

Democracy without Development: The Perils of Plutocracy in Ghana

Maxwell Owusu

By the close of the first decade and a half of the 21st century, a preponderant majority of the 54 independent African countries, including Ghana which won independence from British colonial rule on 6 March 1957 after a hard, long, and bloody struggle, will have marked or celebrated their 50th anniversaries of independence from European rule. The first wave of African decolonization that occurred in the 1950s affected only a handful of countries, namely Libya, Morocco, Tunisia (North Africa); Sudan (East Africa) and Ghana and Guinea (West Africa). The second and larger wave followed in the 1960s when thirty-one countries, more than half of them former French colonies, gained their independence. This provides a good opportunity for the historically-minded student of African democracy and political economy, in the sense of the principles governing the generation and distribution of surplus wealth among the different socio-economic classes and the state's role in the process, to step back and assess, on the basis of the available empirical evidence and relevant historical facts, the socio-economic and political development achievements, failures and challenges of Ghana to derive some lessons, parallels and wisdom, if not inspiration, for national policy for the next half-century.

The present study draws heavily on, expands and clarifies some of the observations made on the subject of the role of money and wealth in the politics of democratization and development in Ghana in earlier publications by the author: *Money and Politics: The Challenge of Democracy in Ghana* (Owusu 2009), 'Two Cheers for Ghanaian Democracy: Lessons from the Last Half Century for the Next Half Century: A Review Essay' (Owusu 2006) and *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: A Case Study of Continuity and Change in the Politics of Ghana* (Owusu 2006).

A large body of literature on Ghanaian elections, politics, democracy and development by foreign and Ghanaian scholars, notably E. Gyimah-Boadi, Kwame Ninsin and others, suggests that there exists in Ghana (and several other African countries) a viable and resilient political culture that combines indigenous African and British traditions: a pattern of political attitudes, values and beliefs and an underlying set of social attitudes and practices that is supportive, paradoxically, of both popular revolt and uprising against authoritarian and dictatorial rule, or simply bad governance, as well as a peaceful and stable democratic process and rapid socioeconomic development. In an earlier essay, I argue that the precolonial '...tradition of rebellion, rooted in evolving African customary law concepts of the subordination of the chief to 'constitutional law' and the 'right' and duty of the subject to disobey and even kill an autocratic or tyrannical ruler, has persisted and adapted to modern conditions (see Owusu 1986:69-99)

As a result, Ghanaians never despaired even in their darkest days of one-party government, *coups d'état* and military rule, about the prospects for democracy and development in Ghana. Indeed, one obvious lesson to be learnt from the chequered experience of the past 50 years is that if full participation, that is, including and beyond regular elections, in the political system at all levels (centre and periphery) and access to the channels and opportunities for social and economic improvement and welfare are limited to a privileged, well-connected or fortunate few and denied to a large segment of the Ghanaian population, Ghana's democratic and development promise will continue to remain unfulfilled. And that this will pose serious challenges to the self-image of Ghana as a prosperous, peaceful, democratic society and the political lodestar of Africa.

African Democracy in the World Context: The Ghana Case

In the period between 1966 when the Nkrumah CPP one-party democracy was overthrown by a police/military *coup d'état* and 1993 when multi-party constitutional democracy was restored in Ghana and several African countries, no less than 63 military *coups* had occurred on the African continent. Meanwhile there had been successful wars of national liberation in countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and the former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe, and bloody civil wars in Nigeria and Liberia among others (Legum 1999:31-32). The widespread political instability and general economic decline and mass poverty obliged The Economist magazine to describe Africa, rather cynically, as 'the hopeless continent' (*The Economist* May 2000.) This is hardly surprising, given the contradictory policies, purposes, influences and legacies of European colonial rule in Africa. Simply put, colonial rule in Africa simultaneously encouraged and retarded Africa's political and socio-economic transformation depending on the dictates of the perceived national interest (military, geo-political, commercial, trade and social) current at the time.

According to Carrington, ‘...the [merchant] adventurers who conducted the partition [of Africa] whatever their motives, alike failed to interest capitalists in their enterprises’ (1961:36). European capital went mostly to the white settler colonies such as Australia and South Africa where there were much safer investments. Ross Johnston also notes that ‘the thinking of the British government and British business interests was that Western industrial might was sufficient to meet all the manufacturing needs of the African colonies – they could supply the raw materials which Europe would process’. Johnston again claims that ‘Lugard set the pattern when he proclaimed that ‘a Government would not be wise to hasten the advent of the factory in Africa. ...Mineral exploitation, however, was accompanied by some degree of industrialization’ (Johnston 1981:148). Indeed, Frederick Lugard, one of the most famous British colonial administrators in Africa, candidly admitted in the *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1929) that ‘European brains, capital, and energy have not been and never will be expended in developing the resources of Africa from motives of pure philanthropy’ (quoted in Owusu 1992:375).

In effect, colonial policies and practices thus routinely cut off Africa from new technology and new capital investments from abroad, which alone could have released her full development potential (see also Rodney 1972:162-310).

In post-colonial Africa, the culture of corrupt and autocratic political leadership, whether instigated or propped up by foreign powers and interests or by pure self-interest, has also contributed immensely to mounting international debt, political violence and repression and persistent poverty. Colonial education created a small African political class, an elite with oligarchic or authoritarian tendencies, which preferred to perpetuate its own ascendance and privileged status after independence rather than to share power and national wealth with the less privileged groups in African society. After decolonization, most African countries were basically poor, underdeveloped, predominantly extractive mineral and agrarian monocrop export economies, with small, but rapidly growing, mostly illiterate populations.

