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STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IN A PETROLEUM-RICH ECONOMY**

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“How empowering Ghanaians can help Ghana avoid an oily mess”

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ABSTRACT

The wealth of a nation is not fully expressed by its supply of oil, gold, BMWs or iPods. As Adam Smith taught us, people are the ultimate wealth of nations. How nations interact with and empower their citizens will determine their country's future. And because Ghana has long been a model for other countries, how Ghana uses its new oil wealth to develop could become a beacon or a lesson for other states in what not to do. Ghana could become a model for how developing countries use their oil to stimulate equitable sustainable growth.

This paper begins with a discussion of how outsiders and Ghanaians see Ghana's governance (Brand Ghana). Ghana is respected for its democracy and governance, yet its performance has been uneven on multidimensional governance metrics. Surveys of Ghanaians also reveal mixed attitudes about governance in Ghana. Yet Ghanaians are optimistic about their future. I suggest that Ghana can use its oil money to make its governance participatory, responsive, and accountable. Scholarly research suggests that policymakers can reduce corruption by investing in their people (education, health, infrastructure, etc.) and ensuring political accountability. I suggest ways that Ghana can ensure that its citizens (whether wired or not) can monitor their Government. In so doing, Ghana may be better positioned to expand trade and investment and make the Government both accountable and effective.

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In September 2009, Ghanaian President John Atta Mills set up a “Brand Ghana” office. Nation branding is a strategy to determine what a country is, “what it stands for, and what it is going to be known for.”² He hoped such a brand would signal a unified positive image of Ghana at home and abroad (NA, 2008, 2009).

Ghana may have difficulty forging such a brand. Ghana is widely seen as an African success story. But its performance, like many other nations, is mixed. The Government is stable and democratic, but the economy is not diversified. Mining comprises some 12 per cent of government revenue. About 75 per cent of its exports consist of cocoa, logs, minerals, gold, and electricity (World Economic Forum, 2010). In contrast with many other resource-rich countries, Ghana has so far avoided the resource curse (the resource curse is a term to describe the inadequate governance and corruption that often occurs in nations blessed with abundant national resources (Auty, 1994; Sachs and Warner, 2001; Gillies, 2010). However, Ghana began to drill oil this year, and this oil will bring billions in new revenue. Some observers fear that Ghana could mismanage these resources and endanger its hard fought progress (Gary, 2009; Harvey, 2010). Ghanaian leaders have not yet clarified how they will use this oil money to invest in its people, stimulate development, and diversify the economy.³ But herein I argue that Ghana’s new oil revenues provide an opportunity to make Ghana’s governance more accountable, participatory, and responsive. In that effort, Ghana might find its brand.

Ghana and governance

On the one hand, Ghana is an effective democracy with a thriving independent media and civil society. The EU called it a shining example of sustainable economic development among sub-Saharan African countries and President Obama noted Ghana’s strong democracy.⁴ On the other hand, the economy is not diversified. Ghana attracts little foreign investment outside of commodities and has a crime and money laundering problem (Gary, 2010; CIA, 2011).⁵ During its most recent WTO trade policy review, where members examined Ghana’s trade and governance performance, the Secretariat reported that although Ghana is growing, future growth

² <http://nation-branding.info/2011/02/05/latvia-nation-branding/>

³ Ghana may be interested in embracing the Natural Resource Charter (www.naturalresourcecharter.org) which is a set of principles for governments and societies on how to use the opportunities created by natural resources effectively, drafted by a group of leading academics and practitioners in the field of natural resource governance.

⁴ WTO, Trade Policy Review, WT/TPR/M/194, 2008, #29, p. 9; and “Full Text Barack Obama Speech to Ghanaian Parliament, 7/11/2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/11/obama-ghana-speech-full-t_n_230009.html

⁵ The OECD ranks Ghana a 6 (of 7) for risk. Business Anti-corruption Portal, Ghana Country Profile, <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/en/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/ghana/resources/> COULD YOU PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON THIS SOURCE – IS IT AN OECD PUBLICATION? OR IS THE CORRECT SOURCE THE WEBLINK? PLEASE ALSO ENTER IT INTO THE LIST OF REFERENCES

is threatened by infrastructural problems, unclear antitrust (competition) policies, and a lack of credit.⁶ A study for the UK Development Agency DFID found that Ghana suffers from an “enduring neopatrimonial” or patron client environment that weakens demand for change and discourages long-term reform (Booth et al., 2005). The World Bank noted that Ghana’s traditional court system and British based modern law legal systems exist in parallel creating insecurity and making contract enforcement difficult. It also notes that the police are corrupt and the state does not fully control and administer rural areas.⁷ The South African Institute of International Affairs warned that Ghana relies heavily on foreign expertise and aid for revenue (Ross, 2010). In the long run, Ghana cannot grow without a well-educated, productive workforce.⁸ Yet, Ghanaians go abroad for university, and many of the most educated do not return home. Ghana cannot possibly build a future economy without a cadre of scholars, technologists, innovators, etc. Thus, Ghana must find ways to improve its higher education and primary school systems.

