

# IMAGING A PRESIDENT: RAWLINGS IN *THE GHANAIAN CHRONICLE*

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## **Abstract**

*The post-independence political history of Ghana is replete with failed civilian and military governments. At the close of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, a young Air Force Officer, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, burst onto the political scene through a coup. After a return to civilian rule in 1992, with him as Head of State, he was to finally step down in 2000. For a greater part of his rule, press freedom was curtailed. But with the advent of civilian rule backed by a Constitution that guarantees press freedom, the country experienced a phenomenal increase in privately-owned media. One of these is *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, the most popular private newspaper in the last years of Rawlings' time in office. This study, under the influence of Critical Discourse Analysis, examines "Letters to the Editor" published in *The Ghanaian Chronicle* that focused on Rawlings. Through manipulating various discourse structures, writers of these letters project an anti-Rawlings ideology as a means of resisting what they see as political dominance reflected in Rawlings rule.*

## **1. Introduction**

Critical studies of media discourse have revealed that media texts are not free from ideological biases. Throughout the world, it has been observed that various discourse types in the media, for example, editorials, opinion, and letters provide conduits for the expression of ideologies. In Ghana, many of the studies carried out on the contents of the media have tended to be done through the traditional approach of content analysis. From the viewpoint of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the media texts in Ghana offer a very fertile area for research. This is so because the media, both print and electronic, have gone through various stages of development. Throughout the post independent years, there has always been, until the advent of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, the state control of the media. Even though in previous times private newspapers have existed, it is nothing compared to the current situation.

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The state of the media is even more interesting when we confine our observation to the period of the rule of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings. Over the period of his time in power, the country went through a tectonic shift in the character of the media. From the period of strict state control and state-allowed-only newspapers in the 1980s, we move into the early 1990s when privately owned and operated newspapers started appearing. The advent of the 1992 Republican Constitution brought with it an explosion in the proliferation of private newspapers and radio stations. This happened because the Constitution guarantees the freedom and independence of the media Article 162 (1) and (3) of the Fourth Republic of Ghana Constitution made provision for the establishment of the private press (Article 162 (3):

Freedom and independence of the media are hereby guaranteed.(Article 162 (1))

There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a licence as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information. (Article 162 (3))

In the context of ideological contestation, it is very much an understatement to indicate the obvious that the media are very critical in any political struggle. In the history of Ghana, we have seen the media used as a tool in the political struggle. For example, in the 1970s when there was not as much press freedom as there is now, the *Catholic Standard* and the *Legon Observer* provided avenues for those who fought against the military rule of that period. So the media have always been used for the struggle for political power. Much as the media are used as instruments of political domination, as do they provide avenues for victims of political dominance to express their resistance to the forces of domination.

As a result of the growth of the private media in Ghana since the coming into being of the 1992 Constitution, those who made up the political OTHER in relation to the government of Rawlings found in various newspapers and radio stations avenues to express their resistance to that government.

With the preceding as the background, the goal of this study is to examine the political resistance to the rule of Rawlings as expressed in Letters to the Editor in the leading private newspaper in Ghana in the twilight years of Rawlings' rule as Head of State *The Ghanaian Chronicle*. During the 1990s, this newspaper was considered as one of the media outlets for opposition to the rule of Rawlings.

## **2. Political Context**

To situate this study in its proper context, an overview of Ghana's political history and the role of Rawlings in that history are very crucial. In this section, therefore, my goal is to provide a broad overview of the historico-political context necessary for the appreciation of the texts being analysed.

### **2.1 Overview of Ghana's Political History**

The documentation on Ghana's political history is immense and well articulated. What I offer in this section, therefore, should be seen as a microcosm of an extensive intellectual domain expertly articulated by those whose professional skills are better suited for that purpose. Some of the relevant works in this regard are: Chazan (1983), Oquaye (1980, 2004), Boahen (1989), and Nugent (1995).

After a period of struggle between the nationalists and the colonial authorities, the Gold Coast won its independence to become Ghana in 1957. The first civilian national government was led by Kwame Nkrumah, the architect of Ghana's independence. In 1964, Nkrumah declared Ghana a one-party state, thus ruling out every opposition to his government. In 1966, the country experienced its first military take-over. The military government of the National Liberation Council ruled till 1969 when, through elections, the country went back to civilian rule. The new government, under Prime Minister K. A. Busia, was also overthrown in the second military coup in January 1972.

