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A Comparative Study of Challenger-Incumbent Strategies in Ghanaian Presidential Campaign: The Case of John Agyekum Kufuor

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Abstract

In recent years, growing research interest in challenger-incumbent campaign communication has provided illuminating insights into the kinds of strategies favoured by challengers and incumbents in presidential elections. However, most of these studies tend to focus on two or more presidential candidates. This has resulted in little knowledge about the rhetorical strategies of the same candidate who contested as a challenger in a previous election, became president and won again as an incumbent in the next election. In this paper, we explore and compare challenger-incumbent strategies as they manifest in the presidential campaign of John Agyekum Kufuor's (JAK) who won the 2000 presidential elections as a fresh candidate and, for a second term, won in 2004, as an incumbent. A qualitative analysis of four of his campaign speeches in both elections revealed that as a challenger, JAK presented

himself as an agent of change and resorted to negative campaigning rooted in bellicose rhetoric. He marketed himself with can-do optimism that portrayed him as the quintessence of the cure-all for Ghana's socio-economic problems. Conversely, as an incumbent, JAK adopted temperate rhetoric amidst self-promotion on the wings of his accomplishments and personal qualities. He appropriated the ethos of traditional rulers to present a viable image of himself as a performing president. The findings of the study have implications for presidential candidates, particularly, for challengers who are eager to win elections and incumbents keen to maintain power.

Key Words: challenger campaign, candidate, incumbent, presidential.

Introduction

In presidential campaigns every candidate adopts a certain style of campaign rhetoric to suit his status as a challenger or an incumbent (Anekjumnongporn, 2004). The incumbent is the sitting president seeking reelection while the challenger is the candidate trying to win power from the sitting president. Each one of these has their own style of discourse as they face different rhetorical states (Smith, 2010). Thus, the status of a candidate significantly impacts on the campaign plan (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Therefore, an important factor in campaign communication is the dichotomy between the strategies employed by the incumbent to seek another term in office and the way in which the challenger strives to override the incumbent to win power.

Communication scholars have, however, not treated challenger versus incumbent strategies involving the same presidential candidate who won an election as a challenger and sought reelection as an incumbent to win a second term in office. Such an intellectual gap calls for a comparative study of the campaign communication of the same candidate from the challenger and incumbent perspectives. John Agyekum Kufuor (JAK), the second President in Ghana's Fourth Republic is the focal candidate for this study. The selection of JAK was informed by the fact that he is the only presidential candidate in Ghana who has ever won the presidency as a challenger and as an incumbent in two subsequent elections. JAK won the 2000 Ghana presidential election as a challenger and sought reelection in 2004 as the incumbent President and won a second term in office. Our aim in this paper is to embark on a comparative study of what became known as JAK's "positive change" and "so far so good" campaign slogans in the 2000 and 2004 Ghanaian presidential elections respectively. In particular, we examine how the contrasting status of JAK in the two different campaigns impacted on his rhetorical inventions. The main question that guides the study is, how did the strategies created by JAK as a challenger contrast with those he invented as an incumbent in his reelection campaign?

JAK'S Presidential Ambition

JAK entered presidential race for the first time in 1996 general elections as the presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). He, however, lost to Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings (JJ), the incumbent President. In 2000, he again won the mandate of the NPP as the presidential candidate and finally won the presidency, with his "Positive Change" campaign message. JAK's presidential victory in 2000 was historic as it marked the first time in the annals of Ghanaian politics that one democratically elected government handed over power peacefully to another democratically elected government. Accordingly, JAK went down in history as the first and only opposition leader in Ghana whose campaign message was convincing enough to get voters to vote out the formidable incumbent party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and its antecedent, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military regime, which metamorphosed into NDC (Agyekum, 2013). Together, these regimes, under JJ, had ruled the country for 19 years. It is not surprising that most political analysts refer to the two regimes as P(NDC). JAK's victory was therefore considered pivotal to the nation's transition to democracy.

JAK, as a sitting president, sought re-election in 2004 with a repackaged campaign message labeled, "Positive Change Part II", dubbed "So far so good", and won a second and final term in office. These

two electoral successes elevated JAK to political eminence, as political commentators perceived him as possessing what it took to influence electorates to end the political dominance of the P(NDC) regime(s). He left office on January 7, 2009 after successfully completing two terms in office.

Related Literature

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is underpinned by two theoretical standpoints: The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse (henceforth, the functional theory) developed by Benoit (1999) and the Aristotelian Triad (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*). The functional theory in its analyses of political campaign communication maintains that the functions of political campaign messages are three-fold: acclaims, attacks, and defense. A candidate seeking political office may enhance his/her own credentials and desirability as a capable office-holder through *acclaims*, which involve statements extolling candidate virtues, achievements, and benefits that accompany his/her election (Dudek & Partacz, 2009). Candidates may also resort to *attacks* to undermine and downgrade their opponents as incapable office-holders. These attacks are directed at the negative traits of the opponent(s) and highlight those that voters frown on, and it is challengers who attack more (Benoit, 1999). Again, when candidates are attacked by their opponents, they *defend* themselves through refutations. Each of these three functions: *acclaims*, *attacks* and *defence* manifests itself in two issues: *policy* and *character*. The theory postulates that utterances regarding policy are divided into sub-categories: past deeds, future plans and general goals. Character utterances, on the other hand, are classified into personal qualities, leadership ability and ideals. In general, the functional theory claims that in principle, acclaims are used more commonly than attacks, and the incumbent will attack less and acclaim more while the challenger will attack more. The functional theory will serve as a helpful framework in understanding the extent to which JAK's contrasting status as a challenger and incumbent influenced his persuasive strategies.