It is important also not to forget, as Ivor Jennings has correctly pointed out in his classic *Democracy in Africa* (1963), that ‘the essential problem of African democracy is... the essential problem of democracy everywhere – and it is wise to remember that only a few countries in the world have really made a success of it. Democracy has succeeded in Northwestern Europe and in a few countries outside Europe because it has become *entwined* in the *traditions* of the people’ (Jennings 1963:68-69).

Jennings further notes that the consolidation of democracy requires several favourable events. These include strong political organization with its roots in the villages, as well as efficient and honest leadership (Owusu 1992). Among the obvious risks, Jennings warns, are nepotism and corruption; racialism, communalism or tribalism; dictatorship, anarchy or economic breakdown. There

is no sure way of guarding against the risks. Constitutional safeguards help, but they can be overridden.

Moreover Miliband (1992) claims that *capitalist* democracy 'is a contradiction in terms, for it encapsulates two opposed systems': on the one hand is capitalism a system of economic organization that demands the existence of a relatively small class of people who own and control the main means of industrial, commercial and financial activity, as well as a major part of the means of communication; these people thereby exercise a totally disproportionate amount of influence on politics and society both in their own countries and in lands far beyond their own borders. On the other hand, there is democracy, which is based on the denial of such preponderance and which requires a rough *equality of condition* that capitalism... repudiates by its very nature' (Miliband 1992:109) (see also Perham 1962, Carrington 1961:36, Johnston 1981:148 and Rodney 1972). The poverty of Africa has direct implication for sustainable democracy. The evolution and development of modern democracy in Western societies and in the non-western world colonized by Western powers since the 19th century clearly demonstrate a mixed record of achievement. For each of the unique constellations of political institutions and practices distinguishing democracies today from non-democracies, such as universal suffrage, freedom of political association and institutions that ensure the peaceful transfer of power from the losing party leader to the winning party leader after elections, seems to have a relatively independent history and pattern of development depending on the particular country. For example, in a majority of African countries, the universal adult franchise and its exercise was achieved long before other democratic elements had time to take root. In contrast, in many of the mature or older democracies of Britain, U.S. and Western Europe, universal suffrage was preceded by industrialization of the economy, improved standards of living and mass literacy, all of which are beneficial to, if not necessary prerequisites, for sustainable modern democracies. But even in the older, more prosperous democracies, it was not until, in some cases, after World War I or World War II that the vote was extended to every adult citizen, regardless of race, gender, class, property or level of education.

The Meaning of Elections in a Democracy

From the wider historical perspective of global democratization in the modern age, the record since independence of Ghana and other African countries (notably Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and Benin) that have comparatively fewer resources or advantages, such as high levels of literacy and a prosperous economy which favour the consolidation of modern democracy, is commendable in many respects. Despite David Apter's sensible and timely caution about democratization in Uganda against 'the ease and confidence with which pronouncements about prospects for democracy are made by political scientists with reference to countries

about which they have not the foggiest notion of complexities faced by the people on the ground' (Apter 1995:158), there are good grounds for optimism about the future of democracy and development, not only in Ghana, but in most of the rest of Africa in the first half of the 21st century.

Ghana's democratic achievement since the inauguration of the constitution of the Fourth Republic in 1992 is an iconic testament to the progressive consolidation and routinization of electoral democracy in an increasing number of African countries. There is hard evidence for this assessment. First, it is noteworthy that one of the severest critics of the lack of meaningful progress in postcolonial African economic and political development, *The Economist* magazine, which in an editorial a couple of years before had described Africa as a 'hopeless continent' had this to say following the controversial Nigerian presidential election of 2007 won by the late Umaru Yar' Adua: 'Nigeria's latest shameful and rigged election does not mean that all Africa is hopeless'. It adds: 'Nigeria is not typical of Africa' and that Nigeria's dismal performance as a would-be democracy does not cast a blight across the rest of Africa. For, 'Over the past decade or so, the rest of the continent has on the whole been taking modest, belated but encouraging steps towards greater prosperity, security and democracy.' It continues: '...Remember it was only in 1991 that, for the first time since independence, the leader of any African country (not counting the Indian Ocean State of Mauritius) was peacefully voted out of office – in Benin ... Since then many African countries [including Ghana] have followed suit. Multi-party elections, though often very messy, *have become far commoner*' (*The Economist* 28 April 2007: italics added).

Second, comparing the state of African politics and political leadership style from the late 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century, to that of the previous forty years, Kenyan Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, former parliamentarian and Deputy Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, points out correctly in her recent publication, that

Few African leaders today dare to be as autocratic as their predecessors. In nearly all sub-Saharan African countries, democratic space has increased and opposition movements are stronger than they were (although, of course, this varies by region and country). More leaders than ever before in post-independence Africa have their actions scrutinized or checked by an increasingly vocal and sophisticated civil society, and a freer and at times vibrant press. In addition, more heads of government have their time in office limited by set terms and elections (Maathai 2009:54).

It is noteworthy in this regard that the most recent results of the annual Ibrahim Index of African Governance indicate that African governance has continued to improve since 2000. According to this report 'multi-party systems are now more normal in Africa and most countries demand that their leaders step down after constitutionally mandated term limits.' The Index codes fairness of national elections and assesses opposition participation in elections at the executive

and legislative levels, as well as press freedom, respect for civil rights and the absence of gender discrimination (as measured by women's economic, political and social rights). Governance in thirty-four of forty-eight sub-Saharan African governments have shown improvements. In 2006, the Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Ghana seventh in overall improvements after Mauritius (ranked first), Seychelles (ranked second), Cape Verde (ranked third), Botswana (ranked fourth), South Africa (ranked fifth), and Namibia (ranked sixth). Gabon was ranked eighth after Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe (ranked ninth) and Senegal was ranked tenth. Sudan, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia were, not surprisingly, among the worst governance performers in Africa (Rotberg 2009:118-119).

