

## Mao's new democracy and Ghana's foreign policy change in 1983 \*

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### Abstract

Flight Lieutenant John Rawlings took power by a *coup d'état* accusing the previous Limann regime of being neo-colonialist and being a slave of imperialists in 1981. When he took power, he was mainly supported by radical leftists and Ghana's foreign policy leant towards socialist countries. However, two years later the regime drastically reversed its foreign policy towards the West. The paper focuses on the foreign policy change in 1983 and takes a close look at the role of Maoism on the elite in the foreign policy change in Ghana. During the first two years of the Rawlings regime, the June Fourth Movement (JFM) and the New Democratic Movement (NDM) were two main elite groups in the regime. Even though the JFM and the NDM shared the same goal of socialism, the two groups had different

*\*Note from the Deputy Editor: This article, although not necessarily directly China-Africa related, gives an insight into the policy environment in an African state after colonialism. The paper explores the driving mechanisms behind Ghana's foreign policy in the post-colonial era as it "switched between East and West". Although the ideas of "the West" and "the East" have lost much of their Cold War era logic, some states such as Zimbabwe have also seen a discussion, in the present day, on a "Look East" policy, in contrast to dependence on Breton Woods institutions.*

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visions on how to reach to the goal. The JFM sought rapid socialism through attacking the rich and severing international links with imperialist countries. On the other hand, for the NDM, which was influenced by Mao's "New Democracy" as the name indicates, embracement of the rich business people and international players were on its path to the ultimate socialism. In the middle of the ideological conflicts between the two, Rawlings severed the link with the JFM whose leaders turned out to be threats to survival of the regime, and in the process the NDM emerged as the single influential power group. The NDM and Rawlings turned Ghana's foreign policy toward the West and sought for aid from the Bretton Woods institutions in 1983.

## **Introduction**

Rawlings took power by a military coup in 1981 overthrowing the civilian Limann administration whose foreign policy was skewed towards the West. The new Foreign Minister Obed Asamoah argued that "in the past, we have tended to lean more to the Western countries and to ignore the possibilities of fruitful co-operation with the countries of the East. Now we are going to explore those possibilities" (West Africa, 1982e). However, this ostensibly non-aligned stance of the Rawlings regime did not mean that foreign policy of Ghana was also non-aligned in practice. In fact, the practice of foreign policy in the Rawlings regime was getting socialist countries close to Ghana and keeping distance from the West. The Rawlings regime redirected Ghana's foreign policy towards the Communist East as soon as Rawlings took office. America's Reagan administration was regarded as resurgent "old demons" (West Africa, 1982d) and countries in the Eastern bloc emerged as friends. Diplomatic relations were rebuilt with socialist countries such as Cuba, Libya, and Eastern Europe. Rawlings visited Libya, Nicaragua and Cuba and deported United States of America (US) diplomats from Ghana to which the US replied with a similar action and with an aid blockade on Ghana. However, two years later, the socialist-oriented foreign policy reversed drastically towards the West. The paper analyses the "politically suicidal" (Jeffries, 1990:159) foreign

policy change of Rawlings in 1983 at the level of elite dynamics and examines the role of Mao's theory of New Democracy in the change.

### **Theoretical Background**

Most of the colonized countries in Africa and Asia became independent after World War II and at first ideology drove the foreign policy of the newly independent countries. At some point, however, the new states came to realise that political independence did not necessarily mean economic independence and subsequently began to redefine their foreign relations with a fresh economic perspective; this was the realisation that they could and should get more economic benefits from abroad in order to survive politically (Rothstein, 1976). In Ghana, the realisation was materialised in 1983 when Rawlings redirected Ghana's foreign policy toward the West. Until 1983, foreign economic policy of Ghana was the "second fiddle to traditional foreign policy concerns" (Boafo-Arthur, 1999:73).

Nevertheless, a far-reaching redirection of foreign policy is not an easy task for any government and is even more difficult for newly independent countries. Thus when a government steers its foreign policy towards foreign aid, there should be significant grounds to do so. It is true that foreign policy always changes to correspond to any changes in the goals of a state; after all, the term "foreign policy" means "a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative policy makers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policy maker's political jurisdiction" (Hermann, 1990:5). Far-reaching or fundamental redirections in foreign policy take place upon the replacement of an old regime by a new one with a different political philosophy. Mostly, foreign policy can be expected to be more or less stable within a regime (Moon, 1985:312).