With regard to persuasive strategies Aristotle (*Rhetoric*) proposes three possible rhetorical proofs: ethos (the character and credibility of the speaker), pathos (the emotional state of the hearer) where the speaker puts the audience in a certain mindset; logos (the argument itself) referred to as the "Aristotelian Triad", these must be combined (though not in equal measure) in any speech for the achievement of the persuasive intent of the speech. Aristotle emphasises the rhetor and how he/she is able to discover in any particular case all the available means of persuasion (Aristotle, 2007); hence, he defined the rhetorician as one who is always able to see what is persuasive. Using the three rhetorical proofs in the analysis of the rhetoric of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first President, Opoku Mensah (2014) found that while Nkrumah employed logical association in his argumentation, he also used symbolism to establish his ethos and the collective memory of his audience for pathos appeals. Similarly, in this paper the Aristotelian proofs, will provide a platform for the application of the principles of rhetoric to the investigation of how JAK combined pathos, ethos and logos for the achievement of persuasion in political campaigning.

Challenger and Incumbent Strategies

Trent, Friedenbergr & Denton (2012), opined that incumbent campaign discourse arguably resonates with the electorate, essentially because having been in office as a president and enjoying all the trappings of the office, he/she is capable of deploying a varied range of rhetorical strategies to hype his/her achievements. A challenger on the other hand, has nothing to show in terms of presidential experience. Indeed, a challenger has a penchant for discussing character-related issues rather than emphasizing his or her future plans. Trent et al. (2012) further contended that challengers attack the record of the opponent, take aggressive positions on issues, call for change, emphasize optimism for the future and speak to traditional values instead of calling for changes in values. Incumbents on the other hand attract and control media attention by creating pseudo-events, emphasizing

accomplishments, depending on surrogates for the campaign trail, among others. A further interesting observation made by Trent et al. (2012) is that incumbents usually perform better in elections than challengers, adding that in the US, election results indicate that in the twentieth century only five presidents lost their reelection showing that 75% of incumbent presidents have been reelected. This presupposes that in the US incumbents stand a better chance of winning the presidency while for challengers winning the presidency becomes an uphill task.

Contributing to the challenger-incumbent dichotomous style, Agyekum (2013, p.44) opines that incumbents persuade the masses to resist change and “stick to their existing allegiance, and continue with an established voting pattern.” Druckman et al., (2009) also argue that challengers are prone to emphasizing issues, personal features and party while incumbents highlight factors that relate to incumbency. The authors again maintain that in response to competition, challengers take risks but incumbents will only take risks when the competition gets tougher.

In an earlier study, Proctert, and Scherick – Hamlin (1996) also find that in terms of attacks while challengers will deliver them on their own, incumbents rely on surrogates, and rightly so because the incumbent being the President is expected to use decorous language in his/her public speech. This runs counter to the observation by Trent et al. (2012) that challengers rely on surrogates, usually their running mates, for attacks. This contrast may result from a change in trends in campaign styles over the years. Thus, the different rhetorical strategies of incumbents and challengers, underscore the fact that the strategies adopted by candidates are predicated upon the status with which they enter the presidential race. Together these studies provide deeper insights for our knowledge and understanding of the plethora of strategies employed by candidates.

Strategies in Campaign Communication

A considerable amount of literature has grown up around various strategies used by presidential candidates. Among the strategies include hate speech (Osewe-Akubor, 2015; Lau & Rouvner 2009); emotions (Melaine & Hepler, 2015; Goldman, 2011); slogans ((Asah-Asante, 2015; Bartlett & Rayner, 2014); and propaganda (Ayi, 2013; Ngoa, 2011; Omozura & Ezejideaku, 2009). For instance, Agyekum (2013, p.110), observes, and rightly so, that politicians employ negative campaigning to “throw psychological bombs at the hearts of their opponents and damage their emotions”, and reputation, making the targets less admirable candidates. This observation is supported by Lau and Rouvner (2009) who argue that in the US, the electoral defeats of candidates John Kerry – 2004, Michael Dukakis – 1988 and Bary Goldwater – 1964 were largely due to negative campaigning against them. Similarly, in the run up to the 2015 elections in Nigeria, Osewe-Akubor (2015) reports that campaign platforms were turned into a theatre of hate speech. In the same way Asamoah, Yebaoah-Asiamah, and Osei-Kojo (2014) contend that in Ghana the constant use of intemperate language does not only affect the quality of political discourse, but it also creates tension during every election year. In an earlier study, Mayer (1996), however, had contended that negative campaigning offered valuable information to voters to enable them to take voting decisions, arguing further that but for negative campaigning, candidates would turn campaigns into “a procession of lies, exaggerations and unrealistic promises” (p. 443). Mayer could be right in his view of negative campaigning, but the literature is replete with voices of disapproval about negative campaigning, making Mayer a lone voice in the wilderness.