Thirdly, and perhaps more significantly, Freedom House, using two broad categories of freedom namely, political rights and civil liberties, has developed composite scores which are averaged to determine the overall status of a country as either 'Free', 'Partly Free' or 'Not Free'. These terms may be used interchangeably with 'Democratic', 'Partly Democratic' or 'Not Democratic'. In addition to these terms, Freedom House describes as 'electoral democracy' states that have competitive multi-party politics, universal suffrage, regularly contested elections using a secret ballot and without huge voter fraud, and significant access of major political parties to the voters through the media and open political campaigning. For a country to qualify as an electoral democracy, the last presidential or parliamentary (legislative) election held in the country must be competitive (see 'Methodology', <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>). Since 2003 Freedom House has rated Ghana as being 'Democratic' or 'Free' and as an 'electoral democracy' on the basis, among other factors, that John A. Kufuor, who succeeded Jerry John Rawlings, served two terms and in 2008 was succeeded peacefully by John Atta Mills. Freedom House concludes that democracy appears to have taken root in Ghana.

To underscore this remarkable sense of growing optimism about the future of democracy and development in Ghana and Africa generally, the front cover page of a recent issue of the *Economist* entitled *Africa Rising* portrays, symbolically, a young African school boy flying a kite in the shape of the continent of Africa in brilliant rainbow colours high up in the sky. The editorial notes that after decades of slow economic growth, Africa has a real chance to follow in the footsteps of Asia's fast growth rates. Pointing to the link between democracy and development the editorial explains, 'All this is happening partly because Africa is at last getting a taste of peace and decent government....' The editorial continues, '...since Benin set the mainland trend in 1991 [of peacefully ousting a government or president at the ballot box] it has happened more than 30 times – far more often than in the Arab World'.

However, *The Economist* was quick to stress that optimism about Africa ‘needs to be taken in fairly small doses, for things are still exceedingly bleak in much of the continent’. The editorial goes on:

Most Africans live on less than two dollars a day. Food production per person has slumped since independence in the 1960s. The average lifespan in some countries is under 50. Drought and famine persist, the climate is worsening, with deforestation and desertification still on the march. Yet against this depressingly familiar backdrop, Africa is making significant economic progress. Africa now has a fast growing middle class, according to the World Bank, around 60 million Africans have an income of \$3,000 a year and 100 million will in 2015 (*The Economist* 3-9 December 2011:15).

But this is for a growing current African population of over 1 billion. Indeed, a recent report from the Africa Progress Panel led by the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a Ghanaian, found that African countries were growing faster than almost any other region with booming exports and more foreign investment. But it warned that there was a disturbing contrast between a growing yet still *relatively small middle class* and the large majority of Africans left behind. Annan’s study found that almost half of Africans were still on incomes below the poverty benchmark of \$1.25 a day. Ghana was the fastest-growing economy in the world in 2011 and Ethiopia expanded more quickly than China in the period from 2004-2009 according to the report, but it added that the current trickle-down pattern (without a real distribution of wealth in favour of the poor was leaving too many people in destitution. ‘The deep, persistent and enduring inequalities in evidence across Africa have consequences’ the report said. ‘They weaken the bonds of trust and solidarity that hold societies together. Over the long run, they will undermine economic growth, productivity and the development of markets’. The Annan report added ‘it cannot be said often enough, that overall progress remains too slow and too uneven; that too many Africans remain caught in downward spirals of poverty, insecurity and marginalization; that too few people benefit from the continent’s growth trend and rising geo-strategic importance; that too much of Africa’s enormous wealth remains in the hands of narrow elites and increasingly foreign investors without being turned into tangible benefits for its people’ (*The Guardian Weekly* 18-24 May 2012:18 italics added). The Annan report clearly reveals the paradox and challenge of post-colonial African social transformation, namely economic growth without a broad-based development, that is without the benefits of growth translated into sustainable improvements in the material well-being of the common people, the pro-democracy voting masses.

The conduct of elections is critical to the determination of a country’s status in Freedom House’s scheme of things, but it is equally true that elections pose special problems, some historical, some cultural and social, and others economic and technical, that are not easy to overcome. As MacKenzie and Robinson (1960:1)

have pointed out, in such circumstances elections *mean* not the same thing in different countries, especially where the colonial rule bequeathed ambiguous states and an amalgam of cultures in which elections were planted as the only ideological basis for constituting legitimate government. Moreover, certain conditions must be met for elections to be meaningful, including a body of dedicated officials who have high standards of honesty and routine competence. The existence of such an administration creates and steadies public confidence in electoral procedure, but unless it is supported by public confidence along with the active engagement of civil society in the political system this particular task is beyond it. In this regard, I believe also that the excellent performance of Ghana's electoral commission, since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic, under the leadership of Kwadwo Afari-Gyan (Chairman of Ghana's Electoral Commission) has no doubt contributed to both the international reputation of the electoral commission and to the public trust in the electoral process in Ghana, as well as to the designation of Ghana as an 'electoral democracy' by Freedom House. Afari-Gyan, a man of exceptional integrity, courage and administrative competence, is respected locally and in several post-conflict African countries, including Sierra Leone, Burundi and South Sudan transitioning to electoral democracy where he has advised, as a consultant, on how to organize and successfully hold free, fair, and transparent elections.

There are, of course, Herculean challenges facing every modern nation in her struggle for democracy and development. The widespread political instability and bloody internecine feud and rivalry between political factions and the general economic malaise in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt following the seemingly successful popular uprising, against long-sitting autocratic leaders, the so-called 'Arab Spring' beginning at the end of 2010 should make us cautious about predictions on the future of democracy and development. But the argument here is that Ghanaian society has taken a number of significant steps toward fulfilling popular demands for democracy and development; not without protest, not without countermovement and resistance, of course, but toward democracy and development nonetheless.

