufuor administration's strong ties with Côte d'Ivoire had their roots in the discord between Ghana and her neighbours under Nkrumah. As a result, the domestic antagonism between Nkrumah and the opposition United Party led to many seeking asylum in Côte d'Ivoire. The United Party was at certain times accused of planning insurgency attacks on the CPP government with the help of Côte d'Ivoire. However, the ousting of the CPP government and the subsequent takeover by President Busia's PP in 1969 changed the nature of the Ghana–Côte d'Ivoire relationship; it became much more cordial.

### **The International Environment as an Extraneous Variable**

Both Gustavsson and Goldmann cede some level of influence to the international system on foreign policy, whether for change or continuity. This finds expression in international political economy, international politics and international institutionalisation. The fundamental argument is that whatever happens internationally has the propensity to shape relations between states in the international system.<sup>50</sup>

One major event that occurred in the international environment, within the time scope of this study, was the end of the Cold War. Its impact on neighbour relations under Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor was dynamic. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union sent a pivotal signal to African states; neighbouring countries could now

supposedly shrug off the fear of being attacked by dissidents. Essentially, perceptions of rivalry culminating in covert actions between Ghana and her neighbours were to give way to more cordial relations devoid of threats and counter threats. However, these changes in the international system did not so easily end interstate suspicions between President Rawlings and his neighbours. That happened only after 10 years, when President Kufuor assumed power.

While one can say that the Rawlings era was too early to expect the full-blown effect of the end of the Cold War, the immediate acceptance of President Kufuor by Ghana's neighbours cannot be fully explained as a matter of maturity 10 years on from the end of the Cold War. Perhaps if President Kufuor was in power during the Cold War, Ghana would have still enjoyed cordial relations with neighbours, partly owing to political institutionalisation and his personal idiosyncrasy. We therefore argue that, although the end of the Cold War was clear with its generalised perceived impacts, the two leaders received and perceived this change in the international environment in different ways – thereby making it a vital endeavour to place some priority on the role of leadership in analysing Ghana's neighbour relations under the two leaders.

### **Neighbour relations under Rawlings and Kufuor**

While forging cordial neighbour relations has been an integral part of Ghana's foreign policy objectives since independence, various leaders have exhibited different approaches towards achieving this end. Ghana's leaders have tended to link good neighbour relations to the goals of African emancipation from colonialism and to building African unity. In addition are considerations of international political economy inherent in good neighbourliness. Both Rawlings and later Kufuor attempted to link neighbour relations with efficient economic diplomacy. As explained in detail later in this paper, both the Rawlings and the Kufuor administrations explored the economic facets of neighbour relations. In essence, they both aimed at exploring economic diplomacy through good neighbour relations. It is no accident that these two leaders were each elected twice as ECOWAS chairmen – President Rawlings in 1994 and 1995 and President Kufuor in 2004 and 2005. They were seen to foster both economic and trade relations between states, as well as subregional stability in West Africa.

The Rawlings administration primarily sought to build stronger relations with socialist and progressive states. These were states ruled by leaders that had similar socialist revolutionary ideas during the latter years of the Cold War. Ghana's only such neighbour at the time was Burkina Faso under Thomas Sankara. Consequently, most neighbour relations under Rawlings were characterised by 'security consciousness'.<sup>51</sup> Specifically, he was suspicious of a potential threat to his administration emanating from neighbouring countries owing to the policy of containment by the US.<sup>52</sup> This is important in that the initial unhealthy relations under Rawlings between Ghana and her neighbours, which were partly fuelled by the vicissitudes of the Cold War, had an adverse effect on Ghana's neighbour relations under Rawlings even after the end of the Cold War. This was true even after the authoritarian PNDC had transformed into the democratic NDC. Rawlings was not trusted by leaders in the region.