Moreover, Ghanaian officials must think long-term about their agricultural sector. It must be able to feed its people and move them out of poverty. However, many countries that have abundant mineral resources tend to ignore the consequences for the agricultural sector. Ghana has a comparative advantage in agriculture. If Ghana invests in modernizing agriculture, increasing access to credit for farmers, and educating farmers on new technologies, seeds, and crops, it can help ensure that farmers are not left out of economic growth and that their exports do not become too costly (if the cedi rises with greater oil output).⁹ Ghana can also modernize and supplement its agricultural extension service to help farmers meet industrialized country sanitary and phytosanitary standards. By making agriculture a priority and by investing in farmers, farmer technology, and access to credit and education, Ghana may well be able to take advantage of rising commodity prices and move even more people out of poverty (Nankani, 2009; Booth et al., 2005).

Ghana’s mixed performance is also reflected in multidimensional measurements of governance.¹⁰ For example, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation looks at the quality of governance: it ranked Ghana 7th out of 53 African countries. However, Ghana began the century at rank 7 and has remained there 10 years later.¹¹ On the World Bank’s “Doing business” report, which rates countries’ business

6 WTO, Ghana Trade Policy Review, 2008 WT/TPR/M/194, p. 2, 7, 9 PLEASE PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON THIS SOURCE AND ENTER IT INTO THE LIST OF REFERENCES.

7 <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/en/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/ghana/snapshot/> PLEASE ALSO PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON THIS LINK AND ADD IT TO THE LIST OF REFERENCES

8 The Bertelsmann Foundation reports that “maintenance, sustainability and quality of teaching remain major problems, especially in the country’s north.” (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2009).

9 I am grateful to Antoine Heuty, Deputy Director of Revenue Watch, for this insight.

10 WTO, Ghana Trade Policy Review, 2008 WT/TPR/M/194, # 3. 4, p. 2, #23, p. 7, #29, p. 9. PLEASE PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON THIS SOURCE AND ENTER IT INTO THE LIST OF REFERENCES

11 2010 edition of Ibrahim Index, <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/en/section/the-ibrahim-index> - PLEASE PROVIDE MORE DETAILS SUCH AS TITLE, YEAR, ETC. AND ENTER IT INTO THE LIST OF REFERENCES

environment, Ghana ranks 67. On this metric, Ghana has improved—it has made it easier to get credit, is doing better at protecting investors, but the Bank concluded that it still has not created an effective environment for entrepreneurship (World Bank, 2010). On the new Revenue Watch Index, which measures Ghana’s performance on transparency, the country also receives low scores. In fact, despite fully complying with EITI, Revenue Watch described Ghana’s approach to transparency as “scant” (Revenue Watch Institute, 2010; 2011). The Legatum Prosperity Index measures national progress at providing citizens wealth and well-being. Ghana is ranked 90 of 110 countries. Legatum stressed that Ghanaians are optimistic; they see the country as meritocratic, and as a good place to start a good business. However, the survey also found that “only a third of the population is satisfied with their standard of living. The country does not have firm foundations for future growth.”¹² Finally, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index measures country efforts on democratic governance and on a socially responsible market economy. It found that many resources are wasted through corruption and there is a clear lack of customer-oriented service culture, even in the tourism sector (Bertelsmann Foundation, 2009).

Ghana is not alone in its mixed performance; even the richest oldest democracies have problems with governance. Yet these studies reveal that Ghana can and should work harder to diversify the economy, provide credit, and invest in its people.