However, foreign policy can change within an existing regime and this change is different from a foreign policy redirection that coincides with a regime change. According to Hermann (1990), there are four levels of changes depending on the significance of the change: first, adjustment changes that only affect the level of the quantity of existing foreign policy; second, programme changes that include the means of foreign policy, for example, from diplomatic negotiation to economic

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sanction; third, problem/goal changes which refer to a change in the ends of foreign policy; and fourth, international orientation changes which include a shift in alignments.

In executing such a change within a regime, a government risks its political life or legitimacy. At the domestic level, a regime's positions on political conservatism, balance-of-payments and trade openness are central issues which identify the regime. It is same for the competing political groups. In other words, those central issues differentiate and legitimise the regime, and therefore cannot easily be altered. Foreign policy is closely linked to critical domestic policy such as political alliances or free trade agreements with strategic international partners. Because of this, it is not expected to be fundamentally redirected until the regime is replaced by a new government with different political and economic perceptions. Also, at the international level, drastic changes in foreign policy within a regime reshape the world alliance map, which can range from adjusted economic cooperation to wars between the nations affected (Hermann, 1990). The benefit from foreign aid should be big enough to offset the domestic and international risks which might result from the foreign policy change. In addition, the reasons for the change are frequently discussed and openly expressed by the political elites and also by the public, and this disclosure helps researchers to determine the underlying intention behind the foreign policy change.

Any change to foreign policy within a regime is more challenging for those who took power in an unconstitutional way than for those who were elected through legitimate procedures. Coup leaders legitimise themselves by denying the previous regime and differentiating the new regime from the toppled one. When a coup regime takes over a pro-West administration, blaming its foreign policy direction, the new military regime naturally seeks to change the direction of foreign policy to legitimise the coup through steering the foreign policy away from the West. Far-reaching foreign policy changes during the tenure of the regime rarely take place since they dilute the differences from the toppled previous regime and cast doubt on the legitimacy of the principle or stance of the coup regime.

This paper examines one of the fundamental foreign policy changes which took place within the tenure of a military regime: the foreign policy change towards the West by the socialist Rawlings regime in Ghana in 1983. In order to examine the event, the paper focuses on the elite in Ghana. According to Burton and Higley (2001:8), elite are “persons who are able, by virtue of their authoritative positions in powerful organisations and movements of whatever kind, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially.” Elitists believe that a seemingly pluralist system of foreign policy making is an illusion and in reality, the black box is only accessible to a limited few, or in other words, elites. They criticise realists for disregarding the internal paradigm of foreign policy making which takes place in the name of the state. Mills (1956), one of the most famous proponents of elitism, described power elites in foreign policy as a higher circle of decision makers who rank above professional politicians in congress. Elitists explain that the elitist pattern of foreign policy making can be observed clearly, especially on occasions of crisis. Kennedy’s entourage led the Cuban missile crisis beyond legitimate institutions and the US’s power elite dropped nuclear bombs on Japan despite congressional renunciation (Allison, 1971). Even though there are other thinkers such as Lowi (1967, quoted in Zimmerman, 1973) who believe that elites involved in the foreign policy process are smaller than the power elites, the fundamental belief of elitism is common: foreign policy is a process regulated and distributed by “a polyarchy of elites” (Zimmerman, 1973:1211). Elitism is the most viable framework to account for Ghanaian foreign policy (Akopari, 2005). According to Nugent (1995: 107), “although a PNDC minus Rawlings would certainly have been like Hamlet without the prince, his importance did not lie primarily in his involvement in the day-to-day business of government” and “the importance of Rawlings’s periodic interventions in debates about economic reform, foreign policy and democratisation was largely symbolic.” In practice, foreign policy in the regime was led by elites, which included Rawlings.

