

NEGOTIATING RHETORICAL EXIGENCIES:

President Mahama's Address at the National
Democratic Congress on August 30, 2012

Eric Opoku Mensah
PhD Candidate,
Centre for Rhetoric Studies,
University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Wincharles Coker
PhD Candidate,
Rhetoric and Technical Communication,
Michigan Technology University,
Houghton, Michigan, USA

ABSTRACT

Following the unexpected demise of President J. E. A. Mills in August 2012, Ghana's ruling party, National Democratic Congress (NDC) felt obligated to call for an Emergency Congress of the Party to elect a new presidential candidate to run for the December 2012 general elections. The vacuum left by President Mill's death necessitated a rhetorical transaction that would reposition the party for the forthcoming elections. Applying Bitzer's theory of the rhetorical situation, this study critically examines the attendant rhetorical exigencies that President Mahama must address in his speech before the Congress and the speech's ability to take into cognizance the deleterious potential of those exigencies.

We argue that Mahama's speech made attempts at addressing some key exigencies within the rhetorical situation thereby was successful in repositioning NDC as the stronger party in the run up to the 2012 elections in Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

On a hot sunny afternoon on August 30, 2012, President John Dramani Mahama addressed the Extraordinary Congress of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) at the Baba Yara Sports stadium in Kumasi. This extraordinary Congress had been convened about three months to the national general elections to be held on December 2012. The purpose of this meeting was to decide on a new flag bearer for the December 2012 general elections. Politically, it was a very trying period for the ruling Party. This situation had come about as a result of the demise of President Mills.¹ John Mahama, the Vice President had been sworn in to fill the leadership vacuum under Ghana's constitutional provisions. Though the Osu Castle² had been filled in the interim, the ruling Party, the NDC, had no legitimate presidential candidate for the upcoming elections in December.

As the Party faced a possibly stiff opposition in the December polls, the situation was further aggravated by the limited time the ruling Party had in order to present a credible candidate in order to

¹ The sitting President, Prof. John Evan Atta-Mills had passed away a little over a month earlier on the 24th of July 2012.

² Osu Castle has been the seat of government since the beginning of the first Republic in 1957.

maintain steady momentum and credibility in the campaign towards the upcoming elections.

Before this emergency Congress, the NDC Party's highest echelon had validated Mahama as the NDC Presidential candidate,³ but this decision, according to the Party's Constitution, would need the assent of Congress which is the highest decision making body of the ruling Party. It was clear that the president would receive overwhelming support from the Congress for Mahama to be legitimately named the Presidential candidate for the ruling NDC due to the following number of reasons.

First, he was the only candidate the Party's leadership presented at Congress for ratification; secondly, as the sitting President, he was better placed to gain the automatic support of members of the Party with just three months to a major national election. President Mahama's presentation seemed a facile rhetorical utterance; however, in view of the political climate within the NDC and the nation as a whole, there were obvious rhetorical exigencies which required a 'fitting response' from him as the prospective presidential flag bearer for NDC Party. This paper is an attempt to examine the attendant rhetorical exigencies, and how Mahama used his address to negotiate them as a means of enhancing his chances in the 2012 December polls.

Lloyd Bitzer, deliberating on the rhetorical situation, maintains that:

³ 'It's Nana vs Mahama on December 7.' [online: www.ghanaweb.com. Accessed April 28, 2012. www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage//elections2008/artikel.php?ID=256395.

Rhetorical situation may be defined as a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (Bitzer 1968: 6)

The underlying assumption of Bitzer's definition is that rhetorical situations present 'actual or potential exigence' whose need is being addressed by discourse. The question which naturally arises is: what were the actual or potential exigencies which required the attention of the Kumasi Congress? For the purposes of this discussion, we will attempt to identify three key exigencies.

