

Evolutionary Governance Theory a Comparative Historical Analysis of the Rule of Acheampong & Rawlings, 1972-1992

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ABSTRACT

Military interventions have been a major part of the historiography of Ghana since post-independence. The paper critically examines the military regimes of General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong and Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings in Ghana. It focuses on their distinct governance styles and the economic and institutional factors catalysing their rise to power. Through a robust qualitative historical method, it adeptly utilises primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, newspapers, and scholarly articles, to fortify its arguments. It unequivocally fills this gap, providing a meticulous analysis of the contrasting governance approaches undertaken by Acheampong and Rawlings. Evaluating the ideological orientation and leadership styles of the Acheampong and Rawlings and theorising aspects of their regimes with the Evolutionary Governance Theory, the paper argues that the regimes were established due to economic factors and the alienation of the military institution from the governance structure in the country. Acheampong's regime is markedly characterised by a nationalistic and non-partisan governance strategy, notably resisting a return to constitutional rule throughout his tenure. In stark contrast, Rawlings adopted a more inclusive approach to governance, facilitating broader participation from the populace and eventually restoring civilian rule. This represents a pivotal divergence in their ideologies and methods of military governance. The paper further explores the socio-economic landscape that influenced these military regimes. Both regimes grappled with economic mismanagement, implementing policies centred on import substitution and export promotion while encountering rampant corruption. It convincingly argues that the military's motivations for intervention were deeply rooted in the economic crises exacerbated by prior democratic administrations and the shortcomings of civilian politicians. The analysis embeds the governance styles of Acheampong and Rawlings within the framework of Evolutionary Governance Theory, asserting that these regimes emerged due to the military's disconnection from traditional governance structures. While both leaders share a common military background, their divergent governance strategies and contrasting legacies regarding constitutional order reflect the broader tensions embedded in Ghana's political evolution during this critical period.

Keywords: Ghana, Acheampong, Rawlings, Evolutionary Governance Theory, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Military coup d'états and the military's political engagement have been common in post-colonial Africa (McGowan, 2003). These phenomena have featured in active discussions in Africa's historiography. The military as an emergent factor in national politics inspired Claude E. Welch to ask in 1967 the key question: "Should we view army intervention with alarm, as inherently detrimental to the best interests of African states, or should we concur with a noted authority who suggested that 'frequent coups are a sign of change and progress?'" (Welch, 1967, p. 305). The military as an institution of the post-colonial state in Africa began as a colonial creation to assist the colonial machinery by being a coercive arm of the state. The military's role in contemporary politics is new since the military ought to be apolitical (Asante, 2020). Accordingly, it is estimated that at the beginning of the 21st century, the continent had experienced eighty successful coup d'états out of about one hundred and eighty-eight coup d'états in all forms (McGowan, 2003).

Since 2010, Africa has experienced an average coup each year. This brings the total number of attempted coups d'états on the continent to 220 out of the total 492 coups global, representing approximately 45% of all global

coups. Of the 220 attempted military takeovers, Africa has 109 of the global 245, an estimated 44.5% of all successful global coups (Powell & Thyne 2011; Duzor & Williamson, 2023). The countries with the most successful coups are Burkina Faso (9), Benin, Nigeria and Sudan (6 each) and Burundi, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger and Mauritania with 5 each. This shows that West Africa alone has experienced 63 of the 109 successful coups in the sub-region. Notably, the historiography of military rule in Ghana has focused on analysing the causes and effects of military regimes. The various military regimes were characterised by economic policies, including import substitution, export promotion, and privatisation, to promote economic growth and development, as well as corruption and mismanagement. Two such regimes are under study in this paper: the National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council I (NRC/SMC I) regime of IK Acheampong (1972-8) and that of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) of J.J. Rawlings (1981-92).

Although there are extensive scholarly works on factors of coups and their ripple effects on Ghana, a gap exists in assessing the governance styles of military regimes of the same country. This research evaluates the governance styles of two distinct military regimes — NRC/SMC I and PNDC. By the latter part of the 1960s, the wave of coup d'états in Africa created a new interest in coup d'états as a political phenomenon worthy of the interests of political scientists. However, coup d'états have mainly been studied within political science as isolated and exceptional events and how coup d'états could contribute to 'modernisation' (Wiking, 1983). In the case of Ghana, the literature has primarily focused on factors that resulted in the military's intervention in Ghanaian politics and the internal issues under the regimes, focusing on politico-economic developments (Kraus, 1990; Rothchild, 1980; Price, 1971). Claude E. Welch asserted that Ghana's military's direct intervention to overthrow and replace a civilian administration is relatively new (Welch, 1967).

Scholars such as Erik Nords, Micheal Bratton, and Clive Dewey have espoused that the military as an institution can solve socioeconomic problems better than civilian politicians; others, such as Erik Nordlinger and Samuel Decalo, disagree (Bratton, 1997; Dewey, 1991; Nordlinger, 1977; Decalo, 1976). Erik Nordlinger argued that the performance of military regimes "...is significantly and almost consistently poorer than civilian governments" (Nordlinger, 1977, p.197). Samuel Decalo also asserted that the military in Africa was not playing a progressive role in politics. He posited that the political changes that military rule effected in Africa could hardly be described as promoting development (Decalo, 1976). Political science has shed some light on the coup phenomenon, but history also has a voice on coup d'états.

The historiography of military rule in Ghana began with the NLC. However, the "problem" is that there is no available literature on the comparative study of military interventions in Ghana aside from single case studies, the comparison of civilian and military regimes based on similarities, and the comparison of civilian and military regimes' performances on transnational levels (McKinlay & Cohan, 2017; Osman, 2004; Abasa-Nyarko, 1988; Tsamenyi, 1983; Zeff, 1981). This study, therefore, contributes to the existing literature on Ghana's social and political history, precisely the field of governance, as it focuses on the comparative study of the governance styles of two significant military regimes in Ghana. It also provides insight into military transitions, informs contemporary governance and leadership debates, and enhances knowledge of the application of evolutionary governance theory. The study deploys the Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) to explain the governance styles of the investigated regimes. EGT draws strength from law, governance, and public administration. The theory posits that governance is a contingency and coevolutionary, and to appreciate the governance of a regime, the basis must focus on the relationships between actors/institutions, formal/informal institutions, object formations/external realities (ideas generations/actualities), and power/knowledge (Kristof, Beunen & Duineveld 2013).

Governance is, therefore, the interaction between the state processes and structures that determine the modalities of the use of power and responsibilities, the procedure for decision-making, and how the general populace is involved. A common characteristic of governance is the moderate role and importance of elected representatives, as political leadership is less associated with formal elected office. Leadership is critical in governance as it influences the development and mobilisation of resources. In the context of the study of the two regimes, governance refers to individual military leaders and their military juntas (structure/organisations) as actors participating in the rulership of Ghana. The productivity of governance is essential. A leader's governance style is influenced by specific subjectivities (constructed identities), associating them with specific ideas so that the involvement and idea become a part of the identity and the subjectivity.

