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# Political Leadership in Africa: A Case Study of Ghana's Presidents Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry John Rawlings

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**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA**  
**A Case Study of Ghana's Presidents Kwame Nkrumah**  
**and Jerry John Rawlings**

**Johnson N. Gwaikolo**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Leadership**

**AUGSBURG COLLEGE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA  
2005**

MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Master's Non-thesis Project of

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## ABSTRACT

### POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA A Case Study of Ghana's Presidents Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry John Rawlings

Johnson N. Gwaikolo

June 13, 2005

The effectiveness of a political leader depends on the leader's ability to formulate a vision, demonstrate genuine concern for the people, and create a constituency or following to translate the vision into concrete actions that produce change. In Ghana, these behavior patterns, which are characteristics of transformational leadership, have been demonstrated by Nkrumah and Rawlings, leading to independence for Ghana and later, the development of more stable and stronger institutions. Nkrumah rallied his colleagues and a majority of the Ghanaian citizens to seek independence. Unfortunately, Nkrumah could not maintain the commitment of his colleagues to remain focused on other aspects (e.g. economic prosperity) of the goal and his government was forcibly removed from office on allegations of corruption.

Rawlings had a "mission" to rid Ghana of corruption and decentralize the process of national decision making. His government established institutions at the level of the grassroots that provided the mechanism for "effective democracy." He pursued economic reform through structural adjustment programs that helped to strengthen the Ghanaian economy.

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**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

The ideologies governing political leadership in most African countries have gone through changes as the countries have matured. During the period of colonization, political leadership was dominated by statesmen whose focus was to fight colonialism and gain political independence from their colonial masters. These statesmen also formulated nationalist ideologies and doctrines that led to the creation of political parties. Their commitments and motivation were geared toward becoming freed states. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, was of this motivation. Not only did he want independence for Ghana, his vision was for all of Africa to achieve freedom from all colonial influences.

Since independence, a new order has emerged in Africa with new thinking, ideologies and circumstances. Instead of independence and the elimination of the foreign presence, leaders of the new order are concerning themselves with economic development, the establishment of effective government (the practice of good governance) and satisfactorily responding to political, economic and social demands of the citizens. The question is no longer how to do away with foreign presence; it is now how to build upon post colonial relationships or establish ties with other countries in order to provide effective leadership in the national political arena. The immediate past president of Ghana, Jerry John Rawlings, followed this path.

Nkrumah's leadership was focused on achieving political independence for Ghana (and eventually for all of Africa) which in his mind would lead to economic prosperity.

The paper discusses that Nkrumah's persistence in pursuing the objective enabled Ghana to obtain independence from Great Britain. Unfortunately, Nkrumah was unable to translate the political gains into economic gains. His efforts to introduce socialist concepts into the Ghanaian society, coupled with corruption within government made him unpopular. His government was overthrown and therefore, could not achieve other aspects of his vision – African unity and economic success.

The paper also discusses Rawlings, with a leadership style similar to Nkrumah, on a “mission” to rid Ghana of corruption and instill integrity in public institutions. Rawlings remained concentrated on the vision and was successful at transforming the political system and economy of Ghana. He committed his government to the establishment of an “effective democracy” which resulted in economic recovery programs.

Prior to colonization, leadership in the African culture was largely based on the chieftaincy tradition where power was concentrated in a group of elders to whom the chief was responsible and accountable. Matters of “state” were decided by the elders (typically older, experienced men) and articulated through their chief. However, “imperial rule had undermined the old African political systems, but did not create a new sense of citizenship in the new nation states” (Dowden, March 9, 2005). The colonial powers introduced measures to facilitate their rule. In some instances, policies were introduced to assimilate or obliterate local cultures, while in other instances indirect rule was exercised through re-oriented traditional structures (Olukoshi, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, the new nation states were not effective in helping their citizens. According to Dowden (March 9, 2005), “African rulers simply would not or could not create

institutions and systems to make Africa's new countries function effectively. Most states fell into the hands of wealthy and greedy elites who stayed in power by buying support and exploiting ethnic divisions. Taxes... were stolen or wasted" (p. 2). In other instances, the withdrawal of the colonizers happened hurriedly. Although world opinion was demanding that colonial powers support their African colonies financially, many of the colonizers did not leave behind more factories, ports and means of communication (Ankomah and Price, May 2005, p. 10). This may have stifled community growth, leading to underdevelopment of socio-economic institutions.

In recent times there have emerged leadership theories that describe the behavior of leaders in all spheres of life. Although specific leadership theories have been recently developed and clarified, they represent leadership styles that long have been in existence. Bennis (1989) points out that the significance of leadership as opposed to management can be expressed in three ways. Firstly, leadership effectiveness results into organizational effectiveness. The ability of the organization to succeed depends on how the leader is perceived. Secondly, leaders guide their followers to a purpose for life. Lives can be meaningful depending on the direction provided by the leader. Finally, building the integrity of our institutions is the duty of the leader: the belief that the system will work (p. 15).

Of particular interest in this paper is the role of transformational and charismatic leadership in the African political arena. The effectiveness of a political leader may depend on the leader's ability to formulate a vision, pursue a purpose, and create a constituency or following, elements of transformational and charismatic leadership.



Transformational leadership is provided through “moral agents” who focus themselves and followers on achieving “higher-level missions” and “purposes.” According to Avolio and Bass (2002), transformational leadership can be conceptualized into four behavioral components: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. In demonstrating these behavior patterns, transformational leaders set examples for showing determination, display extraordinary talents, take risks, show dedication to the “cause,” and create a sense of joint mission. They also provide meaning and challenge, painting an optimistic future, thinking ahead, and molding expectations that create self-fulfilling prophecies. Additionally, transformational leaders encourage followers to employ intuition, creating imaginative visions. Furthermore, they show concern for the followers’ well-being and encourage two-way exchange of ideas (pp. 2-3). Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring followers by injecting enthusiasm and energy. Furthermore, Tichy and Devanna (1986) suggest that “transformational leadership is about change... It’s a leadership process that is systematic, consisting of purposeful and organized search for changes, systematic analysis, and the capacity to move resources from areas of lesser to greater productivity” (p. viii). Therefore, Tichy and Devanna (1986) continue, transformation can be thought about and presented as (1) *recognizing the need for change*, (2) *creating a new vision*, and (3) *institutionalizing change* (p. ix).

On the other hand, charismatic leadership style assumes that the leader uses charm, personality and grace to create followers. The charismatic leader possesses strong self-belief, and others follow because of personal admiration. Both charismatic and transformational leaders have behavior attributes that embody creating and articulating

vision, sensitivity to the surrounding environment, sensitivity to the needs of followers, personal risk taking and demonstration of nonconventional behavior (Changing Minds). Transformational leaders usually possess charismatic characteristics.

Despite the strengths of transformational and charismatic leadership, there are some shortcomings that if not recognized and contained, can lead to failure. For example, there are times when the behavior and actions of the leader become overrated, and the leader becomes blind to the actual needs of the followers while following his or her personal goals; or because of the leader's ability to persuade, he or she continues to win the support of the people for a failing cause. These can lead to the failure of the leader and pose problems for the organization or society (Conger, 1989, p. 137).

Although transformational and charismatic leaders have the potential to produce great results, the passion and confidence of a transformational or charismatic leader can wrongly be equated to truth and reality, thereby rendering the leader unable to realize the true picture of the circumstances among the followers. The rightness of the beliefs may not mean that the actions of the leader are right. These are traps that, when ignored, will lead to disaster.

This paper is a case study that will attempt to discuss leadership styles demonstrated by Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry John Rawlings, two former political leaders of the West African nation of Ghana. Nkrumah was a nationalist who led Ghana into independence and became the first president of the republic, and Rawlings was a military leader who made a transition to civilian rule and left office as required by the constitution. The paper will look at their backgrounds, philosophies and ideologies, and the effect of their leadership styles on the Ghanaian nation. Both leaders may have had

characteristics of transformational and charismatic leadership styles; each led in a different era and was driven by a purpose different from the other. The focus of the paper will be on three aspects of transformational leadership style that may have dominated the leadership practices of both men: formulating a vision, demonstrating a concern for followers' wellbeing, and creating a sense of joint mission. How did Nkrumah and Rawlings perform individually with respect to these three elements of transformational leadership? The performance of Nkrumah and Rawlings will be evaluated on their effectiveness at achieving their goals. Let me point out that the outcome of the evaluation may depend on the observers discussed in this paper. That is, observers who identified with the goals may be favorable and vice versa.