Of relevance along analytical lines is Murphy's presidential assertiveness protocol. J. M. Murphy (1997; 2008) has studied presidential power and authority. He has argued that for the president successfully to construct his power in the imagination of the people, he has to appeal to this fundamental triadic: religion, tradition and authority. In our analysis, we shall employ two of Murphy's triadic, tradition and religion, to examine Mahama's quest to assert himself as the *bona fide* candidate to represent the congress.

THE EXIGENCIES

The first exigency relates to the problem of unity within the NDC party. Just after winning the general elections in 2008, the NDC had been plagued with divisive tendencies which had been

deteriorating with intensity even as it got closer to the December 2012 elections. Critics had warned the Party about the possible effects these internal conflicts on the Party's chances in the general elections.

Whilst there might have been serious under currents which were not captured in the media, the most overt signs of division had been initiated by former President Rawlings and former First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings.⁴ Since the story of the antagonism between Rawlings and President Mills is beyond the limitations of this paper, we would not attempt to examine it in this discussion. However, the crux of the exigency was that since the beginning of Ghana's Fourth Republic in 1992, the NDC had never won any national general election without the presence of the Party's founder, President Rawlings on the campaign team.

Before the Party's campaign could begin for the 2012 elections, there were doubts whether former President Rawlings would campaign for the ruling Party.⁵ The Party's positioning to secure a win at the polls required the input of all party stakeholders including Jerry Rawlings', but due to the mayhem and schism that had plagued the party, Rawlings' presence seemed a major concern that should be addressed in the speech, for not only Mahama, but also, NDC delegates who had gathered in anticipation of Mahama's address at the Baba Yara Sports Stadium.

⁴ 'The faith and fate of Nana Konadu.' *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 24, 2012. <http://opinion.myjoyonline.com/pages/feature/201109/73212.php>.

⁵ 'Rawlings may join the NDC campaign for election 2012.' *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 28, 2012. <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/93134.php>.

Another key exigency was how President Mahama would self-define himself as the leadership material within the context of Mill's overcast on the proceedings and the gloomy but inevitable transition. Connected to this was the need for him to provide some form of assurance to members of the NDC and the general Ghanaian audience that he possessed the leadership ethos suitable to the Ghanaian Presidency. In other words, he needed to put his virtues and capabilities on public record, which would frame him as the legitimate candidate who deserved to fill the presidential void created by Mills' demise.

Thirdly, the imminent December elections presented a fierce contest between the two major political parties, the NDC and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Mahama, if ratified by Congress, was going to be engaged in an election battle with Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo, the NPP Presidential Candidate, who had narrowly lost to President Mills in 2008. The NPP had had two years of campaign to their credit for the 2012 elections. It would appear that this was not going to be an easy battle for Mahama.

Indeed, Mr Mills' demise had culminated in the maturation of some key exigencies, which were central to the 2012 elections. Mahama, as the new candidate of the NDC, needed to address these apparent exigencies quickly before they decayed.⁶ This is because the exigencies could only prolong as long as there were no fresh nationwide elections in Ghana. To Bitzer (1968: 12), some

⁶ Bitzer argues that exigencies within rhetorical situations can 'mature or decay or mature and persist' (Bitzer 1968: 12). We argue that given an opportunity, as it was presented to Mahama, it is of strategic importance for the rhetor to address potential exigencies.

rhetorical exigencies can mature and decay without an appropriate rhetorical response. These exigencies require urgent attention if Mahama were to emerge victorious in the 2012 elections, upon which his political future very much depended. The Kumasi Congress therefore presented a window of opportunity for the President to invent an appropriate rhetorical response to these crucial exigencies. We then ask these questions: did Mahama's address in Kumasi show an awareness of the contesting exigencies? To what extent did he confront the apparent disunity within his Party? How did he create a neutral role for himself and used the speech to reunite the factions sides as he attempted to point to the vision of the Party? To what extent did he appropriate unto himself a religious authority as a means of continuing in the image of the dead president? How did Mahama use the speech as an effective rhetorical tool to re-direct the strength of the Party towards a common opponent? Lastly, was Mahama able to use his Congress speech to appeal to the teaming youth who have been the strength of the Party's support?