The regime performance is associated with the effectiveness of the leaders. Analyses of military regimes have focused on a cross-national approach, offering much-needed knowledge into the validity of the hypotheses on the ability to recognise particular socioeconomic and political goals. However, the study uses an inward approach focusing on country-specific and evaluating the performances of two successive regimes following their set ideas and intentions. This approach allows the researcher to emphasise the uniqueness of each specified administration since the variables of administrations, society, and international settings vary from one regime to another. The paper seeks to build on country-specific analysis to round out the representation of military regime performances. Therefore, by drawing from data based on the experiences of the military juntas, the research paper seeks to answer the following fundamental question: What were the causes for the establishment and the governance styles deployed by the Acheampong and Rawlings regimes as military leaders?

The present research paper is organised into five distinct sections: Section One focuses on the Background to the Study, Section Two provides the analysis of the arguments in the literature review and conceptual framework, Section Three demonstrates the research methodology, Section Four approximates the outcomes and decode the results and Section Five concludes and provides the implications and limitations of the study.

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

A critical examination of the literature review shows that much has not been done in the political history of Ghana, where a comparative study of military governments unearths knowledge about military interventions, regimes, and governance styles. None exists that solely compares the governments of Acheampong and Rawlings. Existing literature on military juntas in Africa does not profess the relationship between theoretical expectations and political realities. Thus, in this paper, some vital scholarly works have been reviewed to offer information about historical and political science arguments and views on military intervention in Ghana. The review has been helpful in terms of its discussion of governance style.

The works of Erik Nordlinger and Samuel Decalo have been helpful to the paper in its search for the contributions of military rulers in the development of states. Scholars like Erik Nordlinger and Samuel Decalo have usually perceived the performance of military regimes as dismissal when examining military leaders as political agents of modernisation (Nordlinger, 1977; Decalo, 1973). In Africa, the military is an ideologically and structurally cohesive institution capable of high levels of discipline internally and serving as a repository of managerial and technological skills, whose officers share a professional belief system combining the elements of secular rationality, puritanical asceticism, patriotic nationalism, dedication to public service, and an orientation toward the goal of modernisation (Price, 1971). The military, thus, is the “harbinger of progress” (Pauker, 1959).

Robert Price argues that a better comprehension of the link between military governance and development analysis should be focused on addressing two general issues—causes and effects—focusing on modernisation processes in the political system. The economic condition in Ghana was a significant factor that culminated in the genesis of military interventions in the politics of Ghana, such that, between 1960 and 1965, the overall growth in real Gross Net Product per capita had stagnated at 0.7 per cent with an insufficient balance of payment situation and a concomitant shortage of foreign reserves (Price, 1971).

Additionally, the pervasiveness of corruption and inefficiency in the political space had affected the administrative agencies and specific political situations, such as the abrogation of the 1964 Constitution and the dissolution of Parliament, accompanied by the banning of all political parties; all contributed to the 1966 coup (Price, 1971). Also, the sweeping aside of the military by the Nkrumah regime and a high degree of public cynicism towards anything and everything government all contributed to the coup d'état.

Furthermore, Robert Price inquired into the political leadership potentials of the military in dealing with economic and political issues. The capacity of a military regime is the motivation that resulted in first staging a coup, with motivations classified into societal and professional interests (Price, 1971). The prevalence of coup d'états is the differences between politicians and soldiers about the ‘actual’ function and space of competence

of the armed forces and the lack of political integration—i.e., the absence of a standard, consistent set of values and goals about the behavioural roles of the political and military elites.

Abel Nartey focused on the debate about the politics-institution nexus. The military has demonstrated its commitment to constitutional rule and subordination to civilian rule. Democratisation is a dominant factor for political stability (Nartey, 2019 p.105). Nonetheless, the thriving of democracy has not solved the failure to reform state institutions and eradicate neo-patrimonial political dominance. The character and effectiveness of the state determine its development competence, and the competence of the regime is, in turn, a functionality of its politics (Nartey, 2019, p. 105).

Abel Nartey, in assessing civil-military relations, uses two conceptual frameworks—public bureaucracy and political process models. Nartey argues that the forms and results of the political process “are both formed by and help to shape, the structural environment, internal and external, the distributions and balances of power, ideas, ideologies, interest, and crucially, the formal and informal institutions through which they all work” (Nartey, 2019 p.106). Thus, he highlights the importance of politics and how it interconnects with institutions, emphasising that a regime's survival and prosperity are determined by its ability to provide mechanisms for development (Nartey, 2019, pp. 106-107).

The emergence of the modern nation-state system has influenced the evolution of political leadership as an institutionalised and complex act. Leadership is an influential aspect of the socioeconomic advancement of countries. Development is conceptually defined as attaining self-sufficiency, self-reliance, justice and equity to improve the citizens' welfare and living standards (Nzau, 2011). Governance is crucial for development, and to understand governance in Ghana, it is crucial to initially understand the transformation of state forms from pre-colonial to post-colonial eras, as chieftaincy has an important bearing on the concepts of the state, sovereignty and legitimacy (Ray, 2003). This is because the ‘degree of authority, power, influence or legitimacy that any one traditional leader’ exercises differs. Hence, the institution of traditional leadership is positioned to play a distinct role in comprehending governance and development in Ghana (Ray, 2003, p. 83).

The absence of efficient and effective leadership has been one of the significant challenges faced by Africa since independence despite the immense natural and human resources bequeathed to the continent and its great cultural, ecological and economic potentials and diversities (Decalo, 1989; Afegbua & Adejuwon 2012). The absence of ‘effective’ leadership is causing Africa to stagnate. Leadership has acted as the fulcrum for the interaction of social groups within the diverse state institutions in Ghana. In Ghana, the measure of proficient leadership is hinged on varied factors, and one of the significant varied factors is the ability to cause sustainable and tangible development (Tagoe, 2011).

The emergence of the Cold War immediately after WWII fuelled the dominance and predatory role of the military in Africa as states needed to ‘provide public order and defence from external invasion before they can provide universal health or free education’ (Naidoo, 2006, p 34). A major cause of post-colonial development challenges in Africa is attributed to the absence of good and democratic governance, largely caused by the counter-productive involvement of the military in institutions of governance (Decalo, 1989). The armed forces in post-independent Africa have been perceived as a ‘coterie of armed camps owing primary clientelist allegiance to a handful of mutually competitive officers’. (Naidoo, 2006, p. 34). The usurpation of state power by the armed forces in Africa has been on the foundation that civilian leaders are the leading participants and beneficiaries of economic mismanagement and are the promoters of domestic political conflicts and rivalries. As a result, military coups have become the easiest and fastest routes to state power and self-aggrandisement (Naidoo, 2006).

The military's role has evolved and is developing in emerging democracies like Ghana, especially its political and economic systems. The armed forces are not only vital in peace sustenance and stability necessary for the developmental processes, but they are also crucial in the process as the armed forces are often relied upon to aid in providing internal security and to ensure regime stability. A convergence of consensus among the armed forces, political elites and the citizenry in the social makeup of the officer corps, political decision-making process, recruitment procedures of officers and the style of the armed forces help in mitigating the tendency of military involvement in a country's internal politics (Norman, 2024; Salihu, 2019; Mbah, 2013).