Furthermore, effectiveness typically may have a price associated with it. Nkrumah and Rawlings will be further evaluated against the price the Ghanaians had to pay to achieve the goals. The cost-benefit factor is relevant in the analysis of political leaders, which Nkrumah and Rawlings were.

Whether in Africa or elsewhere, political leadership presents a special case. The greatest problem of leadership is usually found in the strategic political arena. However, unlike the technical arena, the political arena does not have a formalized, systematic analysis. Unfortunately, this condition creates tension between organizational goals and individual aspirations (Tichy and Devanna, 1986, p. 49).

The paper will give a summary and analysis of the activities of Nkrumah and Rawlings respectively in the context of their leadership style, look at both leaders comparatively, and draw a conclusion.

## **Selected Bibliography**

A more detailed discussion of transformational leadership theory is presented by Warren Bennis (1989) in his book *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company). The book describes the characteristics and traits of a transformational leader.

The concept of transformational leadership is fully discussed by Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna (1986) in the book *The Transformational Leader* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.). The authors point out ways in which transformational leadership can successfully impact organizations through change and vision.

J. A. Conger (1989) in the book *The Charismatic Leader: Behind the Mystique of Exceptional Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.) talks about the virtues of a charismatic leader. He gives us an understanding of how vision, communication skills, risk-taking and empowerment all work together to develop a charismatic leader. The author illustrates his points by discussing the careers of some prominent charismatic leaders.

## **LEADERSHIP STYLES OF NKRUMAH AND RAWLINGS**

Both Nkrumah and Rawlings were transformational and charismatic leaders. Each of these leaders had a specific purpose for which he assumed leadership. Each had a goal to bring about change in their society. Generally, both Nkrumah and Rawlings were able to formulate a vision for Ghana and articulate the vision. Both leaders showed concern for the ordinary citizens and advocated their wellbeing. They were able to create a following through political institutions (parties) established by them. Both exerted influence among their peers outside of Ghana and were source of inspiration and motivation when others emulated their examples.

However, there were some differences in the practical application of the theories between Nkrumah and Rawlings. Nkrumah, in his leadership, set out to do three things: 1) create a new state through independence from Great Britain; 2) establish a strong economic order that would bring prosperity for the people of the new state; and 3) unite all of Africa into one nation for the advancement of the African people. Nkrumah's desire was to bring about change to the Gold Coast that would lead to prosperity through self rule and unity. His success would depend on how effective he was in developing, articulating and enlisting others to his aspirations. Although Nkrumah's leadership was instrumental in Ghana's struggle for independence, he did not empower the society to become economically strong. Nkrumah's charisma overwhelmed him to the extent that he became a ruler (he was enthroned as Chief) and lost track of reality in terms of his economic recovery program. (Ghanaians were opposed to socialism.) He lost his ability to instill integrity into government (corruption increased) and was forcibly removed from office.

Rawlings, on the other hand, remained focused on the objective of alleviating injustice in the society and establishing participatory governance. Rawlings was determined to play three roles: 1) builder of a participatory democracy that would foster strong, multiparty democratic institutions; 2) reformer of the economy to bring about a self sufficient society; and 3) eliminator of corruption and builder of integrity among public officials. His success, too, would be rated on his effectiveness at pursuing his goals. He established local groups to coordinate the affairs of their communities and undertook reforms that were to the liking of the people. He remained humble and could identify with the “common” person. He successfully completed his terms of office.

## **KWAME NKRUMAH**

### **Nkrumah's Philosophy and Vision**

Nkrumah's conceptualization and development of a political philosophy and vision started early in his school days. The driving idea for Nkrumah was that "the great and primary task was achieve (sic) quality of respect and treatment, no matter what happened next. Only this could restore to Africans the power to control their own history and development" (Davidson, 1989, p. 26). While studying in America, Nkrumah was faced with two schools of thought among black Americans. One school of thought was that in order to be accepted as equals by the white Americans, the blacks in America had to disconnect with their African heritage and adopt "white habits." Equality and acceptance depended on forgetting about the Dark Continent.

The other school of thought, propounded by William Du Bois and others, "argued that black people in America could realize their full humanity only if they accepted their African heritage. They should be proud of Africa and its history" (Davidson, 1989, p. 36).

The second school of thought was so very much appealing to Nkrumah that it led to his belief in Pan-Africanism. He argued that if North America could become a federation of states, then Africa could do the same. Nkrumah thought that this would lead to Africa becoming great and powerful. He began at this point to visualize colonial Africa and the possibility of freedom. Once he knew where to go, he embarked upon spreading the message and forming a following. His goal was to transform the African continent into a united group of countries whose prosperity would come from within. He saw colonialism as an impediment to development and prosperity in Africa.

Unfortunately, Nkrumah's dream did not become a reality (at least during his life time). His vision for a United States of Africa may have been way ahead of his time. At the time of Nkrumah's push for unity among African countries, the continent was experiencing change from colonial rule to self rule. The leaders of the newly created states were involved with galvanizing support within their own states. They were not prepared to give up power they had just won to merge with other nations. In the end, however, the Organization of African Unity was formed as a compromise to Nkrumah's dream (Shillington, 1992, p. 5).

Nkrumah's vision was for a united Africa, comprised of a federation of the people with their numbers, skills, talents and strengths. But to implement this vision would mean freedom for all through strong political will. His thoughts are captured in his book *Towards Colonial Freedom*. Rooney (1988) writes:

(Nkrumah) argued that the intensification of the colonial crisis, the growth of liberation movements, and cooperation between colonial liberation movements and the proletarian movements in capitalist countries were inevitable. The answer was to organize the colonial masses, to organize labour and youth, to organize mass education, to organize a revolutionary press, and to eliminate the intelligentsia who were the architects of colonial enslavement. He put forward the following programme:

'Political Freedom – complete and absolute independence

Democratic Freedom – freedom from political tyranny with sovereignty vested in the broad mass of the people

Social Reconstruction – freedom from poverty and economic exploitation' (p. 19).



These thoughts would lead Nkrumah toward creating a following by establishing the Convention People's Party; they would lead Nkrumah into taking actions that motivated leaders in other African countries to seek political independence; they would lead Nkrumah to embark upon economic reform programs.

It can be seen from Nkrumah's actions and pronouncements thus far that as a transformational leader he had a clear vision for the people of Ghana and of Africa. His desire was to identify a path that Africans could follow to become great through free expression of their will. Nkrumah wanted to bring about change for which he developed the goal (of independence) that when kept in focus, would produce the change.

Not only did Nkrumah develop a vision, as is characteristic of transformational leaders, he articulated the vision to his colleagues and followers so as to move them in the same direction. This will be elaborated further.

### **Early Years of Nkrumah**

While at Government Training College, Nkrumah developed interest in the principles of Marcus Garvey and Kwegyir Aggrey, the assistant vice principal at Government Training College. Aggrey was a strong advocate of cooperation between black and white people, while Garvey believed in the equality of both based on freedom for the black man. According to Addo (1997),

Nkrumah, like Garvey, argued that there can be harmony only 'when the black race is treated as equal to the white race; that only a free and independent people – a people with a government of their own – can claim equality, racial or otherwise, with another people' (p. 54).

Additionally, Nkrumah “saw that the whole solution to this problem lay in political freedom for our people, for it is only when a people are politically free that other races can give them respect... No people without a government of their own can expect to be treated on the same level as peoples of independent sovereign states” (Nkrumah, 1957, p. xiv). This was the beginning of the development of Nkrumah’s transformational leadership characteristics – defining a vision out of a general concern for the wellbeing of his people. This vision would be articulated and pursued until partial fulfillment thru the independence of Ghana.