The second military government was headed by General I. K. Acheampong with a ruling council that went by the name National Redemption Council (NRC). The NRC was made up of seven army officers, the Inspector General of Police, and the Attorney General. In the early years of the NRC, there was popular support for the government. This was mainly because the government took certain measures which

the mass of Ghanaians felt were in their interest. For example, Gen. Acheampong decided not to honour any of Ghana's foreign debt obligations. He also introduced an agricultural policy, 'Operation Feed Yourself', which ensured sufficient food supply in the early years of his rule.

By 1975, however, various factors had combined to create a crisis of confidence for his government. These factors included the oil crisis of 1973 which unexpectedly increased the country's import bill; a drop in cocoa production—the country's dominant export; a general decline in the economic fortunes of the country; shortage of goods, including food items, leading to very high prices. In addition to these, there was also a very high level of corruption in official circles. As Shillington (1992:22) points out, "The Acheampong government, widely recognised as disastrous for the country, is most vividly remembered for its institution of corruption on a massive scale . . ." These factors started to cause disaffection for the government. Opposition to the government came from all directions.

To forestall any loss of credibility for the army, there was a re-engineering of the ruling council initiated by top level officers of the armed forces. In October 1975, the NRC was replaced by the Supreme Military Council (SMC). The new council was still headed by General Acheampong; the other members were the Chief of Defence Staff, the Inspector General of Police, the Army, Navy and Air Force Commanders and the Boarder Guards Commander. The change in the ruling council, however, did nothing to reverse the deterioration in the economic fortunes of the country.

By the second half of the seventies, the national economy was in serious trouble and the corruption among government officials was becoming more and more obvious. As Shillington (1992:22) observes:

The incompetence and mismanagement of the early years was coming home to roost and it was soon clear that the government had lost control of the economy. As the economy fell apart, those military officers in positions of power began to help themselves to the country's dwindling coffers. Senior military officers, now in charge of ministries and state corporations,

used their positions to look after their own interests. The scope for their nefarious activities was almost infinite. It ranged from diverting state funds and selling import licenses, to using army labour and equipment to build private houses for themselves. At the same time those military officers who headed state corporations left themselves open to exploitation by corrupt civilian businessmen who manipulated contracts and deals to make illegal fortunes for themselves.

As support for the government was eroding, agitations at the national level was rising. To try and prop up his hold on power and partly in response to a growing call for the military to hand over power to a constitutional government, Acheampong mooted an idea for a non-partisan form of constitutional rule in what was popularly referred to as UNIGOV (Union Government). However, critics of the government saw in this a ploy by Acheampong to perpetuate his hold on power. Opposition to the government came from various powerful groups—the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (an umbrella organisation for university lecturers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals), the Christian Council of Ghana, and the Catholic Church. There were persistent students' demonstrations and workers' strikes. Almost invariably, these were met with police and military brutalities.

In 1978, concerned about a national explosion, some officers of the military dislodged Acheampong as Chairman of the SMC and Head of State in a palace coup. He was replaced by Lt. Gen. Akuffo and the ruling council came to be commonly referred to as Supreme Military Council II (SMC II). With the coming into power of SMC II, nothing much changed. The corruption that had characterised the NRC and SMC I continued. A remarkable change, though, was that the ban on party political activities was lifted at the beginning of 1979 in preparation for a return to civilian rule.

## **2.2 Political Rawlings**

The overview of the Ghanaian socio-economic and political scene briefly outlined above formed the background that brought Rawlings on to the political landscape. On May 15, 1979, there was mutiny in the

army led by Fl. Lt. Rawlings. With the mutiny unsuccessful, Rawlings and those who joined in it were put before a court martial. However, on June 4, 1979, while the trial was still in progress some young officers staged a coup and overthrew the existing military government, released Fl. Lt. Rawlings from custody, and formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) under the chairmanship of Rawlings. When the AFRC came to power, elections had already been planned. These elections were allowed to proceed and on September 24, 1979, the AFRC under Rawlings, handed over power to the newly elected civilian government. The elections were won by the People's National Party headed by Dr. Hilla Limann.