Kwame Dartey-Baah (2014), in assessing the political leadership journey of Ghana spanning over five decades, argues that leadership with its associated practice and interpretation is culturally framed. His work examines the leadership journey in Ghana and focuses on four predictors—personality, values, role and setting. Favourable economic circumstances can create an environment for regime success or failure; however, a critical factor influencing the success of a political regime is leadership. The extant literature on leadership opines that strong aspirations and willpower determine a leader's effectiveness through a person's continuous yet unending self-study, education, experience and training (Decalo, 1989; van Wyk, 2007; Dartey-Baah, 2014).

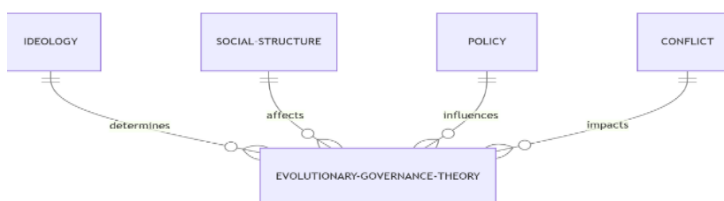
Despite these factors, African states have not provided sufficient and needed attention to develop their leaders' competencies, which is why Africa is home to numerous states that are largely underdeveloped and home to military coups (Chikerema et al., 2013; Yimer, 2015). Therefore, Ghanaian political leadership is best understood by unravelling the challenges the leadership faces. These challenges are in four distinct aspects: the neoliberal economic setting in which leaders operate, the media, the culture and the economy's challenges in meeting citizen's expectations with derisory resources (Dartey-Baah, 2014).

Military rule and its entrenchment in the political history of Ghana have proven that the mentality of power-grabbing by the armed forces was no different from that of the political elites. From the formation of the military in 1879 until 1993, political power was premised on paternalistic, clientelistic and segregated standards, such that in 1966, the military began to be intensively interested and involved in state politics, resulting in numerous military interventions (Norman, 2024).

Theoretical Framework & Concept

The paper deployed the Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) to explain the governance styles of the investigated regimes and their contributions to national development. EGT draws strength from cultural studies, history, political science, law, governance, and public administration. The theory posits that governance is a contingency and coevolutionary, and to appreciate the governance of a regime, the basis must focus on the relationships between actors/institutions, formal/informal institutions, object formations/external realities (ideas generations/actualities), and power/knowledge.

Additionally, concepts such as coup d'état, governance, regime, development, and the junta were conceptualised. Coup d'état is conceptually defined as the overthrow of a constitutionally elected government by either the army or a coalition involving the military; governance the art of administering the state machinery; regime—the institution or body in charge of the affairs of running the state machinery; development—a recent event that has some relevance for the present situation, and junta a group of military officers who rule a country after seizing power.



Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, ideologies were defined as the constructed identities of leaders in association with certain objects such that the involvement or object becomes a part of the identity. Objects are issues and topics or abstract concepts that are classified into three—reification (the recognition of the object as a unit separated from its environment), solidification (the tightening of internal coherence in the concept) and codification (the simplification of the object boundaries—it influences which concept is included and excluded). In this case, the leader is the reification, the appointees are the solidification and the state, with its environment, is the codification. Social Structures refer to the embodying roles of state institutions. Institutions encompass the ideologies, the state itself, leaders and citizens, and the legal system; policies and programmes connote the plans and achievements of the regime, and conflicts connote the approach of power relations and the legitimation processes. Governance is the art of administering the state machinery.

In offering an understanding of the governance styles of the longest tenures of military regimes in the political history of Ghana—the Acheampong (1972-78) and the Rawlings (1981-92), the study fashions a theoretical deconstruction of the term governance. The study of governance aids in the better comprehension of the world, but it is concerned with how the functioning and operation of the state and its machinery could be improved. It signifies “the range of activities, functions, and exercise of control” by state actors in promoting economic, political, and social ends. Governance lacks a universal definition, as numerous definitions are offered for the term (Kjar, 2004, pp. 10-11; Chhotray & Stoker, 2009, p. 3). Jon Pierre argues that the conceptualisation of governance is slightly problematic and confusing as a result of its duality in meaning; therefore, he asserts that it refers to the empirical manifestations of state adaptation to its external environment as it emerges in the late twentieth century and on the other hand, governance denotes a conceptual or theoretical representation of coordination of social systems and, for the most part, the role of the state in that process (Pierre, 2003, p.3 cited in Katsamunskaja, 2016).

Governance is, therefore, the interaction between the state processes and structures that determine the modalities of the use of power and responsibilities, the procedure for decision-making, and how the general populace is involved. A common characteristic of governance is the moderate role and importance of elected representatives, as political leadership is less associated with formal elected office. Leadership is critical in governance as it influences the development and mobilisation of resources (van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld, 2013).

In the context of the study of the two regimes, governance refers to individual military leaders and their military juntas (structure/organisations) as actors participating in the rulership of Ghana. The productivity of governance is essential. A leader’s governance style is influenced by certain subjectivities (constructed identities), associating them with certain ideas so that the involvement and idea become a part of the identity and the subjectivity. In appreciating the formation of ideas that impact one’s governance styles, three concepts emerge—reification, solidification, and codification (van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld, 2013, pp.35-37).

Leaders coordinate decision-making through informal or formal institutions intending to bring continuous change. The uniqueness of institutions—the Institutions include ideologies, the leaders, the regime, citizens, and the judiciary. Hence, the idea of institutions directs the focus on the agency and the possible reforms in governance by different players and by changing rules—their reputations, decision processes, and the nature of functions and citizenries, as success and failure, inspire the nature of the governance style of a leader.

Due to dependencies, leaders cannot freely shift the course of governance in a given configuration of institutions. Dependencies can be classified into path dependence, interdependence, and goal dependence. Path dependence is the legacies of the past impacting the course of governance. It can reside in the presence of specific actors and their conservative strategies and the presence of certain formal and informal institutions. Power relations, legitimation processes, and the broader cultures as shared understandings of the circumstances are the legacies of the past that influence a regime’s governance styles. Interdependence is the relations between actors and institutions as the patterns of actors’ and institutions’ evolution affect the nature of governance styles. Therefore, interdependence is important for leaders in strategising towards set goals and furthering common goals. Goal dependence—i.e., the influence of shared visions or programmes and policies concerning the governance style—is critical when politics is more significant than coordination when visions of the future are formed and translated into policies. Hence, each governance style differs and is unique in its

combination of path dependencies, interdependencies, and goal dependencies. Each form of dependence is an aspect of the governance style rigidity, yet their interplays create flexibility (van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld, 2013, pp.38-42)

Leadership is vital for the governance of a state; thus, leadership is the process of facilitating collective and individualistic efforts and influencing others to attain the common public good. The assessment of leadership in parallel with development is a critical criterion for a regime's success or failure in history (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020). The emphasis on leadership is quintessential because leaders have decisive power over the people and implicitly on regime successes. This assertion is emphasised as “the basic condition for the effective management of social, political, economic and national structures or to achieve organisational aims is to have a leader with a high ability to adapt to environmental conditions” (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020, p. 2). Leadership styles can be categorised into concerns for the people and situations for effectiveness or production.

In understanding the governance style of a specific regime and ascertaining whether it was successful or failed, it is inadequate to concentrate on the traits or behaviours; hence, such analysis should be situated within a context. Governance does not necessarily require the legitimate authority of a position or status, as a leader is a person who innovates, is original and originates and challenges the status quo (Warren, 1992). The governance style of a leader is synonymous with the leadership style displayed in the discharge of duties and responsibilities and the ideology that influences the policies and programmes.