After graduating from Achimota College in 1930, Nkrumah was hired to teach at a Roman Catholic Junior School and later at the Roman Catholic Seminary at Amissano. Nkrumah noted of his appointment at the Seminary:

It was an honor to be the first teacher of the Gold Coast appointed to train these young men in their preliminary studies for this great vocation. Certainly, I thought, I must have been forgiven my religious waywardness at Achimota. Maybe it was felt that here was the surest way of attracting a straying sheep back to the fold, and in a way this was right.... It was certainly during this period at the seminary that I gained the religious fervour to such an extent that I seriously formed the idea of taking the vocation of priesthood myself.... (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 22).

Although he later abandoned the thought of pursuing the priesthood for politics, his leadership style would be influenced by his religious beliefs and practices. Addo (1997) recognizes the effect of Nkrumah’s religious beliefs on his leadership ability: “That his early success as a political leader was due to his ability to resymbolize Ghanaian politics

through religious symbols, as evidenced by the appellations, key honorifics, and ascriptive titles normally reserved for major traditional rulers, religious personalities or indigenous gods that were given to him by his followers” (p. 2). Nkrumah was later given chieftaincy titles such as *Osagyefu* (Savior/Redeemer), *Kokoduruni* (The Brave One), *Kantamanto* (One Who Honors His Word), *Oyeadieyie* (One Who Sets Things Right), and *Osuodumgya* (Rain That Extinguishes Fire) (Addo, p. 113).

Nkrumah’s practice of taking on the ascriptive names and titles contributed to the erosion of his leadership effectiveness. By taking unto himself these names and titles, Nkrumah may have been placing himself on a “godly throne” above the people. His charm seemed to have resulted in self confidence that failed him when he created a one party state and enacted legislations to eliminate or suppress political opposition (Library of Congress Country Studies, Ghana: Nkrumah, Ghana and Africa) or when he introduced and pursued economic reform based on socialism even when that was not supported by majority of Ghanaians.

Nkrumah later traveled to the United States of America where he was enrolled at Lincoln University in Philadelphia in 1935. He completed his work in 1939 for a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Economics and he graduated sixth in a class of 46, a further demonstration of extraordinary ability. He later pursued other academic interests and received a Bachelor of Theology at Lincoln Seminary, Master of Science in Education from the University of Pennsylvania and Master of Arts in Philosophy from University of Pennsylvania. The Lincoln experience helped to shape Nkrumah as a future political leader.

I made time to acquaint myself with as many political organizations in the United States as I could.... My aim was to learn the technique of organization. I knew that when I eventually returned to the Gold Coast I was going to be faced with this problem. I knew that whatever the programme for the solution of the colonial question might be, success would depend upon the organization adopted (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 45).

Nkrumah returned to Ghana when he was called upon by Dr. J. B. Danquahn to come and serve as general secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). The urgings of his transformational motivation propelled him to expand the political base of the UGCC and to “combine the effort and influence of... trade unions, cooperative societies, ex-soldiers’ and farmers’ and women’s associations. They should start a campaign of mass political education. They should mobilize the common people” (Davidson, 1989, p. 61). This was the method Nkrumah employed to create a following toward independence. Nkrumah, however, was removed from the UGCC. Because the effectiveness of a political leader partly lay in the ability to get a large number of people to identify with and support the leader’s goals, Nkrumah was not about to let things go when he was kicked out of the UGCC. He formed the Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP). The CPP, under Nkrumah’s leadership, was the vanguard to Nkrumah’s quest for self-rule in Ghana. The CPP would be the instrument through which he would expand his ideologies and beliefs; it would be the means through which Nkrumah would win the commitment of Ghanaians to see things his way. Indeed, the CPP did bring about acceptance of Nkrumah early in his endeavors.

## **Ascendancy to Political Leadership**

Kwame Nkrumah was the first president of the Republic of Ghana. He demonstrated transformational leadership skills by tirelessly pursuing the desire to free Ghana from colonial rule, urging his colleagues to seek the wellbeing of the citizens through selfless commitment to the “cause” of becoming an independent nation. His deep rooted desire to change Ghana motivated him to work very hard through the turbulent years prior to independence, after which he ascended to the office of president. Early on in life, Nkrumah formulated a vision of freedom and equality for all of Africa. His mission became to benefit Africans by seeking independence for Ghana and subsequently for the African continent.

Nkrumah’s ascendancy to political leadership started in 1951 when he was elected to the Ghanaian Assembly while he was in prison. He, along with several leaders of the Convention People’s Party (CPP), had been arrested for supporting a general strike against colonial authority. Nkrumah established the CPP when he broke away from the United Gold Coast Convention. This provided an opportunity for him to create an institution through which he could go after his goal. However, while in prison, Nkrumah’s name was placed on the ballot, and he was subsequently elected to the Assembly.

In politics, as in everything else, one thing leads to another. The transformation of one situation to another depends on how effective politicians tackle issues of national importance. This transformation also depends on the degree of determination and readiness of the leaders to seize available chances to enhance their policies and beliefs (Busumtwi-Sam, 2001, p. 21). In supporting the strike against the British, Nkrumah

redirected the focus of the strike from economic concerns to political concerns to demonstrate that colonial rule was creating hardship for Ghanaians. (The strike was against the high cost of imported commodities.) He wanted the ordinary citizens to be aware that the British were controlling the economy and politics of the Gold Coast to the disadvantage of the citizens. The strike was to send the message that the people could control their own destiny; therefore, the British should leave.

While working toward the independence of Ghana, Nkrumah's leadership styles were predominantly charismatic and transformational. In this regard, he developed a vision, as grand as it may have been, to rid the continent of Africa of colonialism and establish a united Africa. This vision came out of the concern that Nkrumah had about equality for black people. He thought that African people needed to control their own destiny both politically and economically, and that Africa had the resources, human and otherwise, to be prosperous. He then began to enlist the commitment of his colleagues in the Assembly to the cause.

Among the first things Nkrumah had to do was to get his native country free from colonial rule. Therefore, his election to the Assembly was a chance for him to articulate his vision so as to win the support of his colleagues.

At its first meeting, the Assembly voted Nkrumah as Leader of Government Business, along with eight other Council members in different positions. This responsibility provided another conduit through which Nkrumah could pursue his goal of getting rid of colonialism in Ghana. In pursuing this objective,

Nkrumah had a serious responsibility to educate the Assembly members and members of the party in their roles. ... He had to tread a delicate path, for, having

won the election on an anti-imperialist ticket, his government had to operate a colonial-style system, and could be open to jibes from the opposition. He explained to his members that going to the Assembly and taking part in government was the best way of achieving their continuing object of self-government. ... He warned that bribery and corruption, which were part and parcel of the colonial system, must be stamped out. Ministers and members must renounce self-interest and always remember their responsibility to the people. ... Finally, he reminded them that colonial people everywhere were looking to them for hope and inspiration (Rooney, 1988, pp. 62-63).

As indicated above, Nkrumah had several issues to deal with. First, by accepting to lead a government rooted in Great Britain, he was risking his mission to get rid of colonialism, thus leaving himself to be seen as a hypocrite. Notwithstanding, Nkrumah thought that participating in government would expedite the transformation process.

Secondly, Nkrumah had to articulate to his colleagues his vision that the interest of the common people, the nation and Africa as a whole depended on their commitment to the process to self-governance. He challenged his colleagues to join him to abandon what they thought were the ills of colonial rule – bribe taking, self aggrandizement, and corruption. He expressed optimism that the future of Africa lay in their hands and their mission could be accomplished through personal sacrifices, with the wellbeing of the ordinary citizen paramount.

Serving as Leader of Government Business posed several challenges for Nkrumah. The expectation was to adopt a revolutionary mentality and get rid of the old civil servants. Unfortunately, Nkrumah had to deviate from this expectation. The new

members of government lacked the experience in government; therefore, they had to rely on the expertise of the “old guard.” Nkrumah, in order to avoid a breakdown in government, established a relationship based on trust with Sir Charles Noble Arden-Clarke, the British appointed Governor, which resulted in both parties collaborating for the common good of the people. Nkrumah’s collaboration with Sir Arden-Clarke could be seen as enlisting the support of the governor to jointly seek the welfare of the Ghanaians. Nkrumah was interested in effective leadership and engaging Sir Arden-Clarke helped to further the cause. Nkrumah wanted to succeed at the business of government. Realizing that he could not be successful with his newly elected, inexperienced colleagues, he sought support from the experienced Governor.