### **The foreign policy change in 1983**

The history of Ghana’s foreign policy can be divided into two phases: from independence to 1983 and from 1983 up to the present. In the first phase, the locomo-

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tive of Ghana's foreign policy was ideology. If one considers Nkrumah's serious attempts to build the political kingdom as first priority, it was inevitable for Ghana to start with a politically biased foreign policy. In addition, the nature of the regime after Nkrumah reinforced the political inclination of Ghana's foreign policy direction. Between independence in 1957 and 1981, Ghana saw eight regime changes and five of them took power unconstitutionally through military coups and counter coups. Foreign policy of a regime was always counter to the policy of the previous regime. Politically loaded foreign policy redirection was unavoidable in order to establish legitimacy of a military coup regime. When Nkrumah, the first prime minister and president of independent Ghana and his Convention People's Party (CPP), was toppled by the National Liberation Council (NLC) by a military coup, the NLC and the successive regime of the Progress Party (PP) turned the course of foreign policy towards being pro-West<sup>1</sup>. However, when the PP regime was violently replaced by the National Redemption Council (NRC) in 1972, the pro-West ideology became something to destroy and so that foreign policy was readjusted to the new demand of the new military regime. The NRC was toppled by a military coup by Rawlings's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979, but the socialist Rawlings regime gave way to pro-West Hilla Limann's People's National Party (PNP) through election. The PNP tried to win support back from the West through redirected foreign policy which was lost during the short-lived AFRC period. The AFRC was in power for three months from June to September 1979. Despite its short period in office, the AFRC sent strong anti-capitalist signals. Besides the domestic instability in elite politics, the irresistible dynamics of the Cold War exacerbated the ideological swings in Ghanaian foreign policy.

The second phase of Ghana's foreign policy began in 1983 with a foreign policy shift towards the West by the Rawlings regime. Since then, pragmatism instead of ideology has been pursued in an overly aggressive way as a central goal of foreign policy of Ghana. In the first two years of the Rawlings regime foreign policy was mainly driven by ideology as in previous regimes. However, in 1983, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) of Rawlings redirected its foreign pol-

icy and turned to the Bretton Woods Institutions which he initially proclaimed as a foe of the regime. Since the foreign policy change in 1983 and up until today, the main objective of foreign policy of Ghana has been pragmatism rather than ideology.

The paper examines competition of two elite groups with a different leftist ideology around the time of foreign policy change in Ghana. However, it should not be translated as the diversity in the political ideology or that the competition was the only contributing factor to the foreign policy redirection. Basically, the foreign policy change should be understood from a global political economic context of the declining Cold War, the end of a commodity boom, the international oil crises and the emerging influence of globalisation. In addition, the regional and local environment should be taken into consideration; these include factors such as influx of more than one million expatriates from Nigeria, droughts and the consequent crop failure. In addition, not only contemporary factors but also historical factors such as a tradition of Non-alignment should be considered as well. Toyé (1991) also argues that the combination of historical factors such as a defective development strategy since Nkrumah, exacerbated corruption and economic mismanagement in the 1970s, and the external shocks in the early 1980s, led Ghana to the agreement to the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP).

Taking those global and regional factors into consideration, throughout its independent history, Ghana was one of the “elite-politically unstable countries” (Fosu, 2009: 4) until Rawlings’s second coup in 1981 which was also to be the last coup in Ghana. After the coup he stayed in power as a head of state for 19 years. Rawlings finished school in 1966, the year when Nkrumah was ousted and in 1967, at the age of twenty, signed up as a Flight Cadet and was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in 1978. He, like most Ghanaians, encountered the deteriorating economic conditions in the era of the Acheampong regime when he was an Air Force officer. A wage of a middle ranking military officer did not match rampant inflation and pilots had to stop practicing due to lack of fuel and flight parts. Rawlings who, by nature, expressed the “desire for action to right injustice” became involved in planning a coup to overthrow the corrupted Acheampong regime as did many other

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middle-rankers around that time (Shillington, 1992:37). Finally, in 1979, he led his first but abortive coup. The purpose of the coup, Rawlings claimed, was to create a chance for a dialogue with top-ranking military command but this did not happen. The coup failed and he was put on trial. Rawlings was still unknown to the public but the failed coup and the following trials made him famous. During the trials, he emerged as a hero with integrity who called for the release of his men and who accepted full responsibility. Throughout the history of coups in Ghana, Ghanaians had never seen a single coup leader who claimed responsibility and pleaded impunity for his men. Failed coup leaders were busy blaming others to save their own lives. Rawlings, on the other hand, was different in the eyes of the Ghanaians and his charisma captured the imagination of Ghanaian people (Brydon & Legge, 1996:13).