In assessing the governance styles of the two military regimes, four perspectives have been helpful: the types of institutions they worked with, the forms of democratic systems they employed, the forms of steering that they engaged in, and the knowledge mobilisation made —i.e., formal vs informal institutions, representative vs participatory democracy; central steering vs. network steering and expert knowledge vs. local knowledge. Furthermore, two essential things the regimes had a relationship with have been addressed, as they are entwined: power and knowledge to understand how they run their governments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper used a qualitative and historical approach to research issues related to military governance in Ghana's history. Thus, primary and secondary sources were consulted to account for Ghana's military interventions and governance spanning 1972-1992 through the NRC/SMC I and PNDC regimes. Primary sources included documents from the Public Records and Archives Department, Accra (PRAAD), white papers and reports issued by the IMF and World Bank, Ghanaian laws and decrees, speeches by investigated leaders, newspaper articles, and other media sources. Interviews were also conducted to offer the context for critical debates and understanding of human affairs and their interpretations through the eyes of specific interviewees and well-informed respondents, providing essential insights into a situation. They provided paths to the prior history of the situation, helping to identify other relevant sources of evidence. Interviews also serve as an efficient approach to ‘get to the heart of the matter’ and are valuable for strengthening and complicating other data (Tracy, 2020, p.79).

Archival materials were from the Public Records and Archives Department (PRAAD), the University of Cape Coast Library, and online-based archives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Secondary sources included academic articles, books, and other scholarly works and texts that have shaped debates and informed the theoretical frameworks of governance and leadership and military coup d'états. A combination of fieldwork and desk-based research has produced this research paper.

DISCUSSION

A striking feature of the literature on military governments in developing states, especially in Africa, is the gap between theoretical expectations and political realities. Practitioners of comparative studies of social and political theory tend to view the military as an institution capable of playing a critical role as a moderniser. At the same time, some empirical researchers have found the performance of the military as apolitical agents of modernisation to be dismal (Price, 1971; Pye, 1961). Lucian Pye argues that, in emerging states, the military represents the most effective public institution available for leading modernising efforts. Guy J. Pauker views

the military as a ‘harbinger of progress’ (Pauker, 1958). The section offers a comparative appreciation and examination of the regimes of Acheampong and Rawlings in terms of their philosophies, ideologies, governance dispositions, and contributions to Ghana’s socioeconomic development.

Governance Styles of Acheampong and Rawlings Through the Prism of the Evolutionary Governance Theory

Following the demise of the Nkrumah government after the coup d’état, Ghana experienced several coup attempts. It saw a return to civilian rule for about thirty months under the Busia administration until Thursday, 13th January 1973, when the government of Busia was overthrown by a coalition of senior officers of the armed forces (The New York Review, 1967; Nkrumah, 1968, p. 33).

In explaining the reason for the coup which brought the NRC into power, Acheampong disclosed that economic malpractices, corruption and authoritarian tendencies of the erstwhile administration fuelled their motivation to usurp political power (Ghanaian Times, 1970; The New York Times, 1972; Information Service Department, 1973). As the new leader, Acheampong dissolved the Legislature, withdrew the 1969 Constitution and banned political parties (The New York Times, 1972). In his first broadcast, Acheampong nullified all policies and decisions of the Busia administration. Acheampong further said his government would include civilians representing labour unions, religious bodies, farmers, lawyers, businessmen and army officers, yet in naming his council member, only one was a civilian—E.N. Moore (The New York Times, 1972). The NRC comprised seven military officers (majors and lieutenant colonels) and a civilian, Edward Nathaniel Moore, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General. To ensure the stability of the NRC, Acheampong placed himself in charge of the two most important ministries: the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Ministry of Defence. The regime closed all borders of Ghana, and resistance to the coup d’état was minimal.

However, two days after the takeover, Ghana experienced an attempted coup d’état to reinstate the Busia administration, but it was aborted (The New York Times, 1972). While in the UK, Busia described the coup d’état as “just an officers’ amenities coup arising from their grievances at my efforts to save money and argued that the military had no justification for the coup. On the subsequent day of 14th January 1972, the Council membership was expanded to ten to include the Inspector General of Police, and by 18th January 1972, the entire membership stood at twelve before the Council underwent several reshufflings of the membership (Agyeman-Duah, 2021, pp. 56-57).

As the membership changed, Colonel Acheampong opined: ... ours is a Revolution that must achieve the permanent transformation of our nation.... To this end, every necessary step must be taken to create a just society (ADM/4/6/120, 1973, p.5). Acheampong believed that for the coup d’état to achieve its objectives and ensure survival, it was necessary to empower the populace. In his address to Ghanaian workers, Colonel Acheampong remarked: The Ghanaian worker needs a new vision and a new spirit. He needed the spirit of a great new nation that was well industrialised with booming agriculture and stood four squares on its own resources (Daily Graphic, 1972, p. 1).

The Acheampong regime believed that the government’s capacity to improve infrastructure and distribution networks could be achievable when citizens committed themselves to “reduce our heavy dependence on the Central Government, revitalise local and regional initiative, adopt a new progressive philosophy based on responsible citizenship” (Tsamenyi, 1983, p.186). The Acheampong regime increased political awareness of the political class, and socially, ethnocentric prejudices, subjectivities, social snobbery and insolence of wealth heightened. Therefore, on the whole, Ghana was amid political enfeeblement, economic decline and social fragmentation (Ahwoi, 2020, pp. 5-6). The moral decadence in Ghana was so high that the military tribunal established by the Acheampong regime sentenced two Ghanaians to death by firing squad for stealing telephone cables valued at £800 (The New York Times, 1973). During its first anniversary, the Acheampong regime released most political prisoners and cautioned foreign industrialists from sabotaging the country’s efforts (The New York Times, 1973).

Acheampong, in the first two years, generated mass interest in the regime, drawing responses from tertiary students to help in the mobilisation of labour to harvest cash crops such as cocoa and sugar-cane to further the objectives of “Operation Feed Your Industries” with many joining in the self-help programme, “Operation Feed Yourself.” (GH/PRAAD/RG6/4/140; *The New York Times*, 1973). Samuel Adjei Nkansah, a former electrical engineer, cultivated 84 acres of land growing crops—lime, pineapples, oil palms, cassava and corn and rearing animals—goats and other livestock (*The New York Times*, 1973). Operation Feed Yourself was a buffer and cure to Ghana's high debts and trade deficit. These were new forms of empowerment and involvement in the nation's political and economic destiny, based on indigenous social and economic exchange networks and bolstered by government infrastructure investment (*The New York Times*, 1973; *Daily Telegraph*, 1974).

The Acheampong regime received widespread popular support in the heydays, helping to consolidate its legitimacy and ensure political stability. In legitimising its seizure of power, the NRC did some things. It dismissed the Chief Justice and appointed a new one, established Military Tribunals under NRC Decree 90 with specific offences as their mandate (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1019, 1973). The Military Tribunal could pronounce the death sentence on citizens, and its verdict could not be appealed. The formal courts had no supervisory jurisdiction over the military tribunals. The NRC also meddled in the affairs of Chieftaincy, which resulted in the removals and seizures of the properties of the paramountcies of Akyem Kotoku, Effutu, Gushiegu, Wenchi, and Yendi (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1052, 1974/1976; National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, p. 86). John Alex Hammah, a Trade Unionist and a native of Agona Abodom in the Central Region was convicted of treason in 1974 and sentenced to death on the charge of inducing an army officer with ₵56,000 to help him overthrow the Acheampong regime. However, Akuffo, as the leader, signed his release on 7th December 1978, when Acheampong was removed and pardoned unconditionally in September 1979 (National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004).