The objective of the Kufuor administration, stemming from its 2000 election manifesto promise, was to 'establish and deepen friendly relations with other countries, respecting

their values and customs and enduring reciprocal treatment'.<sup>53</sup> Since Kufuor publicly made this stance known while in opposition, it was complementary when neighbours responded positively to an invitation to attend his inaugural speech on 7 January 2001. Those in attendance included four presidents from West Africa – Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. Also, the democratic credentials of Kufuor seem to have made him less of a threat to neighbouring countries, as opposed to their perception of Rawlings owing to his military and revolutionary background.<sup>54</sup>

The ensuing subsections take a dive into an independent review of selected country case studies (Togo, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire) to adequately depict neighbour relations under Rawlings and Kufuor, comparatively (see [Figure 1](#)).

While all but Nigeria share a border with Ghana, the addition of Nigeria is informed by the historic relations that have existed between the two countries since independence, and the fact that Nigeria is geographically the closest country to Ghana that has had a similar experience of being colonised by Britain and being a member of the Commonwealth.

### ***Ghana–Togo relations***

The highest level of diplomatic relations between Togo and Ghana during the years of Rawlings's PNDC was the appointment of respective Charges d'Affaires.<sup>55</sup> In essence, this means that Ghana did not have a substantive ambassador in Togo, which presents problems in international relations, especially between countries sharing borders. Ghana–Togo relations had an historical rift dating back to the pre-independence era, however, owing to disagreement over the Togoland and Ewe unification, and this rift continued.<sup>56</sup> Beyond the historical driving forces, there were some administration-specific differences that heightened tensions between both countries. Just as for other neighbouring states, the Rawlings administration was perceived as an adaptation of the socialist communist movement planted to spread communism/socialism within the West African sub-region. Even after the Cold War – when the PNDC had transformed into the democratically elected NDC – high levels of suspicion persisted. These suspicions were partly spurred by comments by some high-ranking officials of the PNDC, who were unequivocal about the domino effect of the 1981 PNDC revolution in Ghana on neighbouring states. Chris Atim, for instance, is noted to have commented that the new wave of revolution and transformation could not be truncated but would move further to countries that have people who desire change.<sup>57</sup> 'Chairman' Rawlings conclusively stated that: 'We know that our revolutionary process threatens those institutions and countries whose systems are based on the exploitation of the common man. And we can understand scientifically why they will want to destroy us.'<sup>58</sup>

To buttress his claims, the Rawlings administration made Ghana a home for and supported dissident opposition against Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema. As a rebuttal, Eyadema welcomed Rawlings's adversaries. Therefore, both administrations accused each other of subversive and covert attacks aimed at overthrowing the other, culminating in a series of border closure and attacks. Even though the Rawlings administration made efforts at improving these relations, the high level of suspicion derailed these efforts. For instance, in 1992 he arranged for a resumption of the Permanent Joint Commission for



**Figure 1:** Map of Ghana

Source: UN Cartographic Section

Cooperation (PJCC) between Togo and Ghana for the first time in 20 years (its first meeting was in 1972), but that meeting failed to yield positive results in terms of good neighbourliness.<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, the Kufuor administration inherited an unhealthy Ghana–Togo relationship in 2001. However, President Kufuor sought to improve the situation. Togo was President Kufuor's first official visit after his inauguration, a move that received strenuous

backlash from the opposition who blamed him for visiting and partnering with an authoritarian president. By 2002, Ghana had convened a meeting of the PJCC with the aim of fostering close collaboration and integration of the ideals of ECOWAS,<sup>60</sup> a feat the Rawlings administration could not achieve owing to heightened tensions and suspicions between both leaders. Kufuor's healthy and friendly relations coupled with a series of official and unofficial visits by the two presidents – Kufuor and Gnassingbe – culminated in the resolution of border disputes that had sprung up during the Rawlings administration. Even after the death of President Gnassingbé in 2005, the Kufuor administration still maintained the peaceful and cordial co-existence that had existed between the two countries with his son, President Faure Gnassingbé.<sup>61</sup>

It is clear that, beyond the institutionalised interstate differences that arose during the post-independence era, the poor relations between Presidents Rawlings and Eyadema – whether based on personal vendettas or ideological differences – negatively affected Ghana–Togo relations. Kufuor, on the other hand, facing the same counterpart in Lomé, was able to reach across the historical rift and personal differences to mend relations between Ghana and Togo.