Propaganda as a campaign strategy has equally attracted some attention. Ayi (2013) notes that in the 2008 presidential election in Ghana, Prof. Atta Mills, Nana Akufo Addo and Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom adopted propaganda rooted in audience-driven and actor-driven strategies to denigrate their opponents. Ezejideaku and Ugwu (2007) also claim that if propaganda were the only strategy to win elections in Nigeria, then some politicians would outclass the others when it came to the persuasive use of language. Interestingly, propaganda as a rhetorical tool in campaigning is viewed as a two-sided linguistic tool (Brunello, 2014; Ayi, 2013; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012) that can damage reputation and also build

relationships. This position is supported by Ngoa (2011) who argues that propaganda is used to create disaffection for opponents as well as sustain friendship of allies and, where possible, extend cooperation overtures to neutrals. These positions confirm an earlier position held by Walton (1997) that propaganda is “not inherently bad or illogical. It has a purpose as an organized and methodical type of discourse that is recognizable as such” (p.386).

The use of emotional appeals in campaign has equally been a subject of debate. For instance, it has been argued that emotional appeals in political campaigning deprive voters of taking rational voting decisions on “which democratic processes rest” (Brader, 2005). Likewise, Keltner and Gross (1999) opine that the use of emotions in campaigning serves no useful purpose, as it impedes common sense and rational thinking. Regardless, emotional appeals continue to be a cardinal strategy in campaigns. Barack Obama’s “Yes, we can” refrain in the 2008 elections inspired hope in Americans to vote for him (see Finn, 2010; Ash, 2010). Earlier, J.F. Kennedy, 1960; Ronald Reagan, 1980; and Bill Clinton, 1992; had run hope-based campaigns to win the presidency (Goldman, 2011).

It has also been established that political parties and candidates employ slogans in election as a political mnemonic for purposes of reaching the electorate without ceremony regardless of time and space. A slogan could be a word, a phrase, a clause or a sentence. Slogans indicate an increasing personalization of politics and attention on party leaders (Young, 2006) as well as serving as the strategic fulcrum of campaign narratives (Rayner, 2014). For example, the “yes, we can” mantra of Obama’s campaign message in the 2008 US elections resonated with Americans, (Hodges, 2014). Similarly, in Ghana the 2000 elections NPP’s slogans: “asegho” (down there), and “positive change”, “we are moving forward” (Nana Akufo Addo, 2008) and the NDC’s “change” and “better Ghana agenda” (Mills, 2008; Mahama, 2012) contributed immensely in getting the campaign messages imprinted on the minds of the electorate (Asah-Asante, 2015). However, Hodges (2014) cautions that no matter how artful a slogan is, it cannot achieve its desired political goal unless it is first placed within “some kind of speech chain that allows it to diffuse across multiple contexts” (p.363). Thus, the success of a political slogan in spreading a campaign message is predicated upon the potency of the “intertextual web into which it enters” (ibid).

The studies reviewed above, no doubt, have provided elucidating insights into challenger and incumbent as well as campaign discourse strategies in general. Nonetheless, the review has shown that no study has compared the campaign communication strategies of the same candidate running as a challenger and an incumbent in separate elections. As a consequence, the present study is undertaken as an attempt to fill this gap on challenger versus incumbent campaign rhetoric, particularly, involving the same presidential candidate.

Methodology and Data

The study employed the qualitative research approach where themes or generalizations were extracted from evidence and organized to present a coherent reliable picture about JAK’s campaign discourse. The qualitative research design created an opportunity for an interpretative and descriptive analyses of the rhetorical features employed in the selected campaign speeches of JAK.

In all, four campaign speeches were used for the study: two from the 2000 elections when JAK ran as a challenger and two from the 2004 elections when JAK campaigned as an incumbent. The speeches which were stored in audio and video tapes were collected from NPP headquarters and the Kufuor Foundation, both in Accra. A list of the four speeches appears in Table 1 below

Table 1: Selected Campaign Speeches of JAK

Town	Year
Ho	2000
Sopke	2000
Jirapa	2004
Nadowli	2004

After the selection of the speeches, they were manually transcribed in clean read also referred to as smooth verbatim which involves a word for word transcription without the inclusion of fillers like *uhm, ah, yeah, you know, right* (Philipp, 2014). The data were then typed to serve as the primary source for the ensuing rhetorical analysis. This was followed by coding based on the guidelines set by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in coding texts. First, the speeches were marked up by assigning labels, names and notations to sentences for the open coding. Then, the axial coding was done by re-grouping and re-categorizing concepts along the axis of particular themes ranging from individual words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs to whole texts (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Next was selective coding where themes central to the rhetorical strategies were identified and regrouped into higher order headings to minimize the number of categories by collapsing similar or dissimilar ones into wider higher order categories in line with suggestions by Elo & Kyngas (2008). Through these procedures the dominant rhetorical strategies were identified for the analyses.

Analyses and Discussion

The analyses and discussion section seek to address the research question: “How did the strategies created by JAK as a challenger contrast with those he invented as an incumbent in his reelection campaign?” We begin with JAK running as a challenger.

JAK as a Challenger

Agenda for Positive Change

As a challenger, JAK constantly called for change on the wings of the NPP’s slogan, “Positive Change”. *Change*, thus, became the buzzword in his campaign messages. On his campaign trail at Sopke he declared:

Why Ghana must have a new government, I think is obvious or should be obvious. The economy has collapsed. I’m sure there are many teachers here. The quality in education has dropped out. People have no access to health care because it is too expensive. The youth have no hope of employment when they leave school.