The focus of Nkrumah as Leader of Government Business from 1951 to 1957 was to obtain self-governance. This was to be done by the authority of a new constitution. It was Nkrumah’s challenge to negotiate a new constitution. To achieve this end, Nkrumah had to create in his fellow Assemblymen a sense of joint mission. Nkrumah thought that it was essential to get his colleagues to move in the same direction with him. His intention was to avoid constituency politics which would delay the march to freedom. This led to the “Motion of Destiny” in the Assembly in which he shared his views regarding the constitution. In the Motion, Nkrumah called for the constitutional debate to be national, not regional; patriotic and not partisan; in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. He called for practicing virtue. He reminded his colleagues that the rest of Africa was looking to them with hope (Rooney, 1988, pp. 73-74). He concluded the Motion that “we can only meet the challenge of our age as a free people. Hence our demand for our freedom, for only free men can shape the destinies of their future”



(Nkrumah, 1957, p. 203). Subsequently, after a series of discussions, a new constitution was adopted which formed the basis for elections in 1954 and 1956 (Rooney, 1988, p. 69).

### **The Five Year Plan**

In 1952, Nkrumah was made Prime Minister after the CPP victory the year earlier. He continued to demonstrate his unflinching concern for the welfare of the general population who had become ecstatic about Nkrumah. This concern was articulated in a policy statement as quoted by Rooney (1988):

My first objective is to abolish from Ghana poverty, ignorance and disease. We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school and by the quality of their education; by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages; and by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs. The welfare of our people is our chief pride, and it is by this that my government will be asked to be judged (p. 83).

Nkrumah made good on this policy statement thru programs adopted by the government's Five Year Plan. The Plan addressed issues of infrastructural development. Road networks were built to connect Accra with other port cities as part of the Volta River Project. Roads were also built to connect northern towns to Accra to enable northerners to transport their agricultural commodities to the major markets in the southern cities.

The educational system was also improved as a result of the Five Year Plan. In addition to higher institutions of learning, vocational programs were embarked upon. New technical colleges and primary schools were built. For example, “in the five years from 1951, the number of primary schools trebled from 1,000 to 3,000, and the total number of pupils in schools rose from 200,000 to 500,000” (Rooney, 1988, p. 83).

The Plan also encouraged communities to set up health centers where the public learned about modern concepts of hygiene and sanitation. Eventually, the country’s own medical schools began producing medical practitioners.

The government also targeted developments in the agricultural sector. Cocoa was the major export crop of the nation. To augment the agricultural production capacity, “research institutes were set up to encourage the growing of coffee, copra, palm kernels and rubber on a commercial scale” (Rooney, 1988, p. 84). The fishing industry was equally developed by training crews for fishing vessels and building small harbors.

According to Rooney (1988),

All these excellent schemes not only brought real benefits to the entire population, they also brought political benefit to Nkrumah whose dynamism and leadership had sparked so much of the momentum. Here was an effective development helping to provide the people with an improved quality of life and a greater measure of prosperity... It tied in with Nkrumah’s endless concern for the ordinary man and woman and their families... (pp. 84 – 85).

The hope of the Five Year Plan was the promotion of rapid industrialization that would be an integral part of the road to economic development. For this reason, Nkrumah built the Akosombo Dam, which created Lake Volta, one of the largest man-

made lakes in the world. However, the electricity generated from the Dam supported only one major aluminum factory and did not lead to much other development (Cassidy, April 11, 2005, p. 4).

Nkrumah's charismatic and transformational capabilities were not limited to local Ghanaian affairs. According to Shillington (1992)

Ghana's route to independence through mass action on the streets combined with peaceful constitutional negotiation behind the scenes had set the trend for other aspirant African leaders to emulate. After independence, Nkrumah was inspirational in the African struggle against the new economic imperialism which stretched far beyond the formal end of empire (p. 4).

Because of his vision of unity and freedom for all of Africa, his leadership style inspired and motivated other Third World leaders. For example, Tom Mboya of Kenya, Enosis leaders in Cyprus, and Amilcar Cabral of Portuguese Guinea emulated Nkrumah's example of focused leadership (Rooney, 1988, p. 86).

As Prime Minister, Nkrumah stepped up his pressure for negotiations for full independence. He was determined to see Ghana free from colonial rule and he pursued this goal until Ghana gained its independence in 1957. On that day,

Prime Minister Nkrumah announced that 'the long battle is over and our beloved country Ghana is free forever... We again rededicate ourselves in the struggle to emancipate other countries in Africa, for our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent' (Kwame Nkrumah, *The Fight for Independence*, Nov. 1957, end of article).

Nkrumah was definitely instrumental in paving the way to Ghanaian independence. But would Ghana have been granted independence without the Nkrumah factor? What was the world trend at the time?

Certainly, the Ghanaians would have been granted independence regardless of Nkrumah or not. The Nkrumah factor was to speed up the process. Nkrumah wanted “self rule now.”

After World War II, people in Africa wanted change. At that time, only Liberia, Ethiopia and Egypt were independent states. The colonial powers, including Italy, France and Great Britain, had started to give up colonial rule. In 1951 Libya was granted independence from Italy, in 1956 Sudan from Britain, and Morocco and Tunisia from France also in 1956. Earlier in 1947, India, a British colony, was led to independence by Mahatma Gandhi through nonviolence. This event had the biggest impact on African nationalists such as Hastings Banda (Malawi), Obafemi Awolowo (Nigeria), Jomo Kenyata (Kenya), and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) who wanted independence for their countries (BBC World Service, *The Story of Africa*).

During the same post-World War II period, America and the Soviet Union also wanted an end to colonialism. America was interested in gaining access to the African markets while the Soviets wanted to increase their sphere of influence to spread their ideology (BBC World Service, *The Story of Africa*).

Hence, Ghana would have eventually been granted its independence from the British, but Nkrumah made it happen sooner rather than later. His persistence paid off for early political freedom for his country. Nkrumah’s success at leading Ghana to

independence was based on his ability to take advantage of the opportunity presented by world trend at the time.

### **Leadership Challenges**

On July 1, 1960, Ghana became a republic. After successfully leading Ghana through independence to this point, Nkrumah was faced with several leadership challenges which eventually led to his removal from office by military coup. Nkrumah's concern for the public was manifested in his economic goals rooted in socialist idealism. His desire was to implant socialist practices in Ghana. The concept of socialism which led to collectivism among farmers and workers was alien to Ghanaians who were engulfed with individualism. That is, Ghanaian farms were owned and operated by individual families, and not by a collection of unrelated farmers, as would be under socialism. Nkrumah could not see the resistance to socialism and continued to fruitlessly pursue this goal to the extent that he set up the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute for that purpose (Rooney, 1988, p. 172). At this point, Nkrumah was becoming a victim of one of the pitfalls of charismatic and transformational leadership; he became blind to the actual needs of his countrymen while following his own goals. The institute failed to mobilize the masses of the people to socialism because the Institute remained narrow-minded; Nkrumah alone set the tone for the Institute and was seen as the absolute reservoir of thought and ideas. As indicated earlier, the "godly" tendencies of Nkrumah were beginning to emerge to his detriment. At this point, he was no longer soliciting the views of others.

Despite the Ghanaian society's unwillingness to adopt socialism, Nkrumah continued his efforts to abandon capitalism in favor of socialism. He had, prior to independence, introduced and passed legislation, the Statutory Corporations Act, to set up public corporations without the authority of the Assembly. By 1963, more than forty such enterprises had been set up. However, these enterprises were a haven for the corrupt CPP party members who were running them. The public corporations were losing money and becoming a liability to the government (Rooney, 1988, p. 186).