UNITING CONGRESS

As we indicated in the introduction, the major rhetorical challenge that was to face Mahama was not the outcome of the decision of the extraordinary Congress but the aftermath of the Kumasi meeting in the days leading to the general elections. The Party had witnessed serious cracks within its ranks which had threatened its unity. No sooner had the nation concluded the 2008 general elections, which brought the Party into office, than two major factions emerged within the Party.

A faction of the party still had its allegiance to former President Rawlings, while the other faction the late President Mills.⁷ Many political analysts and social commentators as well as party members have advanced reasons in the media as to the real cause of the division within the ruling NDC. However, one obvious move which contributed to the occurrence of the cracks within the NDC was the decision of former first lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang Mills, to seek the Party's mandate as a Presidential candidate in the 2012 elections. This was a break of the Party's tradition, albeit not a constitutional breach of the NDC Party. This is because it was the first time in the Fourth Republic that a sitting President was being challenged for his decision to run for a second term since the times of Presidents Rawlings and Kufour.⁸

Nana Konadu Agyemang's contest was either a demonstration of the former first family's lack of faith in Mills' leadership, both as President of Ghana and as leader of the NDC, or just testing the waters whether Ghana was ready for a female presidency. This situation, though a key concern to most Ghanaians, wore on until the demise of President Mills. If the NDC was going to win the December polls then it was incumbent on Mahama to address the situation in his speech. As part of the opening his address, Mahama sought to address the delegates

⁷ 'NDC: Party unity to be tested in Tamale.' *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 24, 2012. politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201001/40610.php

⁸ Surprisingly, both Presidents Rawlings and Kufour received unanimous support from their respective Parties to contest for a second term of presidency without any opposition within the Parties.

present by tapping into the authority of the two former Presidents of the NDC tradition, that is Rawlings and Mills. He noted:

Fellow countrymen and women, as HE J. J. Rawlings will say, my brothers and sisters as HE Prof Mills will say, Fellow Akatamansonians, we all know why we've gathered here today. We've gathered here for an Extraordinary Delegates' Congress. And this Congress has been convened as a result of the tragic events that unfolded in our country over the last few weeks.⁹ [Mahama 5]

By invoking the authority of both the living (Rawlings) and the departed (Mills) presidents respectfully, Mahama seeks not only to attempt to unite the two leaders and their factions but also to establish himself within the pantheon of revered leaders who in the past had had the opportunity to address Congress as leaders of the NDC. It was the beginning of the creation of a neutral position for his leadership within the Party, and he acknowledges that his leadership strength emanated from the established traditions of the past two leaders of the Party: Rawlings and the late Mills. To Murphy, for the speaker 'to speak from within a tradition is to interpret communal life through that tradition.'¹⁰ Thus, Mahama, right from the opening of the speech diffuses any trait of suspicion of his singular allegiance to either of the two former presidents in particular. We argue that the evocation of the two former leaders is

⁹ See President Mahama's speech [online] <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/93069.php>

¹⁰ For details on traditions and authority see, Murphy 1997: 72.

partly an invocation of the unique traditions, which had always been brought to bear on the party. It is a demonstration and validation of the input that these Party leaders had made to electioneering processes in the past for the party to achieve victory at the polls. In other words, Mahama could not have stood at the stadium addressing the congress without prior joint effort and team work of the two eminent party leaders – Rawlings as President and Mills as his Vice –President.