MacKenzie and Robinson (op. cit.) add further that for elections to be credible, there must emerge a new group of 'political persons' or politicians, who know how to work in and through the electoral system and the party system in a unified political system at the centre of which is an assembly based on free and fair elections. These new 'political persons', with varying interests and socio-economic backgrounds, will certainly pull against one another, seeking, as rivals, to extract their own advantage from it, yet once established such people have a common interest in stability, and may collectively be wise enough not to push rivalry to the point of mutual destruction (MacKenzie and Robinson (op. cit.:4-5). This sense of emotional and political maturity may take some time to take root.

Harold Laski has added a third factor that underpins the success of democracy in Europe. According to him the success of parliamentary democracy was

... dependent upon a conjuncture of economic circumstances [namely, capitalist development] the permanence of which could alone guarantee their effective functions. It required, first, the sense of security that came from the ability to go on making profit that enabled it, from its surplus wealth, to continue the distribution of amenities to the masses. It further required *agreement among parties in politics to all matters of fundamental social constitution in order that each might succeed the other as government of the day without a sense of outrage*. [Without the ability to meet these conditions, constitutional democracy] was powerless to settle differences in terms of reason (Laski 1962:157, italics added).

Money Matters: Poverty, Politics and Plutocracy

A plutocracy is a democracy in which institutions are formed whether or not by design such that only a person of some means or considerable wealth can aspire to office, or hold office, either because of the expenses necessary to compete for office or to maintain it. The second meaning of democracy as a plutocracy (for example, Ghana's) is that it is a democracy in which holding office is the occasion for acquiring wealth (through legal and corrupt means), higher status and power. The close connection between political liberalism and economic liberalism shown by Harold Laski and others is quite clear. In the older European democracies, industrialization, improvements in the welfare and material standards of living of the masses and mass literacy *preceded* full universal suffrage, or both developed in tandem. In the new states of Africa, the reverse is the case. In Ghana and elsewhere in tropical Africa, universal adult suffrage, which is at the core of political liberalism, was achieved before sustainable economic growth that makes possible higher incomes, better standards of living and the provision of social amenities for a majority of the ordinary people in villages, towns and cities. For example, in Ghana, as an internationally respected electoral democracy, the gap between political liberalism and socio-economic progress has produced a situation in which advances in political liberalism are not matched by equal advances in economic liberalism or the reduction of widespread poverty. Economic development lags woefully behind political development in Ghana, creating contradictions and crises of political legitimacy, characterized by popular cynicism about elected representatives and politicians in general. In the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections that earned Ghana the coveted designation as electoral democracy by Freedom House (as well as in previous elections of the Fourth Republic), it was not uncommon to hear young people (poor, unemployed, often unskilled, semi-skilled or illiterate or semi-literate, mostly living on the street or in the mushrooming slums of the cities) express their utter frustration, a sense of betrayal, mistrust of government and political institutions in statements such as 'politicians are all the same, whether NPP,

NDC, CPP, PNC or under Kofi Wayo's party! Why waste our time to vote? Few people have much faith in politicians as the people entrusted with the responsibility to bring improvements in the life of the poor masses. At best, the ordinary people regard government as a big lottery from which individuals, particularly if they are well-connected, may or may not benefit. The question is, who benefits? The answer to this question is not so simple. Obviously, it depends on who you are, what you are, and what your constituency is. In other words, who gets what, when, and how (la Lasswell 1972) is the attitude of practicing politicians and their constituents. That is, self-interest, rather than the national interest, as the principal thrust of politics and political behaviour in Ghana provides a major part of the answer to the question about the main beneficiaries of democratic politics in Ghana. This was the case in the 1950s and it is the case today.

Eating From the Same Bowl and the Politics of Plutocracy

Democratic politics in Ghana centred on elections consists of power and manipulation by selfish, self-seeking and self-indulgent ruling elites and counter-elites and their equally self-seeking supporters or followers. Culturally, this sort of relationship between leaders, potential leaders and the led, rulers and subjects is often couched or defined in a kinship or chieftaincy idiom which is deeply institutionalized, pervasive and, therefore, difficult to change. I have shown in an earlier publication (Owusu 1971:68-76) that individuals occupying positions of authority (such as teachers, landlords, employers, senior colleagues, religious leaders and political incumbents) are ritually treated deferentially and receive loyalty and respect in proportion to the extent to which they provide publicly and conspicuously solicitous care for their 'small boys' and 'juniors'. Coincident with their right to expect unwavering loyalty and service at their beck and call, if not their pleasure, the 'big men' or 'social superiors' are under a well understood obligation to offer generous assistance, tangible and intangible to their 'social inferiors': a relationship of superordination and subordination which is highly ritualized.

As I pointed out in that essay, the power or authority to command others is one important way of showing and maintaining one's superior status and respect. The other side of this picture is the desire of subordinates to please their superordinates, whether the latter are headmasters or headwaiters (Owusu 1971:73) This pattern of behaviour clearly contradicts and undermines a democratic civic culture which is based on individual initiative and rights, individual freedom, creativity and accountability, and equality of opportunity. More cynically, this political culture nurtures and sustains corruption and bad governance; it arrests development and perpetuates mass poverty.

The challenge facing the consolidation of representative democracy in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa is the universal predisposition of power holders and officials to use state power for their own ends rather than for the public good;

of ruling political parties to become vehicles and transmission belts of ethnic or regional blocs, special interests, patron-client networks, and of influence peddling chains of what Ghanaians aptly call 'connections'; their predisposition to use state-owned enterprises and public sector positions as a source of 'jobs for the boys' to meet the cravings of party activists and 'foot soldiers', and the delivery of public services as a source of self-enrichment for party bosses, the party faithful and their families and friends. The citizens have seen power corrupt their trusted leaders, though they may continue to vote for them out of habit, ethnic or personal ties or the hope of personal gains from those they vote for.