With these words, JAK catalogues examples of the government’s failures, in a string of logos appeals. He gets the audience to reason that the negatives and incompetence of the ruling government cannot escape their (NPP) watchful eyes. The collapse of the economy, fall in education, expensive health care and lack of employment for the youth evoke a feeling of gloom and hopelessness in the audience. These are vital performance indicators that provide voters with assessment tools for them to make political decisions. The reference to the aforementioned sectors of the economy is also an appeal to the basic wants of the audience, to paint a picture of hard conditions. In the words of Snider (2005, p.180), “the great speaker is one who understands these basic wants and can then adapt them in her speeches from audience to audience.” The thrust of JAK’s argument is the need to change the government.

JAK persistently incorporated talk of reform into his call for change at Sopke. *This year Ghana must change government through the ballot box*. In this extract JAK speaks from a position of authority

commanding voters to vote out the NDC government. By defining the method by which the change is going to happen, “*through the ballot box*”, JAK alludes to change of governments that have taken place through military takeovers. With this he appeals to voters’ sense of fear of coup de tats. This allusion is repeated at Ho when he observed, *I want us to change government through the ballot box this year.*

The call for change became a catchphrase and painted a picture of a run-down nation in which JAK presented himself as the agent of this change. According to Trent et al. (2012), challengers are confronted with the problem of persuading voters to accept the need for change and persuading voters to accept the challenger as the likely candidate to bring the change. It is not surprising, therefore, that JAK called on the audience to *Vote to pick a government that will serve your best interest.* The call for change is encapsulated in the NP *that will serve your interest.* By inference JAK shows an adversarial characterization of the NDC government as callous and hard-hearted. As a consequence, the audience should *Give Kufuor and NPP the chance.* JAK presents to the electorate an alternative government that is caring and sensitive to their interests and aspirations, confirming the observation that challengers offer an alternative discourse to counter the success stories that incumbents present (Bonikwoski & Gidron, 2016). JAK further stresses that the benefits that the change will bring will be so tremendous that they will *live to thank God for the vote you did.* The clause contains an implied negation in that JAK subtly draws voters’ attention that should they fail to vote for the NPP, they will live to regret their action. The impression created here is that it is only the NPP that has the political savoir-faire to meet the aspirations of the audience. Such words of inspiration and hope resonate with the emotions of the audience and serve as a catalyst for the needed change because *Our country is at the crossroads, searching for a way and since we are in place and holding this vision, we should let the nation know that we are ready here and now to assume the leadership role* (Ho). Anything that is at a crossroads has got to a very important stage in its development where there is the tendency for it to go one way or another. JAK’s use of “crossroads”, however, has an ominous connotation. It depicts a nation at a critical stage where the economy is teetering on the brink of collapse. JAK’s aim is to instil in the audience a feeling of a looming danger, and unless the NPP assumes the leadership role of the country the consequence might be disastrous. This is a pathos appeal designed to evoke voters’ sense of fear. JAK reiterates this shared vision of the party and urges the audience to embark on a vigorous campaign to inculcate the electorate with this vision as well, for the change they all hope for.

JAK doggedly harps on his vision of transforming Ghana. His statements are, therefore, imbued with images of a political messiah, a redeemer and a reformer. These qualities bestow on JAK the forte of a liberator intensely eager for transformation. At Ho he reinforces his change agenda when he reasons, *the nation that used to be called Gold Coast has been reduced to the poor post. We must address that. Ghanaians are tired.* JAK deliberately plays with the country’s former name, “Gold Coast, to contrast it with “poor post” to bemoan the current state of affairs. The name, “Gold Coast,” was derived from the country’s rich gold deposits during the colonial times. The antithesis *Gold Coast/poor coast* is an appeal to the audience’s sense of “the good old days” which sharply contrasts with bad contemporary times under the ruling government. It must be noted, however, that the rosy picture painted about “Gold Coast” to contradict “poor post” under the NDC is a fallacy as well as an anachronism. The economy of the “Gold Coast” era was not as buoyant as JAK wants the audience to believe, just as the NDC did not exist as a political party by then. To hold only the NDC culpable for the nation’s woes since colonial times smacks of a travesty of objective criticism of one’s political opponent.

Victor-in-Waiting (VIW)

As a challenger, JAK created the notion of a victor-in-waiting, a strategy where a candidate creates the impression that he/she has already won the election and the opponent has already lost (Corcoran, 1998 as cited in Stogsdill, 2013). According to Corcoran (1998), there are three indicators of the VIW strategy; namely, *loss of power, transfer of political legitimacy* and *closure of public division.* The data

showed evidence of the first indicator of the VIW strategy, *loss of power*. JAK's statements suggested that he had already won the presidency and the candidate of the ruling party, Mills, who was also the Vice-President, had already lost the election.