### ***Ghana–Burkina Faso relations***

Ghana–Burkina Faso relations could be described as low-level diplomatic relations up to the point that Thomas Sankara took over power through a coup in 1983. Three main reasons account for this change. First, Rawlings and Sankara shared ideological convictions which flowed from socialist beliefs and populist methods of leadership. Second, both leaders assumed power through a military coup, and Rawlings was clearly a role model for Sankara, whose coup was a replica of the PNDC coup of 1981. Sankara also established institutions similar to those established by the PNDC in Ghana after the revolution, such as the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution and People's Tribunals. Based on these shared convictions, the PNDC foreign affairs secretary, Obed Asamoah, suggested a union between Ghana and Burkina Faso mimicking Nkrumah's Ghana–Guinea–Mali union, with the objective of developing a more formidable union between the two countries.<sup>62</sup>

Thirdly, under Rawlings and Sankara, who were ardent admirers of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi, Ghana and Burkina Faso were recipients of aid from Libya. Other states within the West African subregion did not share in their enthusiasm for Gaddafi.<sup>63</sup> This became a source of acrimony in neighbour relations between Ghana and its other immediate neighbours, derailing relations.

After the overthrow and subsequent death of Sankara in 1987, the vibrant cooperation between the two countries fizzled out. Only in 1998 did Rawlings and the new Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré seek to work together. They revived the suspended Ghana–Burkina Faso Permanent Joint Commission for Cooperation with the aim of establishing a Permanent Technical Committee to take up studies on power generation, irrigation, water transport and the control of water-borne diseases specifically in the Volta Basin.<sup>64</sup> In essence, the Rawlings administration ended on a relatively positive stance in terms of Ghana–Burkina Faso relations even though interpersonal relations between Rawlings and Compaoré, who overthrew Rawlings's ally, were generally hostile.

On the other hand, the Kufuor administration, notwithstanding the seemingly fragile relations between Ghana and Burkina Faso during the Rawlings administration, focused

on reinvigorating the relations beyond personality differences. The focal point upon which the Kufuor administration re-established Ghana's relations with Burkina Faso was the existing, yet fragile, PJCC. The PJCC streamlined successful bilateral talks on peace, security, stability, economic growth and trade between both countries.<sup>65</sup> One of the interviewees indicated that the Kufuor administration was able to collaborate with the leadership of Burkina Faso owing to the former's clear strategy of not taking into consideration whether the leadership of the latter was democratic or not.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Ghana–Côte d'Ivoire relations***

Ghana's relationship with Côte d'Ivoire under President Rawlings was not as challenging as Ghana–Togo relations. Aside from a general antagonism stemming from the belief that Rawlings was an ally of Gaddafi (which raised concerns about his propensity to nurture internal revolutions in neighbouring countries, including Côte d'Ivoire), Abidjan was a dissenting neighbour when Rawlings was perceived to have granted support to the Charles Taylor faction during the Liberian civil war.

However, another issue nearly damaged relations between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire under Rawlings: the clash between the two countries as a result of a football match between Kumasi Asante Kotoko football club of Ghana and Asec Mimosa of Côte d'Ivoire on October 31, 1993 (ASEC Mimosa, 1993), where Ghanaian fans were attacked and beaten after the match, attracting retaliatory attacks by Ghanaians.<sup>67</sup> In a separate incident, three armed personnel who were captured and executed in 1984 were identified as being part of dissident groups that had plans to infiltrate Ghana through Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. Fortunately, the two countries agreed to settle these long-standing feuds through diplomatic channels. The formation of the Ghana–Côte d'Ivoire Border Demarcation Commission, which was established to deal with their border issues, also helped to improve relations between the two countries. Both countries also agreed to consider improvement in road and telecommunication systems, thereby improving ECOWAS mobility.<sup>68</sup> Despite the tensions, which could have spilled over into a continuous brawl, the efforts made by the Rawlings administration yielded peaceful co-existence. This was partly due to the transition of the authoritarian PNDC to the democratic NDC. Secondly, the two countries were bound by the objectives of ECOWAS, including the need to seek peace, especially at a point when Rawlings became the Chairman of ECOWAS in 1994 and 1995.