This style of electoral politics, the politics of plutocracy, detailed in Owusu (2006), has been well summarized by Dennis Austin, the father of modern Ghanaian political studies, in words which deserve extended quotation for their relevance to political practice in the post-1992 period which is characterized by 'instrumentalist' or 'extractive' conception and practice of politics rather than a 'public service, public interest' view of politics. Ghanaians, according to Austin, are:

... remarkably (and favourably) responsive to each change of regime. The crowds which gathered to listen delightedly to the CPP leaders at independence in 1957 actually danced in the streets to welcome Kotoka in 1966. They queued patiently in the sun to vote for Busia in 1969, but were ready again to turn to Acheampong in 1972. There was a hopeful acceptance of each turn of fate and popular expectation rode high at least until the second coup... [or another change of government]... of course there were many, at each turn of the wheel, who were disadvantaged since those who benefited, individually or communally, from a particular structure of power went out of business: but there was always the possibility that their chance would come again. Fortune's wheel could turn, when those who had been displaced might, if they survived, return to benefit not only themselves, but their kinsmen and dependents. What mattered therefore was to survive each castle revolution. The ordinary elector waited hopefully, while those who claim to act for him [or her] when their time came round, did what they could to capitalize on the resources which they could offer to the new rulers (Austin and Luckham 1975:6).

Dennis Austin then proceeds to comment on the 'instrumentalist' view of Ghanaian politics and its continuing relevance:

Maxwell Owusu explores this notion of political stock exchange and its brokers. The Ghanaian world (it is argued) is essentially one of distributory politics. It embodies the values of the market – a political market place in which allegiance is determined by the good on offer. And if the distributory government runs out of benefits, the customers, if they can, will go elsewhere. Such an 'instrumentalist' view of politics – of governments as instruments of disbursements via an intermediary elite to the electorate at large – is not of course particular to Ghana. Clientage and brokerage are age old. It is simply that in many independent states, including Ghana, such trading relationships between the national government and the local centres of power may become the *prime matrix* of political life.

They reflect not only the poverty of trust in national institutions (whether parties or parliaments or trade union) but, the persistence of 'polyarchies,' – of semi-autonomous concentrations of power still largely territorial, in what was once a colonial artifact (ibid. 1975:7, emphasis added).

What makes the use of political power for private ends so common, as Hodder-Williams (1984) avers, can be explained in part by reference to a crucial element or strand in nearly all contemporary African political cultures called the 'extractive view of politics'. The inescapable assumptions or postulates underpinning or driving political actions are *instrumental* rather than *programmatic* (Hodder-Williams 1984:97-98). It hardly needs belabouring that in Ghana, and the rest of tropical Africa, ordinary people can readily point to individual politicians, party activists and party organizers, ministers, senior civil servants, parliamentarians, prominent traditional rulers and so on who could not have so enriched themselves without political power or connections to power holders (Owusu 1975:233-261).

Again, in their more recent article, Richard Sandbrook and Jay Oelbaum claim '[t]he few available studies of popular attitudes uniformly portray Ghanaians as expecting their politicians to be self-aggrandizing, and therefore hoping to receive some tangible benefits in exchange for their continued support. Political cynicism breeds, at the same time, a populist yearning which Rawlings initially satisfied' (Sandbrook and Oelbaum 1997:644). A survey of Ghanaian popular attitudes to democracy, the state and markets conducted in 1999 by Bratton, Lewis and Gyimah-Boadi confirms the plutocratic nature of Ghanaian politics. The survey reveals among other things, that Ghanaians overwhelmingly 'associate democracy – in practice with concrete delivery of basic political goods' and evinced a deep attachment to 'government provision of key goods and services', such as schools, clinics, roads, and agricultural credit. Furthermore, 'two out of three Ghanaians favoured the government as the main provider of employment' (Bratton, Lewis and Gyimah-Boadi 2001:231-250).

Persistent Problem of Ghanaian Democracy

Ghanaian popular attitudes toward democracy reflect the dangers of democracy *without* economic development, dangers foreseen by the British colonial administration and African nationalist leaders struggling for independence. Some of the obvious dangers were political corruption and incipient plutocracy. For instance, in 1950 James Griffiths, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, in moving that the House of Commons take note of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) for 1949 said

...the essential purpose of our colonial policy is to guide the people of the Colonial Territories to responsible self-government within the commonwealth, and in partnership with them, to seek to establish with the Colonial Territories those *economic and social conditions upon which alone responsible democratic self-government*

can be built. I am fully conscious of the need to ensure that *economic development* would go hand in hand with political progress and *I am equally convinced of the dangers of creating responsible states without adequate economic and social foundations.* ... Our policy combines economic development and political advancement, it is a policy which will eventually succeed' (quoted in Crabbe 1971:103-104).

The truth is that nearly all African countries achieved independence from colonial rule as economically poor and underdeveloped states thus lacking one of the critical and essential foundations for stable constitutional democracies. It is in this connection that Lord Hailey is quoted as saying, 'Africans would indeed have cause to reproach us if, when they ask for bread, we give them a vote' (reported in Owusu 2009:1-3).