Unfortunately, Nkrumah continued to so believe in himself and his policy that he could not see his limitations as a transformational leader. His belief was that those who believed in socialism were incorruptible. Nevertheless, the more he directed the economy toward socialism, the more corruption reduced the capacity of the economy to perform. According to Rooney (1988), "Nkrumah's personality and his role in this critical aspect of Ghana's life remain an enigma. He appeared to share in and condone the flamboyant and ostentatious lifestyle of his colleagues, inevitably derived from ill-gotten wealth..." (p. 196).

Because of the downward trend of the Ghanaian economy occasioned by economic policies pursued by Nkrumah that didn't seem to work, the population became disillusioned. The arrogant and corrupt nature of the once beloved and popular CPP aggravated the citizens even further. Eventually, Nkrumah was overthrown by the military on February 23, 1966 while on a state visit to China.

Nkrumah then went into exile in Guinea where President Sekou Toure was experimenting with "African socialism." While in Guinea, Nkrumah was made co-president to President Toure. There, he published many articles and made regular radio

broadcasts to Ghana (Yergin and Stanislaw, 1988). Nkrumah later died in 1972 in Romania.

### **Selected Bibliography**

The *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc.) by B. Davidson (1989) gives an overview of Nkrumah's struggle to free Ghana from colonial rule. The book discusses Nkrumah's achievements in the wake of Ghana's emergence as the first independent state (from colonial rule) in West Africa.

D. Rooney's (1988) book *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political Kingdom in the Third World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.) is the closest to a biography of Nkrumah. The book describes the private and political life of Nkrumah. It discusses the education, travel experience, struggle for independence and presidency of Nkrumah.

*Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.) by E. O. Addo (1997) gives an overview of religion and politics in Ghana. It discusses the impact of Nkrumah's religious beliefs and practices (including traditional) on his political leadership.

Kwame Nkrumah's (1957) autobiography *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons) is an account of Nkrumah's life written by himself. It gives an in-depth account of his childhood, education, philosophy, religious beliefs, struggle for Ghana's independence and political life.

David Busumtwi-Sam (2001) writes about Nkrumah's political activities before and after colonial rule in Ghana in his book *Landmarks of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah* (Accra,

Ghana: USSH Graphic Designs). The author, who was an ambassador in Nkrumah's government, gives an "insider's" assessment of Nkrumah.

In *The New Yorker*, John Cassidy (April 11, 2005) discusses Jeffrey Sachs's plans to eradicate world poverty. The article "Always With Us" outlines steps that the developed nations need to take to help poor nations remedy their conditions of poverty.



## **JERRY JOHN RAWLINGS**

### **Four Term Presidency**

Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings was a four-term president of Ghana – twice during a military regime and twice during civilian rule. Rawlings’s first term came when he was named spokesman of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a group of junior officers who overthrew the government on June 4, 1979. Earlier in May the same year, Rawlings had headed a failed coup attempt for which he and others were on trial when the June 4 coup took place. The tenure of office of this government was three months, after which Rawlings and his associates turned power over to a civilian government headed by Dr. Hilla Limann on September 24, 1979.

Rawlings’s second term was also occasioned by a military takeover on December 31, 1981, when the military thought that the Limann Government was weak and ineffective. This time the military government, under the chairmanship of Rawlings, launched a “revolution” which lasted until 1992 when general elections were conducted.

Rawlings’s third and fourth terms at the presidency came with him as a civilian leader. At the 1992 elections, Rawlings resigned from the military and contested the presidency on the ticket of the National Democratic Convention (NDC). He won that election and won again in 1996. However, he could not further contest elections because of the constitutional mandate limiting the term of office.

### **Rawlings’s Early Years**

During his school years, Rawlings worked odd jobs during school breaks at construction sites where houses were being built for families displaced by the Damp

Project. His first disenchantment with people in authority came when he observed the cement for the public project being diverted to private use. When the military coup that toppled Nkrumah occurred, Rawlings thought “the military still had a reputation for honor, discipline and integrity” (Shillington, 1992, 9. 34). Rawlings was impressed that the military could come to the rescue of the ordinary people who had become disillusioned with Nkrumah’s leadership. He then joined the military to be part of this “morally correct” group to bring about change in public institutions. Because he had a passion for flying, Rawlings decided to join the Air Force.

Rawlings was disappointed in the military as he went through his training. He observed that the military was just as corrupt, especially at the senior level, as the civilian government that was deposed. In Rawlings’s view, the senior military officers enriched themselves at the expense of the nation; they treated the junior officers with contempt and had no clear direction for the country. This observation would later motivate Rawlings to think up the idea of leading a fight against corruption by taking over the reigns of power. As stated by Yeebo (1991) of Rawlings’s trial for the failed coup attempt,

the leader of the mutiny, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings, had ‘for a long time felt disillusioned about injustices in the society... With the removal of General Acheampong... Rawlings had thought things were going to improve. When he realized that there were no improvements in the general conditions of life, he was struck with dismay and lamented over what he termed the “tarnished image” of the armed forces. He regretted that the military had done nothing to improve the image of the armed forces... and stated that this nasty state of affairs could be remedied’ (pp. 25-26).

Rawlings firmly formulated his vision and philosophy about leadership while in the Armed Forces. Adedeji (2001) states that “Rawlings’s military training in the Air Force Academy gave him the opportunity to acquire a regimented, structured and disciplined disposition about life, and he was ready to lead after being in the military a number of years” (p. 15). It was the motivation to bring about a system of justice, both political and economic, that brought about the failed coup attempt of May 14 – 15, 1979. However, during the trial of the coup makers, including Rawlings, Captain Boakye Djan successfully took over the government on June 4, 1979 and called upon Rawlings to serve as Chairman of the Ruling Council.

### **Foundation of Rawlings’s Leadership Philosophy**

During his years as President of Ghana, Jerry John Rawlings demonstrated transformational and charismatic leadership. According to Adedeji (2001),

Many Ghanaians equally believe that Rawlings is a man of strong emotions, convictions and driven by a passion for moral justice, intellect and integrity. On the intellectual front, they maintain that he is the first leader of charisma and stature since Nkrumah (in his early days). Many in Ghana believe that Rawlings’ (sic) achievements in the political and economic realm were possible only because of his tenacity, honesty, clear objectives and sense of direction (p. 15).

Rawlings’s strong commitment to his objectives and vision were the strength of his leadership characteristics.

Rawlings envisioned a government free from corruption and involving people at the “grassroots” level. He was driven by the desire to instill integrity in government at all

levels. Although he first came to power thru nonconventional means, during his years as president, Rawlings did not lose sight of his vision to build a nation that would reject corruption and uneven distribution of the nation's wealth.

Rawlings's desire to attack corruption came from his observation of the behavior of national leaders in Ghana. Rawlings took drastic measures to address the issue of corruption. When he took over the reigns of power, "the armed forces were purged of senior officers accused of corrupting the image of the military" (Library of Congress Country Studies: Ghana and the Rawlings Era). Senior military and government officials accused of corruption were publicly executed.

Although Rawlings undertook democratic reform which strengthened the nation's integrity, there were still indications of corruption at the end of his rule. For example, in March 2002, it was reported that the Ghanaian government paid out \$20 million to about 2,000 ghost names in the previous two years (Alabi, 2003, p. 220). Furthermore, Lucy Yeboah, *Daily Graphic* (May 28, 2005), reported that "an amount of \$350,000 (was) embezzled in 1996 from the fund meant for the rehabilitation of the State house" (p. 1). Rawlings was still the President at the time.

Rawlings as a leader had a vision for the future and a general concern for the people. In a speech on July 5, 1990, Rawlings stated that

democracy cannot simply mean holding...elections periodically whilst we continue to endure poverty, misery, illiteracy, hunger and poor health facilities...

We cannot divorce any discussion on structures or process of government from the economic reality of providing basic human needs for society (Ninsin, 1996, p. 7).

This statement by Rawlings was a way of saying that democracy is not elections; rather, it is the means to remove the conditions associated with the social ills of society like poverty, disease and ignorance. He was calling for support to improve the social conditions of his people. This was a continuation of his desire to see improvement in the lives of Ghanaians.