Backed by his fame and popularity, he easily overthrew the Acheampong regime in his second attempt on 4 June 1979. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was formed with fifteen middle and lower ranking military officers, chaired by Rawlings and the AFRC became a *de facto* apex institution. As soon as the AFRC took power, "House Cleaning" began and the AFRC executed three former Heads of State of the country, Acheampong, General A.A. Afrifa (1969) and General Fred Akuffo (1978-9) and a few top ranking military officers. A few months later, Rawlings handed over power to elected civilian president Limann of the PNP. The newly elected PNP government offered and sponsored chances of higher education abroad to members of the AFRC as an attempt to keep them at bay, but Rawlings refused to leave Ghana and instead spent his time getting involved with leftist groups in Accra such as the June Fourth Movement (JFM), the New Democratic Movement (NDM) and socialist intellectuals from the University of Ghana. During this period, Rawlings, who formerly disavowed any form of socialism on behalf of the AFRC, converted to socialist ideology (Boafo-Arthur, 2006:258). On 31 December 1981, Rawlings came back to power with another coup overthrowing the PNP. The second coup did not have significant resistance. Rather, Ghanaians welcomed his political comeback with "great hopes" that he would be more politically trained than he was after his first coup and there was "a



well-grounded belief in Rawlings's personal sincerity and moral integrity" (Jeffries, 1982:307).

After the coup, Rawlings invited leftists such as Emmanuel Hansen, for political consultation; Hansen believed that Ghana's economic plight could not be solved within the post-colonial structure (Hansen, 1987:170). The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) was formed to run the country right after the coup. The PNDC replaced the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) which Rawlings formed in order to deal with the aftermath of the coup. It was a coalition of neo-Marxist intellectuals, left-wing student leaders, some soldiers, and militia trade unionists in Accra. Rawlings appointed himself as Chairman of the PNDC. The PNDC consisted of seven members. Four military members and three civilians were chosen by Rawlings with the aim of enlisting as broad a support base as possible. Brigadier Joseph Nunoo-Mensah was chosen to ensure the support of senior officers in the armed forces while Warrant Officer Adjei Boadi was chosen to ensure support of junior officers. Sergeant Alolga Akata-Pore would represent core junta members. Amartey Kwei was a labour leader for the urban working class and Chris Atim was a former student leader for the young while Father Damuah represented the petty bourgeoisie. The PNDC was the highest policy-making body in Ghana, combining both executive and legislative functions. On the other hand, after Rawlings took office, political opponents were divided between the liberal New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the fragmented Nkumahist. Rawlings did not have to deal with opposing political groups who were able to call for an alternative or a transition (Levitsky & Way, 2010:301).

Even though there were seven members from various sectors, Ghana's *de facto* political elite in the PNDC were divided broadly into two factions: the June Fourth Movement (JFM) and the New Democratic Movement (NDM)<sup>2</sup>. The JFM was a militant leftist group inspired by the Cuban revolution. It was formed in 1979 with the purpose of watching over the new civilian government of Limann and protecting the "gains" of the June Fourth Revolution, which was the first successful coup of Rawlings (Hansen, 1987:186). Scientific socialism of the JFM had its goal at rapid socialism by attacking the rich and severing international links from imperi-

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alist systems (Agyeman-Duah, 1987:629). The JFM was passionately opposed to any forms of collaboration with the capitalist Western countries and entities. Notwithstanding the handful of militant leftist students who founded the organisation, the JFM became a major political group once Rawlings accepted its Chairmanship. For Rawlings, who did not have a particular political base, it was an opportune position as well. As a result, when Rawlings took power through the second successful coup, the JFM regarded this as its own political success and regarded itself as the PNDC government (Hansen, 1987:186).

The dynamics between the JFM and the NDM, as two pillars of the Ghanaian elite, played a critical role in the foreign policy change. The NDM was also formed by leftist intellectuals in the University of Ghana around 1980 (Oquaye, 2004:306). A number of influential economists and scholars such as Dr. Emmanuel Hansen and Dr. Kwesi Botchwey were included together with Kwamena Ahwoi, Tsatsu Tsikata, Fui Tsikata and Asiedu Yirenkyi.