According to Gower (1967), the British bequeathed to Ghana several legacies, two of which are particularly damaging to good governance and democracy, namely, economic exploitation and underdevelopment and an emotional and moral legacy, which he explained as follows: 'Colonialism, like enemy occupation, tends to instil contempt for the law and for the moral standards which it expresses. The government is an alien one; *to cheat* it is a patriotic duty. The law is that of the colonial oppressor; it has no moral sanction, and punishment for breaking it has no moral or social stigma' (Gower 1967:33-34). Colonialism thus encouraged the belief among subject peoples that conviction by a colonial government is an honour rather than a disgrace, thus encouraging crimes of political and administrative dishonesty and corruption. Not surprisingly, the Nkrumah government was plagued from the early 1950s by a steady rise in corruption that Nkrumah saw as a national defect and deficiency, the roots of which go deeper than that of the CPP. Suffice it to recall here that in his famous Dawn Broadcast at 5am on Saturday 8 April 1961, what Nkrumah himself referred to as 'homely chat', he called for high probity on the part of high party officials, ministers, ministerial secretaries, parliamentarians, civil servants, party members and the Ghanaian public in general, to rid the rank and file of the party and Ghanaian society as a whole of bribery and corruption, exploitation, patronage, nepotism, immorality and other evils which militated against the great socialist cause. Nkrumah called for the imposition of limits to property acquisition by ministers, party officials, ministerial secretaries and parliamentarians aiming for them to cease running businesses or involving themselves in other businesses or quit Parliament. He proposed a curb on ostentatious living by high party officials, chairmen of corporations and so on; ambassadors were to educate their children at home [that is, in Ghana] instead of sending them abroad; and there was to be no more 'red-tapism' in the civil service (see *The Party CPP Journal* (Accra) No 4, 1961:2) (see also Le Vine 1975). As Rattray has shown, through indirect rule, economic exploitation, inadequate education, poverty and underdevelopment, the colonial state contributed to the rise and institutionalization of corruption (Rattray 1934:22-36). It is significant that Nkrumah made a largely unsuccessful attempt to replace the elitist politics of plutocracy with the politics of mass democracy, socialism

and the welfare state. For example, after assuming the position and title of Prime Minister, in March 1952 at a huge salary of £3,500 per annum with other ministers getting £3,000, and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) receiving a salary of £960 per annum (when the annual salary of a civil servant was about £120.00) it became clear to him that 'going to Assembly' was enticingly lucrative. This naturally led to fierce competition for office in a poor country with very low salaries, and in a culture that accords high value to money making. He warned the CPP leaders against accumulation of wealth and ostentatious living. In order that CPP MLAs would live humbly, instead of being allowed to be enticed by private economic interests, he set up three principles (in retrospect somewhat naively) consistent with his socialist vision for Ghanaian society, for his ministers and other political leaders to follow. First, ministers must not live in the plush bungalows that the British had always provided for members of the government. Secondly, only a minimum of social mixing with individual Britons would be permitted. Thirdly, members of his Cabinet must pay back one third of their salaries into a party fund or better still, surrender their salaries to the party and instead draw an agreed remuneration from the party in order 'to avoid class-conflict', but to no avail (Gunther 1955:805).

A Rising Plutocracy and the New Oil Economy

There is much evidence to suggest that as democracy in Ghana matures, it is becoming increasingly plutocratic in two senses of the word. It is progressively becoming a democracy dominated by wealth. This was clearly the case in the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana, for which it is believed, nearly GH¢50 billion (fifty billion new Ghana cedis) was spent by Nana Akufo-Addo, the NPP presidential candidate who lost the election (see *Ghana Palaver* 12 January 2009:31). Significantly, GH¢50 billion spent by a political party in a presidential election is far greater than the total average annual budgetary revenue of about GH¢43 billion collected by the government of Ghana. Concentration of presidential power as is the case in Ghana may lead to the acquisition of vast wealth and property by important office holders. Serious abuses of power in a democracy can produce elected autocrats and virtual kleptocracies.

The Nature and Persistence of Corruption

Carl Friedrich offers a minimum definition of corruption as where an 'official ... uses his office for private gain at public expense;' he explains further that corruption exists 'whenever a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, that is, a responsible functionary or office holder, is by monetary or other rewards, such as the expectation of a job in the future, induced to take actions which favours whoever provides the reward and therefore damage the group organization to which the functionary belongs more specifically the government' (Friedrich 2002:3). The publication in Accra of the results of the Ghana Corruption Survey

conducted in Southern Ghana by the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) in March 2005 gives practical meaning to the incidence of corruption in Ghana. The report indicates that over 90 per cent of the representative sample of 900 interviewed agreed that corruption is not only prevalent, but a serious problem in Ghana and is on the increase. The GII survey report indicates that among the leading institutions or organizations perceived as highly corrupt by Ghanaians are as follows: Police Service; Ministry of Education; Customs, Excise and Preventive Services (CEPS); the Judiciary Service; Civil/Public Service; Ministry of Health; Members of Parliament; Ministers of State; Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Ghana Immigration Service. The survey results also indicate that the most common type of corruption experienced by victims or givers of bribe is the demand by public officials for money before rendering a service for which they are paid or taking money without issuing receipts i.e. in other words using their public office for private or personal financial gain (see *The Daily Dispatch* (Accra) Vol. 14, No. 13, Wednesday Edition, 20 July 2005:1,5,8). At a workshop in Accra on anti-corruption sponsored by Crown Agents (British) for West Africa in July 2005 the Chief Justice of Ghana, George Kingsley Acquah, further defined corrupt practices as including: '1) bribery; 2) hiring relatives (nepotism); 3) giving contracts to party supporters (cronyism); and 4) abusing privileged information to buy or sell stock (insider trading)'. These negative practices, according to him, thrived in markets where legal structures are weak or not well defined, where the rule of law is not strictly enforced, and where laws and the judiciary allowed government agents too much unsupervised and discretionary power. Certainly the Chief Justice had in mind the situation in Ghana and most African countries that are undergoing economic liberalization and democratization.