Ghanian views

The governance surveys look at Ghana from 10,000 feet. The Ghanaian people probably have a more accurate vision of Ghana. Surveys reveal that the Ghanaians are relatively pleased with their Government and optimistic about their future. They believe their democracy will prosper with the new oil money (Timberg, 2008). A 2008 survey found Ghanaians believe the Government effectively provides basic health services (83 per cent); addresses educational needs (81 per cent); combats HIV/AIDS (78 per cent); empowers women (75 per cent) and manages the economy (69 per cent) (Afrobarometer, 2008).¹³ However, nearly 7 in 10 Ghanaians polled in 2008 believe that the Government should act like a parent and take care of people like children. The Center for Democratic Development CDD-Ghana is concerned that this “implies residual acceptance of patronage; and attitudes of subservience to authority.” The CDD feared that if people see their representatives as parents, citizens will not act to hold these same legislators to account (Afrobarometer, 2008b; Lindberg, 2009). Moreover, Ghanaians see local government bodies and representatives as corrupt, unresponsive, and unaccountable. Yet most Ghanaians

¹² Legatum Prosperity Index, 2010, www.prosperity.com/country.aspx?id+GH).

¹³ They are less confident of the Government; reducing crime (64 per cent); providing reliable electric supply (64 per cent); providing water and sanitation services (62 per cent); maintaining roads and bridges (61 per cent); ensuring everybody has enough to eat (56 per cent); fighting corruption (55 per cent); creating jobs (54 per cent), and improving living standards of the poor (50 per cent). The poll was taken in 2008.

have not acted to inform and influence their local government representatives. Weak citizen engagement has reduced trust in Ghana's governance.¹⁴

Trust, good governance and political participation

Despite their disenchantment with local government, Ghana has strong levels of trust for national leaders. Institutional trust is the key linkage between citizens and the state for creating legitimacy (Pierre and Rothstein, 2010; Ackerman and Kornai, 2004; Lederman et al., 2001). With trust, decisions can be made through consensus.¹⁵ Ghana is well positioned to provide political accountability: it has a strong and diverse press as well as anti-corruption counterweights such as a free press and a system of checks and balances.¹⁶ The Government is working to be transparent and responsive, but it has not adopted resource contract transparency (Revenue Watch 2009; 2010a). Meanwhile, Ghanaians can do more to hold their Government to account.¹⁷

A few ideas

Global Integrity, one of the leading international NGOs working on improving governance, evaluates how nations have worked to create bulwarks against corruption. It notes that Ghana lacks conflict of interest regulations, has a weak system of monitoring political financing, little executive, judicial, and legislative accountability and whistle-blowing protection measures.¹⁸ Global Integrity also reported the irony that some citizens have had to bribe officials to gain access to information about Ghana (Global Integrity, 2010).¹⁹ The Parliament should consider enshrining citizens' right to know legislation, as well as other key counterweights. It should also

14 Afrobarometer, "Popular Opinions on Local Government," Briefing Paper No. 52, August 2008, 5-6. PLEASE PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ON SOURCE AND ENTER IN LIST OF REFERENCES

15. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as "the exercise of... authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights...and mediate their differences" (UNDP, 1997).

¹⁶ US Department of State Human rights Report, Ghana, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154349.htm>

17 Nicholas Charron, "The Impact of Socio-Political Integration and Press Freedom on Corruption," Quality of Governance Working Paper 2008:4.

18 Global Integrity Report, 2006, Ghana, <http://www.globalintegrity.org/reports/2006/GHANA/scorecard.cfm> PLEASE PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SOURCE AND ENTER IT INTO THE LIST OF REFERENCES

19 Although the Executive has supposedly proposed right to know legislation, I found no information on this on the homepage of Ghana's Government. <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/>. http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=72. Also see NA, "Right to Information: A Necessary Tool for Democracy, 6/30/2011, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=212389>

inform citizens of their right to access to government information which helps ensure effective democracy.²⁰

Ghanaian leaders can do more to involve and empower citizens, even those without web or mobile phone access.

First, the Government should encourage the public to actively participate in decision-making. Ghana only has 5 per cent internet penetration, so it needs to ensure that those without web access (as well as those that are illiterate) have information about what Government is doing. Policymakers can disseminate information through notice boards, newspapers, media broadcasts, as well as the internet (see, for example, Darbshire, 2010). Policymakers should not only provide information, but ask for information. Thereby, Ghana can improve government services.