Not long after Rawlings handed over power, he led another coup on December 31, 1981, that overthrew the civilian administration of Dr. Hilla Limann and formed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC).

The PNDC under Rawlings ruled till 1992 when elections were held under a new constitution. Rawlings led the National Democratic Congress to win those elections and thus became a civilian head of state. In 1996, he stood a second time and won to serve a second term of four years as Head of State. Under the 1992 Republican Constitution, he could not stand again for election after having served two terms as Head of State. The year 2000, therefore, marked Rawlings' last year in office as President of Ghana.

Having held power for over three months in 1979 and from December 1981 to December 2000, Rawlings holds the record as the longest serving Head of State of Ghana. After holding power for that length of time, it is legitimate to find out how sections of the population evaluated his term in office. This is the reason that informs this study. In studying the LEs in *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, one would be contributing to the analytical studies of a genre that offers an outlet for mass participation in the democratic process (Pounds 2006).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis: Overview**

The study is situated in the context of the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as represented in works such as: Wodak et al.

(1999), Fowler (1991, 1996a), Kress (1993), van Leeuwen (1993) Wodak (2001, 2004, 2006), Fairclough (1995), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), van Dijk (1993, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2006), Bhatia (2006).

Critical Discourse Analysis studies the way in which power abuse as reflected in dominance and inequality, and resistance to these in the social context is manifested in discourse. Wodak et al. (1999:8) indicate that: "The aim of Critical Discourse Analysis is to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use." The focus of CDA is, therefore, on the link between power and discourse structures; that is, how linguistic resources are used to manifest social and political power differentiations. This orientation of CDA is based on the assumption that language is not a neutral tool for communication. As van Dijk (1996:84) points out:

One of the crucial tasks of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to account for the relationship between discourse and social power. More specifically, such an analysis should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimised by the text and talk of dominant groups or institutions.

This point is also articulated by (1996b:40): "Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged; world-views or ideologies."

Furthermore, CDA is concerned with how power abuse is resisted and challenged. Predominantly, mainstream research in CDA has tended to concentrate on how social power abuse is discursively constructed. Even though CDA practitioners recognise the relevance of counter-power and resistance, studying the discursive strategies of resistance has not been on the mainstream agenda. This is borne out by the following view from van Dijk (1993:250):

" . . . . we pay more attention to 'top-down' relations of dominance than to 'bottom-up' relations of resistance. . . .

exploitation. The letters in this study were analysed along the following parameters: schematic structure, thematic organization, sentential semantics, lexicalization, and rhetorical strategies.

### **5.1 Schematic Structure**

The schematic structure or schema of a text refers to the overall architecture or form of the text (van Dijk 1988). Previous studies on LEs (for example, Hoey 1983 and Ghadessy 1983) have generally concluded that such discourse types have a problem-solution structure. This means that in terms of the overall pattern, LEs tend to identify a problem and propose a solution. Morrison and Love (1996) found a similar pattern, but with a variation. In comparing the structural model established by Hoey (1983) with what their study shows, this is what they say:

Typically, a letter opens with a statement that introduces and elaborates on a problem. This is followed by reference to some form of offered solution, which then receives negative evaluation. In Hoey's model, the structure then becomes recursive, profering alternative solutions until positive evaluation is achieved. In the case of many of the Parade and Moto LEs, the negative evaluation is followed by an intensifying restatement of the problem and then by a series of moves which build up to a challenge to the government to act to provide a solution. (Morrison and Love 1996:50)

Departing from the problem-solution pattern generally associated with LEs, the data in our study reveal an argument structure pattern. In other words, most of these letters tend to have a proposition-evidence structure or some variation of it. So a writer states their view of Rawlings, followed by the evidence (or reason) in support of the view. Of course, there are few cases where the letters follow the problem-solution structure. In the corpus analysed, then, a letter typically has the following categories constituting its architecture:

- Headline
- Viewpoint
- Justification
- Conclusion



These categories are illustrated with the text in (1):

### IT'S THE SAME OLD RAWLINGS

The recent speech by President Jerry Rawlings marking the seventh anniversary of the Fourth Republic was the President at his dubious best.