The NRC also gave loans to encourage farming, provided seeds and seedlings, fertilisers, pesticides, and agricultural advice, and increased wages by thirty per cent, with fringe benefits for civil servants restored (GH/PRAAD/RG6/4/155, 1974; GH/PRAAD/RG6/4/184, 1978; Gocking, 2005). In declaring the ‘Yentua’ policy (repudiation policy) and revising several policies of the Busia regime—restoration of the Trades Unions rights, students’ grants, and institution of students’ loan scheme payable upon graduation and suspension of the development levy and the Alliance Compliance Order—Acheampong and the NRC won the support of important social groups (students, urban workers, farmers, chiefs and the petty bourgeoisie in commerce and the civil service). These policies were critical to ensure the acceptability and survival of the regime.

The Acheampong-led regime also sought legitimacy and stability through different means. Thus, it reorganised the Ghana Police Service, established in 1970, into the Ghana Police Force to give the establishment the needed muscles to deal with both the public during agitations and protests and to be able to serve as a counterbalancing force to the military. The Ghana Police Force was renamed the Ghana Police Service when Ghana returned to democratic and constitutional rule in 1992. The Acheampong regime institutionally removed the Ghana Police Force from the bureaucratic and administrative supervision of the Public Service Commission, with the IGP as the head of the Police Council. The IGP was further elevated to the Presidential Cabinet Rank, simultaneously making the protector the caretaker, limiting effective oversight and concentration of enormous unchecked powers in the purview of the IGP (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1019, 1973; Information Service Department, 1972).

On 12th February 1973, the Acheampong regime reorganised the NRC. Acheampong dismissed three military members from the junta—Commodore P. F. Quaye (Navy Commander), Colonel E. A. Erskine (Army Commander) and Brigadier Charles Beausoliel (Air Force Commander)—and civilian members (IGP J. H. Cobbina and Nathan Quao) to ensure political stability. As the NRC Chairman, Acheampong remained the Head of State and Commander-in-chief, with the right to all NRC appointments (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1019, 1973). A unanimous vote could dismiss him as Chairman. The NRC nominated nine military commanders as regional commissioners, establishing the Executive Council. The NRC militarised Ghanaian society, promoting top military personnel to posts in important agencies, regional authorities, state companies, and public boards. Acheampong intended to stop party politics and form a union government for national unity and economic prosperity (*Ghanaian Times*, 1977).

The Acheampong regime encountered several counter-coups d'état such that, due to power struggles in the NRC, Acheampong had to reconstitute the junta, culminating in the Supreme Military Council on 9th October 1975 (The New York Times, 1975). In 1975, the regime of Acheampong became unpopular in the eyes of segments of the public due to economic hardships (The New York Times 1975/1976). The SMC increasingly became unpopular as instituted measures could not yield the intended outcomes, resulting in calls for a return to democratic rule and the desire to secede (The New York Times 1976). In November 1975, Brigadier Alphonse Kojo Kattah fled into Togo after a failed coup attempt, and in January 1976, Captain Joel Sowu, together with a retired officer Von Buckustain and other soldiers, were apprehended, tried and convicted for attempting a coup d'état (The New York Times, 1975; Agyeman-Duah, 2021, p.70).

The membership of the SMC included General Acheampong as Chairman, Lieutenant-General Lawrence A. Okai (Chief of the Defence Staff), whom Lieutenant-General Fred W. K. Akuffo (then Chief of Army Staff), later replaced, Major General Robert E. A. Kotei (Chief of Army Staff), Rear Admiral C. K. Dzang (Chief of Naval Staff) whom Rear Admiral Joy Kobla Amedume replaced subsequently, Brigadier Charles Beausoliel (Chief of Air Staff) who was subsequently replaced by Air Vice Marshal George Yaw Boakye, Major General E. K. Utuka (Border Guards Commander) and I.G.P. Ernest Ako, subsequently replaced by I.G.P. Benjamin Samuel Kofi Kwakye. The SMC under Acheampong lasted from 9th October 1975 to 5th July 1978, when a palace coup d'état ousted Acheampong (The New York Times, 1975; Daily Graphic, 1978; Agyeman-Duah, 2021).

Acheampong passed the Prohibited Organisation Act, 1976 (SMCD 20) and banned organisations such as The National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland and Togoland Liberation Movement (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1023, 1976). The Acheampong regime, amid the collapsing economic situation, rehabilitated Nkrumah by erecting a 25-foot statue of him in front of the Parliament House. The Government of Acheampong, therefore, argued: "As the years go by, some of the bad recedes — the preventive-detention cases, the corruption. The good is still there. It's only fitting that we should honour him as the father of the country" (The New York Times, 1976).

The inability of the junta to improve the flagged economy led to strikes and demonstrations from students and professional bodies in the country, resulting in a near toppling of the regime (The New York Times, 1977; Ghana Embassy, 1977). Many called for a return to civilian rule. Acheampong iterated that due to the havoc and misgivings associated with a multiparty system of government, his government had proposed a National or Union Government 'to avoid the bitterness of factionalism and rancour of the past and not an attempt to dominate such a government by military and police officers' (Daily Graphic, 1977; The New York Times, 1976). Thus, Acheampong agreed to the populace's demands and proposed a Union Government (UNIGOV) to solve the quest for a stable and representative government in 1976 and to obviate partisan politics in Ghana (Daily Graphic, 1977; The New York Times, 1976; Ahwoi, 2020). The UNIGOV proposal compromised his military rule and the demand for a return to democracy.

He declared, "...purely Civilian Rule cannot do for this country" (Daily Graphic, 1977, p.1). Traditional rulers and religious leaders massively endorsed the Union Government. The then Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, opined that the country needed a system of government which does not base itself on the support of only a section of the people nor one which generates divisions among the society but one which makes it possible for the energy and the resources of the people to be harnessed and utilised. (Daily Graphic, 1976, p. 16; Agyeman-Duah, 2021).

On 1st July 1977, Acheampong announced a programme to transfer power back to a constitutional government, tasking the ad-hoc committee on the proposed Union Government to submit its report within three months. He declared that to demonstrate his regime's goodwill, the regime empanelled a committee to develop plans and programmes to ensure a smooth power transfer as soon as possible (Daily Graphic, 1977). Acheampong sought to hold power by restricting association activities, engaging in little consultations, applying coercion in its bargaining, and trying to compel groups to control their members' activities on behalf of the regime's goals and power. The Acheampong regime repressed demonstrations and strikes, banned all political associations and jailed its opponents (Amankwah, 2023; Kraus, 1988). On 12th October 1977, there was a disruption of a symposium organised by the Association of Professional Bodies; there was police action against students and

lecturers at the University of Ghana on 13th January 1978, and a disruptive demonstration in Kumasi on 4th February 1978, where supporters of the UNIGOV assaulted Komla A. Gbedema and General Akwasi Amankwah Afrifa (Ocquaye, 1980; Rothchild, 1980).