During a rally at Ho he enthusiastically told the teeming crowd, *we are starting our victory march here at Ho*, creating the impression of a victorious NPP and a vanquished NDC, thereby putting the crowd in a jubilant mood as if the party had already won the elections. Again, JAK claimed at Sopke, *When we see the back of NDC, we see the front of NPP*. The statement foreshadows the loss of the NDC and the victory of the NPP. The *back of NDC* and *the front of NPP* symbolically and metaphorically refer to a defeat for NDC and a win for NPP respectively. The *back of the NDC* again evokes images of a fight between two combatants where the stronger has floored the weaker and the latter is lying helplessly supine on the ground. Such is what JAK uses to dazzle his audience. In their minds' eyes the audience see the NDC struggling and sprawling and consigned to the ground following a humiliating defeat from NPP. A victory for the NPP is further reinforced at Sopke *NPP will be giving Ghana a new government*. Similarly, at Ho 1, JAK reiterated, *I'm telling you Ghana is seeking for a way forward, and the eyes of Ghanaians are on us*. Collectively, these acts of self-assurance, paint a picture of JAK posturing himself as already having won the election, thereby adopting a victor –in –waiting posture.

Again, as part of the enactment of *loss of power*, challengers attack the opponent's weaknesses and failures. As observed by Stogsdill (2013), when challengers attack the opponent's record and emphasize optimism for the future, they are enacting a VIW strategy. For instance, Franklin Roosevelt, using the VIW strategy in his campaign in the 1932 US presidential election, attacked President Hoover as a failed President (Stogsdill, 2013).

Among the several issues that JAK attacked the NDC on was corruption in government, governance, the economy, health, education, and respect for human rights. In his campaign he persistently described the NDC and its appointees in pejorative terms for their corrupt practices. At a rally in Ho in 2000, he noted *those people who went into power wearing "charle wote" are now all billionaires in hard currency*. In this statement JAK exploits shared knowledge in that he and some Ghanaians including his audience are aware that in Ghana politics has become a "gold mine" for most people who enter it. JAK vilifies NDC appointees as looting the nation's coffers to enrich themselves, implying that they are nation wreckers whose main intention of entering politics is to become *billionaires in hard currency* but who were hitherto wearing "charle wote", (considered cheap bathroom slippers). *Charle wote* is a striking imagery symbolizing poverty; and suggests that those politicians, came into politics as paupers, but became fabulously rich through corrupt means. The statement brings the credibility of the government and its appointees into disrepute, thereby upholding an argument by the *Functional Theory* (Benoit, 1999) that the character of a candidate is a topic in campaign discourse. The theory reduces the notion of character to a candidate's intelligence, sincerity and credibility. Therefore, in the statement, JAK question the credibility and sincerity of the NDC appointees. Having become "billionaires in hard currency" through politics, the credibility and sincerity of the appointees have been dented and tainted by ill-gotten wealth. Bent on labelling the government as corrupt JAK further opined, *these people, they dipped their hands into the public purse and just carry on with it*. The underlying assumption is gross extravagance and plundering of state coffers while government looked on for its appointees *to carry on with it*.

JAK persistently defined the NDC in negative terms. At Ho he called on the audience to help free Ghana from the *shackles of this dictatorship, this inhuman government*. The depreciatory labelling captured by *shackles, dictatorship* and *inhuman* conjures images of slavery and suffering. While *shackles* metaphorically refer to people who are fettered by the poor governance system of the ruling party, thereby preventing them from living better lives, *dictatorship* reminds the electorate of the strict and harsh governance system being meted out to them. Similarly, *inhuman* paints a portrait of a heartless

government perpetuating hardship on the citizenry and cowing them into acceptance of the status quo. JAK's negative campaign tactics confirm the assumption that most campaign discourse in Ghana is characterized by intemperate language (see Asamoah et al., 2014; Ofori, 2014).

Not only NDC as a corporate entity was framed in negative terms. Certain key personalities of the party were as well described in terms of their conduct imbuing it with distasteful attributes of corruption, arrogance of power, greed, complicity, and sadism. The sitting President, Rawlings, was characterized in the most derogatory terms. JAK incessantly made references to Rawlings' past as a military dictator by claiming that he *ruled Ghana twenty years as a tyrant*. JAK intensified his resolve to hammer Rawlings' turpitude in the following extract.

This man and his government have incarcerated people without due process of the law. In fact, as I speak to you now, the governance of the council of Christian fort (sic) which were built about 2-300 years ago for slavery, the slave trade is still being used by this government putting Ghanaians in there, shaving their head completely, not as a due process of law (Ho)

The reference to Rawlings' reign as military dictatorship during the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC, June 1979-August 1979) and Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC, 1981-1992) is meant to evoke bitter memories of the Rawlings' regime. During the PNDC era there were newspaper reports that Rawlings incarcerated one Selassie O'Sullivan-Djentuh at the Osu Castle, the then seat of Government for having an amorous relationship with Rawlings' daughter, Zenator. The story had it that JJ caused Selassie's head to be shaved with a broken bottle and put him behind bars (Ghanaweb, General News, Fri. 25 August 2000 as cited in *The Dispatch*). According to *The Dispatch*, Selassie said, "I was shaved with a rusty blade and later a broken bottle. I was told the President had ordered my hair to be brought to him" (ibid, para 13). This incident is used by JAK to insinuate, abuse of power, sadism and to question Rawlings' sense of compassion, respect for human rights and respect for human dignity. JAK equates Rawlings regime with the era of slavery turning the seat of Government into slave dungeons as was done with the castles during the slave trade. The attack on Rawlings emanates from the fact that the NDC was formed on the ethos of Rawlings. Therefore