2. So now he is calling on all of us to see ourselves first as Ghanaians before thinking of ourselves as members of political parties. 3. Since when did he realise this in the 20 years of his partisan misrule?

4. Here is a leader who has presided over the most divisive administration this country has ever known. 5. Is this not the same person who goes to other constituencies in the country to insult the intelligence of people for voting for members of the Opposition?

6. Remember the President's speech last year at Tamale regarding the Minority Leader, Mr. J. H. Mensah! 7. Is this not the same person who called the Opposition thieves, vampires, nation wreckers, dzimakplas, etc? 8. Did we not hear the First Lady recently tell people at Ablekuma North and Bonwire that if they do not vote for the NDC, they would not see any development in their areas, as if the money generated by the good people of Ghana comes from her private bank account?

9. The President stated in his speech that as a nation, "we need to re-discover our national sense of purpose and direction."

10. Fine words, indeed! 11. He should start by explaining to us the rationale in buying a \$20 million presidential plane when education is in tatters and health service for the majority of people is practically non-existent and unaffordable.

12. He still hasn't said a word about this dubious deal, and come to think of it, neither has his group of dribbling sycophants who are always so quick in preaching his infallibility!

13. He should explain to the people of Ghana the sense in procuring armoured personnel carriers and riot control equipment at astronomical prices when the Police do not have the basic facilities to tackle even daylight robberies. 14. We are all witnesses to the spate of unsolved murders going on in the country under the very noses of a force that cannot solve these robberies, but quick to jump on innocent students and civilians expressing their constitutional rights.

15. At the moment, it is too late in the day to listen to words of wisdom that have no meaning even to the preacher himself. 16. Why preach it if you don't believe it? 17. November 2000 cannot come soon enough! (Sarah Kukuaa Mensah, January 24-25, 2000).

In this text, as in all others, there is a **Headline**: IT'S THE SAME OLD RAWLINGS. In newspaper discourse, headlines are very important. As van Dijk (1987:188) has pointed out, "Headlines are particularly important because both in production and in the reception of news reports, they subjectively define the most prominent or most relevant information of the news items." The headlines of the various letters, to a large degree, confirm their argumentative structure. The following are samples:

(2)

- Open Advice to President Rawlings
- Why I Oppose Rawlings
- I'll Demand My Justices from Rawlings
- Politics of Lies, Who is More Guilty?
- Is Rawlings a Joker?
- An Assessment of Rawlings' Rule
- We are Students of Rawlings

In the sample text, sentences 1-3 constitute what I call the **Viewpoint**. In these sentences, the writer states her view of Rawlings. In some cases, writers would make reference to specific incidents and these would provide the background against which they state their viewpoint. In the text, for example, the writer makes reference to an occasion during which Rawlings makes a speech, and this becomes the point of departure for the writer.

After stating the **Viewpoint** the writers of these letters would then go on to offer a **Justification** for their opinion. In Text 1, the writer's justification covers sentence 4 to 14. As would be discussed in detail later, justifications tend to be based on historical cases. In other letters, the justification may be based on the writer's interpretation of an event.

Most of the letters end with what could be referred to as the **Conclusion**. For many of the LEs, this is where the writers' ask for behaviour change from Rawlings. The following are sample Conclusions:

- (3) We have forgiven you all these failures, but we plead with you to put us back on course before you go: the minimum wage of \$4.00

in Limann's time, the rate of the cedi to the dollar before you came. After all, if you couldn't mend our economy, why should you destroy it, if that was why you appeared on the scene. (Kobina Atta, August 23-24, 2000)

- (4) I call on President Rawlings not to crack such jokes. Rather, he should sincerely forget about the issue of corruption since he has completely deceived Ghanaians into thinking that he could have halted corruption. He killed others for no tangible and apparent reason. (Nanabanyin Ninsin-Imbeah, March 15-16, 2000)

## 5.2 Thematic Organisation

The thematic organisation of a text refers to what the text is about at a general level. This means that in any text, the theme is the most central, or the most important information; what we can call the aboutness of the text. The themes in these LEs can be organised into two broad categories, all revolving around the person of Rawlings. One category deals with the character of Rawlings, and the other covers his rule as Head of State. In most of these letters, the tendency is to characterise him in negative terms. One of his character traits is that he is disrespectful:

- (5) Was it not in the regime of Rawlings' (P)NDC that for the first time in the history of Ghana *a young President assaulted his old Vice President?* (Mohammed Adam, January 11, 2000)
- (6) As for Jerry Rawlings, *his vulgarity, arrogance, lack of decorum* and *abusive character* can be understood from *his poor social background*. (Obeng Kwaku, January 14-16, 2000)

Another feature of his character is that he is a liar:

- (7) The whole problem about this man is that Ghanaians do not seem to accept the fact that *this man came to power on a pack of lies*. . . If this man Rawlings was speaking the truth, why can't he mention or substantiate his accusations? (Muntari Awini, June 16-18, 2000)

- (8) It is obvious that *President Rawlings lied to his guests* when he told them the Chronicle had called Vice-President Mills a dog. (Kofi Fofie, April 10-11, 2000)

He is also portrayed as a dictator:

- (9) Because *President Rawlings wants to have more powers* as he had during the so-called revolutionary era, he, in connivance with people like Dr. Obed Asamoah and some “yea yea” members of Parliament, are *trying to impose on us a constitutional dictatorship*. This must be resisted. . . . After all these, Rawlings is not satisfied and *he still wants more power* twelve months to the end of his almost two decades on the throne. (Kwaku Obeng, January 12-13, 2000)
- (10) The 1980s and 1990s saw the disengagement of the masses from the process of state and development in order to escape the excessive appropriation of *the ruthless dictatorship of Rawlings*. (Daniel Djann, November 3-6, 2000)

As Head of State, most of the LEs see him as having run a failed government. Some of the specific sub-themes are that he was in charge of a corrupt government; that his government undertook many wrongful actions; that his style of leadership encouraged sycophancy; that his term in office brought suffering to Ghanaians:

- (11) If loans, foreign aids and taxes squeezed from long suffering Ghanaians for developmental purposes were used properly, Ghana should have been a paradise by now. *Rawlings has supervised the most corrupt government in the history of this land of our death* and has not prosecuted even one of his government officials for misappropriation of state funds, even though there is a lot of them around. . . . *Through corruption, mismanagement and misplacement of priorities, Rawlings has ruined the nation's economy and has impoverished almost all Ghanaians apart from those around him.* . . . I am sure as Rawlings is leaving the Presidency, his heart and mind are not at ease, because he is leaving *a divided, poorer and wretched country* and people than he came to meet in 1981. (Kofi Piesie, April 12-13, 2000)

- (12) Poverty is not new a new thing in Ghana but *what is new and heart breaking is the unprecedented scale of pauperisation*. The gap between the have-something and have-nothing appeared to become uncrossable once *Rawlings and his parasites* entrenched their power base. (Daniel Djann November 3-6, 2000)

In relation to the theme of Rawlings' character profile, there is regularly a call on him to change his behaviour. Some writers who believe that he has committed wrongs would usually ask him to apologise. As a result, the theme of apology is strongly articulated in some of the texts.

- (13) Let me conclude with a piece of free advice for Jerryimah Rawlings: Submit to the authority of God, *apologise for all the caustic remarks*. "I don't fear God . . . . even God is not democratic," etc. and talk less. (Evangelist Kwame Poku, April 7-9, 2000)
- (14) Therefore, as the time for him to leave gets closer, *he should learn to practise what he preaches* and leave Ghanaians alone. We have tolerated him enough. (Yaw Dankyi, 18-20, 2000)
- (15) After overthrowing a legally-constituted government, ostensibly to right perceived wrongs in the society, we still have evils of old staring us in the face. This alone calls for *deep-seated apology to Ghanaians, particularly victims of the revolution*, whether innocent or villain. (Anthony Adjapong, March 1-2, 2000)

### 5.3 Sentential Semantics

#### 5.3.1 Semantic Roles

One parameter of analysis in discourse studies is sentence level meaning. An aspect of this level of meaning is semantic roles. Depending on one's theory, various roles can be recognised: Agent, Patient/Theme, Benefactive, and Recipient. In political discourse, these roles can be manipulated for ideological ends.

Evidence from the corpus for this study suggests that generally, when Rawlings is offered the Agent role, the verbs associated with this role usually have negative values, as the following examples show.