Ghana could also disseminate information about free tools that can enable citizen watchdogs. As 63 per cent have access to mobile phones,²¹ these phones may prove to be the most useful tool in monitoring Government. On phones individuals can:

- Tweet. A tweet is a short message. Anyone can tweet anonymously by simply leaving a voicemail on one of these international phone numbers (+16504194196 or +390662207294 or +97316199855) and the service will instantly tweet the message. No Internet connection is required. People can listen to the messages by dialling the same phone numbers or going to twitter.com/speak2tweet.
- Report bribes.²²
- Use apps such as those that allow farmers to see whether they are getting a fair price²³ or help concerned citizens survey their neighbours regarding equal access to public services.²⁴
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Ghana could also promote knowledge of other technologies that can be used on multiple platforms to report information. These include: Ushaidi, which means "testimony" in Swahili. It was developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election fallout at the beginning of 2008. The [Ushahidi platform](#) provides tools for communities to crowdsource real-time information using SMS, email, Twitter, and the web; Comm.unity, wireless, a device-to-device information system that bypasses the need for centralized servers, coordination, or administration. It builds on the users' social networks, but the user can remain anonymous. Comm.unity is designed to work on as many devices as possible and with as many different

20 In 1946, the UN established that "freedom of information is "the touch-stone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated." In short the UN has established that there is a basic human right to secure access to publicly held information as well as a duty of government officials to make such information available.

21 Internet and telephone figures obtained from data provided on the CIA Factbook.

22 World Bank, 2011, Apps for Development Competition, Bribery Reporting System, <http://wbapps.ideascale.com/a/dtd/Bribery-reporting-system/81089-10789>

23 World Bank, 2011, Apps for Development Competition "All in One Info Hubs for villages," <http://wbapps.ideascale.com/a/dtd/All---In---One-Info-Hubs-for-villages/90396-10789>

24 Jessica Crewe, ed., "Improving Access to Public Services," Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation and Centre for government Studies, Leiden University, The Hague, 2007, <http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/showdoc.html?id=69341>; and Global Integrity, Local Integrity Initiative, examples at <http://www.globalintegrity.org/local>

radios as possible (WiFi, Bluetooth, IR, etc.) which build networks beyond social networks. Finally, See click fix encourages active citizenship, by offering a variety of platforms to report citizens' concerns—whether potholes or pot sales. Citizens can report issues through their [website](#), [mobile apps](#), [widgets](#), and voice mail. And citizens can also use the web to anonymously report bribes: <http://www.ipaidabribe.com>.²⁵

These platforms and apps are not perfect. They could provide citizens and policymakers with much needed feedback. Alternatively, citizens might manipulate or exaggerate information. These platforms might also empower the equivalent of high tech lynch mobs.²⁶ Moreover, as we saw in Egypt, the Government might pressure companies to halt services or breach the privacy rights of individual consumers. In promoting citizen activism, Ghanaian policymakers should set firm rules that respect internationally accepted norms of freedom of expression, access to information, and privacy. By so doing, the Government of Ghana will not only disseminate integrity but be a role model for integrity.

CONCLUSION

In a recent web posting about events in Egypt, Ghana's Vice President E. John Dramani Mahama wrote, "Digital technology is redefining our political landscape and will continue to do so in ways that we have yet to even imagine."²⁷ But Ghanaians can imagine how they might use these technologies to inform citizens and encourage citizens to provide feedback and guidance. In so doing, Ghana may find and highlight its brand of good governance. After all, oil may be the fuel that lubricates the world's markets, but it does not have to make Ghana greasy. Participatory governance could be a slick solution for the Ghanaian people.

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²⁵ The Ghanaian Government has strong authority to regulate the net and restrict information. Under the Telecommunications Act 2005 in Ghana, ISPs can be instructed under court order to intercept communications transmitted online and gather all information they can about users. In special cases, the president can grant authorization, avoiding the need to obtain a court order. Clauses 20–24 of the Computer and Computer Related Crimes Act 2005 also delineate specific data retention and Internet communication interception rules for criminal investigations. Information on the Telecommunications Act 2005 and the Computer Related Crimes Act 2005, These laws can be found at Legislation Ghana, <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/oeur/lxwegha.htm>; and [Open Net Initiative, Regional Overview of Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006-2007](http://opennet.net/studies/SubSaharanAfrica2007#footnote96_89zhawe).http://opennet.net/studies/SubSaharanAfrica2007#footnote96_89zhawe.

²⁶ For a good understanding of these issues, see Hope, 2011. For example, governments might require cell phone companies to deactivate user accounts or violate their privacy rights.

²⁷ H.E. John Dramani Mahama, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4774:wired-for-freedom-in-africa&catid=96:top-headlines

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