There were common violent clashes between supporters and opponents of UNIGOV (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/578). Paul Kofi Agyimah, a resident of Kumasi and a self-employed man, stated that in 1978, he went to Kejetia to purchase drinks for his bar when he became involved in a riot caused by the clash between supporters and detractors of the UNIGOV campaign. During the incident, someone shot him. The bullet went through his mouth, knocked some teeth out, and emerged through his nose, causing him to have problems breathing afterwards (National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004).

After the loss of credibility in the UNIGOV referendum on 30th March 1978, Acheampong banned three movements that had campaigned against the UNIGOV and announced the detention of forty-nine “alleged” coup plotters, including the top hierarchy of the People’s Movement for Freedom and Justice and the Professional Bodies Association (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1052, 1978; National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004). The demonstration against Acheampong resulted in the closure of universities and some secondary schools (The New York Times, 1978). Some writers accused the Acheampong government of promoting patronage. They claim the gifting of import licences, chits, and cars to beneficiaries who were executives of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and their cronies (employees and family members) instead of adequate pay, and the regime expected them to sell the goods on the black market (Daily Graphic, 1977; Tsikata, 1999; National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, pp. 53-61). The regime modestly increased military expenditure from eight to nine per cent of the total budget (Omitoogun & Hutchful, 2006).

The popularity of Acheampong whittled down such that, in January 1978, Highlife Musician Nana Kwame Ampadu composed a song titled ‘Aware bone’ (Bad marriage) to reflect Ghana’s ailing economy, poverty, and political corruption under Acheampong. Other songs such as ‘Ka na wu’ (Say it and Die) and ‘Nkae’ (Remembrance) were also composed by King Pratt and his Africa Revolution Band to reflect the long-standing economic quagmire faced by Ghanaians, corruption, poverty, and mismanagement (Akakpo, 2023, p.27). The popular outcry against the regime resulted in a palace coup on 5th July 1978, where General Fredrick William Kwasi Akuffo accused Acheampong of corruption and nepotism, put under house arrest, stripped of his rank (promoted to General in March 1976) and banished to his village, Imrabuom (The New York Times, 1978/1979; Agyeman-Duah 2021, pp. 184-188).

As interim leader, Akuffo released all political prisoners under the Acheampong regime, most apprehended during the Union Government contest (The New York Times, 1978). Also, the Akuffo regime reconstituted the Supreme Military Council and retired more than half of the members, and military officers who acted as Commissioners were returned to the barracks and replaced with civilians (Ghana Embassy, 1977). The Akuffo regime banned organisations that formed the basis of the Acheampong regime, such as the ‘Organisers Council’ and ‘Ghana Youngster Club’ and froze their assets. The bank accounts of the Special Aides to Acheampong—S.O. Lamptey, Kwesi Ghapson, Sam Boateng, S. K. Danso and Ben Kuma—had their assets and bank accounts frozen. The Akuffo regime did little as it got truncated; however, on 6th November 1978, civil servants in Ghana embarked on a strike to show their displeasure about the country's management, especially its economy (The New York Times, 1978).

On 2nd May 1979, the Akuffo regime released Acheampong from house arrest and charged Acheampong with acts of economic and administrative misconduct, arguing that “he issued import licenses and contracts to friends and agreed to foreign loans that were detrimental to the state” (The New York Times, 1979). The Akuffo regime rescheduled the elections, seeking to return Ghana to civilian rule as his insistence on immunity for himself and other members of the Supreme Military Council as a condition for the restoration of civilian rule rankled many Ghanaians (The New York Times, 1979).

Nevertheless, on 4th June 1979, a group of junior military officers toppled the Akuffo regime in a bloody coup d’état with Rawlings as the leader (The New York Times, 1979). The 4th June Revolution closed all borders of Ghana and accused the Akuffo regime of having thrown the economy into disarray, and the revolution sought to redeem the tarnished reputation of the armed forces (The New York Times, 1979). The regime led by

Rawlings called for the sale of all essential goods at controlled prices. The AFRC of the 4th June Revolution stuck to the election schedules of the Akuffo regime despite its housecleaning and fight against kalabule, thus returning Ghana to civilian rule (The New York Times, 1979).

Housecleaning referred to purging the army of perceived image tarnish due to the governance styles of Acheampong and Akuffo. The AFRC through firing squad executed four men shot with General Akuffo and General Afrifa: Col. Roger Felli, a former Foreign Affairs Commissioner; Cmdr. Joy K. Amedume, a former Labour Minister; Maj. Gen. Robert Kotei, a former Chief of Defense Staff, and former Air Vice Marshal George Boakye. Gen. Ignatius K. Acheampong, and Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Utuka, a former Border Guard commander, were executed for corruption on June 16, 1979. The Third Republic, which ushered in President Limann, did less as he had inherited a moribund economy. As President, Ghanaians had many expectations from him as the republic ended almost eight years of military rule (The New York Times, 1979).

In 1981, a member of the PNP (Limann's party), Addae Amoako, sued his party over the disbursement of the Chiavelli Loan, which caused ripples in the public domain. Thus, on 31st December 1981, some members of the PNP youth wing supported the coup d'état and took prominent positions in the PNDC (National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, pp. 49-50). As the government bridled itself in political chaos and corruption amidst economic chaos, the Limann government's budget of 1981/82 could not secure parliamentary approval, indicative of a collapsed administration. The challenges characteristic of the Limann government catalysed the coup d'état, the last of all revolutions pre-Fourth Republic (The New York Times, 1987).

The second coming of Rawlings as a leader did not surprise Ghanaians much and received public support. The PNDC enjoyed wide support from Ghanaians, especially chiefs, students, and ordinary Ghanaians (Daily Graphic, 1982; The Washington Post, 1982). In justifying the overthrow of the Limann administration, Flt. Lt. Rawlings remarked that instead of the then government taking up the challenge to lead a nation that was pumped up and ready to continue to rectify the rot of the past, to defy any obstacle and to solidify the unity and purposefulness of our nation, the reverse is what occurred (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/559, 1987; Dash, 1982). He further posited, "...it never struck me that some kind of supportive system...would have to be organised to ensure that the people of this country held on to their newly-won freedom, to ensure that they dictate the terms of survival..." (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/559, 1987).

Accordingly, to Rawlings, governance and leadership hinged on populism and the co-option of civilians. The PNDC did this to legitimise the regime and ensure political stability. Therefore, Rawlings stated, "I ask for nothing less than a revolution, something that will transform the social and economic order of this country...rich or poor, should be part of the country's decision-making process" (People's Daily Graphic, 1982). In legitimising the seizure of power, Rawlings, during the heydays of the PNDC, used populist methods to endear himself to the public. It was common to find Rawlings mingling among ordinary people in the markets, such as digging and cleaning big, dirty gutters with his supporters (Nana Hemmea Sakyibea, 2024). On 23rd January 1982, Rawlings named his cabinet, which consisted of sixteen civilians, and remarked that his regime was not handing over power, urging the appointees to regard their appointments as "a chance to serve the people sacrificially"(The New York Times, 1982).