Even though most members of the JFM and the NDM were lecturers, students, or ex-students in University of Ghana, there was a critical difference between the two groups. The idea and strategy of the NDM, as its name indicates, was significantly influenced by Mao's theory of New Democracy (Jeffries, 1990:162). To elites in the NDM, socialism was an ultimate goal which was possible via the intermediary means of alliance between classes. As "the Bloc of Four Classes" in the New Democratic order, the elite in the NDM argued that not only peasants and proletariats but also petit bourgeoisies and national bourgeoisies should be entailed in the time-taking journey toward the ultimate fuller socialism and toward sounder economy. It was an approach denying a blind acceptance of Marx-Leninism and the NDM continued to exert greater influence on economic policies than the JFM did (Biswal, 1992:200-201). Moderates in the NDM asserted that co-operation with the west was necessary for Ghana to get out of the economic plight, as long as Ghanaians recognise the evils of capitalism. The dynamics between the JFM and the NDM, as two pillars of the Ghanaian elite, played a critical role in the foreign policy change.

Foreign relations in the Rawlings regime did not start smoothly, especially with Western countries. When Rawlings succeeded in his first coup in 1979, he executed a number of former heads of states in public in the name of House Cleaning. These episodes led to a bad reputation for that regime and extremely negative responses from Western countries and neighbouring African countries. The United Kingdom (UK) was the first country that condemned the House Cleaning as “an odious mix of secret trails and public executions”, and most Western countries including the US, France, Canada, and Germany warned Rawlings that economic sanctions could be imposed if further executions took place (Okeke, 1982:55-56). In addition, the neighbouring countries, Upper Volta, Togo, and the Ivory Coast also raised their concerns. Upper Volta placed a food embargo, cutting the meat supply to Ghana and Nigeria stopped the oil supply. Shehu Shagari, the President of Nigeria, had a close friendship with Ghana’s Limann who was overthrown by Rawlings. However, Shehu Shagari was later also overthrown by military coup by General Muhammadu Buhari on 31 December 1983. The two newly military leaders in Ghana and Nigeria came to share similar perspectives and have close relations with each other (Okeke, 1982:55-56). Nevertheless, after the second coup, Ghana’s foreign policy theme under the new Rawlings regime remained consistent regarding commitment to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and support to the African National Congress (ANC) and South West People’s Organisation (SWAPO), even though Ghana’s foreign policy toward African countries or entities was not at a top priority in the minds of the ruling elite in Ghana (Boafo-Arthur, 1993:136-7).

The most significant change to Ghanaian foreign policy was turning to the Eastern bloc and away from the West. In his second public speech after the coup on 2 January 1982, Rawlings announced that Ghana’s foreign policy would be “non-aligned” and the regime sought “friendship and co-operation with all countries regardless of ideology” (West Africa, 1982a). However his nominal non-alignment or neutrality meant leaning toward the Eastern bloc in practice<sup>3</sup>. Even though Rawlings never claimed explicitly that he was a socialist, his regime began by claiming to be socialist oriented. This orientation came from his supporting

base. As mentioned above, initially, leftist thinkers in the University of Ghana were key advisers to the regime. Hence, it was just a matter of time before the military PNDC restored diplomatic relations with radical countries, once it took office from pro-West PNP government. The diplomatic tie with Gadhafi's Libya, which had been severed by the PNP, was immediately restored and new diplomatic missions were opened in Cuba and Bulgaria while the Ghanaian government was closing down twelve other diplomatic missions due to budget constraints. The PNDC expanded diplomatic relations with the former German Democratic Republic, Ethiopia, China, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Romania. This expansion was not only in the political field but also economically and culturally; a revolutionary cadre was sent for military training to Eastern European countries and Cuba (Boafo-Arthur, 1999:81-86).