The Kufuor administration, on the other hand, was welcomed from the outset by the Ivorians, owing to the democratic posture of the administration. Even though Côte d'Ivoire was at the time experiencing severe political instability and democratic upheavals, relations with the Kufuor administration were not negatively affected. The role of the Kufuor administration was that of a mediator and a good neighbour who was ready to support the Ivorian government in securing a peaceful settlement.<sup>69</sup> Like Rawlings, becoming the Chairman of ECOWAS made Kufuor responsible for securing peace in Côte d'Ivoire. Consequently, Kufuor was instrumental in moderating the signing of peace accords between aggrieved factions. Beyond these motivations, the historic abode in Côte d'Ivoire by elite antecedents of the NPP in times of suffering domestic antagonism in Ghana from the CPP made it very comfortable for the Kufuor administration to relate to Ivorians. Edwin Adjei asserted that ethnic ties as well as the similarity of ideology between the Kufuor administration and his counterpart in Côte d'Ivoire played an

important role in the cordial relations that existed between the two countries. These relations culminated in Kufuor's participation in the signing of the Marcoussis Accord in France on 23 January 2003 and a host of other conflict resolution meetings in Accra which cumulatively facilitated a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the ensuing years.

### ***Ghana–Nigeria relations***

The Rawlings administration was met with hostility from Nigeria's President Shehu Shagari, owing to the cordial relations that existed between Shagari and Rawlings's predecessor, Limann, who as noted earlier was ousted by Rawlings's PNDC in a military coup in 1981. As a result, the Rawlings administration was met with stringent measures from the Nigerian government, including a refusal to supply crude oil to Ghana in 1982 and the deportation of over 1 million Ghanaians in 1983.<sup>70</sup>

Subsequent Nigerian leaders, however, treated Ghana differently from the mid-1980s onwards. Under General Buhari, for example, Ghana benefited from increased procurement of oil. Relations were mended as Rawlings partook in a Four-Nation Summit to discuss security, stability and economic cooperation among the nations. It is believed that various shared features of the two administrations fostered closer relations between them; Buhari ousted Shagari by military coup – creating a shared enemy. By the end of 1984, Ghana had become one of Nigeria's major trading partners.<sup>71</sup> Later, the warm relations between the two states could have been marred when Babangida, in 1985, staged a softer version of the 1983 deportation of Ghanaians. However, the Rawlings administration prioritised the profitable economic relations that had been initiated at the time, thereby rendering the incident of little consequence in the relations between Lagos and Accra. Rawlings was also aware that any rebuttal could have damaged the hopes of ECOWAS, a conglomeration both countries were highly committed to. President Rawlings admitted that 'Nigeria gave us some serious problems in the early 1980s with their oil embargo and the expulsion of Ghanaians'.<sup>72</sup>