- (16) Was it not in the regime of Rawlings' (P)NDC that for the first time in the history of Ghana a young President *assaulted* his old Vice President? (Mohammed Adam, January 11, 2000)
- (17) Rawlings and his people have *cheated* us for far too long. (Stephen Ayivi, June 14-15, 2000)
- (18) Permit me to use your medium to demand an immediate and unconditional apology from the President, Mr. Jerry John Rawlings (Junior Jesus) for the insult and pain he *inflicted* on the people of Tamale and, for that matter, Northerners. (Joseph Ewumtomah, January 4-5, 2000)

In these examples, Rawlings is associated with negative verbs such as *assault*, *cheat*, and *inflict*. Even though the Agent role is hierarchically the most prominent, when an entity is the Agent of negatively valued verbs, the semantic prominence of the Agentive role is neutralized. Concomitantly, in such juxtaposition, the discourse producer succeeds in accentuating the negative characteristics of the entity so placed.

### 5.3.2 Modality

Related to the theme of behavioural change some writers require of Rawlings is the corresponding use of modals in the texts. Modality, as pointed out by Fowler (1996b:166-168), can be mobilised for expressing ideological point of view. One, therefore, finds in some of the LEs the use of deontic modals—forms expressing desirability, obligation, and necessity.

- (19) My advice to you is that you *must* be very tactful with them [soldiers] and learn how to talk nicely to them so as to ease their tensed nerves, since there is a limit to human endurance. (Obeng Kwaku, January 14-16, 2000)
- (20) Therefore, as the time for him to leave gets closer, he *should* learn to practise what he preaches and leave Ghanaians alone. We have tolerated him enough. (Yaw Dankyi, February 18-20, 2000)

In examining the use of these modals, we find that Rawlings is being

obliged to move in directions that, in the opinion of the writers, would result in a positive behaviour change. The ideological dimension of the employment of deontic modals in these letters is that Rawlings is presented by the writers as someone who *must* or *should* reform his behaviour. By implication, therefore, these modals portray him negatively.

#### 5.4 Lexicalisation

Lexicalisation in discourse refers to the choice of words. The lexical options that a discourse producer settles for tend to reflect their ideology. This is more so in the context of various political texts, such as the corpus for this study. Lexicalisation as the pivot of ideological expressions has been firmly established, as the following quotations indicate:

Traditionally best known in studies of ideology and language is the analysis of lexical items. Words may be chosen that generally or contextually express values or norms, and that therefore are used to express a value judgement. (van Dijk 1997:31)

Although we focus on specific discursive semantics, it should be emphasised that probably the major dimension of discourse meaning controlled by ideology is the selection of word meaning through lexicalisation. (van Dijk 1995:259)

In most of the texts, there is an endemic presence of lexical items (the term is used here to mean single words as well as phrases) that strongly projects an anti-Rawlings ideology. The choice reflects the thematic orientation of these texts, that is, the concentration on Rawlings' character and an evaluation of his term in office. The ideological representation of Rawlings in these LEs is accentuated by negative words used to describe his behaviour, personality, and his government, as shown in the following excerpts:

- (21) As for Jerry Rawlings, his *vulgarity, arrogance, lack of decorum* and *abusive* character, can be understood from his *poor social background*. (Obeng Kwaku, January 14-16, 2000)

- (22) The 1980s and 1990s saw the disengagement of the masses from the process of state and development in order to escape the *excessive appropriations* of the *ruthless dictatorship* of Rawlings. (Daniel Djann, November 3-6, 2000)
- (23) Throughout his nearly 20 years rule, his *disrespect, pride, arrogance intimidatory, bullish* and *insulting* behaviour has turned Ghana into a country of almost 20 million cowards. Majority of Ghanaians actually fear Rawlings because of his *violent* nature. (Kofi Piesie, July 3-4, 2000)
- (24) Rawlings has *supervised* the *most corrupt* government in the history of this land of *our death* and *has not prosecuted* even one of his government officials for *misappropriation* of state funds, even though there is [sic] a lot of them around. (Kofi Piesie April 12-13, 2000)

## 5.5 Rhetorical Strategies

In any discourse, the text producer may resort to various forms of rhetorical devices in the articulation of their message. Rhetorical devices would include metaphors, similes, euphemisms, repetition, hyperbole, rhetorical questions and many others. As articulated by van Dijk (1998a:273): “The main function of such rhetorical structures and strategies is to manage the comprehension processes of the recipient, and hence, indirectly the structures of mental models.” The corpus from *The Ghanaian Chronicle* reveals that writers make use of a variety of rhetorical strategies to different effects. The strategies considered relevant here are questions, examples, metaphor, hyperbole, and numbers.