The Rawlings-led regime thrived on the direct support of the army and appointed officers and other ranks as second-in-command in all ministries, state organisations and agencies, and regional and district administrations (Agyeman-Duah, 1987, p. 616). The PNDC passed two decrees: the Citizens Vetting Committee Law, 1982 (PNDC Law 1) and the National Investigations Committee Law, 1982 (PNDC Law 2), where the former established the basis for a body to investigate individuals "...lifestyle and expenditures substantially exceed[ed] their known and declared incomes", and who possessed certain levels of credit balances at the banks (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1119, 1982). The latter body was to investigate acts of malfeasance involving the misuse or abuse of state funds, tax evasion and corrupt practices leading to the loss of public funds (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1119, 1982). This 'revolutionary justice' resulted in gross human rights abuses, the rule of workers and people's defence committees, and the encompassing of civil society (Birikorang & Aning 2016, p. 85).

The Rawlings regime established a new judicial system under the Public Tribunals Law, 1982 (PNDC Law 24). The Tribunal had its hierarchy from community to district to regional and national, aiming to break the legal monopoly of trained legal professionals. The Tribunals had jurisdictions over only criminal matters, with its Chair as a trained lawyer and the rest as ordinary people (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1119). The Public Tribunals were not independent of the PNDC junta in its pronouncements of verdicts. Like the Acheampong regime, the Rawlings regime meddled in the affairs of chieftaincy, passing the Chieftaincy (Restoration of Status of Chiefs) Law, 1983 (PNDC Law 75) to rectify the NLC Decree 112 as well as destooled several chiefs such as Kevin Dzang (Nandom Naa), and Nana Okutwer Bekoe III, Chief of Gomoa Adda (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1120, 1983; Human Rights Watch, 1992, pp. 5-8).

On 30th June 1982, a member of the junta and their accomplices abducted and murdered three High Court Justices and the Personnel Director of the Ghana Industrial Holdings Corporation (GIHOC), Major (Rtd) Sam Acquah (International Commission of Jurists, 1983). The three murdered Justices were Justice Fred Poku Sarkodie, Justice Kwadwo Agyei and Justice Cecilia Koranteng-Addo. Five PNDC members, Amartey-Kwei, L/Cpl S.K. Amedeka, L/Cpl Michael Senyah, Tony Tekpor and Johnny Dzandu were implicated with one, Amartey-Kwei convicted and executed. sentenced to death by firing squad. Amartey-Kwei, Tekpor, Senyah and Dzandu were executed by firing squad, but Amedeka escaped from prison.

With the murder of the four persons and the economic crisis of 1983, the popularity of the PNDC started to dwindle among sections of the Ghanaian populace. NUGS called on the PNDC to hand over power to a national unity government pending new elections. There was a mass exodus of Ghanaians to Nigeria and several coups d'état attempts. Juxtaposing the reactions of Ghanaians to Acheampong's mismanagement of the economy with the PNDC's economic malaise, Rawlings, in curtailing opposition, focused on the media as it saw it as a burgeoning outlet to promote the aims of the regime. Therefore, Rawlings appointed new editors for the state-owned newspapers, the Daily Graphic (renamed as the People's Daily Graphic), the Ghanaian Times, The Mirror and the Weekly Spectator, and imposed censorship on them (National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, p 82). Senior editors (John Kugblenu, Tommy Thompson and Mike Adjei) of private news outlets, specifically the Free Press, were arrested and detained, causing the paper to cease publication. The PNDC further banned several newspapers (the Ghanaian Voice, The Palaver, the Herald Tribune, The Chronicle and the Christian Messenger) and confiscated their properties via the passage of PNDC Law 3 (Forfeiture of Assets and Transfers of Shares and other Property Interests (Unipress Limited) Law, 1982) (National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, pp. 82-83).

The revolutionary tribunals prosecuted and convicted as they waged war against corruption but lost their sting by 1986. The PDCs and WDCs were scrapped in 1984 and replaced with the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR). Reforms were introduced through PNDC Law 78 in August 1984, which allowed for appeals to be filed against the judgements of the Public Tribunals (Human Rights Watch, 1992, pp. 1-3). The masses welcomed these changes as the Public Tribunals, which had previously operated without oversight from the official judiciary, were seen as instruments used for repressing and eliminating political opponents.

According to Mathias Cudjoe, a member of the CDR, some fetish priests were killed due to allegations that they had made a charm to harm the PNDC Chairman. Five employees of the Controller and Accountant General's Department swindled ₵21 million through forged cheques; a manager of a national bank at Aburi embezzled ₵83 million; a bursar at Aggrey Memorial Secondary School squandered ₵11 million, and twenty-seven officials of the educational sector in the Eastern Region embezzled over ₵300 million (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/609, 1985; Agyeman-Duah 1987, pp. 627-629; Ahwoi, 2021, pp. 118-121).

In May 1985, the Rawlings regime executed 11 people for an attempted coup d'état, which consisted of 8 army officers, 2 civilian armed robbers, and a soldier found guilty of murdering a civilian in a bus-line dispute (The New York Times, 1985). In 1986, the PNDC regime promulgated the Proclamation (Supplementary and Consequential Provisions) (Amendment) Law (PNDCL 145) dismissing seventeen judges and a magistrate without reference to the Judicial Council or Chief Justice and promoted other judges to the Superior Court (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1056; National Reconciliation Commission Report, 2004, p. 77). Moreover, the PNDC regime banned the TUC, dismissed thirty-six union leaders and activists of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), and dismissed two hundred striking workers from the Ghana Italian Petroleum Company

(GHAIP). Furthermore, the military junta enacted the Chieftaincy (Restoration of Status of Chiefs) Law, 1983 (PNDCL 75), reinstating destooled chiefs to their positions and traditional seats under NLC Decree 112. As a result, it successfully reinstated sixteen out of the one hundred and thirty-three chiefs impacted by NLC Decree 112 (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1029, 1983; National Reconciliation Commission 2004, pp. 79-80).

By the sixth year of the Rawlings regime, pressure began mounting to return to a democratic regime in 1986/87. There was much pressure from local stakeholders and international creditors to return to democracy. With the implementation of educational reforms in 1987, the students were hostile to the reforms, which required them to undertake more financial contributions. It resulted in several protests in 1987, forcing the PNDC regime to close university campuses and apprehend various student leaders. The closures served effectively to neutralise the protests. To show a commitment to a return to democracy, the regime in 1987 promulgated the “Blue Book,” which outlined the requirements for the district assembly elections. The proposals received country-wide discussions, and in 1988, the Local Government Law (PNDCL 207) was promulgated to pave the way for the district elections (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1124, 1988).

The PNDC Law 207 gave birth to decentralisation as the preparatory stage of returning to democracy. The decentralisation policy introduced a three-tier local governance system—the regional councils, district councils, and area/town/village councils as the base—with the elections of members from district councils and all other members of the regional councils appointed. The Regional Secretary, a political regime appointee, chaired the regional council. The Regional Council’s fundamental functions encompassed planning and programming the overall development of the region within a broad policy guideline of the PNDC regime, coordinating and supervising the activities of the district councils and state institutions; the allocation of central grants to district councils and the examination and approval of provisional expenditures of district councils under its jurisdiction (Ghanaian Times, 1988; Ayee, 1990).