While the Rawlings administration experienced mixed signals from Nigeria, the Kufuor administration enjoyed stable relations with Nigeria (under President Olusegun Obasanjo from 1999) from the inception of Kufuor's administration in 2001.<sup>73</sup> Both leaders exchanged reciprocal visits that generally portrayed an ambiance of cooperation through what Ambassador DK Osei termed 'direct diplomacy'. Beyond this exchange of felicitous gestures, Kufuor engaged in substantial economic diplomacy with Nigeria. The result of this 'good neighbourliness' yielded substantive economic largesse for Ghana. In the first month of his administration, Kufuor negotiated a 90 day credit facility with Nigeria to economically cushion the administration from excess debts inherited. Amid much domestic backlash in Nigeria, Obasanjo granted Ghana a loan facility of \$13 million for the acquisition of automobiles for the Ghana Police Service which at the time was a crucial intervention to boost their effectiveness. In the bid for West African cooperation, Obasanjo's Nigeria granted Ghana another soft loan of \$40 million to pay for Ghana's share of the overall cost of the West African Gas Pipeline – the first regional natural gas transmission system supplying gas from Nigeria's Niger Delta to Ghana, Togo and Benin.<sup>74</sup>

Nigeria therefore became the first country in the West African subregion to directly engage with Ghana in such an extensive manner, economically. This proved to be a

positive signal for the economic integration under the ECOWAS pact. As a gesture of appreciation for the growing Ghana–Nigeria relations under Kufuor and Obasanjo, a highway in Ghana was named after Obasanjo. The Nigerian president was also named as chairman for the ceremonial commemoration of Ghana’s 50 years of independence in 2007.

It can be argued that Ghana’s relations with Nigeria under both Presidents Kufuor and Rawlings were more ‘man-to-man’ than ‘state-to-state’. However, under Rawlings this relationship did not yield much benefit relative to what ensued under Kufuor’s administration. This is because most of his ‘man-to-man’ or perhaps direct diplomatic relations were more acrimonious than cordial.

## Conclusion and implications for future research

How do we understand the extent of change and continuity in Ghana’s foreign policy, and the overall nature of Ghana’s neighbour relations, during the Rawlings and Kufuor administrations? To what extent did the personal idiosyncrasies of leaders influence their policies? What is the role of other variables in explaining Ghana’s neighbour relations? While these questions remain contentious in general and in the Ghanaian case in particular, this paper has attempted to explain Ghana’s neighbour relations comparatively under Presidents Rawlings and Kufuor, examining the role of leadership in shaping the extent of change and continuity between the two leaders. This examination was based on the proposition that foreign policy decisions are made based less on an objective analysis or view of the international system but on each decision-maker’s own views, values, history, psychology, perceptions and understandings. This proposition is theoretically based on the works of Gustavsson and Goldmann, who consider factors in foreign policy change and continuity. While following this argument and pitching the role of leadership as an intervening variable, the analysis acknowledges the essence of political institutionalisation in influencing neighbour relations. In addition, the international environment is analysed as an extraneous variable, contrary to conventional wisdom, positing that it may not have had the domineering influence on Ghana’s neighbour relations under the two leaders that so preoccupies the literature.

Based on the analysis, it is clear that Jerry Rawlings, president of Ghana from 1981 to 2000, had less cordial relations with the leaders of neighbouring states (specifically Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Nigera) than did his successor John Agyekum Kufuor, who held Ghana’s presidency from 2001 to 2008. This article argues that the personal idiosyncrasies of each leader had a significant impact on the diplomatic, economic and security relationships between these neighbouring states, seen in the very different tenures of these two leaders, as outlined above.

Further analyses of leadership traits and policy decisions are germane and pertinent, in order to understand the actions and inactions of Ghanaian and African leaders in general. This will not only curb generalisations based on Western-induced analysis but also infuse world theories of leadership with the African leadership experience.

## Notes

1. Odoom T & I Tiekou, ‘Re-orienting Ghana’s foreign policy crowd’, in *The Public Policy Making Process in Ghana: How Politicians and Civil Servants Deal with Public Problems*. Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012, pp. 323–44.