In the speech, Mahama treads diplomatically as he touched on the subject of disagreement within the Party but never attempts to mention the nature of the discord. He carefully notes the inevitability of disagreements. ‘But it is how we manage those disagreements that will determine whether an organization is successful or it fails’ [Mahama 6]. Since the immediate and remote audiences are somehow privy to media reports about the discord within the ruling Party, Mahama never committed himself with the responsibility of divulging facts about obvious unpleasant incidents within the Party. However, he touched on a key point that underlies the operations of the NDC, which is democracy. Since argumentation in democratic discourses thrives on ‘disagreements,’ disagreement within the party, in a rhetorical sense, becomes a positive democratic element within the Party. In a sense, Mahama indirectly reiterated the Party’s failure in tolerating one another’s views. The speech’s public acknowledgment of the discord within the NDC comes across as a sincere gesture to the public, especially non-members of the NDC. It is a subtle revelation of the

President's ethos as a man who possesses the virtue¹¹ to publicly acknowledge the challenges of the Party before Ghanaians as a whole. Whilst he exacted good judgment on the situation within the Party, he made the Party corporately responsible for his discourse. He argued, 'I have said that in the past we have not managed those disagreements the way we should' [Mahama 7]. The first person plural 'we' connotes a true sense of 'communion' among the rank and file of the NDC.

In an emotional move, Mahama recounted the late President's demise as a Messianic act done as a divine means of expiating all the wrongs of the Party and therefore becoming a means for the Party's renewal and invigoration. It marked the point when the political disaster as a result of the demise of President Mills became a fresh source of strength. He remarked:

Prof Mills has paid the ultimate price, and his death opens a new door of opportunity for the NDC. His death opens a new door of opportunity for our great party the NDC. And I wish to pledge with your mandate that as your leader I would do everything on my honour I pledge to open that door of opportunity and re-cements the bonds of unity that held us together in the NDC. I will do everything to restore the hope and the confidence that the members of our party and this country have in the leadership of the NDC. [Mahama 8]

¹¹ Apart from logical persuasion, Aristotle discusses other tools, which make a rhetor persuasive and this included the virtue of the speaker. See Aristotle 2007: 2.1.5[1378a].

Thus, through this important renewal, Mahama seems strategically to place himself as the unifier who ushered the Party into a new phase of communion. Mahama canonized Mills so that even in his death, he (Mahama) provided an opportunity to make the Party stronger. Death in this sense does not become a loss but becomes a political gain. President Mills therefore needed to present himself as a sacrificial lamp for the ultimate renewal of the NDC, a renewal which the Party really needed as the Party was heading towards major nationwide elections. Mahama pledged on his honour to also renew himself to this call to 'restore the hope and the confidence' in the NDC.

Although the speech, acknowledges corporate responsibility for the discord within the Party, Mahama at the same time boldly but subtly accuses former President Rawlings of being responsible for disunity within the party ranks. He asserts:

I noted the resounding cheers that you gave our founder when he entered this arena. I noted the resounding cheers that you gave him anytime that his name was mentioned. Those cheers that you have given send a very strong message and a very strong signal that the rank and file of our party is not happy with the state of disunity that exists in the party. Those resounding cheers that you gave send a strong signal that the rank and file of the party have had enough of the schism that exists in our party. Those cheers that you gave send a signal to the leadership that you want an exorcism of the bad blood and

bitterness that has existed in our party. And I pledge to you that I am going to work with you in order that the NDC becomes the united, strong and confident party that the NDC should be. [Mahama 9]

Mahama uses the rhetorical figure of *anaphora* ('I noted the resounding cheers') to suggest that the shouts from the immediate audience signalled the audience's unhappiness with the discord within the Party. Whilst this interpretation of the audience's action by the President may not have been factually accurate, Mahama strategically uses it as an opportunity to express his own disapproval but allows the immediate audience to own his disapproval. Thus, in a subtle and seamless shift from corporate to individual responsibility; from individual accusatory remarks to corporate ownership, the speech swiftly highlights the corporate quality of the audience actions whilst at the same time drawing a strong attention to individual inaction and disapproval. In other words, Mahama may have succeeded in holding the entire Party responsible for the discord within its ranks whilst at the same time in a diplomatic posture points fingers at the Party's founder, Rawlings, as the culprit and possibly holding a key to solving the problem. But at this point, as a new leader, Mahama brought himself into the subject of disunity by providing a solution:

I wish to pledge with your mandate that as your leader I would do everything on my honour I pledge to open that door of opportunity and re-cements the bonds of unity that held us together in the NDC. I will do

everything to restore the hope and the confidence that the members of our party and this country have in the leadership of the NDC. [Mahama 8]

By his pledge, he attempts to position himself as a solid bridge on which to unite the living and the dead within the NDC. He attempts to portray himself as a rare leader who possesses the qualities for providing clear direction during crises moments in the political journey such as the peculiar challenge the Party faced in the 2012 elections. As a faithful arbiter, he presents himself as the most appropriate instrument for consolidating the Party's strength and ensuring victory in the December polls.

RELIGIOUS APPEAL: THE PRINCE OF PEACE (ASOMDWEƐHENE)

Four years earlier in the 2008 elections, the NDC employed religion as a political marketing strategy¹² for Mills' presidential campaign. This rhetorical strategy, among others, contributed to Mills' victory in the 2008 elections. These reasons will be the subject of a future discussion but let it suffice to reiterate that the employment of religious rhetoric in Ghanaian political campaigns has a long tradition, which dates back to Ghana's political struggle to independence and even beyond.¹³

In the Fourth Republic, the NPP successfully executed a religious campaign during the Party's victory in the 2000 general

¹² For details on political marketing in Ghana's 2008 elections, see Hinson and Tweneboah-Kodua 2010: 201-218.

¹³ See Monfils 1977: 313-330; Simms 2006: 118-128.

elections (*Awurade kasa*). In effect, when rhetors had perceived the right political situation in Ghana, religion always had been used as a successful rhetorical tool in Ghanaian political elections. Therefore, on the heels of the success of the NDC in the 2008, Mahama continues to rehash the same kind of the religious motif in his speeches, possibly because it aligns with President Mills rhetorical strategy that brought him into office in January 2009.

For Mahama, it was only appropriate by way of ensuring continuity, to connect with Mills' religious ethos, which even in his death was still evoked by the NDC to arouse pathos among Ghanaians.¹⁴ According to Murphy, 'rhetorical traditions, serves a functional purpose by providing people with an intelligible "cultural grammar," through which they might speak to each other.'¹⁵ Since some exigencies within a peculiar rhetorical situation can persist,¹⁶ it is only tactical for a speaker to repeat a successful rhetorical response peculiar to that situation.

If Mahama received the approval by Congress in Kumasi, he was going to face the NPP candidate, Nana Akuffo-Addo, the same candidate whom President Mills, together with Mahama as a running mate, had defeated in the 2008 elections. In the opening of speech, Mahama revealed the role of God's providence in choosing an appropriate leader for the Party at Congress in Kumasi. He noted:

¹⁴ "Mills' last message to his 'flock': weep not; for I am not dead?" *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 22 2013, <http://m.myjoyonline.com/pages/edition/news/201208/91983.php>.

¹⁵ Murphy 1997: 72.

¹⁶ Bitzer posits that some rhetorical exigencies can prolong indefinitely when they are not addressed. Bitzer 1968: 12.

At the end of the process, if God's favour shines on me, and you give me your overwhelming endorsement, I will give an acceptance speech that contains a lot of what I want to say today. [Mahama 3]

After the death of Mills, Mahama had told the nation that God was going to choose the next leader for the nation.¹⁷ He tries to move the debate of the nation's choice of the next president from secular to supernatural considerations which the Ghanaian voters may not have greater influence. Within that kind of religious rhetoric, he had minimized the material and physical basis of comparison by voters of the contesting candidates in the December polls. The need to minimize the comparison was upon the basis that Mahama was contesting a politician who many considered as quite an experienced candidate. This situation necessitated such a rhetorical strategy which disallowed the public to do an effective comparison based upon the two candidate's political experiences.