The strategy employed by JAK here is one of collective memory which refers to "recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective" (Zelizer, 1995 as cited in Pary-Giles & Pary-Giles, 2000, p.418). In simple language, collective memory refers to memories of the past which linger in the minds of group members rather than an individual. i.e. there is a shared memory of events of the past. The AFRC era is sometimes referred to as the DARK days of Ghana's political history. The adult members of JAK's audience recall Ghanaians living in fear as a result of atrocities meted out to them under Rawlings' military regime. These included public flogging of women, extra judicial killings of a number of Ghanaians, and above all the execution of eight senior military officers including three former Heads of State under what Rawlings and his cronies called "housecleaning exercise." Rawlings himself was on record to have said, "there was the need for bloodshed to clean up the country and the exercise should start from within the Ghana Armed Forces" (*Daily Graphic*, 29 May 1979 as cited in Boafo Arthur (2006). Such a justification for bloodshed crumbles in the face of democratic minded people like JAK. Boafo Arthur argues that the executions stigmatized Rawlings' reputation and arraigned him with others who stood accused of a catalogue of human rights violations under his military regimes. Thus, by referencing the past record of Rawlings, JAK invites the audience to criminalize his reign. In this way JAK invokes Aristotelian forensic rhetoric. Aristotle (*Rhetoric*) posits that forensic rhetoric is used in a trial to establish the guilt or innocence of a person. The party in the case at law is concerned with the past where one man brings a case of wrongdoing against another man who defends himself with regard to things already done. Thus, JAK brings a case of crime against Rawlings. He stands accused at the court of public opinion, and by inference he urges the audience to

punish Rawlings' party by not voting for their presidential candidate. Such evocation of the collective memory of the audience is laden with pathos and logos appeals as far as they induce bitter memories in the audience as well as build arguments to support JAK's claim that Rawlings and for that matter the NDC has visited mayhem on Ghanaians. Voters therefore should consign them to political oblivion by rejecting them at the polls.

With these attacks it could be argued that it is rather unscrupulous for JAK to visit his perceived "criminal" record of Rawlings on the entire NDC. However, it could be also contended that because the party was formed on the ideals and principles of Rawlings, the party is an embodiment of what he stands for. This is where one cannot but agree with Aristotelian thought that an institution is largely shaped by its founder (Aristotle, 2008).

All told, the attacks epitomize JAK's negative campaigning that sought to portray Rawlings and the NDC as undesirable political elements, confirming Agyekum's (2013) assertion that politicians use negative campaigning to denigrate their opponents and damage their reputation. Such a negative evaluation is also in accord with the *Functional Theory* in its postulation that attacks have the potential to enhance the net preferability of a candidate by downgrading the opponent's apparent desirability. Thus, JAK's posturing created the impression that having reminded the audience of the NDC's weaknesses and its "criminal" record, he was cruising to victory. But while it is clear that negative campaigning increases negative opinions about the target, it is interesting to note, as pointed out by Utych (2012), that by doing so the accuser as well invites negative opinions about himself/herself. In the light of Utych's observation, it could be argued that given JAK's vilification of Rawlings and the NDC, the tendency for public opinion to describe him (JAK) as a foul-mouthed politician is high.

Emphasizing Optimism

As a challenger, JAK highlighted his ability to restore the economy and transform Ghana within a spate of four years to elicit visceral feelings of hope in his audience. Goldman (2011) suggests that hope is a positive emotion and aims at drawing "feel-good" responses; for when people are liable to feeling apprehensive of a situation, they fall prey to hope appeals. Such appeals to the audience's sense of optimism are used by JAK to create pathos. By preaching a message of optimism, JAK is replicating one major challenger strategy, as noted by Trent et al, (2012) and Stogsdill (2013).

JAK assures voters that the end of their suffering is in sight saying, at Ho *to break out of the trap of poverty and misery then the way forward is here, the NPP.*" Here JAK shows the audience how they will extricate themselves from *poverty and misery*, and they can only do this by voting the NPP into power because *we must come in to restore the economy*. The use of the modal auxiliary "must" in the statement confers on JAK and the NPP a self-imposed obligation, compulsion and necessity to resuscitate the ailing economy. He presents this construction of the restoration of the economy by representing himself as an epitome of the hope of Ghanaians. And in pursuance of his avowed goal of building a new Ghana, he declared:

We want the private sector to have access to loans because it's there that the interest rate will drop; the farmer will get access to loans to do proper agriculture; grow food plentifully for all of us to eat; leave some to be processed by industry and then even export. That's how to enrich the economy (Sopke, 2000).

In this extract, JAK draws on the image of a reformer that he creates for himself to reveal his vision for the private sector and agriculture. He does this expertly through logical reasoning, in Aristotelian terms. Appeal to logic is a strong persuasive tool in so far as humans are rational beings. This is to enable his audience to appreciate the correlation between the private sector, agriculture and industry. Being an astute politician JAK is aware that his audience need to be convinced about the kinds of measures he intends to put in place to revamp the private sector and agriculture, before they can accept his message.

When he asserts, *that's how to enrich the economy*, he expresses a strong belief in his notion of economic reforms through prudent measures, implying that turning the economy around is a crucial component of the new Ghana he envisages.