A good example of laws that are not enforced and contribute to corruption is Article 286 of The 1992 *Constitution of Ghana and the Public Office Holders (Declaration of Assets and Disqualification) Act 1998* (Act 550). Both Article 286 of the Constitution and Section 4 of Act 550 require that 'A person who holds a public office submits to the Auditor General a written declaration of all property or assets owned by or liabilities owed by him whether, directly or indirectly, before taking office, at the end of every four years; and at the end of his term of office'. Article 286 (2) goes further to state that failure to declare or knowingly making false declaration shall be a contravention of the Constitution and shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 287 of it. To date there is no record of the enforcement of these two legal instruments. Recent Auditor-General's Reports on the accounts of the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) of government are replete with sordid corruption pervading the entire public administration of the country. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the accountability arm of the Parliament of Ghana, which has the constitutional mandate to ensure that public funds are applied as approved in the budget, has also been ineffective in ensuring that public officers found by the Auditor-General

to have misappropriated funds are punished. The PAC is rendered ineffective by its own internal weakness and by the failure of extra-parliamentary bodies such as the Audit Implementation Committees of MDA's and Financial Administration Tribunals to ensure that officers found culpable by the Auditor-General are prosecuted. As the Chief Justice pointed out, institutions such as the Parliament of Ghana, which is a critical accountability institution for ensuring the prudent use of public funds, cannot control the manner in which such funds are used resulting in pervasive corruption.

In a remarkable telephone interview with the *Daily Graphic* (Accra), Ghana's leading national daily newspaper, Papa Kwesi, the flag bearer of the Progressive People's Party (PPP) in the 2012 general elections expressed disappointment over the dismissal by general secretaries of four political parties, namely National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the Convention People's Party (CPP) and People's National Convention (PNC), of a report that described political parties as one of the perceived corrupt institutions in Ghana. Kwesi Nduom, who is also a wealthy businessman, affirmed in the interview that the perceived corruption among political parties is real. He pointed out that most of the political parties were unable to disclose the sources of campaign funds and could not even render accounts internally. He recalled that in the 2012 general elections the PPP challenged presidential candidates to declare the sources of the campaign funds, make their income tax returns public and declare their assets. Interestingly, he noted, 'the other parties ran away from the challenge. Only God knows where they get the funds to run their campaign. This is a recipe for corrupt acts in government'. The 2013 Global Corruption Barometer placed political parties second on the list of perceived corrupt institutions in Ghana. Nduom added that 'Nkrumah's dawn broadcasts were an admission that there were corrupt leaders in the CPP. All *coups* in Ghana have mentioned corruption as one of the reasons for the actions...Ghana cannot afford to have its political leaders burying their heads in the sand and pretending not to see, smell and hear corruption.' He continued, 'All of us must admit that corruption is killing our nation and making its people poor, for which, reason we must join hands to fight it.' (see *Daily Graphic*, Wednesday, 21 August 2013:3).

The problem of corruption is pervasive, running through successive governments, and seems to be getting worse especially with the recent discovery of oil and gas in commercial quantities. Following the victory of the NPP in the 2000 elections the new government heaped serious accusations and allegations of corruption against the leading functionaries of the defeated NDC government. Some of the corruption cases involving Francis Solormey resulted in long prison sentences for the accused. Since 2009 when the NDC was returned to power in a closely fought 2008 presidential election, the tide of accusations of corruption has turned against the leaders of the NPP, including ex-President Kufuor. For

example, in a recent interview with William Wallis of the *Financial Times* (London) which touched upon ex-president J.A. Kufuor's alleged involvement and financial interest in a Ghanaian company EO and its link to Texan (US) company Kosmos that first discovered the Jubilee field oil block in 2007, ex-president Kufuor was unapologetic about his role in the development of the Jubilee field on terms which were said to be disadvantageous to Ghana's national interest. Following the defeat of his party in the 2008 presidential election, the new Ghanaian authorities initiated investigations into whether EO used access to senior government officials and the ex-president to gain the oil block back in 2004 when Kufuor was president, and win a more favourable contract both for themselves and Kosmos (Wallis 2010:7, Gyasi 2011:48). The NDC government has not been immune to similar accusations. Recall for example the recent rage of judgment debt, the most scandalous among which is the amount of GH¢51.28 million Ghana cedis paid to Alfred Agbesi Woyome. The judgement debt controversy that has gripped Ghana since November 2011 is, as expected, heavily politicized. Opponents of the NDC government have been quick to conclude that the judgement debt payment honoured by the Atta Mills' administration but which originated from the state's breach in suspicious circumstances of a contract going back to the preceding NPP government, and made to Woyome was a clever and complicated ploy i.e. robbing Peter to pay Paul, by government officials, to siphon money from state coffers to finance the NDC party in the 7 December 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections. The said contract in litigation was awarded for the construction and rehabilitation of stadia in Ghana in preparation for the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2008, hosted by Ghana. Alfred Woyome is a businessman, considered by some as the bankroller of the NDC party (Achama, 'Woyome Faces Amidu' in *Daily Guide* (Accra) Thursday 7 November 2013:3-4; Bokor 'As Woyome Fights the Public Accounts Committee [Part 1] in *Daily Post*, Wednesday 28 August 2012:10.)

The ruling NDC party sees this as nothing but a cynical and hostile anti-NDC propaganda by the opposition NPP. Be that as it may, Woyome is currently (since July 2013) standing trial at the financial Division of the Fast Track High Court (Accra) on two counts of wilfully causing financial loss to the state and defrauding the state by false pretence. The state Attorney General is in court seeking an order for the refund of the judgement debt of GH¢51,283,480.59 paid to Woyome. According to the Attorney General, Woyome had no contract with the state and consequently lacked a cause of action and the capacity to make a claim for payment in any court of competent jurisdiction (Effah, 'Woyome's Case Back' in *The Ghanaian Times*, Friday 19 July 2013:1 and 3; Bonney 'Woyome Loses Appeal in GHC 51.2 Million Fraud Case' in *Daily Graphic*, Friday 10 May 2013:1 and 3).