In Kumasi, President Mahama knew there was a full chance of him being endorsed by Congress, but he wanted in advance to interpret his final endorsement by Congress as a sign of God's providence. Whilst this may, on the surface, have appeared as a weak appeal since his candidature did not face any competition at Congress, the religious appeal allowed Mahama to tap into the rhetorical authority of Mills. Since 'authority derives

¹⁷ 'God Will Decide Next President for Ghana.' *www.peacefonline.com*. Last modified April 23, 2013. http://news.peacefonline.com/news/201208/130148.php?pageNum_rsComments=5&totalRows_rsComments=76&storyid=100&

from the re-accentuation of the rhetorical traditions,¹⁸ tapping into Mills' traditions allowed President Mahama to establish a certain rhetorical consistency among the Ghanaian public.

The reiteration of Mill's rhetoric by Mahama would have meant, to the sympathisers of Mills, to some extent, an uninterrupted continuation of former's political vision by the latter. During President Mills' days in office, his name became synonymous with peace and therefore was popularly referred to as 'Asomdweehene' (the Prince of Peace). After his final internment, the burial site has been named the 'Asomdwee Park' (Peace Park),¹⁹ as a commemoration to what Mills has come to represent and a reinforcement of the virile construct of Mills in the imagination of the people. This quality of a calm and peaceful demeanour of Mills earned him that epithet among Ghanaians, a quality which is truly admired by Ghanaians when demonstrated in leadership.

President Mahama further appropriated unto himself this quality of 'peace' in his speech. He admonished the entire Congress by saying, 'the second part of that message is the message of peace. Our late leader was called the "Asomdweehene" and he was not called the "Asomdweehene" for nothing. He was the embodiment of peace.' [Mahama 13]

The speech revealed that Mahama was ready to do the bidding of the President Mills, that even though he was no more. In translation, Mahama seeks to assume the presidential *persona* of

¹⁸ Murphy 1997: 72.

¹⁹ Korshie Quashigah, 'Is Asomdwee Park the answer?' *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 26 2013. <http://opinion.myjoyonline.com/pages/comment/201208/92854.php>

Mills: 'I am ready to do whatever President Mills would have done if he were still alive.' It was an expression of the Mahama's solemn promise and commitment as a candidate of the NDC and as President of Ghana. He drew the attention of Party members to view the December elections within the ethos of Mills, which he as a successor has appropriated unto himself. Mahama established authority for himself, an authority whose rhetorical antecedent originated from Mills and is shared by, not only members of the NDC, but also, a large section of the Ghanaian public who may have become sympathetic to the ideology and vision of Mills even in death. According to Murphy (1997: 76), 'authority occurs when rhetors enact, display and augment the complex voices percolating through community life.' Mahama clearly built his authority as he continually illuminated his ethos with the metaphor of a football match between rival teams. He noted:

When two football teams are playing, the team that is confident of victory wants the match to progress to a successful end without any incidence. The team that is not confident of winning tries to disrupt the match at every possible opportunity. We in the NDC are confident of our victory and so we want the match to progress in peace and arrive at a successful end.
[Mahama 13]

The rhetorical envisioning of the NDC as a peaceful team further accentuated the continuation of Mills' legacy. As the leader of the 'team,' Mahama provided a continuous rhetoric of peace which

extended to the totality of the ruling Party. In this case, he did not only personally advocate for peaceful conduct, but indirectly called on members of the Party to exhibit similar virtue within the spirit of a ‘team.’ In the end, Mahama succeeded, through rhetoric, to appropriate unto himself Mills’ virtue and extended it beyond himself as an individual to the larger community of the NDC as a single whole. Through this rhetorical performance, he positioned Nana Akuffo-Addo and the entire NPP to serve as a clear contrast to himself and the NDC.