JAK again assures his audience at Ho, *We are going in there for Ghana, for achieving for Ghana*. The statement highlights the inadequacy and failure of the NDC as non-achievers who allowed their self-interest to override national interest, characterizing them as self-seeking and non-patriotic. By contrast, patriotism will be uppermost in the political thoughts of the NPP. The statement further suggests that when politicians place their self-interest first, the end result is avarice and plunder of state coffers leading to dire economic consequences. And granting that the health of the economy is among the crucial factors for Ghanaians in choosing a president the NPP's main preoccupation will be working for the national interest for the realization of their new Ghana agenda. JAK's goal is to lift the mood of the electorate from the abyss of gloom, despair and despondency to a state of expectancy and ecstasy.

Overall, as a challenger, JAK sought to realize his positive change agenda through a combination of negative campaigning and self-presentation rooted in pathos, ethos and logos appeals. He painted a picture of gloom and despondency under the NDC but balanced it with ecstasy and optimism under his presidency. His rhetoric sought to portray him as one who had already won the presidency and ushering the nation into a new birth of good governance and economic prosperity.

JAK as an Incumbent

JAK is a Performing President

JAK used his campaign communication, as an incumbent, to market himself as a performing president, thereby supporting the view by the Functional Theory that incumbents rely on their past deeds for acclaims. JAK persistently framed his reelection campaign message in tune with the refrain "so far so good" based on his accomplishments

At a Jirapa rally JAK noted, *as we drove into town I couldn't help admiring the projects I saw around. Positive change is in evidence here*. An elated JAK looks upon his own record and markets himself as a performing President. He matches his record against his pledge as a challenger in 2000 to bring about "positive change" in the lives of Ghanaians. It was on the basis of this that he dubbed his reelection campaign, "Positive Change Part II". He draws on the numerous projects that have impacted positively on the lives of the audience at Nadowli, in a series of rhetorical questions, *Who doesn't want positive change? Who can say he or she doesn't like good schools or good drinking water or good roads or community at peace with itself?* These questions are a further reinforcement of his so far so good mantra. They are used as a self-promotion strategy to taut his own achievements as the president. Specifically, the second rhetorical question is an expatiation of the first one by citing concrete examples of the benefits of positive change: *good schools, good drinking water, good roads and community at peace with itself*. JAK's intention behind these questions confirms an argument by Omozowa and Ezejideaku (2009) that in rhetorical questions, the speakers have the answers already but they sarcastically ask them to discredit their opponents. These examples not only strengthen JAK's argumentation that *positive change is in evidence*, they also support his claim that he delivers on his campaign promises. Consequently, the audience should look on his accomplishments and give him a second chance to continue with the infrastructural development. In effect, the rhetorical questions are a subtle reminder to the audience that a vote for NDC means the end of infrastructural development, rule of law, stable economy, improved living conditions, respect for human rights among others, and the electorate stand the risk of being victims of NDC's bad governance. Obviously, no group of people will turn their back on anything that brings transformation in their lives. As Bonikowski and Gidron (2015) opine, incumbents set the terms of the public debate about their accomplishments.

JAK intensified his message of rewarding good performance with another term of office as he asserted at Nadowli:

You gave me four years to manage our country within four years. There are the achievements; I want you to see, and if you are pleased, then renew the mandate for me to continue for our country.

JAK repeats *four years* to add emphasis, reinforcement, power and weight to imprint his *so far so good* message on the minds of the audience in order that they will appreciate the fact that within *four years there are the achievements*. Much has been achieved within such a short period. The dependent (conditional) clause *if you are pleased* is worthy of note here. One would have expected JAK to add its antithesis, *if you are not pleased* for a balance to illicit varied emotional responses from the audience.

JAK's campaign language, as an incumbent, portrayed him as a president serving his people with selfless devotion and commitment. His statements abounded in expressions depicting self-glorification and goodwill to enhance his credibility. Aristotle (2007) enjoins the rhetor to get the audience to perceive him as possessing goodwill to boost his credibility. In line with this Aristotelian prescription, JAK averred at Jirapa:

But I want to remind you that it isn't every government that will operate on the basis that this government is operating; selfless service to the people ... After all what do we want? We just want an effective and efficient service from government and you are getting so just encourage the people who can do it to continue (Jirapa 2004).

JAK resorts to logos appeals to strengthen his argument for continuity. In the extract JAK uses contrast to emphasize the able manner *this government is operating*. The contrast embedded in "*it isn't every government*" distinguishes himself (and by extension his party) from the way other governments, without doubt the NDC, handled the affairs of the country, implying that under his presidency Ghanaians have witnessed marked improvement in governance. Just as President Obama repeated specific expressions for both national glorification and self-glorification in his Victory Speech (Rahimi, 2013), in the above extract JAK uses three adjectives: *selfless*, *effective* and *efficient* as self-glorification epithets. *Selfless* demonstrates he is altruistic and working hard in the interest of Ghanaians while *effective* and *efficient* portray how he has served the people with commendable diligence. These are meant to get the audience to appreciate his presidency and score him high on the performance continuum and support his re-election. Thus, as the incumbent party candidate and sitting President JAK emphasizes his party's accomplishments while in office (Trent, et al. 2012). JAK's statements show how self-glorification is reflected in incumbent campaign communication.