He also looked for participatory democracy where government would be decentralized to involve local traditional chiefs at the village level, union employees in work places, civil servants in the public sector, enlisted men in the military, and so on. In his radio broadcast of December 31, 1981 reproduced in “A Revolutionary Journey” Rawlings said

We are asking for nothing more than to organize this country in such a way that nothing will be done from the Council... without the consent and the authority of the people. In other words, we want the people, the farmers, the police, the soldiers, the workers, as long as you are Ghanaians, rich or poor, to be part of the decision-making process of this country (Nugent, 1995, pp. 47-48).

To effect decentralization, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) under Rawlings, passed PNDC Law 6 on March 10, 1982, dissolving the elected local government councils. The councilors were replaced with management committees, of which the members were selected by the District Chief Executive and approved by the region. The PNDC then adopted a three-tier structure for local governance during implementation of the decentralization program. The tiers consisted of Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC), District Assemblies (DA), and town/area/unit councils (Gyimah-Boadi, 1993, 119–121). These administrative units were to coordinate the

participation of the local residents in decisions affecting allocation of resources, administering the affairs of government, and so on. The District Assemblies, comprised of members elected by the local people (two-thirds) and appointed by the PNDC (one-third), were “the highest political authorities in the districts with deliberative, legislative, executive and administrative powers” (Gyimah-Boadi, 1993, pp. 125-126).

In addition to the three-tier structure, earlier in his rule of Ghana, Rawlings created the Defense Committees to address issues such as “health and sanitation, rent and housing, education and culture, construction and projects...” (Hansen, 1991, p. 30). Two of these committees were the Workers Defense Committee set up in work places and the Peoples Defense Committee in neighborhoods. In a radio and television broadcast on January 5, 1982, Rawlings announced the formation of the Workers’ and Peoples’ Defense Committees:

We have seen enough of a traditional form of leadership which abandons the people once it is in power... The alternative that now lies open before us is for you people to take over the destiny of this country, your own destiny and shaping the society along the lines you desire, making possible what has been denied to you all these years. Only a manifest support and involvement of you the people will enable the carrying out of the tasks that we have thought necessary. That is why... we are asking for local Defense Committees at all levels of our national life – in the towns, in the villages, in all our factories, offices and work places and in the barracks (Nugent, 1995, p. 49).

The initiative by Rawlings to revolutionize the country’s political and economic system by placing power in the hands of the people may have had some human rights

implications. In 1983, PNDC Law 42 was passed which, according to Amnesty International, gave Rawlings unlimited powers over Ghanaian citizens. Restrictions were placed on freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly. Between 1989 and 1991, there was anywhere between 76 and 200 political prisoners and detainees (Library of Congress Country Study: Ghana – Human Rights). Other human rights concerns related to the dragging and beating of street vendors accused of pricing their commodities higher than government rates (The Independent, August 30, 2000).

However, Rawlings later took steps to address the human rights issues. In 1992, a new constitution was adopted with provisions for checks and balances. The constitution also provided for the establishment of an independent Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice. By 1994, the Commission, established in September 1993, had received over 2,500 complaints of which about 1,000 had been addressed (Library of Congress Country Study: Ghana - Human Rights).

For Rawlings, as a leader with transformational tendencies, it was not enough to just have a vision. To share the vision adequately, Bennis (1989) says “leaders are people who are able to express themselves fully. . . They also know what they want, why they want it, and how to communicate what they want to others in order to gain their cooperation and support “(p. 3). Rawlings did just that. Adedeji (2001) notes that “Rawlings was well aware that he had to communicate his passion about change so others could share in it and then get them to work as a unit, contributing their best towards the achievement of that vision” (p. 15). For example, Rawlings cultivated the support of the rural people through regular, dramatic and well-publicized visits to the countryside. He personally identified with their plights and appreciated their hard work. One of these

visits was in the Northern Region where guinea worm had infested the crops of the local farmers (Gyimah-Boadi, 1993, pp. 112-113). The Independent newspaper (August 30, 2000) reported that Rawlings won strong support among rural dwellers, where he visited districts and participated in traditional ceremonies unlike previous presidents. According to Hansen (1991),

when Rawlings came to announce that what had happened was not just the changing of the palace guard but a revolution, namely something which would transform the social and economic order and consequently their lives, people were prepared to listen, and, more importantly, to give it their support. For the mass of the people in the urban areas, Rawlings had come to arouse some kind of messianic expectation which had been void in Ghana since the departure of Nkrumah in 1966 (p. 6).

That Rawlings's charisma supported his transformational leadership style was obvious on several occasions. In the words of Shillington (1992), "Rawlings himself was wildly popular. ... (P)eople flocked to see and to cheer this hero who had burst so suddenly into their lives.... (Rawlings's) personality and style were a dominant characteristic of the period, but they were symbolic of a much deeper awakening" (p. 59). He was well liked by the "common" people who made up the majority of the population. His professional colleagues in the military looked up to him. His utterances and behavior attracted people to him. This helped him to establish a following, an important factor for political leadership. "His leadership style, charisma and passionate commitment brought dignity and pride to voluntarism as an instrument of social engineering and developing strategy" (African Presidential Archives and Research Center, March 3, 2003). For



example, *BBC News* (December 1, 2003) stated that Rawlings would smoke half a cigarette and store the remainder behind his ear to smoke later, in the similar manner that a poor man would do. He was skillful at working the masses into giddiness; he provided leadership without the usual political pomp and pageantry; he talked the people's talk and walked their walk (p. 3). Rawlings's charm, mannerism and deportment were assets that certainly worked to his advantage in galvanizing the support of the people. He wanted the people to be part of the mission to improve conditions in Ghana; therefore, his actions simulated those of the ordinary citizens. Once the people joined him, Ghana would be transformed as quickly as possible.

### **The Five Principles of the Revolution**

Jerry Rawlings's leadership in the early years of his presidency was based on five basic principles. The first principle was the need for a revolution to transform the social and economic order. Though this revolution had not been clearly articulated, there was "a consensus that it would involve the termination of the control of the local economy by foreign multinational companies, ...creation of political forms which would make the interest of the broad mass of the people predominant and realizable and a programme which would initiate a process of improving upon the material conditions of the mass of the people" (Hansen, 1991, p. 16). Rawlings's speeches emphasized the plight of the oppressed who empathized with this principle. In an address at the Opening Session of the Seminar for Assemblymen and Women on July 5, 1990, Rawlings stated

It must be recognized that our democratic ideals can only be realized in a stable and viable economy which provides for each and everyone. As I have previously

emphasized, a national consensus is needed on how to build such a viable economy capable of providing basic necessities affordable by the people (Ninsin, 1996, p. 7).

The second principle was based on the revolution's libertarian and antiauthoritarian nature. The leadership would not impose "on the people from above;" it rather took a "bottom up" approach where the mass of the people were actively involved in the transformation process of nation building (Hansen, 1991, p. 18). This principle was pursued through the establishment of the District Assemblies and the Defense Committees where decisions affecting the districts and local communities were made by citizens of the districts and the communities.

The issue of power was addressed by the third principle. This principle was embedded in the concept that the people constituted "the sovereign power in the land." It was believed that the military takeover was on behalf of the people so that they can build functional institutions and build their economic and political capacities. The District Assemblies and the Defense Committees did not only address political issues, they also "supervised" economic activities as well.

The fourth principle in the transformation process was that justice was an important and necessary condition for the new society while the fifth principle focused on accountability of the leadership to the citizens (Hansen, 1991, p. 19). With justice, the culture of impunity would be curtailed; and with accountability, misuse of public resources would decline.

By these principles, Rawlings was demonstrating transformational leadership. For example, by his pursuit of removing control of the local economy from the hands of

multinational corporations, Rawlings was taking a risk that could have led to worsened economic conditions due to lack of capital and experience by the local participants in the economy. Though the action may have been risky, it contributed to the empowerment of the nation through sustainability of the economy. Additionally, his involvement of ordinary citizens in the decision making process through “popular democracy” created a sense of joint mission to reform Ghana. By his pronouncements and actions, Rawlings showed that he cared and he wanted others to care and be morally upright.