FRAMING THE OPPOSITION

As part of the exigencies which he needed to address with his speech, President Mahama placed the opposition candidate in the appropriate campaign context for the December 2012 elections. On the heels of the football metaphor, Mahama strategically framed the opposition New Patriotic, the opposing team in the football contest, as violent and un-peaceful. The metaphor, in a sense, predicted a loss for the major opposition party, the NPP, who in its anticipation of defeat would turn violent: a habit typical of a losing team in major football contests.

He invoked the ‘All die be die’ comment which associated Nana Akuffo-Addo and the NPP as violent.²⁰ By so doing, he presented a contrast between himself and the NPP candidate for the December elections. Though the central object of the speech was to seek the mandate of Congress to contest on the Party’s

²⁰ Adwoa Gyasiwaa, “All die be die’ is a call for self-defence not violence – Akomea tells NDC.’ www.myjoyonline.com. Last modified April 24, 2013. <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/92848.php>

ticket for the December 2012 polls, Mahama strategically employed the speech to respond to one of the major exigencies which needed to be addressed. He used the authority which he had established through Mills to re-enact the same election contest which occurred between candidate Mills and Nana Akuffo-Addo in 2008 which the latter lost. Through the speech, Mahama invoked before Congress and the general Ghanaian public a similar political context. By this act, he rendered the 2008 exigencies static, through his rhetoric, almost four years after the last elections. If Nana Akuffo-Addo lost to Mills in 2008, then in the face of similar prevailing rhetorical conditions, the same opposition candidate would lose one more time in 2012.

Another significant contrasting feature between President Mahama and Nana Akuffo-Addo was the issue of age.²¹ Right after the demise of Mills, Mahama imagines the contest ahead between himself and Akuffo-Addo as presidential candidates of the two major political parties. It was the beginning of a campaign which was to bring the motif of youthfulness at the centre of the 2012 election campaign. Whilst this kind of rhetoric by the President received a rebuff from the NPP,²² Mahama saw the huge political capital in him being younger than his prospective rival and therefore subtly brought it to the fore in his address. To make his youthfulness become more overt and in a strategy to identify himself with Ghanaian youth, Mahama combined two popular

²¹ The NPP candidate was eleven years older than President Mahama.

²² 'Mahama was insensitive in his remarks- Akomea' *www.myjoyonline.com*. Last modified April 24, 2013. <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/91639.php>.

advertising slogans of two key telecommunication companies operating in Ghana – MTN and Vodafone. Mahama posited:

By the grace of God, and with God by our side, there would be no second round (*loud shouts*). There is going to be a one touch victory. So anytime you see me raise my index finger it means one touch. And so, apologies to MTN, I leave you with this slogan. When I say NDC you say “I go be keke.” I ‘m not very good at twisting my mouth but for those of you who can do it, when I say NDC then you say I go be keke. NDC (*crowd responds*), NDC (*crowds responds*), NDC (*crowds responds*) God bless you all! [14]

The peroration of the speech heightened the rhetorical performance and the general tempo of the address. President Mahama established a call-and-response with these slogans rubbing unto his campaign the popularity of these telecommunication mobile brands.²³ Mahama completely enacted a performance of the mouth-twisting act which youthfully characterises the MTN slogan, setting the immediate audience at the Baba Yara Sports Stadium agog. Such a performance by

²³ According to the National Communication Authority (NCA) MTN Ghana had a mobile market share of 46 % (Samuel Nii Narku Dowuona, “MTN” Ghana H1 revenue up 22%, data revenue up 193%.” www.myjoyonline.com. Last modified April 24, 2013. <http://business.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/91863.php>). On the other hand Vodafone Ghana, in 2012, recorded a 31.5% growth in service related revenue. Samuel Nii Narku Dowuona, ‘Vodafone Ghana records 31.5% growth in service revenue.’ www.myjoyonline.com. Last modified April 24, 2013. <http://business.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201202/81315.php>.