### 5.5.1 Questions

Throughout the corpus, the most rhetorical device exploited for representing the ideological image of Rawlings is rhetorical question. The rhetorical questions in the corpus have the function of reinforcing the ideologically mediated ideas and values expressed by the writers. In (25) below, the writer states the view that there is something different about the Rawlings regime, something negative. In other words, by various indicators that have happened, the Rawlings regime stands apart from other regimes Ghana has had. The writer uses the strategy of rhetorical questions to list what could be considered his evidence.



- (25) From this, one would judge Rawlings right when he claims that the (P)NDC is different from all other regimes. *Was it not* in the regime of Rawlings' (P)NDC that for the first time in the history of Ghana a young President assaulted his old Vice President? *Was it not* under the same regime that Ghana had the highest social and economic unrest? *Was it not* in the administration of Rawlings' (P)NDC that poverty alleviation programmes were set up, yet the people got poorer and poorer? *Was it not* under Rawlings that education was made the preserve of the rich? *Was it not* in the Rawlings regime that we have been compelled to believe that the country has had the highest development, yet the people themselves are under-developed? (Mohammed Adam, January 11, 2000)

The use of questions in the LEs serves as a strategy to enhance the ideologically negative representation of Rawlings through questioning his integrity, commitment to principles such as justice, freedom, the fight against corruption and the overall effectiveness of his administration.

### 5.5.2 Examples

Another rhetorical strategy adopted consistently through the corpus is the use of examples or cases to buttress the writers' views. This takes the form of reference to some past incidents for which the writers consider Rawlings largely responsible. For example, some writers frequently refer to the murder of three high court judges and a retired army officer in 1982 (see Yidana (2002) for a detailed coverage of this case); the execution of the former heads of state in 1979; the overthrow of a constitutional government by Rawlings in 1981; that fact that his children had been sent abroad to school; the serial killing of women; the altercation between Rawlings and his Vice-President, Mr. Arkaah, in which Rawlings was reported to have physically manhandled him; the purchase of a Jaguar XJS by Rawlings; the accident on the Kwame Nkrumah Motorway involving the presidential motorcade. The utilization of such cases helps the writers to anchor their arguments and opinions as a result of the interpretation they give to such events.

When writers of the LEs cite such specific cases, readers are reminded of Rawlings' "offences" thereby stirring up outrage against him and deepening his negative ideological representation.

### 5.5.3 Metaphor

The point has been made in the critical discourse analysis literature that one of the rhetorical means by which discursive construction of ideology is effected is through the use of metaphors. This is especially so in the work of van Dijk. The use of metaphor in political discourse has also engaged the attention of various researchers (see, for example, Chilton and Ilyin (1993) and Zinken (2003), among others). In the corpus for this study, the predominantly negative representation of Rawlings is reinforced through various metaphors.

As discussed in Section 5.2, corruption is one of the thematic strands in these LEs. In various letters, writers use imagery that captures their view of the extent of corruption associated with Rawlings and his government.

- (26) Let us vote out this government and replace it with one with *clean hands* . .

The *stench* of corruption in this country is worse than *the stench from the Korle Lagoon*. The President of Ghana has openly admitted that corruption has indeed become more sophisticated. (Kwasi Boni, December 13-14, 2000)

- (27) Eighteen years on, it is common knowledge that the rich-poor dichotomy in this country is unprecedented, with *corruption ingrained in the national psyche*. There is *more dirt*, indeed, *in the house* now than before. (Anthony Adjapong, March 1-2, 2000)

In (26), corruption is compared with dirty hands and so the writer calls for a new government with clean hands. Corruption is presented as something dirty. The writer reinforces the metaphor of CORRUPTION AS DIRT by indicating that it is unpleasant to the olfactory sense; that it emits bad smell, a stench. To emphasise the idea of CORRUPTION AS DIRT, he compares the smell emitted by the state of corruption in the country with the stench that comes from the Korle Lagoon. This is a lagoon located in the south-western part of the capital, Accra. The lagoon has been polluted so badly over the years that in its environs, the smell from it is incredibly overpowering. By this comparison, the writer succeeds in getting his readers to concretise in their sense of smell the

extent of corruption in the country under Rawlings' administration.