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7. This article combines the Rawlings regime from the 1981 takeover from President Limann to the end of 2008.
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10. Ambassador DK Osei is a Former Ambassador at large and Secretary to President J A Kufuor.
11. Edwin N Adjei is the Director for the Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
12. See Walker SG, 'The evolution of operational code analysis', *Political Psychology*, 11.2, 1990, pp. 403–18.
13. See more at <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Fire-guts-Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-170639>. This was also confirmed by some staff at the ministry during the course of this study.
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16. The choice for the period 1981–2008 but not 1979–2008 is for two reasons. First, the AFRC led by Rawlings, in 1979, had one most important objective – to purge the country of corruption through what they termed as a house cleaning exercise. Therefore, for this analysis, its foreign

- policy was not topical. Second, it stayed in power for a little over three months (4 June to 24 September 1979).
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  18. *Ibid.*
  19. Thompson WS, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957–1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
  20. Chazan N, 'Ghana', in Shaw T & O Aluko (eds), *The Political Economy of African Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1984, pp. 94–121.
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  25. Quoted in Asante SK, *Foreign Policy Making in Ghana: Options for the 21st Century*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Ghana Office, 1997.
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  27. Dr Kofi Abrefa Busia was the Prime Minister of Ghana under the second Republic (1969–1972) and leader of the Progress Party – one of the main political antecedent to the President Kufuor's New Patriotic Party.
  28. Libby RT, 'External co-optation of a less developed country's policy making: The case of Ghana', *World Politics*, 29.1, 1976, 67–89.
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  30. Dapaah-Agyeman J, 'Transformation of ECOWAS as a security apparatus and its implications in Ghana's political orientation 1990–2000', *African and Asian Studies*, 2.1., 2003, 3–36.
  31. Aluko O, 'After Nkrumah: Continuity and change in Ghana's foreign policy', *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 5.1, 1975, pp. 55–62, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166794>.
  32. Bofo-Arthur K (1999) op. cit.
  33. *Ibid*; Chazan N, 'Ghana', in Shaw T & O Aluko (eds), *The Political Economy of African Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1984, pp. 94–121.
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. Kumah-Abiwu F, 'Leadership traits and Ghana's foreign policy: The case of Jerry Rawlings' foreign economic policy of the 1980s', *The Round Table the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 105.3, 2016, pp. 297–310.
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  38. See Hermann C, 'Changing course: When governments choose to redirect foreign policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, 34.1, 1990, pp. 3–21.
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45. View expressed in an interview with Ambassador DK Osei; also see Agyeman-Duah I, *Between Faith and History: A Biography of J. A. Kufuor*. Africa World Press, 2003; Agyeman-Duah I, 'The philosopher and foreign policy', in *New Africa*. IC Publications: London, UK, 2004.
46. Views expressed in an interview with Ambassador DK Osei and Edwin N Adjei in personal interviews on 11 April and 23 June 2015 respectively.
47. *Ibid.*
48. For instance, it is argued that 'one of the major source of acrimony between Presidents Rawlings and Eyadema was the detainment of the former in Togo when he was returning from a visit to Libya after handing over to Limann'. In Asamoah O, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013)*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2014.
49. See Goldmann K, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy – The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.
50. *Ibid.*; Gustavsson J, 'How should we study foreign policy change', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 34.10, 1999, pp. 73–95.
51. This argument was made by the respondent from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
52. See Ohaegbulam U, 'The United States and Africa after the Cold War', *Africa Today*, 39.4, 1992, pp. 19–34.
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54. An argument made by respondent 2 from the Kufuor administration.
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60. GEA-African Studies Group, *ECOWAS Regional Integration Processes and International Cooperation*. Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, 2014, [http://www.aecid.es/CentroDocumentacion/Documentos/Eficiacycalidad/01\\_InformeCEDEAO\\_AECID\\_ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.aecid.es/CentroDocumentacion/Documentos/Eficiacycalidad/01_InformeCEDEAO_AECID_ENG_FINAL.pdf).
61. Opined by both Ambassador DK Osei and Edwin N Adjei
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71. Segun J, *Dimensions in Nigeria's Foreign Policy*. Lagos: Blada Nigeria, 1990.
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73. Ambassador DK Osei and Edwin N Adjei shared this view.
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