However, Ghana's economic situation was not favouring the ideological courtship with international comrades. Socio-economic hazards shook the political stability. Rawlings toppled the previous civilian regime citing their economic inaction and so he needed to show results promptly to regain lost popularity. Ghana needed money and macro-economic constraints were felt harshly in the everyday life of Ghanaians. Indeed, hunger became part of daily life. Half of the urban population and two thirds in the rural areas lived below the poverty line. In 1983, income per capita, hit the lowest point in the history of independent Ghana at US\$ 185 (World Bank, 2013). In 1983, the worst droughts in Ghanaian history aggravated the situation (Fuso & Aryeetey, 2008). Food production was severely affected and increased the demand for food imports. Basic items such as bread and sugar disappeared from markets and the government did not have money to pay its employees. Some state-owned factory workers were offered factory products for payment (Shillington, 1992:73). Moreover, Nigeria expelled approximately 1.2 million Ghanaians in the midst of the worst economic situation in Ghana. This meant that the government had to deal with an influx of equal to a 10 per cent increase in the population adding additional stress to the job market.

Rawlings was discontented with the economic situation and took the office with a strong leftist rhetoric. However, it did not take long for him to understand the

global economic impact on Ghana's economic situation (Antwi-Danso, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. The economic situation that the PNDC inherited was "acute economic insolvency" (Jeffries, 1990:163). When Rawlings took power, inflation had been as high as 150 per cent in the two previous years and foreign debt had reached US\$ 1.6 billion (West Africa, 1982c). Concerns existed from the beginning of the coup about the record low level of foreign reserves and the high probability that international aid institutes could withdraw aid. Just after the coup, the Rawlings regime wishfully announced that "none of the countries and agencies which have been offering aid to Ghana over the past two years will be so foolish as to draw back now" (West Africa, 1982b). However, the regime clearly did not have a developmental strategy for Ghana's already struggling economy. After the six months of an ad hoc and punitive economic policy of Rawlings's regime, the situation became worse, and "there was no money even to print money" (Hansen, 1987:192).

Leftist Ghanaian elite, feeling threatened both economically and politically, fled to Eastern Europe, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. However, the international Communist comrades were embroiled in their own domestic troubles and the world was heading to the end of the Cold War. Ghanaian diplomatic missions who fled to the Soviet Union to get financial support came back empty-handed but with advice that Ghana would be better off seeking help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Rawlings and the PNDC needed money to maintain political power and to resolve unprecedented economic challenges in Ghana but the Eastern comrades proved to be unavailable. In addition, the Ghanaian elite were witnessing another change. Socialist African countries, such as Tanzania and Guinea were going through economic inactivity. Capitalist African countries such as Kenya and Ivory Coast, on the other hand, seemed to be growing prosperous. Now, "the most appealing option" left for Rawlings was to turn to the IMF, the formerly claimed neo-colonialist (Boafo-Arthur, 1999:83). As there was no other obvious option, a Ghanaian writer argues that foreign policy change in 1983 was imposed rather than chosen (Antwi-Danso, 2013)<sup>5</sup>. However, a closer look at the process of negotiation discloses that Ghana's foreign economic policy in 1983 was indeed a chosen direction by the Rawlings regime rather than being imposed.

Even though Ghana came under the personal rule of Rawlings in 1979, in the beginning he was neither an active autocrat nor a single-handed captain. Rather, at the initial stage, he was “a figurehead to lend legitimacy” to the leftists’ rule since he was popular enough with civilians and the army to maintain political stability (Jeffries, 1990:159). In this early stage, the power of his supporting groups was stronger than that of Rawlings. Hence, the populist Rawlings regime had to adopt policies which could please its leftist power base. However, the left wing, mainly the JFM, soon emerged as his main rival for political power. Hutchful (2002, p.43) points out that even in the beginning, leftists were not Rawlings’ voluntary choice and “it would be more accurate to say that it was the Right that rejected Rawlings rather than the other way around”. Despite his initial weak stance, Rawlings was a good politician insofar as he could make good use of the one party to check and compete against another. Ghana’s critical juncture of foreign policy change toward the IMF and the World Bank should be understood in the context of Rawlings securing a tighter grip on the Ghanaian political arena by manipulating the elite dynamics of two leftist groups of the JFM and the NDM.