Appropriating Chieftaincy Ethos

A feature of Ghanaian political campaigning is the endorsement of presidential candidates by chiefs. Obiri Yeboah (2016) argues that traditional rulers endorse presidential candidates in order that should the candidate win, the chiefs stand a better chance of their traditional areas being considered for development projects. These endorsements are considered by presidential candidates as the chiefs' testimonies about their good performance. This underscores JAK's appropriation of chiefs' ethos as he knows what chieftaincy represents in traditional societies, particularly outside the major cities. JAK therefore does not hesitate in claiming at Jirapa:

What hit me among the many positive change our chiefs said was the fact that the chiefs and people appreciated the deepening of decentralization. We are democrats and we do not want to bottle up power in Accra. We want power to go into the districts of Ghana.

In this extract, JAK uses his endorsement of chiefs as a rhetorical tool to highlight the traditional notion that the chief speaks on behalf of his subjects and when the chief speaks, he must be obeyed. With this

JAK elevates chieftaincy to the height of being “the most enduring socio-cultural institution in Ghana ...” (Amoatia Ofori Panyin, 2010, p.1). JAK is ecstatic about the acknowledgement by the chiefs and people of Jirapa that the NPP has strengthened decentralization. The effects of positive change are not only manifested in infrastructural development, but they also reflect in the governance system, in the area of decentralization. JAK seizes the opportunity to project himself by highlighting how he and his party have taken positive change to another level by disseminating democratic governance to Ghanaians at the grassroots. He proudly characterizes his party as democrats, and democratic as they are, it is unworthy of them “*to bottle up power in Accra*”, implying that the NPP government is not an oligarchy.

In effect, the distribution of power to the districts is a manifestation of the government’s good governance system which cannot escape the watchful eyes of the chiefs and the audience of Jirapa. Such ethos enhancing statements, speak eloquently about JAK’s leadership qualities which are fundamental to his self-presentation as a performing President. He continued to reiterate how the chiefs, and by extension the people of Jirapa, perceived his governance system, saying, *This evening we’ve heard from our chiefs that the assembly has been functioning well for the benefit of the people here in the district*. Just as JAK uses the statement to build his self-confidence he also uses it to draw the attention of the audience to the chiefs’ open declaration of the beneficial influence of the work of the District Assembly on their district. For this reason, the audience should emulate the example set by their chiefs and support him. Every positive evaluation of JAK’s performance by chiefs was an opportunity for him to inculcate the audience with the impression that “JAK has already been endorsed by our chief (s)”. As a consequence, most voters shall toe the line of their chief (s), granting that in the traditional set up the public pronouncements of chiefs reflect the views of their subjects. At Nadowli, JAK quickly and deftly took advantage of this to promote his party, and by extension himself. He said:

So, when we hear good things being said about what we have been able to do, we want to believe it’s not just the chiefs telling us; we want to believe the people of Nadowli, all join the chiefs in acknowledging the little we have been able to do so far. And if this is the appreciation among you, then I will say, show your appreciation in practical terms, support this government and the government will continue to serve you.

JAK strategically makes references to the chiefs’ appreciation of government’s efforts to create the awareness that he is not the one flaunting his achievements for self-promotion. This line of thinking provides an avenue for JAK to get the audience to reason that when such recognition comes from the chiefs then there is no gainsaying that the NPP government has performed creditably to warrant a second term of office. Also, JAK’s description of government’s efforts as *the little we have been able to do so far* is on one hand a tacit admission of government’s inability to meet the maximum expectation of the electorate. On the other hand, it is a gesture of humility and self-effacement, making light of his achievements. This demonstration of meekness boosts JAK’s self-presentation and increases his chances of being a likeable candidate.

Conclusion

The paper compared the campaign communication strategies of JAK when he ran as a challenger and incumbent in the 2000 and 2004 elections respectively. Specifically, the study revealed that as a challenger, JAK built his argumentation around the notion of change amidst aggressive rhetoric and vitriolic language resulting in negative campaigning. Generally, he resorted to pathos appeals rooted in a campaign of calumny, name calling, sneering and malicious labelling and scapegoating. He badmouthed President Rawlings as a tyrant and dictator and the entire NDC as maladroit, corrupt and self-seeking JAK also relied on self-presentation to strategically market himself as the embodiment of the panacea for Ghana’s socio-economic problems. He as well presented himself as an agent of change, a liberator, redeemer and one who had already won the election. The pivot of this can-do optimism was his incessant and vociferous claim to transform the economy within four years. Conversely in 2004,

running as an incumbent JAK attacked less and acclaimed more as noted by Trent et al. (2012) and Benoit (1999). He jettisoned the rather belligerent rhetoric that characterized his 2000 campaign discourse. Being a President seeking re-election, he spoke with equanimity, neutrality, a less condescending and deferential tone culminating in what Leff and Utley (2004) call 'verbal control'. This conclusion contrasts Tenuche's (2009) assertion that President Obasanjo's public statements and speeches as an incumbent seeking re-election were derogatory, intimidating, and menacing, portraying his perception of politics as warfare. As an incumbent, JAK centred his argumentation on his accomplishments, personal qualities and endorsement of traditional rulers to present a viable image for reelection. These enabled him to build his ethos as a successful president, thereby translating his 'so far, so good' performance assessment into the needed votes for a second presidential victory.

Arguably as the first study, from the Ghanaian perspective, to explore the campaign discourse of the same presidential candidate from two opposing campaign perspectives, the empirical findings provide new insights into our understanding of how the split personality (politically) possessed by a challenger turned incumbent is propelled by differing campaign exigencies.

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