Example (27) also deals with the predominant presence of corruption in the country, still using the CORRUPTION AS DIRT metaphor. In his opinion, there is more corruption now than before. The metaphor of the COUNTRY AS A HOUSE is in consonance with dirt since it is much easier for the intended readers to visualise a dirty house, especially because that is closer to people's lived experience. This writer moves from the CORRUPTION AS DIRT metaphor to CORRUPTION AS A MENTAL PROPERTY: "with *corruption ingrained in the national psyche*." In effect corruption has been so pervasive that now it is etched into the national mentality.

#### 5.5.4 Hyperbole

This is the use of exaggerated forms of language as a means of projecting one's values. In the context of ideologically mediated discourse, the tendency is to overstate the opponent's weaknesses. The examples below illustrate some instances of the adoption of semantic amplification in characterising Rawlings' perceived weaknesses.

- (28) Here is a leader who has presided over *the most divisive* administration this country *has ever known*. Is this not the same person who goes to other constituencies in the country *to insult the intelligence* of people for voting for members of the Opposition? (Sarah Kukuaa Mensah, January 24-25 2000)
- (29) The 1980s and 1990s saw the disengagement of the masses from the process of state and development in order to escape *the excessive appropriation* of the *ruthless dictatorship* of Rawlings. Poverty is not a new thing in Ghana but *what is new and heart breaking* is the *unprecedented scale of pauperisation*. The gap between the have-something and have-nothing appeared to become *uncrossable* once Rawlings and *his parasites entrenched* their power base. Whatever else has appeared in Ghana seems little more than *stagnation gone beyond recall*. Indeed, *concentrated and unadulterated poverty* has become life. (Daniel Djann, November 3-6, 2000)

In example (28), the writer refers to Rawlings' administration as “the *most divisive* this country *has ever known*.” The use of the superlative '*most*' and the adjective '*divisive*' conveys to us an administration that is incomparable in the history of Ghana in terms of subverting national unity. The writer also says that Rawlings *insults the intelligence* of those who vote for the opposition parties during elections. This projects him as having no regard for those who do not share his political opinion.

Example (29) offers a strong case of the hyperbolised representation of the effect of Rawlings' rule on Ghanaians. In the view of the writer, Rawlings' regime is dictatorial; more than that, it is dictatorship that is *ruthless*. The outcome, then, is that the masses have had no option other than to escape from this dictatorship. The writer also presents Rawlings as the ruler under whom Ghanaians have experienced the most extreme form of poverty—*unprecedented scale of pauperisation*. Indeed, the writer is of the opinion that this poverty has been caused by Rawlings. The evidence for this is use of the word *pauperisation*. The strong language chosen by the writer to depict Rawlings and his rule is further revealed through the following: *stagnation gone beyond recall; concentrated and unadulterated poverty*.

## 6. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine the images of Rawlings, a former Head of State of Ghana, as represented in “Letters to the Editor” published in *The Ghanaian Chronicle* in 2000, the last year of his rule. Analysis of the corpus has shown that the writers of these letters manipulate various discourse structures to portray Rawlings in a negative representation. In terms of schematic structuring, most of the letters follow an argument structure pattern where a view of Rawlings is presented followed by the evidence supporting that view. Thematically, the LEs deal with his character and performance as Head of State. Overall he is presented as an individual with greatly flawed character traits who superintended over a failed political administration. These themes are strongly projected in the LEs through resorting to the use of discourse strategies such as lexicalization, modalizing, and a number of rhetorical strategies.

Considering that in 2000, *The Ghanaian Chronicle* as a newspaper generally tended to take an anti-Rawlings stance in its overall coverage,

it provided an outlet for those who stood across the political divide to articulate their anti-Rawlings ideology. This is an example of bottom-up resistance of domination—a phenomenon that mainstream CDA needs to pay more attention to.

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