When the Rawlings government embarked on secret talks with the IMF behind the back of political left, the JFM and the NDM were sceptical about the new foreign economic policy. Instead, the secretaries of the JFN and NDM suggested a leftist version of developmental strategy. The core idea of the suggestion was “*autonomous* and self-reliant development based on mass mobilisation (emphasis added)” (Hansen, 1987:198). However, this united suggestion was abandoned in following political manipulation and breakdown of the leftist union. In order to change foreign policy toward the IMF and secure aid from them, Rawlings needed to break down the dominant socialist alliance, Rawlings manipulated the NMD to undermine the JFM. The JFM, whose chairpersonship Rawlings once enjoyed turned out to be the biggest threat to Rawlings. Between October and November 1982, a number of incidents took place that brought JFM to an end. After an abortive coup on 23 November, a number of critical figures from the JFM were arrested. Chris Atim went into self-imposed exile after his resignation as co-ordinator of the National Defence Committees (NDCs), which gave the already ailing JFM a

severe blow.

In order to understand the check and balance tactic by Rawlings between the JFM and the NDM, it is necessary to understand the role of the Defence Committee (DCs). The DCs were consisted of the Workers' Defence Committees (WDCs) and the People's Defence Committees (PDCs). The WDCs were set up in work-places such as mines and factories, and the PDCs were set up in residential areas in villages and towns. As a higher organ which coordinated the activities of the PDCs and WDCs, the National Defence Committee (NDCs) was formed with a self-appointed head of Rawlings. The Interim National Coordinating Committee (INCC) was the organ preceding the National Committee. However the INCC (headed by Chris Bukari Atim, a member of the PNDC) did not operate effectively because of political checks, conflicts between groups over ideologies, and various suspicions; it changed to the National Defence Committee (NDC) in July 1982.

The ultimate task of the NDC was "to educate the nation on the objectives of the revolution" (Bing, 1984:98). The NDC issued the National Defence Committee Guidelines for the formation and functioning of the Peoples Defence Committee in 1983, in which neo-colonialism was strongly censured for the economic plight of Ghana. According to the Guidelines between 40 and 100 people are needed to set up a DC. Its functions entail: data collection on population, economic activities, and infrastructure; ensuring maximum production and storage for self-sufficient and efficient marketing; establishment of People's Shops<sup>6</sup>; education and training for raising political awareness; health and sanitation; village layout and housing; afforestation; and, defence and security. The DCs had to finance themselves and the members had to pay dues for this purpose. The DCs were designed as "the institutions through which their collective energies could be mobilised and channelled into social action in accordance with the dynamics of the transformation process" (Hansen, 1987:178).

In short, in the beginning the DCs were an influential structure that could mobilise the masses, and the elite in the JFM were occupying most key posts in the NDCs, a top organisation in charge of the whole DCs structure. The elite in the NDM

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hardly liked this and indeed they always kept their eyes on the posts in the NDCs. After the core elite in the JFM were expelled from the NDCs, Rawlings approached the elite in the NDM with a bait of newly available positions in the NDCs, and they seized the chance. Throughout this procedure the NDM turned in favour of the new foreign economic policy towards the IMF. Based on the ideology of the NDC, in the beginning, when the deal with the IMF began to materialise, the Rawlings regime pronounced that the pro-West redirection of the foreign policy was a procedural means to reach Socialist ends. Ghana's engagement with the IMF was proclaimed as an immediate expedient to achieve the ultimate goal of "complete disengagement of the country's economy from the exploitative capitalist world economic order" (West Africa, 1983b)<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, Ghana was not shy to show its confidence in the Soviet Union for material help not only for Ghana but also for South Africa and Namibia under the imperialist Apartheid regime (West Africa, 1983a). The foreign policy change in Ghana can be explained with the demise of the Marxist JFM and the emergence of the NDM with a development ideology of the theory of New Democracy by Mao<sup>8</sup>. As Maoism did to the Chinese, in the eyes of some Ghanaian elites, it was seen as a viable substitute for imperialist capitalism and for radical Soviet Socialism (Tu, 2008; Yu, 1988). However, instead of materialising the ideology of New Democracy, Mao's ideology and the NDM were used and manipulated by Rawlings in his search for power and foreign aid.