### **Economic Recovery and Political Stability**

Rawlings ascendancy to the presidency through democratic means did not change his leadership style. He did not lose sight of his vision to root out corruption, decentralize political and economic activities, and create an environment for material gains extending to the masses of the people. During the period of Rawlings’s civilian rule in the 1990s, he effectively transformed Ghana from economic depression and political instability to one of economic recovery and political maturity. According to the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (March 30, 2003),

the successful return to democracy is a measure of Ghana’s economic and social progress during the last twenty years. Appalling economic stagnation has vanished and Ghana is showing unprecedented economic activity... (P)olitical parties have proliferated.

Internationally Ghana has taken a prominent role in West Africa peace-keeping operations and in this and many other fields it has regained its early position as one of the great leaders of Africa.

And in the center of everything that has happened has been President Rawlings.

It is he who was the driving force behind all these changes. It was he who personally ensured that the things he believed in happened (APARC).

Prior to Rawlings taking over in Ghana, the economic problems seemed insurmountable, and they were compounded by natural disasters. By Austin's (April, 1985) account,

(i)t was in the early years of Rawlings' (sic) second coming that the country began to be stricken with drought, then ravaged by fire as the tinder-dry bush caught alight destroying thousands of acres of farmlands and villages. Food disappeared from the markets, the shops were empty of goods. The whole economy was in such desperate straits that Rawlings was compelled to turn to the Western world for help (p. 5).

From some quarters, the economic problems could be traced back to the Nkrumah years for its apparent unwise and excessive expenditures. At the time when Rawlings returned to power in 1982, the inflation rate had climbed to 200 percent while Gross National Product (GDP) was in the decline at an annual rate of 3 percent for seven years. Cocoa production, and diamond and timber exports had fallen. Gold production had likewise dropped to half of its colonial level (Library of Congress Country Studies, Ghana: The Second Coming of Rawlings – The First Six Years, 1982 – 87).

Rawlings employed radical means to address the situation of stagnation and underdevelopment by introducing the Economic Recovery Program (ERP), to the dislike of the “intellectuals” of Ghana who thought this measure would subject Ghana to conditions imposed by the interveners such as the World Bank and the International

Monetary Fund (IMF). As realistic as this concern may have been, “(t)he Economic Recovery Programme (ERP), launched in April 1983, represented the Rawlings Government’s response to the economic crisis. The ERP aimed to reverse the decline of the economy since 1970 and to reestablish growth and development” (Gyimah-Boadi (1993, pp. 18 – 19). Rawlings’s programs progressed so rapidly that by 1987, the rate of inflation had been reduced to 20 percent and Ghana was reportedly experiencing economic growth at 6 percent annually (Library of Congress, *ibid*).

The ERP was implemented through structural adjustment programs. The initial stage of the structural adjustment program (SAP) created a dilemma for the Rawlings government. While the SAP was intended to help alleviate the poor economic and social conditions of Ghana, it also created negative effects on some sectors of the population. For example, urban and public sector job reductions to distribute resources to rural populations created hardships for urbanites while benefiting rural dwellers; devaluation wiped away any wage increases (Adedeji, 2001, p. 6).

In order to deal with this, Rawlings adopted a multidimensional concept of leadership which incorporated power, discretion and legitimacy. His success was attributed to the two-way relationship established with the Ghanaians – he exerted influence as the leader, and was equally influenced by and accountable to them. His focus was to create a balance between competing needs based on recognition of shared values (Adedeji, 2001, p. 8).

Though Rawlings was predominantly a transformational leader, he employed other leadership styles such as repression, or centralization of power when he needed to. The implementation of the SAP to boost the economy was a mixed bag. There were

outcries from several sectors of the Ghanaian society. Adedeji (2001) notes that “for the urban working class in Ghana, the government’s pursuit of economic adjustment marked the beginning of the transition from the period of alliance to one of confrontation. ...” (p. 8). Measures taken by the government were seen as eroding the income of the working class. In the business community, the concern was with government’s inability to effectively manage industrial labor relations. In addition, higher prices and problems in mobilizing local private capital were impacting the ability of the private sector to perform. Furthermore, students who from the beginning of the Rawlings era were among the strongest supporters began to grumble about the withdrawal of government subsidies to schools. The “intellectuals” and the “middle class” also got involved in the criticism of the SAP.

The dissension created by the SAP among several sectors within the nation had the potential to narrow the political base of the government. Without political legitimacy, the economic recovery efforts would be meaningless. With his foresight, Rawlings adopted a policy of “inclusiveness” where he reached out to a diverse group comprised of professionals, the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women’s Movement, local chiefs and members of the clergy. These groups had the capacity to overcome any anti-government sentiments (Adedeji, 2001, p. 13).

In the end, Rawlings prevailed: “Besides its first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, no political leader has had as much of an impact on Ghana as Jerry John Rawlings” (*BBC News*, December 1, 2000). His charismatic and transformational leadership styles contributed to the political stability and economic success of Ghana. He

pursued his vision rigorously, empowering the people through inclusiveness, resulting in the success story of Ghana today.

### **Selected Bibliography**

Rawlings's life and ascendancy to the presidency of Ghana is fully discussed by K. Shillington (1992) in *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.). Shillington points out conditions that led to the two coups initiated by Rawlings. He further outlines Rawlings's policies and achievements as president.

Z. Yeebo (1991) in *Ghana: The Struggle for Popular Power. Rawlings: Savior or Demagogue* (London: New Beacon Books) gives an overview of Rawlings as military ruler in Ghana, analyzing Rawlings's leadership activities which at times raised concerns about human rights, dictatorship and antidemocratic tendencies.

"The Legacy of J J Rawlings in Ghanaian Politics, 1979 – 2000" (*African Studies Quarterly* 5(2):1) is a study conducted by J. L. Adedeji (2001) on Rawlings since 1983. The study discusses Rawlings's "watchdog" role, economic and political achievements, and the transition from military rule to multiparty democracy.

*Daily Graphic* is the biggest selling independent newspaper in Ghana today. In its Saturday, May 28, 2005 edition (No. 149440), there are two articles that discuss corruption in Ghana. Zakaria Alhassan writes about one of the root causes of corruption in the article "Corruption Attributed to Low Wages" while Lucy A. Yeboah writes about the embezzlement of government funds in "Job 600 \$350,000 Rip-Off, Government to Seek Interpol's Assistance."

Kwame A. Ninsin (1996) gives an overview of Ghana's political progress in *Ghana's Political Transition: 1990 – 1993* (Accra, Ghana: Freedom Press). It emphasizes the transition from military rule to civilian rule.

*Ghana Under PNDC Rule* (London: Anthony Rowe, Ltd.) edited by E. Gyimah-Boadi (1993), is a collection of position statements by civil society organizations, including trade unions and the Ghana Bar Association, on government policies and programs. It gives insight into the public's reaction to some of the policies of government.

A more detailed discussion of transformational leadership theory is presented by Warren Bennis (1989) in his book *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company). The book describes the characteristics and traits of a transformational leader.

### **Other Readings**

George B. N. Ayittey (1998) in the book *Africa in Chaos* (New York: St. Martin's Press) gives more insight into why Africa has been perpetually stuck in poverty and what Africans need to do to excel like other people. He asserts that when given the necessary incentives and rewards, Africans will progress toward developing their capacities and abilities to be self-sufficient. He goes on to say that sometimes the African governments help to retard progress. The book focuses on issues of politics, economy, religion, ethnicity, culture, among others.

*The Economies of West Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press) by Douglas Rimmer (1984) gives an overview of economic development in West Africa after World



War II when most of the countries had gained independence. The impact of state policies versus world market conditions on the economies of the region is discussed. Though the book is dated, it gives some ideas about economic developments early in the newly independent states of West Africa.

In *An Invented Life: Reflections on Leadership and Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company), Warren Bennis (1993) writes about ways to deal with facilitating leadership and managing change. He also discusses the ethics of organizational life. The book is a “how to” manual on the rightness of decisions in leadership.