Mahama had the possible effect of identifying and strengthening his bond with the youth of the NDC and the larger public both immediate and remote. According to Perelman (1969: 321):

Every technique promoting the communion of the speaker with his audience will decrease the opposition between them - an opposition which is harmful when the task of the speaker is to persuade.

This call and response was going to become a key source of communion for the NDC campaign in the 2012 elections.

CONCLUSION

President Mahama's address at the NDC Emergency Congress served as a key publicity for him as a candidate to reach out to key constituencies within both the NDC and the general Ghanaian public who were unsure whether he should be given a term of his own to run the nation in the next four years. Among these key constituencies was the youth group which he strategically targeted in the peroration of the speech. The address therefore clearly neglected certain parts of the NDC audience²⁴ but reached out to address the bigger questions which were hanging unanswered but were nevertheless crucial for the NDC in the upcoming December polls.

²⁴ Perelman (1982: 13–14) argues that 'the speaker could neglect one part of the audience.' He further explains that the speaker does not necessarily always address his immediate audience.

These crucial issues largely bothered on disunity in the ruling Party, whether the Party's chosen candidate could carry out the vision and mandate of the late President and whether Mahama could fairly stand in a fierce context against the formidable Opposition Leader, Akuffo-Addo. The speech sought to show cognizance of these competing exigencies among other things and sought to address them adequately.

Though some critics may conclude that Mahama really took Congress for granted. This is because he seemed not to have fully addressed the highest body of the Party as a member who was seeking the Party's mandate. We however conclude that with all intent and purposes, since his nomination was obvious, it was important for him as an orator to use such an opportune moment at Congress with all the media apparatus to prime the NDC campaign which, at the time of Congress meeting, seemed to require some momentum. We believe that Mahama therefore succeeded in using his address at the Party's Congress in Kumasi to set the agenda for the three months campaign leading to the 7th December 2012 elections. Again, in relation to the late President, Mahama succeeded in appropriating unto himself the religious tradition of Mills and presented himself as 'the Joshua' who was to take the NDC Party 'across the Jordan River' [Mahama 13]. Mahama's employment of a religious imagery would have invoked the person of the Biblical Joshua who had been chosen through divine providence to bring victory to the NDC in the elections. Lastly, the President succeeded in using the speech clearly to contrast himself with the major Opposition Party and ended his rhetorical invention by establishing a bond with the youth. In

effect, President Mahama's 30th August 2012 address at the NDC Congress was a strategic response to the exigencies, which needed an address within the rhetorical situation.

REFERENCES

- Kennedy, G. A. (trans.) (2007) *Aristotle: On Rhetoric*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bitzer, L. F. (1968) 'The Rhetorical Situation,' in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* (supplementary issue): Pennsylvania State University 1-15.
- Hinson, R and Tweneboah-Koduah, E. (2010) 'Political Marketing Strategies in Africa: Expert Opinions of Recent Political Elections in Ghana.' *Journal of African Business* 11.2: 201-218
- Monfils, B. (1977) 'A Multifaceted Image: Kwame Nkrumah Extrinsic Rhetorical Strategies.' *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 7.3: 313 -330.
- Murphy, J. M. (1997) 'Intervening Authority: Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Orchestration of Rhetorical Traditions.' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 83: 71-89.
- (2008) 'Power and Authority in a Modern Presidency' in Aune, J. A. and Medhurst, M. J. (2008) *The Prospect of Presidential Rhetoric*. Texas: Texas A&M Press, 28-45.
- Perelman C. (1982) *The Realm of Rhetoric*. Notre Dame. Translated by Klubark W. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Perelman, C. and Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969) *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Translated by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver, Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame U. P.
- Simms, R. (2006) 'Christianity is Black with a Capital 'B': The Religion and Politics of Kwame Nkrumah.' *Western Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 30.2: 118-128.