Consequently, the promulgation of the PNDC Law 207 resulted in the creation of a hundred and ten district assemblies where the district councils, the basic units, were responsible for the coordination and monitoring of policy planning and implementation within their respective areas of jurisdiction, making bye-laws and levying taxes, providing social amenities and infrastructure such as markets, school buildings and equipment, lorry parks, enforcement of public sanitation guidelines, construction and maintenance of streets, bridges, culverts, public building and road rehabilitation (Ghanaian Times 1988). The December 1988 and February 1989 District Assemblies Elections were supervised by the National Commission for Democracy (NCD), formerly the Electoral Commission, headed by Justice Daniel Francis Kweipe Annan, a Justice of the Appeals Court, a former Chairman of the Ghana Police Council, and Chairman of the National Economic Commission under the PNDC in 1984. The NCD was allocated C1.7 billion cedis out of the total budget of the decentralisation programme of C6 billion. The election registration stood at 5,899,098 (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/590, 1989; GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/763, 1989; Ayee, 1990). The country was divided the country into Zone One: Ashanti, Central, Eastern, and Western Regions; Zone Two: Upper West, Upper East, and Northern Regions; and Zone Three: Brong Ahafo, Volta, and Greater Accra Regions (Ayee 1990, p. 171).

In the context of the elections, all were eligible to contest once 18 years; there were pictures of candidates to enable the illiterate to recognise the candidates; it gave candidates a common platform to campaign before elections, and no candidate was to pay for any filing fee compared to C500 required under Acheampong, the equivalent of a worker’s month salary (Ghanaian Times, 1988). Here, the elections saw its highest turnout since 1958, 59.3% compared to 18.4% under the Acheampong regime. The election was the highest in thirty years, primarily attributed to the public education of the regime’s institutions. The district assembly elections saw twelve thousand four hundred and eighty-two people contesting (Ayee, 1990; Electoral Commission, 2015).

There was an attempted assassination of Rawlings in September 1989. Therefore, from September 1989 to June 1990, Rawlings assumed direct command of the armed forces (Ahwoi 2020). The PNDC, in attempting to ensure stability, also regulated religion and its associated activities, requiring the licensing of churches before operation. In 1989, the regime ordered a freeze on two foreign churches operationalised in Ghana and deemed them dangerous to Ghanaian society. The Rawlings regime gave these churches—the Jehovah’s Witness and the Latter-Day Saints—a week’s ultimatum to evacuate from the shores of Ghana (The Washington Post,

1989). The junta described their existence and activities as a disturbance of public order and a threat to the sovereignty of Ghana, saying: “Despite repeated warnings, the two sects have continued to conduct themselves in a manner which not only undermine the sovereignty of Ghana but is also not conducive to public order” (GH/PRAAD/RG8/2/1125; The Washington Post, 1989; Los Angeles Times, 1989). According to Madam Mary Apau Nyarko, a resident of Tafo 4 Miles: “As a Jehovah’s Witness under the PNDC, it was criminal for us to congregate; hence, she and her colleagues secretly met in her house until Ghana returned to democracy...” (Interview with Mary Apau 2023).

With the massive enthusiasm from Ghanaians in the District Assemblies Elections, the PNDC subsequently became responsive to the people's demands (Ghanaian Times, 1988). Rawlings asserted that the ballot box was “...the best way of judging the electoral process and ... what the PNDC has criticised is the abuse of the ballot box by politicians We want the ballot box to assume its true functions as the true arbiter of the electoral process” (Information Digest, 1988). In 1991, due to enormous internal and external pressures on the regime calling for a return to civilian rule, there were presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992. The internal pressures came from bodies such as the NUGS, TUC, Professional Bodies, and former politicians with the IMF, World Bank, and Western creditors tying aid to democratisation. On 18th May 1992, the PNDC unbanned political parties and announced that elections would be held in November and December 1992, forming eight political parties.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined the military regimes of General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong and Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings in Ghana, focusing on their governance styles and the underlying economic and institutional factors that led to their rise and establishment. It aimed to fill this gap by assessing Acheampong and Rawlings' differing approaches to governance. The research employs a qualitative historical method, utilising primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, newspapers, and scholarly articles. It highlights military interventions' significant role in Ghana's post-independence political landscape, with coups d'état common across many African nations. Since the colonial era, the military has evolved from a coercive arm of the colonial government to a significant political player in contemporary African politics, often contradicting its intended apolitical nature.

The Acheampong coup d'état can be termed a referee-transactional coup as it took power due to the perceived power vacuum, which had caused the economy's deterioration, hence lacking any clear programmes for the political and socioeconomic changes. It focused on bettering many of the armed forces, particularly their demands for promotions, better remunerations, housing and equipment and the personal ambitions of soldiers; hence, the Acheampong regime predominantly featured senior military officers in charge of state institutions. In contrast, the coup of Rawlings was a reactionary attack on corruption, privileges, and caste, where caste included the military itself. The coup reacted to the worsening living standards; hence, it initially lacked any clear ideas about restructuring the economy. The membership of the Rawlings regime was civilian-military.

The Acheampong and Rawlings regimes initially attempted to solve the economic issues that had bedevilled Ghana. In his inaugural broadcast, General Acheampong outlined specific policies to deal with the economic quagmire Ghana found itself in. Yet, Rawlings, in his inaugural speech at midnight on 31st December 1981, offered no details of the immediate takeover of the reigns of governance aside from saying that the people and the military should be part of the decision-making of Ghana. Hence, by 1983, the regime was forced to implement specific policies of structural adjustments, including attacking inflated government budgets, subsidies, and exchange rates.

Acheampong's regime is characterised by a nationalistic and non-partisan approach to governance, avoiding a return to constitutional rule during his tenure. In contrast, Rawlings later embraced a more inclusive representative democracy, allowing for greater participation from the populace. While Acheampong resisted political pluralism, Rawlings eventually restored civilian rule, significantly shifting Ghana's governance structure. This highlights a key contrast between the two leaders' ideologies and approaches to military rule.

Furthermore, the paper considered the socio-economic context in which these military regimes operated. Economic mismanagement, policies focused on import substitution and export promotion, and widespread corruption were common features that defined both regimes. It argued that the military's initial motivations for intervention were linked to the economic crises faced by Ghana during the preceding democratic administrations and the perceived ineffectiveness of civilian politicians in addressing these issues. The analysis situates the governance styles of Acheampong and Rawlings within the framework of Evolutionary Governance Theory, positing that these regimes emerged partly due to the alienation of the military from conventional governance structures. While both regimes share similarities in their military backgrounds, their differing approaches to governance and their legacies in restoring or hindering constitutional order reflect broader tensions within Ghana's political evolution during this period. In conclusion, this study not only enhances our understanding of military governance in Ghana but also underscores the intricate interplay of economic dynamics, leadership styles, and military roles in shaping the nation's political trajectory. The insights derived from this comparative analysis carry significant implications for future discourse on governance in post-colonial African states.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Declarations

Ethics Approval

The study research procedures followed the ethical standards of the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The exemption of this study was because the data from this questionnaire were anonymous, and there was no way for readers to identify the participants. No name lists correspond to the questionnaire respondents, and the names of the participant universities were not mentioned.

Consent to Participate

All subjects were informed about the research, and all participants who were enrolled in the study provided informed consent.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no competing interests.

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