Bruce J. Avolio (1999), a leading writer on leadership theories, points out in *Full Leadership Development: Building the Vital Forces in Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.) that leadership is a system that takes into consideration inputs (people, resources), process (how the people and resources interact over time) and output (level of performance). He says that the interaction of the players will determine the effectiveness of the leadership.

*Ghana: Transition to Democracy* (Oxford: African Books Collective), edited by Kwame A. Ninsin (1998), is a collection of essays discussing the prevailing trends and tendencies in Ghana’s democratization process. It gives an analysis of the relationships between economic and political liberalizations, connections between the military, party politics and sustainable democratic transitions, and institutional and non institutional structures in mass consciousness and movements.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have looked at the leadership styles of two African leaders and the consequences of their leadership practice on their society. Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry John Rawlings were two African leaders whose desires for political leadership were motivated by different circumstances. In considering the three dimensions of transformational leadership (developing a vision, concern for the wellbeing of followers, and sense of joint mission) we will conclude with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the respective leaders. How well did each perform within the confines of the study?

Nkrumah was a pre-independence leader who wanted political freedom for Ghana (and all of Africa), a condition that he believed would lead to economic prosperity. From his public utterances and interactions, we saw that Nkrumah was deeply moved to change the colonial condition under which Ghanaians in particular and Africans in general were living. Nkrumah developed his vision early and persistently articulated the vision. This, I believe, may have been his strength. Nkrumah was clear on where he wanted to see Ghana and eventually all of Africa. He wanted a place for Africa among the United States of America and the Soviet Union as a united and prosperous state. This was his motivation for seeking political power.

Regarding his concern for the people, he developed his vision out of the feeling that Ghanaians and Africans can and should control their own destiny. He wanted to elevate the living standards of the people. He, therefore, embarked upon infrastructural development and social reform initiatives. He built roads, schools, health centers, etc., all as an expression of his concern for the wellbeing of Ghanaians. Nkrumah succeeded in

this effort by improvements in school attendance, large road networks, and easy access to health facilities, among others.

Nkrumah's weakness appeared to have been in developing a sense of joint mission among his people. Although Nkrumah successfully led Ghana to independence, he could not continue to get his followers to remain committed to his ideas and programs. Allegedly, his government officials became corrupt and misused public resources. In addition, the attraction to and belief in Nkrumah due to his personality made him believe in himself to the extent that he could not realize the failure of his economic policies rooted in socialism. His government eventually became unpopular and was forcibly removed from office.

Rawlings also seemed to have demonstrated transformational leadership during his presidency in Ghana. From accounts reviewed in relation to the three dimensions, Rawlings's leadership practice seemed to have produced good political and economic results. Rawlings's vision was to rid Ghana of moral deficiencies, build a decentralized participatory democracy and revamp the economy. His desire was to see Ghana free from corruption, to see decisions made at all levels of society, and to see a strong economy. He was successful in reforming the Ghanaian society by enacting legislations and adopting policies to move the state toward achieving the goals. Furthermore, Rawlings demonstrated strong concern for the people of Ghana. He was moved to seek political power because he thought the ordinary citizens were disadvantaged by those in leadership roles. Rawlings was dubbed "watch dog" for the common person. His actions and pronouncements were intended to provide equal opportunity for the citizens to have

health care, education, and to freely participate in the democratic process. After all, Rawlings thought that Ghanaians needed to be prosperous.

Rawlings's leadership style mobilized the state into building a strong economy and a stable democracy. He was able to keep his colleagues and countrymen (and women) focused on the objective of the Ghanaian "revolution." He personally identified with every sector of the society for the purpose of enlisting and maintaining the support of the people. Rawlings wanted the transformation of Ghana to be by all and for all.

Political governance in Africa is faced with many challenges – chieftaincy traditions, institutional weakness, corruption and lack of accountability, gross incompetence, injustices, etc. However, the case study of Ghana's presidents shows that charismatic leaders can institute transformational styles of leadership with positive results.

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## APPENDIX A

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GHANA

Ghana obtained its independence from Great Britain on March 6, 1957. Prior to that, Ghana, because of its large deposit of gold, was called the “Gold Coast,” a name given by Portuguese explorers in 1471. Ghana was explored by several European kingdoms, including Denmark, England, Holland, Prussia and Sweden. The country was of particular interest to explorers from those countries because of the abundance of natural resources including gold, diamond, manganese, iron ore, bauxite, and salt. The extensive presence of colonial rule is evidence by the fact that 29 of the 32 European colonial forts and castles along the West Coast of Africa are in Ghana (Ghana at a Glance).

Ghana is one of the countries in West Africa, a sub-region of Africa that is unique in many respects. West Africa is home to the world’s most populous black country (Nigeria), Africa’s oldest republic (Liberia), and Africa’s first country (Ghana) to gain independence from European colonial rule. Furthermore, this is the region in which one of the first military coups d’etat in post-independent Africa occurred. Since that Togolese coup of 1963, all of the countries in the sub-region, except Senegal, have experienced an average of about three coups d’etat, thus gaining the reputation of the coup d’etat belt of Africa (Olukoshi, 2001, p. 1).

In addition to political instability in the West African region, Africa in general is plagued with multitude of problems. Africa is the second largest continent with an area of 11.7 m square miles and a population of 690 million people. Considered to be the

origin of mankind, Africa has 53 independent countries with a mix of native peoples, cultures (including religions), economies and history. The continent is home to the world's largest desert (Sahara), tropical rain forests, and fertile grasslands. Despite its wealth, Africa has the 15 least developed nations in the world, 70 percent of its population lives on less than \$2 a day, disease (including HIV/AIDS) and famine kill millions each year, and basic education is not available to a large percentage of the children (Maryknoll Africa).

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Europeans began to establish trading posts in Africa, especially in gold and slaves. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Europeans competing for control of Africa's resources carved up most of Africa into colonial empires. However, by the mid 1900s, the demand for independence became strong. Between 1950 and 1980, 47 African colonies had gained independence (World Book – Africa), including Ghana, which was colonized by Great Britain. British rule was exercised through Governors and District Commissioners (British nationals) appointed by the British Government. In turn, the local chiefs were manipulated by the Governors and District Commissioners to centralize power in the chiefs and reduce the influence of the elders.

Ghana is today a member of the Commonwealth of Great Britain. The country is situated on the West Coast of Africa bordered by Burkina Faso on the North, Togo on the East, Cote d'Ivoire on the West and the Atlantic Ocean on the South. The capital city is Accra. Currently, the President of Ghana is John A. Kufuor, who was elected in 2000.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **About Kwame Nkrumah**

Nkrumah was born into the Akan ethnic group on September 18, 1909 in Nkroful, in the Western region of Ghana. However, his mother says he was born in 1912. His father was a goldsmith. Nkrumah was bonded to his mother because of the matrilineal nature of the Akan people. After his baptism into the Christian faith, Nkrumah was called Francis Nwia Kofi Nkrumah.

Nkrumah went through formal education at a school in the village of Half-Assini where he went through elementary school in eight years instead of the usual ten. This academic achievement led to his admission to the Government Training College, later named Achimota College, in Accra in 1926. He went through secondary school and teacher training programs at this school. The display of extraordinary talents at Half-Assini would help Nkrumah develop his transformational leadership style.

## APPENDIX C

### **About Jerry John Rawlings**

Jerry John Rawlings was born on June 22, 1947 in Accra to a Ghanaian mother, Victoria Agbotui, and Scottish father. Rawlings was brought up by his mother “who did not hesitate to beat her children in order to instill in them her own strong moral code of honesty, integrity and personal discipline.”

Rawlings was baptized as a Roman Catholic and attended the prestigious Achimota School. At school, he was well-known and well-liked by his school mates. Rawlings would not tolerate bullying and he readily came to the defense of any ‘underdog’ who might be mistreated. This behavior may have helped to shape his “watch dog” philosophy during his political career.

Rawlings presently lives in Accra, Ghana with his wife, Nana Konad Agyeman-Rawlings, and four children – three girls and one boy. In 1993, Rawlings received the World Hunger Prize. He is also the recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Law Degree from Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, and Doctorate Degree for Diplomacy and Development from Lincoln University.

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