William Wallis noted in his interview with ex-president Kufuor that the cycle of accusations is an emerging feature of Ghana's politics of elite-rivalry: the competitive strategies of a rising plutocracy in the context of a diffuse culture of corruption and strong 'instrumentalist' view of politics, a syndrome that is difficult to change. It should be noted here that the rivalry of the fortunate or privileged few, the elite and sub-elite, made up mostly of the more and better educated, for power, wealth and status is not new in West Africa. It has deep roots in pre-colonial and colonial history. Writing about the middle-class elite in West Africa in the 1960s after independence, Colin Legum observed that 'nowhere in the world are [the middle class elite] invested with more power and status than in Africa... It is ... a startling paradox that the continent with the highest illiteracy rate (85-90 per cent) should find its destiny entrusted to its smallest power group.' Legum continued

...Often the old and the new elites engaged in a power struggle for possession of the nationalist movement... The older elite – while politically conscious – were inclined to put a high value on their status for the *prestige and wealth* it brought their families, and were inhibited from action likely to jeopardize their bourgeois position. The newer elite, usually *no less concerned with wealth and prestige* affected to despise the older bourgeoisie and were willing to use their own status as an instrument to win power. Instead of basing their challenge for power on prestige and wealth... they sought to rest their power *on the people.*' (Legum 1965:134, italics added; Austin and Luckham 1974:122-123; and Owusu 2006).

Indeed, plutocracy is the root cause of political corruption in Ghana. Democratic elections are capital-intensive operations. As one Ghanaian observer puts it, an election in Ghana is lucrative business.

It is an undeniable fact that ...there are political investors and business people engaged in political activities who do not have the interests of the people at heart, but basically what they stand to gain surpasses all... Now there is the emergence of some business tycoons in the Ghanaian political [world]...normally behind the scenes sponsoring political parties and their candidates to win elections. They give them money for their campaigns, print T-shirts for them and [lend out] a fleet of cars for their political activities...so after investing heavily in these campaigns, they hope and [believe] that when their candidates do win the elections, the business tycoons would be awarded good contracts, given top board memberships and to have easy and daily access to the presidency. It is imperative to note that most of these people do not care about political ideologies; they put their money where they think they will get quick returns.' (Alagma 'Sponsorship of Political Parties: The State Must Take Responsibility' in *The Daily Dispatch*, 28 August 2012:5; Owusu 1975:233).

Accordingly, the real curse, if one exists, of Ghanaian politics and development, contrary to what several observers may believe, is not the recent oil find but

rather the curse of unchecked human greed, self-interest and bad leadership in the management of the wealth of nations. As I have argued elsewhere, 'democracy of the franchise could hardly in itself, ensure peaceful and stable government. Good leadership is not necessarily assured by the free ballot; nor does civilian rule invariably produce social and economic democracy' (Owusu 1971:68).

Conclusion – Ghana and What President Obama Said

The official visit of U.S. President Barack Obama on 10-11 July 2009 to Ghana was hugely historic especially for Ghana and Ghanaian citizens. As the first sub-Saharan African country to visit after taking office in January 2009, Ghana was greatly honoured, a visit that Ghanaians are, understandably, deeply proud of and will never forget. There are important lessons to be learnt by Ghanaians and all Africans from the address he gave on Saturday 11 July 2009 in Accra at the Accra International Conference Centre that speaks directly and eloquently to the subject of my paper. The first lesson is closely linked to the theme of this chapter; namely, the complex relationship between democracy and development, especially economic progress and the role of the state and civil society and its leaders in the process of social transformation. The second lesson is a thoughtful assessment of the harsh realities of Ghanaian (African) experience of poverty, misery and misgovernment, and his advice that could simultaneously advance and sustain real democracy as well as promote economic development and prosperity, lifting the masses out of poverty and promising a peaceful and better future for all. President Obama's speech reminds Ghanaians of the dangers of equating democracy with elections. He points out:

Repression can take many forms, and too many nations, even those that *have elections, are plagued by problems that condemn their people to poverty. No country is going to create wealth if its leaders exploit the economy to enrich themselves... or... if police can be bought off by drug traffickers. No business wants to invest in a place where the government skims 20 per cent off the top...or the head of the port authority is corrupt. No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery. That is not democracy; that is tyranny, even if occasionally you sprinkle an election in there.* And now is the time for that style of governance to end. In the 21st century, capable, reliable and transparent institutions are the key to success - strong parliament; honest police force; independent judges...; an independent press; a vibrant private sector (and) civil society. Those are the things that give life to democracy, because that is what matter in people's everyday lives' (Sackey 2009:6, italics added).

He further advises that '*Development depends on good governance. That is the ingredient which has been missing in far too many places, for far too long. That's the change that can unlock Africa's potential. And that is the responsibility that can only be met by Africans.*' (2009:5, italics added).

We have seen that popular allegiance to the (colonial)/post-colonial state and its institutions and demands that Ghanaians (Africans) inherited at independence remain extremely weak producing a situation in which public property or interest (material and non-material) is routinely and wantonly abused or mismanaged by state office holders for self enrichment and status enhancement and for various personal ends. We have seen from post-colonial political experience that periodic elections (at both national and district levels) do not provide effective sanctions for exploitative and corrupt leadership in our fledgling electoral democracy. After more than fifty years of independence Ghanaians should reclaim the post-colonial state to ensure that the citizens' interest, security, prosperity, sustainable growth and development is passionately advanced by those who are given the mandate to govern. Especially the political class should replace the politics of self-service in pursuit of self-interest that is currently predominant with the politics of public service and the pursuit of the public good.

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