## **Conclusion**

The New Democratic Movement (NDM) was not the most influential body in the beginning of the Rawlings regime but it became the most supportive and influential group as Rawlings changed Ghana's foreign policy toward the IMF in 1983. The elite in the NDM, who were inspired by Mao's New Democracy, argued that instead of rapid socialisation excluding some classes in Ghana, Ghana should take time to reach fuller socialism by entailing various classes in Ghana and by collaborating with international capitalists. This approach originated from Mao's New Democracy and Rawlings found a good use of it, as a political tool to check his rivals, the radical socialist June Forth Movement (JFM). The paper highlighted



the emergence of the NDM in a context of the foreign policy change in 1983. Rawlings needed to tame radical socialism among elites to collaborate with the IMF and, at the same time, to maintain his socialist support groups. In the process, the NDM and its New Democracy ideology was chosen and upheld as a principle of Ghana's foreign policy change. However, the New Democracy ideology was not materialised in Ghanaian economic development. Instead of being implemented as a development ideology, the New Democracy ideology was used as a political tool for eliminating a threat to the regime and abandoned when it was no longer useful. The high-time of the NDM did not last long. The harsh restructuring programme imposed by the IMF marginalised the Ghanaian population and the elites in the NDM turned to become critics of the Rawlings regime. Rawlings responded to the criticism by destroying the NDM and the remnants of leftists using the rightist groups in 1985. Finally, in January 1990, several key members of the NDM were arrested or detained and the NDM was disbanded, after which the regime turned Ghana's economic development direction towards full-fledged capitalism.

## Endnotes

1. The PP under Busia in 1969 undertook the Rehabilitation Programme led by the IMF. It did not have any significant impact on spurring economic growth despite the 30 per cent devaluation of the currency which took place as part of the programme (Boafo-Arthur, 1999:78).
2. Mainly six political organisations provided varying degree of support for Rawlings regime: the June Forth Movement, the New Democratic Movement, the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards, the Africa Youth Command, the People's Revolutionary League of Ghana and Pan-African Youth Movement. However, the major two was the JFM and the NDM.
3. In fact, Ghana has a long tradition of a Ghanaian version of the non-aligned movement (NAM) which claims neutrality in expression but leans towards social-

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ism in practice. Regarding this argument, consult a PhD thesis of the author (Kim, 2014:118-121)

4. Antwi-Danso is senior research fellow at the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy. Interview was conducted in Ghana on 24 May 2013.

5. Ibid.

6. According to the Guidelines, a People's Shop has multiple purposes such as distribution of commodities, and co-operation for production, marketing and obtaining inputs for farmers. The creation of a People's Shop originated from the scarcity of commodities in previous regimes in Ghana. Private shops yielded high profits due to scarcity and the PNDC attempted to control the supply by introducing People's Shops where the PNDC distributed supplies.

7. Some writers find the Rawlings regime to be populist rather than Communist because despite the strong anti-Western rhetoric in the beginning of the regime, there was nothing revolutionary in Rawlings' policy (Kilson, 1987; Toye, 1991; Bentsi-Enchili, 1983; Chazan, Naomi 1991). Jeffries (1990:160) also argues that, based on the speeches of Rawlings when he came back to power in 1982, the leftists failed to convert him between 1979 and 1982 and Rawlings was "a populist patriot" who was "determinedly non-ideological, even anti-ideological" regarding Ghana's economic conditions.

8. China and Ghana established diplomatic relations in 1960. Kwame Nkrumah, who did not want to get involved in the Sino-Soviet feud visited Moscow and continued to visit Beijing thereafter (Shinn, 2012:288). In Beijing Nkrumah received a US\$ 20 million interest free loan which was a better deal than he got from Moscow. The two countries continued with good relations and Ghana was one of the ten African countries Zhou Enlai made a visit to between 1963 and 1964. Zhou Enlai pledged a US\$ 22 million loan in his visit to Ghana. The first aid was sent from China to Ghana in 1964 (Davies, 2008; Tu, 2008). The amicable relations severed, however, in 1966 when Nkrumah was overthrown by a military regime during his visit to Beijing. The military regime accused Beijing of supporting

ousted Nkrumah in a comeback to power. The severed relations became re-established in 1972 and Rawlings made the first visit as head of Ghana, since Nkrumah, to China, in 1985. It is ironic that Ghana and China made a similar foreign policy turn around 1982. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Communist Party of China (CPC) National Assembly in 1982, a shift in foreign policy from “war and revolution” to “peace and development” was upheld in China. In Ghana, the negotiation with the IMF was practically agreed at the end of 1982 and it was also a shift from revolution to economic growth.

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